

**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on Thursday, November 29th, 2012 at 9:30 a.m.

Members Present:

Legislator Kate Browning, Chairperson
Legislator Robert Calarco, Vice-Chair
Legislator DuWayne Gregory, Member
Legislator William Spencer, Member
Legislator Kara Hahn, Member
Legislator Lou D'Amaro, Member

Also in Attendance:

George Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature
Sara Simpson, Assistant Counsel to the Legislature
Renee Ortiz, Chief Deputy Clerk, Suffolk County Legislature
John Ortiz, Senior Budget Analyst/Budget Review Office
Jill Moss, Budget Review Office
Josh Slaughter, Aide to Legislator Browning
Bobby Knight, Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Paul Perillie, Aide to Legislator Gregory
Lora Gellerstein, Aide to Legislator Spencer
Alyssa Turano, Aide to Legislator Hahn
Tom Vaughn, County Executive's Office
Mike Sharkey, Suffolk County Sheriff's Office
Ted Nieves, Lieutenant, Suffolk County Police Department
Tracy Pollak, Suffolk County Police Department
Lou Molinari, 2nd VP, PBA
Jim Hughes, Suffolk Detectives Association, 1st VP
Patrice Dishopolsky, Suffolk County Probation Department
Peter Dykeman, Suffolk County Probation Officers Association
Jay Egan, Chairman, FRES Commission
Barbara Bender, Babylon Central 911 PSAP
Laura Ahearn, Executive Director, Parents for Megan's Law
Kevin Williams, AME 3rd VP
Don Daly, AME 4th VP
Michal J. Finland, AME
Suzanne McBride, AME Police Emergency Unit President
Andrea Lang, AME Police Emergency Unit

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Anne DiIorio, AME Police Emergency Unit
Karen Hauff, AME Police Emergency Unit
AnnMarie Cohon, AME Police Emergency 911
Kathleen Kovar, AME Police Emergency 911
Robert Marmo, SCCCJC
John Cowie, SOA 2VP
John-Paul Carroll
Other Interested Parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Lucia Braaten, Court Stenographer

MINUTES TRANSCRIBED BY:

Lucia Braaten, Court Stenographer
Kim Castiglione, Legislative Secretary

(*THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 9:30 A.M. *)

(The following was transcribed by Kim Castiglione, Legislative Secretary)

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Good morning. If everyone could please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Legislator Calarco.

(*Salutation*)

And please stand for a moment of silence for those who defend our country.

(*Moment of Silence*)

Thank you. Okay. We have a couple of cards. We do have a presentation this morning. We have -- we have only two cards, so we'll start with the public portion. The first one is Andrea Lang.

MS. LANG:

Good morning. My name is Andrea Lang. I'm the face of the Suffolk County 911 Dispatcher Emergency Operator. Our communication center is the heart of the Suffolk County Police Department. I'm here today to bring attention to the fact that we are severely understaffed. I myself was mandated to work an 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. shift on a regularly scheduled day off before I left for the night after a four p.m. to a midnight shift. That was the day Hurricane Sandy came to town. I left my family and drove into work during the height of the storm. I took over the precinct radio from the obviously stressed and exhausted prior Dispatcher and proceeded to weed through over 300 calls in the northwest area of the Suffolk County Second Precinct. My mantra for the evening was "life over property". I made experienced decisions over what calls would go out first to the 30 officers I had on patrol that evening. Hurricane Sandy is an extreme example of what I do, what I signed on to do.

I'm proud to serve the residents of Suffolk County in their greatest time of need. I tend not to think about what I do, as the details would overwhelm most people. I look forward to my days off and make that time count with my family and friends. Doing what I do for a living, and knowing that my job can cause me physical, harmful conditions related to stress and shift work, makes it harder to understand the County's blind eye toward realizing we at this time cannot do more with less. I no longer plan on going home after work. I plan on staying for 12-hour days and doing double duty at my job. My primary function is no longer Dispatcher, as I have to fill in for 911 Operators that we do not have.

We are aware of the County's current fiscal problems. We have made sacrifices to fill positions currently empty by staying overtime to fill them. The very nature of our job doesn't give us a choice. We are not looking for accolades or employee of the month; we need help. The current rates of physical illness in our department has risen visibly. We no doubt -- I'm sorry. We too often hear about diagnosis of high blood pressure, cancer, heart issues, and have no doubt that the correlation between our current working conditions and these medical problems is more than coincidental. Imagine the effect one getting the flu and feeling guilty about taking sick time and coming to work because they know not showing up will cause forced overtime could have on a whole squad.

We are not asking only for ourselves, but for the deserving constituency of Suffolk County. They need to know their lives and property are of paramount importance to the County's governing establishment. At this point in time, the question is not what we can do without in the interest of financial constraints, but what we cannot afford not to do. Our neighbors are counting on us to be there for them as we are counting on you to be there for us. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you. Any questions? Legislator Kennedy has a question for you, Andrea.

MS. LANG:

I'm sorry.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Thank you. I'm sorry. I was out of the room. I didn't get your name.

MS. LANG:

My name is Andrea Lang.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay. We have gotten a number of e-mails from a variety of different 911 Operators talking about a bunch of things that have gone on, particularly since Sandy. There were issues with accessing gas, and whether or not you were considered as priority personnel and things like that.

MS. LANG:

We were not.

LEG. KENNEDY:

No. I heard about that and, you know, in the postmortem that we do after the storm, the whole gas debacle is something that we have to work at as well.

My question today goes to either you or BRO, as to I'm a little confused. You're a 911 Operator or you're a Dispatcher?

MS. LANG:

I'm a Dispatcher, but I'm also trained to take 911 calls.

LEG. KENNEDY:

What is the difference between the two job titles?

MS. LANG:

A 911 Operator strictly takes 911 calls. A Dispatcher does double duty. We're on opposite sides of the same room. A 911 Operator takes the calls from the public, they send them over to us on the dispatch side, and we give to the Police Officers. We assist the Police Officers.

LEG. KENNEDY:

So do calls come up like in a cue that the operator takes and then you as a Dispatcher --

MS. LANG:

Yes.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Route them out?

MS. LANG:

Out to the Police Officers, yes.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Are you routing out only to Police Officers, or do you send to the fire departments, the ambulance or other emergencies, or is it just S.C.P.D.?

MS. LANG:

The 911 Operator, depending on the call -- the 911 Operator gets the call. Depending on what they need either connects them to the ambulance department or the fire department, and that call essentially is already started within those departments and then sent over to Dispatch to be given to the Police Officer. But we do notify for an ambulance or the fire department as well.

LEG. KENNEDY:

How many of you are there in Dispatch, approximately?

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Fifty-five.

MS. LANG:

Fifty-five.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

John, we're going to have a presentation.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Somebody's going to brief us on it?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

We're going to have a presentation so you'll have time to ask those questions.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay. Well, so I'm pleased to hear from the Chairwoman that we're going to get some numbers, but it sounds like at this point that, regardless of whatever the numbers are of you folks there, there's not enough of you.

MS. LANG:

There's not enough. It's not enough.

LEG. KENNEDY:

All right. Thank you. Thank you for coming forward.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you, Andrea.

MS. LANG:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Next one is Deborah McKee.

MS. MC KEE:

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Deborah McKee. I'm a 911 Emergency Dispatcher for the Suffolk County Police Department and a member of AME, the Police Emergency Unit.

In the Fall of 2007, I spoke before this body as a member of the Executive Board of AME regarding staffing shortages at 911. Today I speak to you as an Emergency Dispatcher directly from the 911 floor. While the conversation is much the same, let me make one thing perfectly clear. Our current Administration and our County Executive both have and are doing everything they can within their power to support us and give us the tools we need to do a job that we have consistently done in an exemplary manner.

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This is a job that is like no other. We look at multiple screens that update on a moment to moment basis in order to perform our job and send essential services to where they are needed. As a Dispatcher I constantly scan five computer monitors that are divided into some 16 smaller segments, all while working a foot pedal to speak and typing on two separate keyboards. Oftentimes I work the phone at the same time during instances where another agency is involved, such as the MTA in cases where a stop order has to be placed on trains for suicidal individuals on the tracks.

A Dispatcher carries much responsibility and endures the inherent stress that comes with that responsibility on a daily basis. As you know, we work 24/7, a schedule that includes weekends and holidays and rolls forward through the calendar. It takes us two months of rotation to get a few weeks of weekends off, and three years to get one year of major holidays off. Unfortunately, prior administrations never truly appreciated the depth of services we provide, nor the level to which they encompass.

I started with this department in 1993. 2013 will be my twentieth year of service. Prior to my arrival, a former administration saddled us with X days in exchange for taking us off an unhealthy rotational three shift schedule that included midnights. These are six days a year that fall on our three day off acclamation swing that we work for free. A six day week. And it's not unheard of to have your X day fall on a major holiday. They told us then that we work less than the average County employee and had to pay back those days. That's not true. And in many years since, we've continually averaged more days per year than the average employee. Subsequent administrations have subjected us to doing more with less, which brings us before you today.

We are currently so short that each day that I go into work it is uppermost in my mind that I may be mandated to stay, hence performing a 12 hour shift, regardless of any other obligations in my life, family or otherwise. We all volunteer for overtime within our capabilities to try and mitigate the mandate burden, but it's not always possible.

I want to express my thanks to my department for all that they're trying to accomplish on our behalf under the present circumstances. For the health, safety and well-being of our unit, as well as the public, please address our issues and get us the manpower we need in order that we may continue to provide them and the Police Officers we dispatch to with the highest levels of service just as we always have.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you, Deborah. And there's one question from Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you. Thank you for coming here today, Deb. I guess when I first got into office I -- myself, I think Legislator Browning, were you there, Kara?

LEG. HAHN:

(Nodded yes).

LEG. GREGORY:

You were there? Legislator Eddington. We went to the 911 Operators, we looked at the operation. We saw there was an issue with the software at the time. We saw the Dispatchers and it was a whole issue. The former County Executive and the PBA kind of battling back and forth on response times and stuff like that. So I'm somewhat familiar with the operations. And I knew there was a shortage back then and there has been for some time now.

I'm just a little more curious as to what the issues are. We started receiving these e-mails that first seemed to just -- well, we're not essential, so we can't get ahead in line to get gas so we can get to work. And then I don't know if it kind of morphed into something else. I got an e-mail on

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Thanksgiving day, which was a little disturbing, but I'm just trying to clarify what are the issues as you see them. Is it just about gas, is it just about we want to be given due consideration that we're essential employees, that we do, you know, important work, which you absolutely do. The previous speaker did speak about vacancies. I'm aware of those. Is it about that, is it about being overworked, not, you know, not enough, you know, Dispatchers? Is it about being designated as essential? What's the issue? Or issues.

MS. MC KEE:

Andrea spoke very well to what the real issue is here, and it is staffing. Yesterday I went in at noon for overtime before my regular four-to-twelve. I got out at midnight last night. I'm here this morning. I'm going in at noon again today before my regular shift, and I will work four-to-twelve this evening. And I do it as often as I can because I know that if I don't, the next person in line may have -- they may not feel well enough to do 12 hours, so we're trying to help each other as much as we can. That stresses people out.

Was gas an issue during that brief period of time? For some people it may have been. For me it wasn't. I filled the tank before the storm and I prepared to sit in line if I needed to afterwards, and I didn't do any non-essential driving, because I got the depth and the scope of what was going on in our world for those days. Whether or not we're essential, we know we're essential. We need the County to recognize that these positions have to be filled because it's now becoming a health issue up there. If you were to check with supervision, you would find out that, you know, back in 2007 I spoke to you about heart attacks. We've had more since then. We've had people come down with cancer. Is it directly stress related? Ask a doctor. I'm not a doctor. We need staffing.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you. Kara.

LEG. HAHN:

Thank you for all that do you. I've seen it. You know, when you call 911, you know how important you are at the other end. Your calm, your collectiveness, your ability to handle the stress of the individual calling, all of that. Your time off and your ability to recoup is so critical to your ability on the phones as well. And it's very, very frustrating to hear what seems to me like an overall, in some ways almost lack of respect, and that is -- we got to change that. And I don't know, I wonder how many of you are women?

MS. MC KEE:

That's a good question. I've never actually done a head count. But I think that if you look into what it is we do, how we do it, and the scheduling that's in place, especially with regard to those X days, what you just said hits the nail on the head. We need those days off to recoup to go back in. I don't look to do overtime on my days off, because those are my recharge days, hence the 12-hour day yesterday and the 12-hour day today, and perhaps tomorrow as well. When I leave there, I need to get back to being me.

LEG. HAHN:

We know how important that is in all of the public safety fields that we have here at the County, and in so many in responding to individuals in crisis puts yourself in crisis as an individual in the ways that your body needs to react to, or automatically reacts to in ways that are detrimental to it. And so recognizing, of course, in a storm you're going to have to work a 20 -- you know that, you know that kind of thing. But it shouldn't be an ongoing pressure and stress on your life that you're always working this extra time and can't even expect free time for yourself. And so I think we do need to take this seriously and I think we're all here to hear the presentation.

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I don't want to, you know, go on any more until -- and I'll ask questions when that's done. But thank you for all that you do. And I know how important it is to our residents that call and ask for the very professional services that our Police Department provide, that our firefighters provide, and you're that very first point of contact and how you respond and are able to get from an individual calling in the emergency situation the very critical pieces of information that the Police Officer will need, the firefighter will need. It's so important and it's critical to how we provide our first response. So thank you.

MS. MC KEE:

Thanks.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Kate, can I?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you, Deborah. Okay, John.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Can I follow-up on what Kara said? We really do need to have this presentation, but Legislator Hahn hit on a very important point I think and one that you brought up, about the percentage of your operators and Dispatchers that are women. And in particular, you know, just to kind of add to what Legislator Hahn talked about, being a spouse of a night nurse, there has been research, and certainly Dr. Spencer can confirm that, that there's a higher incidence of breast cancer with night workers, that employees, which is typical and you see in, you know, health care and other types of placements. So absolutely, positively I'm concerned.

You usually do not hear about mandated overtime unless you're talking about somebody like a nurse on a floor, like my daughter or wife are. But this is something where there's a human toll, and obviously we're going to need to hear about what's going on with the overtime, because, you know, there's that point where you look at the cost associated with filling a position and bringing on another person in straight salary is substantially less than the OT, and it's disingenuous not to hire because of this notion about benefits, and that's the line we always hear, *it's cheaper to run OT because you don't have another set of benefits*. But it's not a proper way to operate. I would be interested to hear about the numbers in both those categories of women employees. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Thank you, Deborah.

(The following was transcribed by Lucia Braaten, Court Stenographer)

So we will move on with the presentation. And so, Mike and Suzanne, if you would like to come forward. And I don't know if there's anyone else that you have that you need to bring up with you. So we have Mike Finland, Executive Vice President of AME, and Suzanne McBride, who is President of the Police Emergency Unit. Suzanne -- is it Suzanne or Susan?

MS. MC BRIDE:

Suzanne.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

I thought so. Okay. I knew -- so, if you would like to go ahead and begin whenever you're ready.

MR. FINLAND:

Okay. Good morning, everyone. I thank you for your time. My name is Michael Finland and I'm Executive Vice President from Suffolk County AME.

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From a historical perspective, the genesis of the Suffolk County Police Department, as you all well know, occurred January 1st, 1960. Through the past 52 years, Suffolk County government has grown dramatically in tandem with the population expansion in our municipality.

County government has responded appropriately in addressing the needs of our residents as we have grown. Our points and purpose in speaking to this committee today is to hone in on a unique and specific issue which is occurring within the Police Emergency Unit of the Suffolk County Police Department. There currently exists a three-tiered fragmentation of that unit.

First of all, you would have the 911 Division, which is comprised of Emergency Complaint Operators, or ECOs. These individuals deal with a plethora of incoming calls on a 24/7 basis. Most frequently, they are dealing with life and death situations, which call for swift and decisive action on behalf of the ECO taking the call. The gamut of calls can run from the sublime, for an example, a cat stuck in a tree, to extremely serious situations, such as a multiple car accident, a bank robbery in progress, a heart attack victim, or a host of problematic issues related to a storm or hurricane occurrence.

The second component of police emergency encompasses the Public Safety Dispatchers. These are the employees who will ultimately decide and interact with the police officer who will respond to a specific call. If you were to survey Police Department operations in the Communications Bureau, you would witness the vast array of electronic data and programs which is at the disposal of the Police Department support staff.

I worked in the Communications Bureau 30 years ago when the unit was located here in Hauppauge, right next door to the Suffolk County Legislature. When I think of the equipment, and computers, and technology that people used back then, Communications Bureau was reminiscent of the old police television programs from the 1960s, and I'm dating myself here, such as Adam-12 or Dragnet. My point is this, we've come a long way in the technology department.

The third component of the Communications Bureau is the Teletype Unit. This section interacts with other police agencies throughout New York State, and also communicates with police agencies in all 50 states in the United States. Courtesy of INTERPOL in Washington D.C., Teletype can also interact with various international police departments around the globe. This unit, too, is a 24-hour operation, and the lion's share of their work must be completed in a time-is-of-the-essence fashion. For example, if a vehicle is stolen out of Suffolk County, an alarm is placed in our computer database, and if that same vehicle should be recovered in another state, that jurisdiction will reach out to us and seek an advisory as to the disposition of the vehicle. When they forward an e-mail to the Suffolk County Police Department, the Police Operations Aide on duty at the Teletype Unit has essentially a 15-minute time frame to respond to e-mail. The same policy would apply in other situations.

In a hypothetical situation, let's say a warrant is issued for the arrest of a John Q. Public for the charge of Robbery Third Degree. This warrant is electronically entered into the computer by the Police Operations Aides, and if another Police Department takes this individual into custody, that Police Department sends an e-mail to the Suffolk County Police Department and inquires as to extradition information. The Police Operations Aide then receives this e-mail -- that receives this e-mail, rather, has a 15-minute time frame to respond to the e-mail. These are just two examples of the types of alarms that POAs would be handling.

When I worked in this unit many years back, the total unit staffing stood at 15 employees. Five were assigned to each shift, five to midnight tour, five to eight-to-four tour, and five to four-to-twelve. Now, due to retirements, promotions and gradual staff reduction, there are five people which collectively comprise this unit.

Our County has grown, and with that, the demand for services has grown as well. It is exceedingly difficult to maintain optimal timely contact with other police jurisdictions if we do not have the

sufficient staffing to do the job.

During my tenure at the Police Department, I was involved in an independent entity known as the Civilian Awards Committee. Each year during Police Week in May, civilian employees from various divisions of the Police Department would be cited and honored for their outstanding achievements during the normal course of their duties. Each year the majority of the nominees and ultimately recipients of this award would be employees affiliated with the Police Emergency Unit. This is not to undermine the work or contributions of the other civilian employees of the Police Department, but, rather, it points out the extreme life-saving endeavors that these workers encounter and definitely deal with on a regular basis.

I will be having others briefly share their encounters as to what a typical workday would entail in the Unit. I want the Legislators to understand firsthand the life-and-death situations that these workers must face on a daily basis around the clock. In addition to the stress of the job, they must contend with mandated overtime situations. It has been brought to my attention, as you have already heard, that on a typical five-day work week, a unit employee may be facing mandated overtime during three of their five-day work weeks. The actual number could at peak times actually exceed what I have just stated to you.

We recently experienced a unique and exceptional weather phenomenon in the form of Hurricane Sandy. There were many components involved as we prepared, endured, and then lived with the after effects of that storm. But at the very core, at the heart line of this event, you had your committed Police Emergency workers doing the best job possible in the face of this natural disaster. They never skipped a beat and performed their job with the utmost of professionalism.

Aside from the staffing issue, there was also a problem with regards to the 852-COPS phone number, which has been publicly touted as an alternative resource point of contact for the general public. This number is to be strictly used for non-emergency situations. It has been brought to my attention that there was a staffing issue, per se, regarding this phone line. It is staffed by Communications Bureau personnel, Public Safety Dispatchers and Emergency Complaint Operators. So, in reality, it is not an entirely separate entity from the 911 function.

My purpose here today is this: I'm not here to criticize anyone, to institute a blame game, or to fault anyone with regard to this problem. I, along with my fellow County workers, are fully aware of the budgetary issues that the County faces in these dire fiscal times. I am respectfully requesting that, by whatever means possible, we build up the staffing in this unit. We are providing a vital service to the public, and for future large-scale emergency situations, and we know that they will occur, we need to be ready and armed with the appropriate staffing to handle the situation, whatever that may be.

I thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. At this juncture, I will introduce Suzanne McBride, a Public Safety Dispatcher I, and the Unit President for Police Emergency.

MS. MC BRIDE:

I want to thank you all for giving us this opportunity today to speak to you. I do have a PowerPoint presentation that I think will answer some of the questions that Mr. Kennedy was asking. Before I start that, however, I would like to answer that question.

You asked about men versus women. We have approximately 139 employees. Out of those 139, 27 of them are men.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay. And I'll be eager because I'm wanting to -- well, I need to know the function and the titles and the numbers of personnel in each one of those.

MS. MC BRIDE:

I do break that down.

LEG. KENNEDY:

I'm trying to struggle a little bit to hear that as well, but thank you. So it's a hundred and --

MS. MC BRIDE:

We have approximately 139, and 27 are men.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay.

MS. MC BRIDE:

And I did that math quickly, so --

LEG. KENNEDY:

Thank you.

MS. MC BRIDE:

-- I might be off by one or two, but I believe that's close to being accurate.

LEG. KENNEDY:

A hundred and thirty-nine total, 27 men. Thank you.

MS. MC BRIDE:

I have one other thing I'd like to mention before I get into my presentation. Legislator Kennedy, you also happened to mention about high incidents of breast cancer with night shift workers.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Yes.

MS. MC BRIDE:

There is one aspect I did not cover in my presentation. The County offers breast screening time, as well as --

LEG. KENNEDY:

Prostate.

MS. MC BRIDE:

Prostate, thank you, for men. My midnight personnel are not entitled to that time. We've been fighting for that time for several years. They are denied that time constantly. While my two-tour rotating people are entitled to that time, my midnight people are told they are not, they don't matter as much.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay. Well, Madam Chair, after this is done, we're going to get an opportunity to speak with Deputy Inspector Nieves, I assume.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Absolutely.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN BROWNING:

I would like her to go ahead with the presentation.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Sure. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

And then we'll continue questions afterwards.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Thank you.

MS. MC BRIDE:

We're just going to switch so I can do the PowerPoint. As we were discussing before, some of my members have already mentioned, the 911 Center has different job titles. We have 24 call-taking stations; they're set up into four pods of six work stations. For Dispatchers, we have eight stations, one for each of the seven precincts, and one additional to cover the Highway and Special Patrol functions. We have four backup dispatch stations that we activate in need of emergencies, such as hostage situations, pursuits, other major incidents, as well as parades. And if one of our main terminals goes down, we use those as backups. We consist of two floor supervisors, we have two duty office stations, and then we have the Teletype Office, which has two work stations for our teletype operators, the switchboard station and a supervisor station.

We have eight separate job titles. We have Public Safety Dispatch I, we have Public Safety Dispatch II, which is a Floor Supervisor, Public Safety Dispatch III, which is the Duty Office Supervisor, we have the Emergency Complaint Operators who take your calls, we have Spanish-Speaking Emergency Complaint Operators, which also take your calls, as well as those of our Spanish-speaking population. We have Police Operations Aides, who are teletype operators. We have a Senior Police Operation Aide, who is our Teletype Supervisor, and we have in budget a switchboard operator.

Our members work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. We work days, nights, weekends and holidays. We primarily work a five-day-on-two-day-off/five-day-on-three-day-off rotation. It's either rotating two-tour, meaning one week you work eight to four and the next week you work four to twelve, or steady midnight tour. Every two months our employees are required to work an extra day for free. That means we work six days on, two days off.

As you can see here, this is a chart of our budgeted versus actually filled positions. For the PSD function, we're budgeted for 68; we currently have 55 that are filled. We have four people out on extended leave. That means there's 17 positions that are not helping us meet minimum staffing. Our other drastic numbers are 58 ECO operators. Those are Emergency Complaint Operators. We budgeted for 58, we have 51. We have four more of those on extended leave, so we have 11 who aren't there to help us when we need them.

As you can see, our PO Operators, we're supposed to have nine, we have six. As Michael said earlier, there used to be 15 in the budget. They're still doing the same job, in fact, they do more.

Our PO Operators on the midnight tour have the responsibilities that are usually Detective's responsibilities during the day tour. We don't have a switchboard operator; we're budgeted for two, we have none. We have no Senior POA. There is no supervisor in the Teletype function, she retired and has never been replaced. And our supervisors, the PSD III, which replaced the Duty Officer, which was the Sergeants. There used to be at one point 13 of them. They budgeted for 11 PSD III's to replace them; we were only ever given nine. There was just not enough people to promote to fill those positions.

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Our PSD II's, they handle floor supervision, as well as tape search function for the DA's Office. If a case goes to court, they need to pull tapes to play in court. We're supposed to be budgeted for 12, we're down to eight. We used to have three that did tape search, we now have one. We used to have two that handled the administration function in the back office, such as budgeting, time sheets, things like that. We have none back there. As you can see, we're extremely low.

In order to fill one of these positions, it takes the County quite some time to get them actually filled and up and running where they're functioning as a full-fledged operator. You have to successfully pass a civil service test, which usually takes a year-plus to put out the announcement, give the test, get the results. They have to canvas to see who actually wants the job after all that time, then we have to do training. For Dispatcher, it takes six to twelve months to get an actual full-fledged Dispatcher who can be good at their job. For ECOs and POAs, it takes approximately two to four months. They have to learn a complex computer system, they have to go through customer service training, and they have to go through NYSPIN certification, which means they have to learn how to run data, warrant checks, missing persons, drivers license, vehicles, all of that information.

Our Dispatchers have to be able to handle 17 to 23 sector cars in each precinct, monitor numerous tracking systems, such as the ShotSpotter, which I'm sure you're all familiar with, as well as some other ones that I don't want to go into details on. They have to be able to coordinate with other agencies, and our call-takers and our Dispatchers have to be able to calm frantic callers. We have to be prepared for any emergency at any time.

Our responsibilities are to answer 911 calls, to answer 852 calls. We answer the general calls to the Police Department, there's a switchboard, because when we have no switchboard operator, it either goes to our POAs and Teletype or to our 911 Operators. We dispatch the emergency calls to sector cars, we monitor their status, keep them safe. We log all pertinent information for the police officers to use for their reports and possible prosecution of criminals. We provide a lifeline of safety to the officers on the road. We assist the officers on the road with wanted person checks, criminal history checks, missing person reports, stolen vehicle information and more. We also log the homeless sex offender locations on a daily basis.

There was a resolution put forth by the Legislators that all homeless sex offenders had to register with the Police Department their location every night. That duty has fallen to my supervisors, my PSD II's. The phone is at their desk and it's their responsibility to log every night. The phone rings continuously, taking them away from their duties of Supervisor of the Communications Section.

We have to coordinate with other agencies, such as the MTA, Nassau County Police, FBI, Homeland Security, FAA, State Police, and that's just to name a few. As I mentioned, we provide the tape recordings of 911 calls and Dispatch to use in court, and many other items. As I mentioned, our Dispatchers are a lifeline to police on the roads. It's not just our opinion, these items were taken from ABCO's website. That is the opinion of many officers; without us, they wouldn't be out there.

Michael had mentioned 852-COPS earlier. If you go on Suffolk County's Police website, it clearly states that 852-COPS is the Suffolk County Police Department's non-emergency telephone number to be used to report incidents requiring a police response. 852-COPS has become the non-emergency information line for Suffolk County. Any time anything's going on in the County, many of the news organizations are giving out 852-COPS as the number to call for information. We're not an information line. We've never been trained to give the information, we don't have the information. This is creating quite a hostile exchange between some of the citizens of this County and our operators. The citizens don't understand why they're being told, "Call 852-COPS for information." "Why don't you idiots have that information? I've been told to call you."

Public safety communication professionals have evolved over the years into a very skilled profession, but the recognition of this evolution has not kept. The ability of these professionals to adapt to the ever-changing situations and technology speaks volumes to the knowledge, skills and abilities

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required to fill the position. In the past 30 years, public safety communications has so vastly changed, seeing the introduction of technology to perform daily duties. Basic requirements to the public safety telecommunicator started with a phone, radio, pencil and paper, and now have become complex.

When many of our employees started, we started with a red pen, a black pen, and a CC card, is what we called them. You filled in a little information, you sent it on a belt, and it went on its way across the room. After a few years, we got a computer system that was basically one screen, had four little boxes, and we worked off of that up until 2011. Now our ECO Operators, Emergency Complaint Operators, use three screens. They have one for the phone, they have one to enter their information on, and they have a whole mapping system. Our dispatch side of the room, we started with a little box and a radio. We'd put the cards in those boxes and each one signified a police car, and that's how we kept track of our calls. Then we went to the one computer screen, and that worked for years. Now we have six computer screens. We have to actively monitor five of them on a continuous basis. The sixth one is our radio, which we also have to monitor, because the officers can hit an emergency key and let us know they're in trouble on their radio, and it pops up red and it beeps in your ear, and we have to figure out who they are and hope that we can find them; all this while using three key boards -- two key boards. Two key boards?

MS. LANG:

Two keyboards.

MS. MC BRIDE:

Two key boards, three mice, a foot pedal and a phone. You'd be hard-pressed to find another profession which has experienced such changes in required learning curves as public safety telecommunicators, yet our profession folds into obscurity, the invisible component of public safety. How many children dress up to be a public safety telecommunicator for Halloween? What would the costume even look like?

When the public calls 911, they expect to reach the Fire or Police Department. There isn't much thought into who answers the calls or what personal sacrifice; it's just the fact it will be answered and help will be sent. It's not only that the public is not aware, but also local governance fails to recognize the critical nature of the job and the profession. Without this awareness, how can we ensure the proper staffing and training?

These call-takers and Dispatchers are frontline individuals, taking, processing and providing dispatch services. Education about the duties of these members within the public realm, the public safety profession and the Legislative level is essential. When the public dials 911, their calls come into Suffolk County Police Department 911 Center. It's answered by one of our ECOs or one of our Dispatchers who take the information and enter it into the computer. Dispatchers will then dispatch the call to a sector car, monitor radio traffic, and ensure the situation is controlled after the officer's arrival. If after taking the initial information rescue or fire is needed, the ECO or Dispatcher then transfers the call to the FRES Dispatch Department, but our operator remains on the line to determine if further police assistance is needed.

If you've called up and you're saying you're being beaten up, we're going to transfer you to Rescue as quickly as possible to make sure you get the medical needs you need. But we're going to stay on the line so that when rescue is done taking your information, we can ask questions about who attacked you, so that we can help the Police Department find that person.

At times, our ECO needs to act as an interpreter between the public and FRES, helping to give vital medical information and instructions. A perfect case in point for this is we had -- first day we went online with our new system, one of our operators was taking an active maternity call. The woman on the other end of the phone spoke only Spanish. Our operator transferred her to FRES, stayed on the line, translated FRES' directions on how to deliver that baby, and that baby was born, to my

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knowledge, healthy, safe, and sound, thanks to the teamwork of both departments.

Oftentimes calls come into our 911 Center and are quickly disconnected, leaving the ECO and PSD to use whatever available data they can to find the location to send help. A lot of times in domestic disputes somebody disconnects the phone, they don't want the police to come, people are too ill to talk. Our operators use whatever resources they can. They don't just hang up and go on to the next call. They stay with that call and exhaust every possible resource to get help to those people.

Our members have helped to catch bank robbers by staying on the phone with witnesses, getting detailed descriptions. We had one bank robbery, the witness watched the person that robbed the bank go into the bushes, change their clothes, and come back out. Our operator kept the witness on the line, got that information from them, all while keeping the caller safe. At one point, the caller started talking about landscaping and trees while on the line with our operator. Our operator knew that meant that he was so close to that bank robber that he didn't want the bank robber to know that he was on the phone with 911. Our operator continued to ask questions, the caller continued to answer like they were talking about trimming trees, and they managed to catch that person and he was arrested.

Our operators have helped apprehend a subject wanted for kidnapping. They've helped stroke victims who couldn't speak when they needed help. They helped return a missing elderly man to his family. That one you may all recall, it actually made the newspaper. One of our operators, on their way home actually found the person as she was driving home; she had taken a call from earlier in the night. We don't just leave our job when we walk out the doors.

Our operators have been the first point of contact for officer-involved shootings in other jurisdictions, and they made sure that that officer got the help that they needed in the other jurisdiction. We've also been the comforting voice as a mother loses or struggles to save their young child. Many of our operators are on the line listening to those struggles day in and day out, and it's heart-breaking.

Our members have also physically stepped up to save the lives of several people at Police Headquarters. We had a 14-year-old son of a Detective who had a heart issue. Our members used a defibrillator on him and saved his life. We had a female employee down in Central Records who went out to her car one day to leave -- to go to home and collapsed inside her car. Our members managed to save her as well. They pulled her out of her car, they used a defibrillator, and they called for help. They also came to the aid of a woman down in the lobby having a seizure. They're dedicated to the communities and their jobs.

Here you'll see staffing levels. This is a chart of our basic staffing day in and day out. Monday to Friday, we basically have between 13 and 8 operators working the phones. Saturday and Sunday, it's 13 to 10 operators working the phones. Our average for Dispatchers runs between 12 and 11, depending on the time of day. One thing that this chart doesn't take into consideration is that while some of those numbers there are listed as being Dispatchers, they're also over answering your phone calls, because we just can't answer all those phone calls with just 13 to 8 operators. We need to throw a few extra people on the phone, which takes away from our break people for our Dispatchers. Our Dispatchers can't get up and walk away from their console any time they want, it's one-for-one relief. You can't even go use the restroom without having someone come and sit in your seat.

This is a chart that shows the mandated overtime that Andrea and Debbie were speaking of earlier. All those times where people thought they were coming into work to work eight hours, and suddenly they were told, "No, you're not going home today, you're doing another four." As you can see, back in 2001, there were very few. And the reason this chart starts in 2001 is because before that, no one had ever heard of mandated overtime. I was actually the first Dispatcher to be mandated back in 2001. Since then, as you can see, we've gone up a bit. These past two years, it's off the charts.

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We've had over 600 mandated positions of overtime. That means 600 times our employees were told they have to stay, they can't go home to their families. This includes holidays, weekends, birthdays, graduations. Any special event, it doesn't matter, we have to stay, it's our job.

The graph doesn't take into account the supervisory positions, which are also mandated to stay, but it's so often, they don't even keep track, nor does it keep track of our POAs in Teletype, who you have six people on staff to cover a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week, 365-day-a-year position, with two people required per each day tour as a minimum. You can't do that with six people, it's impossible. It also does not take into account the thousands of hours that our members volunteer to do overtime, where people say, "Yes, I'm here, I'm willing to do it, I'll come in early, I'll stay late." It doesn't take into account the thousands of times that our members are told that they're not getting a meal today, "You're not going on your meal. You'll be lucky to get your two 15-minute breaks."

My members worked through the storm. They were mandated in on their day off, they got no meals, they got no breaks. They were told, "Run to the ladies room and come back," for 12 hours.

This is a breakdown by position, PSDs being our Dispatchers, ECOs being our call-takers. As you can see, our Dispatchers have been hurting the past two years. Our ECOs are too, but our Dispatchers are feeling a little more pain. This is simply just by -- we work in a squad system. We have three-day shift squads, we have three midnight squads that overlap each other. This just gives you an idea of how frequently each squad was mandated to stay. The numbers were just staggering. As I sat and went over these, again, this is just breaking it down by midnights and two-tour.

If our centers are not prepared to handle the day-to-day normal traffic, how are we going to be able to continue to handle events like Sandy or the possibility of terrorist attacks? We just can't do it. The men and women of 911 Center exemplified dedication and support to their community during Super Storm Sandy. They left behind their families and homes to report to work in the height of the storm. Some of these members lived in areas that were devastated by the storm and lost nearly everything they owned. Many went without electric, heat and hot water, just like the general public did, but they still showed up for work. They faced mandated overtime when they got there. They left their families behind in cold, dark houses. They struggled to find gas to make it to work, but they did. They handled tens of thousands of calls during and after the storm, ensuring that residents of the Suffolk County had a place to turn during this devastating time.

Our members were at work receiving text messages from their families that trees were falling on their houses, on their cars, that their homes were flooding. They couldn't even take five minutes off of the phone to go and to respond and to check to make sure everyone was safe. They were too busy taking calls of someone being stuck on their roof with their home flooding, and hoping that they could get that person help, but, yet, knowing that their own family could be in jeopardy at the same time.

We all took this job knowing in an emergency we would be called upon to do just what we did, be there for our friends, neighbors and our loved ones, answering their calls for help, putting in long hours, and sacrificing time away from our family. We also knew when we took this job that we work nights, weekends, holidays. The fine residents of Suffolk County count on us to be there 24/7, 365 days a year. However, we didn't anticipate when we took these jobs that our lives would be routinely and constantly disrupted. Our sacrifices of time away from our families because of mandated overtime and mandated missed meals, required just to ensure the phones get answered and the calls get dispatched. Some of our members have worked 911 for over 25 years. In the first 20 years they never heard of a mandate, now it's an everyday occurrence.

When I started with the department 15 years ago, the Lieutenant that did my interview said to me, "It's a stressful job. If you get a hot call, we understand. We expect you to get up, take a walk around the building, catch your breath, walk it off." It's not an easy job to listen to the mother

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trying to breathe life into a dying child, or family fights and horrific accidents, and gunshots in your ear and not be touched by it. Now, because of budget numbers, there isn't time for our members to catch their breath. It's become necessary for them to become robotic, taking one stressful call after another. Eventually, the wear will show, the safety of the public and the police officers we serve will be in jeopardy.

Recently, March of 2012, there was a study released by a -- the Department of Psychology in North Illinois University that shows public safety Dispatchers suffer from PTSD. The members of 911 are there to help the residents of Suffolk County during some of the worst times of their lives. They deserve the respect and support of their community, their elected officials, their commanding officers, and their supervisors. They deserve someone looking out for their health and safety, not just during such devastating storms, but year-round. These members have sacrificed for years without speaking out.

We know that times are tough in Suffolk County. We've gone above and beyond, doing much more with much less to ensure the public gets the help it needs, because we know all too well the next call on that phone could be one of our loved ones, our friends, or our neighbors. We urge the County to immediately begin to fill some of the vacant positions in the Police Department of Public Safety I, II, and III, Emergency Complaint Operator, and Spanish-speaking Complaint Operator, and Police Operations Aide and Senior Police Operations Aide. We ask to develop a comprehensive emergency response plan that includes the telecommunicators of the 911 Center. We're asking you to hear our call for help and to take action to ensure we can provide the finest service to the residents of Suffolk County, as we have been for years.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Thank you, Suzanne.

(The following was transcribed by Kim Castiglione, Legislative Secretary)

I think that was an excellent presentation. And I think it's good that we all are reminded about what you do. Because I think sometimes you are taken for granted. You know, we have had the conversation and I worked 911, which was 999 in Ireland, and definitely it was no comparison, and we didn't do that service all the time. You didn't do it every day all day, because then you have the stress. And when it comes to being an essential service, I know you are. I know that we were considered essential when I did the job. When we got a bomb scare in our building, and it happened very often in Belfast, but we weren't allowed to leave the building.

MS. MC BRIDE:

We're not either.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

When we got a bomb scare in the building, we had to stay. So it's the same for you guys?

MS. MC BRIDE:

We've worked through many bomb scares. We've worked through fires in the building, we've worked through no power in the building. We're not evacuated. The message goes over the loudspeakers, we can hear it, "Everyone evacuate, everyone except communications".

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Right, because you're the one that got the call for that scare or that fire. So I think to say that you're not an essential service, you absolutely are. I know that there was a lot of back and forth. I contacted the County Executive's Office over the gas issue. It was, you know, the Deputy's understanding that you were getting gas. I don't know where the disconnect was, but thank God it's not a problem today. And hopefully it won't happen again, but when it does -- if it ever does happen again, I think that you should definitely be on that list of essential services if we have that

gas, type of gas crisis again.

You know, there's a couple of things that you brought up that I have -- I have some serious concerns with, and I know that we have a representative from the Police Department, I thought we did from the County Executive's Office also, on the budgeted, I know there's budgeted positions. But the 852-6000 number, when we call Police Headquarters, and I don't know if you'd like to come up, Mr. Nieves, and respond to some of these. That was at one time I had called that number to call for the Police Commissioner, and then I found out that it went to a 911 Operator to respond to, and I said I'll never call that number again. I want direct numbers because it's wrong for me to call 852-6000 for Police Headquarters and take away the time from a 911 Operator. And I -- you know, I do see when I walk into Police Headquarters there are some employees who sit at a front desk. And I think like any other department, why wouldn't they be the people responding to that 852-6000 number?

And the other thing that I have a question about is, especially during the storm, the number of press releases and press conferences saying call 852-COPS for information. And to find out that they don't know anything about that press release or that press conference, if we're going to be saying to people on television call 852-COPS, shouldn't they be advised ahead of time you're going to start getting calls for this issue and to respond? Can you answer them, two of those?

DEPUTY INSPECTOR NIEVES:

Good morning, Madam Chair and Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee. I'm Deputy Inspector Ted Nieves, Executive Officer of the Office of the Chief of Department.

Before I answer your question, ma'am, I just want to say that the entire civilian staff in the Police Department, and especially our employees in communications, did exemplary work during the recent crisis and should be recognized for that. And our communication employees day-to-day do exemplary work. I'm glad that Mike and Suzanne have delineated their duties clearly so anyone who wasn't aware before this, is now aware of what they do day-to-day and their key function in the Police Department. And they deserve accolades as much as anyone else, as I said, especially during the recent crisis.

As to your question specifically, the first one concerning the people at the front desk, the 852-6000. The equipment to properly handle those calls that come in are up in the Communication Center. That's where we have our switchboard and so that's where the calls come into for general information. It's true, when we have to reorganize staffing in order to ensure that 911 calls are answered, and that there are sufficient Dispatchers to get those calls out to the Police Officers, that those calls may be routed to 911 Operators.

As to your second question with reference to the 852-COPS and the information distributed, that's a similar situation, especially during the storm. Once again, as you can imagine, during that crisis staffing the 911 system was the -- was the goal, to ensure that it was properly staffed and that the dispatch section was properly staffed. So it's true that those calls may have gone -- did go to the 911 Operators to answer. And yes, it's probably also true that they may not have had all the information at their fingertips.

Once again, a crisis situation like that, as everyone here is aware, is very fluid and sometimes you're playing catch up with some of your procedures as you're seeing the incident unfold. As Legislator Kennedy pointed out, we're going to obviously review our procedures and take a look at how we operated during that time in order to improve in the future in similar situations.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Well, I still think it's something that should be looked at, you know, because here at the Legislature we have a front desk here that receives calls if nobody's answering the calls back here. I don't think it would be that complicated to put in a couple of extra phone lines at Police

Headquarters at the front desk. So I think that's something that should be looked at. Either that or get a switchboard operator, or two, which is what I think you probably need. You know, at least for the time period that the headquarters is open, which is I guess what, eight to four, nine to five? I don't know. But at least have somebody working the switchboard so they're specifically answering that.

And, you know, I spoke with Suzanne about the 852-COPS, and I think, you know, we had talked about why 911 Operators would be answering 852-COPS. You're not an information service, you're an emergency service. And you did tell me that there are sometimes people call 852-COPS and it really does become an emergency, it really is an emergency and they're afraid that they're calling the wrong number. So I -- you know, in your opinion, do you think 852-COPS should stay?

MS. MC BRIDE:

In my opinion, as the Police Department advertises it on their website, 852-COPS is for calls for a non-emergency police response, and for that purpose, it's perfect. But the County, in my opinion, needs another number that's for informational purposes during a storm that doesn't come into the 911 center, or if it does, that we have dedicated spots that answer that and are given the information to provide, so that it's not distracting from the call-takers answering those emergency life and death calls. It just adds stress to our call-takers to have to deal with callers who are looking for information that unfortunately we don't have, we can't provide.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. I think this is a budget question, would be, I believe there -- how many positions are budgeted for 911 currently?

MR. ORTIZ:

There are 154 authorized positions for ECOs and Dispatchers.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. And what do you currently have?

MR. ORTIZ:

The last time I checked, which was in September, there are 28 vacancies or 18%.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Okay. Do we have that many budgeted? Okay. Which -- how do we pay for that? Is that General Fund or is that out of the Police District?

MR. ORTIZ:

That comes out of the Fund 102, which is the 911 Fund.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. So we have 20 -- and I don't know if you can respond to this, but do we have a test list currently existing for these positions? And do you know of any plan in the near future to sign any SCIN forms to start hiring?

DEPUTY INSPECTOR NIEVES:

That I wouldn't know, ma'am. That is handled by Civil Service and the County Executive's Office.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. You have not been informed. And I know there was a representative here.

LEG. HAHN:

Tom Vaughn is here.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Is he here? Tom's here? Oh, he's hiding. Tom, if you could get back to us with an answer on, you know, I don't know if you have the information if any SCIN forms are being signed, and let us know if there is and when.

MR. VAUGHN:

Absolutely. And if it's possible, Ms. McBride, could I also have a copy of your presentation? I would really like the opportunity to kind of take a look at it and see if there's other concerns that we can address.

If you don't mind, Legislator Browning, the one thing that I would say is, Ms. McBride, you went through a list of things that you deserve at the end of the presentation. I certainly think that one thing that you left off that list that you deserve is a thank you, because you and your members do an outstanding job, and I certainly think that is something that you deserve as well.

I can tell you, Legislator Browning, that I got an e-mail from Budget while I was sitting here concerning the SCINs. I don't have -- I didn't understand quite what it meant, which is why I don't really want to provide any more detail other than to say that I did receive an e-mail from Budget about the state of the SCINs and we will see what we can do to get you more clear information on that.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Because there's 28 budgeted unfilled positions.

MR. VAUGHN:

Yes, ma'am.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

I think, you know, when we look at those numbers, I think it's serious.

MR. VAUGHN:

Sure.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

I just think when you're putting these people under so much stress, and I know what it was like, I've done that job, and I didn't have to do it for an eight hour period. And so, you know, when you get that type of a call, like Suzanne said, you know, a mother who's losing her child, or, you know, a serious accident, you know, you do need time to break away. I mean, talk to your Police Officer when he is on a call like that. Yeah, they have to respond, but sometimes they get time out to -- you know, if they're involved in a shooting. They don't go right back on the job. They get taken away and there's a time out period. You know, these people don't get that. And, you know, I think out of fairness, they should be treated appropriately.

I do want to know when those SCIN forms are going to be signed, because even if they were signed for January 1st, you're talking June or July before that person is even ready to start working and do the job.

MR. VAUGHN:

Absolutely. And I will do my best to get you that information as soon as possible.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Thank you.

MS. MC BRIDE:

May I ask one question? I'm sorry. We have one member who had left us early last year who has

been looking to come back. He's fully trained, ready to go basically once he hits that seat. But he's awaiting a SCIN to be signed for him to return. Can we also look into that and maybe try and speed that process? At least one more body will take a little tiny bit of that pain.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Well, if you can share that information with Mr. Vaughn, I think that might be a good start.

MR. VAUGHN:

Be happy to.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Legislator Calarco.

LEG. CALARCO:

Thank you very much. And, Suzanne, thank you for being here today. I know you're a constituent of mine, and I appreciate everything you do for the County and the work that the 911 -- the whole 911 office does for us. I have quite a number of constituents who work in the department in that unit. I just had a couple of kind of specific questions. How many people left your unit as a result of the Early Retirement Incentive Program?

MS. MC BRIDE:

I believe -- with this last retirement incentive I believe we lost seven.

LEG. CALARCO:

Seven.

MS. MC BRIDE:

Seven.

LEG. CALARCO:

Okay. Yeah, that's quite a high number when you're talking 28 vacancies. Seven of them came from the early retirement incentive. That was one of the issues that I had brought up at the time the program was being discussed, was losing vital employees and making sure that we replace them. And in fact, I know that one of my colleagues has a resolution that would abolish five of those positions. So I'm asking that those get removed from that resolution.

For Budget Review, do we have the funds available to rehire those positions if we wanted to through the budget?

MR. ORTIZ:

In our review of the 2013 recommended budget, one of the very, very few areas that permanent salaries were actually included for vacant positions was for 911 Operators, and that was noted in our review that the equivalent of eight full-time positions could be hired, which is probably more between 12 and 15 over the course of the year.

LEG. CALARCO:

Great. So we could replace those people who left through early retirement and then maybe a few extra.

MR. ORTIZ:

Correct.

LEG. CALARCO:

Would that help, Ms. McBride?

MS. MC BRIDE:

Every person that you can hire would help.

LEG. CALARCO:

Okay. So it looks like we're at least trying to make some progress toward filling this gap, because I understand it's a heavy workload you have there. It is very trying. Is there a lot of turnover in the 911 Unit? Do you get a lot of people who just kind of come in for a few months and find that it's just too hard or too difficult?

MS. MC BRIDE:

We do have quite a large turnover. We have approximately -- maybe half of our personnel have been there for 15 years or more, the rest of them are fairly newer. One of the problems that I foresee in the future is our job was never one of the most attractive jobs for people to take. It became less attractive back in 2006 when the County negotiated that all new hires had to work a 40-hour work week before they were paid overtime. Our members are mandated to work overtime and getting paid straight pay. It's not really something that a lot of people want to do.

Now, on top of that, when you hire after January 1st, our new members will have to pay 15% of their health insurance and be mandated at straight time. I foresee that once people come in, start talking to some of our old timers and hearing what life's been like for the past few years, that they're going to quickly pack up, turn around and walk out that door and never to be seen again.

LEG. CALARCO:

Yeah, that's the concern, and it's hard when it takes as many months as it does to train somebody to become an Operator or a Dispatcher and then to have that person leave shortly thereafter because of the difficulty of the burden that the job places on you, it's difficult for us. So it's something we need to make sure we take care of. And I'm sure the pay doesn't help that process either.

MS. MC BRIDE:

No, not particularly.

LEG. CALARCO:

Okay. I think that's all the questions I had. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Kara.

LEG. HAHN:

Bear with me. I think I have like seven different areas I want to cover here.

First, this is sort of towards Budget Review, but also a combination, and because I'm new, I think I know the answer, but I'm going to ask it. We have budgeted positions that are not filled, so the money is in the budget.

MR. ORTIZ:

Not always. A lot of vacant positions --

LEG. HAHN:

Because they brought up the chart and it says, "Okay, here's budgeted positions." So, what does that mean?

MR. ORTIZ:

A budgeted position can either have funding included to fill it or it can be included in turnover savings, which means it's anticipated not to be filled. So with the 28 vacancies, there's enough

money to fill eight of them for a full year. The rest of the money goes into turnover savings.

LEG. HAHN:

Okay. So we're waiting on SCIN forms being signed. So somebody said the County Executive and the Police Department were doing everything they can on this, but we have eight positions that are vacant with budgeted money behind it and this is happening, and they're not being signed.

MR. ORTIZ:

Well, that funding is included for -- no, for 2013.

LEG. HAHN:

Okay. So there's not like an immediate hire that can happen without an amendment to the budget?

MR. ORTIZ:

There probably is some funds available for 12 because of the amount of attrition that has occurred over the course of the year.

LEG. HAHN:

Okay.

MR. ORTIZ:

Which meant that there is money included for a full year's salary, but somebody left, so somebody could be replaced.

LEG. HAHN:

Right. No, I understand that. So there is forms that could be signed tomorrow for people who are ready, have taken the test, qualified, able to work this job, but we just haven't done it, or not we, but someone just hasn't done it.

MR. ORTIZ:

The County in general is not backfilling many positions at this time.

LEG. HAHN:

Right, but this, come on. This, come on, is more vague, not to you. This is an essential job where people can't leave the building when the freaking fire alarm goes off and we're not backfilling those jobs is what I'm being told here? That people have to work -- I'm sorry. I don't get this way. People have to work three overtime shifts out of five a week and you're telling me that we can't backfill those eight jobs when we have the money? This is ridiculous. This is unacceptable. Not you, John.

*(*Laughter*)*

LEG. HAHN:

This is something that clearly I'm not sure how aware they are, but hopefully, somebody heard that. So the mandated overtime situation, they're facing three out of five shifts. So talk to me about what that means. Does that really mean that three times a week you're told you have to stay for an extra four hours?

MS. Mc BRIDE:

At least, yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

At least.

LEG. HAHN:

Holy shit.

MS. MC BRIDE:

I'm sorry, that doesn't include --

LEG. HAHN:

I didn't say that, take that back.

*(*Laughter*)*

Strike that from the record.

MS. Mc BRIDE:

I could volunteer to work all of my days off, come in and work two days of overtime, and then still be told that I'm being mandated for three days because we are that short-staffed. And if I could, one of the things that we had asked for, I believe, back in 2008 when Debbie McKee had come to this body and asked for help, they had asked for renewable or reusable SCINs so that when a position was empty, when somebody left, that it could be automatically filled and it didn't have to go through this process. My understanding is, and I could be wrong, that that is in place in the Sheriff's Department for their Dispatchers, and it may be in place --

LEG. HAHN:

Is Counsel here?

MS. MC BRIDE:

-- for FRES for their Dispatchers. We all do the same job, but to my knowledge --

LEG. HAHN:

How do we make that happen? Does that require Legislative action to make these renewable SCINs?

MS. MC BRIDE:

I don't know the details.

LEG. HAHN:

Does anybody know? Is that what we did for the Sheriff's Department or what we did for -- since Counsel is not here.

LEG. KENNEDY:

We can't make him sign, but we can pass something that basically prioritizes it. We've got an agreement with DSS.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

We'll get George to comment on that when he gets back.

LEG. HAHN:

George -- here he comes in. So is there a Legislative action that can happen to mandate that these are kind of -- some of these are renewable positions?

MR. NOLAN:

The positions -- I wasn't listening.

LEG. HAHN:

That's okay. 911 Operators. We have like a renewable filling of some other offices, such as what

was it you said, correction, Sheriff's Department and some other --

LEG. KENNEDY:
DSS.

LEG. HAHN:
DSS, where, you know, it's kind of automatically renewed. Is that a Legislative action that we can take?

MR. NOLAN:
I mean, if you want to change the way that vacant positions are filled so that you wouldn't need the County Executive to sign a SCIN form in order to get the position filled?

LEG. HAHN:
Yeah.

MR. NOLAN:
You could do that. We did something similar with the elected officials a year or two ago, where those positions, vacancies -- there was a different process for filling vacancies in those departments.

LEG. HAHN:
I think we need to think about that here. Now --

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Hold on. So it's kind of like we have the backfill on CPS.

LEG. HAHN:
I think so. Because the toll on the worker, I mean, look, the storm, you guys know, I mean, you expect that.

MS. MC BRIDE:
We fully expect, yes.

LEG. HAHN:
You expect in a blizzard you're going to work a long time. But it becomes so much harder when you have to do it every week three times a week, and then on top of that, you've got the 25 hour storm that you're working, you know, or longer. This went on for like 48 -- however. So, you know, it's one thing to say, you know, we worked long hours and didn't get a break during a storm. It's another thing to say we do it every freaking week three times a week and then now there's a storm that makes us have to do it triple amount of time, and all that pressure from what everyone was experiencing and your families, etcetera, etcetera. So that -- you know, this is really concerning to me. And I'm going to go quickly through my others.

The 852-COPS. Look, I mean, obviously if we were properly staffed those calls that the Operators got could be kind of some relief time because they're -- but we're not properly staffed. So to like burden them with that as well and not -- and not have an information line, we really have to be thinking about this as we're giving it out to News 12 and to Newsday and on every flier that goes out, clearly. I know, I know the cops on the street and the -- you know, the Lieutenant's here, totally appreciate everything you do for them, as I did -- took ride-alongs, you know, they're back and forth with the Dispatchers and I know there's the appreciation there. So this is just a systematic thing that we've got to solve.

The midnight personnel not entitled to the time off for the breast cancer screening. Hello. Okay. We're going to have to deal with that, too. That's just ridiculous. I don't know. Can the Lieutenant comment on that?

DEPUTY INSPECTOR NIEVES:

Actually, as I understand it, if the test takes place during the tour, the agreement was then they will get the time back. That's how I understand it was set up.

LEG. HAHN:

So, how that -- how does that affect the person who's working the midnight shift who needs to sleep in the daylight shift when the tests are given, okay? You've got to remember what happens here. Just because they're not working when the test is going to be given, they need -- their sleep time is when the tests are given. So you're making them interrupt their sleeping hours in order to take the test and you're saying but that doesn't count to give you some time off, right? Is that the issue here?

MS. MC BRIDE:

Yes, yes.

LEG. HAHN:

Okay. So, we got to work -- that's not right. We got to work that out. And, hopefully, we can talk about how to make that possible, but, clearly, it comes down back to staffing, I'm sure. This is all about the staffing, which is insufficient.

Five. The gasoline. Enough said. We -- you know, they're essential, they can't leave the building when the fire alarm goes off, we're going to hopefully work out for the next storm, because there's going to be a next one, we're hopefully going to work out beforehand a clear understanding of who gets what when, so that everybody knows, knows what to expect, reminded to fill up their tank before the storm, whatever. You know, whatever, but I don't think you need to respond, but I just wanted to bring that up, because I made the calls in response to your e-mails.

DEPUTY INSPECTOR NIEVES:

Well, I just wanted to say --

LEG. HAHN:

Okay. Go ahead.

DEPUTY INSPECTOR NIEVES:

If I may. I was in charge of the Emergency Police Operation Center the night of the storm, and what we did do was if a Dispatcher or a 911 Operator could not -- did not have transportation, we sent police vehicles to bring them to and from the dispatch center.

LEG. HAHN:

And that's what I had always heard, in a blizzard we go pick up the 911 Operators, we make sure they get -- I mean, there's no more essential services than these people, but, you know, to mark them as non-essential on day four, you know, it's that stupid stuff that happens that just -- it shouldn't, it shouldn't. It shouldn't. And here we are, you know, you said we established the Police Department in 1960. By now we should know that, you know, please don't disrespect these folks who their job is essential and critical and we all know that. We don't need to repeat that six times and I'm sorry. I'm trying -- switchboard I talked about. The -- I think obviously their Comprehensive Emergency Response Plan is what we just got to. So how many are left on the test and the search takes a year, six to 12 months of training. So are we --

MS. MC BRIDE:

There is a current list for both, for all positions. However, if I remember correctly, they expire this coming year. I know they're planning on giving a new test. I believe it's in March. I don't have exact dates. I'm not sure if that information is 100% accurate, but I was told by a friend in Civil Service they're working on a test for March. The current list does have quite a few people still on it and it expires some time in the spring, I believe.

LEG. HAHN:

Okay. So we need to make sure that that's ready for filling what we hopefully are going to be filling, make sure that we have enough and timely. That's a long time. You know, we need to be thinking and planning way in advance to make sure we have enough people on that list.

I think I got to everything. I thank you and I'm sorry that I, you know, went a little nutty there, but this clearly, I was not aware of the extremity of it. I had visited the center when the new -- it was like right after those new --

MS. MC BRIDE:

New computer system last year?

LEG. HAHN:

-- computer system came up and I'm very impressed with all that you do and I thank you. As a social worker I know how important that -- that's the Jack Eddington thing -- I know how important your calm is to the person on the other line, and you are critical to them. You're our inner -- our day-to-day interaction with our residents who are in crisis, and sometimes, like you said, it's devastating what they're going through. And it's devastating to you to hear it. And you said it, that presentation was phenomenal. I think you really did a great job. And I think every one of us here, you know, have always recognized what you do, but it was just reinforced again today. So thank you.

MS. MC BRIDE:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Legislator Spencer.

LEG. SPENCER:

Thank you. I had three brief things. One is that it's definitely well documented and we should have something built in when you're exposed to stressful situations, like someone doing CPR for their infant. And I could tell you, as a health care professional, an airway specialist, that if I'm in a situation where there's a code, we lose a child, as a physician, I know that I have to step back and take time to debrief.

I wanted to ask, is there any -- you indicated that there isn't any decompression time. Are there any counselors available, grief counselors or anything that employees have access to? What I mean by that, it would make sense that in terms of preserving productivity that if there was an event that you dealt with someone and there was a loss of life, that there should be a kind of like a debrief that you have, where you have an opportunity to go in and at least speak with someone and then just really talk about how it's impacting you. And it doesn't have to be a long period of time, but is there any mechanisms or support mechanisms in place?

MS. MC BRIDE:

Well, we can always reach out to the Employee Assistance Center on our own time if we feel the need. There has been one or two instances where we've had major events, one of them that I can recall off the top of my head was the loss of Officer Ciano. They did take some of our Dispatchers and operators who were involved in that particular incident on duty and took them and let them speak to the employee assistance counselors. But as a regular course of procedure, no. It's not there for the infant who passed away while you were on the phone or the other traumatic events we deal with, no.

LEG. SPENCER:

Well, that's something I think that I would suggest that we work on that should be readily available and not on your own time. And I think that in the long run, we would kind of preserve your

emotional and mental health and would actually create more productivity. So if we have to do that by legislation or working with the Executive's Office, or with your superiors, then we should do that.

The second thing was when you indicated the volume of calls that come in. Is there any sort of buffer where if there are non-essential calls -- I know, for instance, in the City I think it's the 311 Program, where, especially during a storm, if people call the County, is there any sort of automated system where it gives out kind of essential information that can be customized based on a storm or something like that, that would cut down some of those calls that are coming in?

MS. MC BRIDE:

To my knowledge, I don't know. I'm sure it's probably something that could be programmed, but I don't know if it's used that way at this time.

LEG. SPENCER:

That's an idea maybe we can work on. That doesn't even require more manpower -- I think you need more staffing. I support that 100%, but that may be some way to create a buffer with some of the volume of calls that come in. And the technology is there, I don't think there would be a lot of expense to maybe put something like that. Maybe we can work together and also do something like that.

And lastly, you mentioned that there are employees that are currently not working that would like to work. And I -- this Legislature did pass legislation as we were making those very difficult decisions in the spring. I sponsored legislation that would give first priority to County employees who have been separated to be given first preference in terms of return. So I hope that that law is being followed. So, anyway, thank you for what you do, and that's all that I have.

MS. MC BRIDE:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Legislator Kennedy.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you for being here and for giving us this presentation, and I'm going to ask if you'll forward me a copy of that PowerPoint.

MS. MC BRIDE:

Certainly.

LEG. HAHN:

It should be online. It should be on your T-drive.

LEG. KENNEDY:

I found it pretty interesting, actually interesting is an understatement. I have questions that really go back and forth between the two of you. And I appreciate my colleague's passion on this issue. As a matter of fact, Legislator Hahn sounds like the indignant minority here.

*(*Laughter*)*

But let's go first to Deputy Inspector Nieves. I think I know the answer to this question already, but I just want to make sure. I need to start this from the very beginning. Is the civilian employees of the Police Department, who do they report to? Who signs their time sheets?

DEPUTY INSPECTOR NIEVES:

I'm not sure. You mean their immediate supervisor?

LEG. KENNEDY:

Well, ultimately, who are they -- the supervisors there for this unit, for these multiple things, report to whom? Whom -- what sworn officer oversees them if that's the way the chain of command works?

DEPUTY INSPECTOR NIEVES:

Well, there's a shift Lieutenant who reports to the Captain, the Commanding Officer of the Communications and Records Bureau. That Captain reports to the Chief of Support Services.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Chief of Support Services. Okay. So that's -- if I'm going to be having a conversation about this whole function here, that's the Chief that I should be speaking with? Is that Chief Meehan?

DEPUTY INSPECTOR NIEVES:

No, sir. That's Chief Mark White.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Chief White, okay. Sure, I know him. Great. All right. Let me go first to -- because I think it's the simplest one to go ahead and clear up. The issue about the cancer screening. You gentlemen work with code and State law all the time. You're skilled in it, you're trained in it, you're very familiar with it. When I look at Section 935 of the Suffolk County Administrative Code, it says nothing about daytime or scheduled time for receipt of the cancer screenings. Gus Mantia never schedules a prostate exam for me at three o'clock in the morning. I would assume that for these employees to avail themselves of what is County law, and also I'm going to direct you to Section 159B of New York State Civil Service Law. It's unequivocal that they are entitled to receive the time associated with those cancer screenings.

So I'm going to ask you to take a look at those sections, or whoever is responsible for their time. And if they feel there's ambiguity, I'll be happy, along with my colleagues I'm sure, to sponsor the resolution that clarifies that our County employees, whether it's here or anyplace else, who want to avail themselves of that medical opportunity, don't do so or don't get denied that opportunity to do so. It's just -- it's incredulous that a night shift worker would be somehow not availed the same opportunity that their colleague, evening or day shift workers, would have. Can you do that? Or can you have whoever it is in your unit look at those sections of statute and then get back to me and let me know?

DEPUTY INSPECTOR NIEVES:

Yes, sir. As I understand it, the agreement was reviewed by Labor Relations. So -- but I can absolutely have that reviewed, take a look at the agreement and see how it -- how it corresponds to the Administrative Code that you've laid out.

LEG. KENNEDY:

I'm asking you to work with me here. And I will be happy, if you were directed somehow through Labor Relations, then again it may very well be necessary for us to introduce a resolution to clarify that. Because, quite frankly, the statutes are crystal clear. There's no ambiguity, nothing that references time of day, day of week, month of the year or anything like that at all. It says very clearly employees shall. So I would appreciate that if you could go through that and look at it.

I couldn't have heard this properly, but I'm going to ask it again. This goes to Ms. McBride and then, Inspector, I think it will come back to you. Did you say that you're mandated to work overtime and that overtime is at straight salary?

MS. MC BRIDE:

For our employees who are hired after, I believe it was July of 2006, they are mandated to work overtime and it is at straight pay up until they reach 40 hours.

LEG. KENNEDY:

That's in NFLSA, okay. But if you go over 40 hours then you're at time-and-a-half.

MS. MC BRIDE:

If you go over 40 then time-and-a-half. But we work a 35-hour week, so they're mandated to work the first five hours. And with our schedules, because of the way we rotate, sometimes our work week isn't always Monday to Sunday, so it can at times go over that five hours. And if you've taken a day off for vacation the way our schedules are.

LEG. KENNEDY:

No doubt about that, I mean, particularly when you deal with shift folks, you do get into different types of intricacies associated with that. I just wanted to make sure we weren't, you know, breaching like, you know, Federal requirements or State requirements. Over 40 hours you are getting time-and-a-half.

MS. MC BRIDE:

We do have another issue that we are currently working on with AME, where those six extra days a year that I mentioned that we have to work free? We do work over 40 hours and we're not paid for the time over 40 hours at all.

LEG. KENNEDY:

I will talk with you, because that one, when I heard it, it mystified me, too. I mean, it just -- it defies logic. But I'm going to have to talk with you a little bit. I don't want to keep my colleagues, we still have an agenda to go through. Like everybody else said here, we appreciate what you do.

But my last question was a broader question for you, and it's almost like a rhetorical question, but something that I'm going to need to speak with Chief White about and maybe the Commissioner. When was the last time that this function was looked at for the purposes of a qualitative or quantitative review? I mean, it sounds like they're operating, you know, at an entry level of 32 grand, you know, at the level of an extremely, highly complex, multi, you know, informational function, and for the life of me, I can't follow where the call comes in, how it goes out, and ultimately to whom it gets to.

They do a great job doing it, but I would defy anybody to go ahead and say that there is -- that's an optimal method of function there. It just -- it doesn't make sense. And especially when she talked about that red button, where they're following your officer that's going into a hot spot, and they got to answer a phone call about a barking dog? That's lunacy, that's absolute lunacy. So I will ask Chief White to please call my office so we can talk about when this was last reviewed or how we can start the process now so that they can do their job. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you. Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you. Thank you for coming here today. Excuse me. I know there was several, several people have brought up about calls that are received, but I think in addition to 852-COPS calls, from my recollection, my visit, and I stated this, there was a Newsday reporter when we went, I said you guys are really acting like switchboard operators. Because not only do you take the emergency calls, you take 852-COPS calls, you're actually taking calls, interdepartment calls for people making long distance, which is absolutely ludicrous. So it's not barking dogs, it's, you know, someone in Economic Development has to call someone in New Jersey and you guys make the long distance connection. So that even further takes you away from your critical duties.

You've stated your case very well today. You're obviously advocating for more positions, not less. I would encourage you to attend the Government Operations meeting today. There's a bill, 1911,

that calls for elimination of five positions, I believe, in Emergency Operations or Communications, that may be of interest to you. So I would advise you to take a look at that. Okay? But that's all that I have.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Legislator D'Amaro.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yes, thank you. Ms. McBride, excellent presentation. And also, Mr. Finland, excellent job. Very important matter. I want to just hit on a couple of areas. Most of my colleagues have asked all the questions, so I'm not going to take a lot of time this morning. But I wanted to ask you, I was concerned, obviously we have a staffing problem from your perspective. You made the statement, you know, if we can't deal with the day-to-day, how do we deal with emergency. So is it your belief today that in the event of a real emergency striking Suffolk County, we're just not prepared?

MS. MC BRIDE:

I believe that this past storm stretched us to our absolute limits. Had it gone on any longer, had we had worse flooding than what we had, I think the 911 system would have been in a very critical point, because we just -- we don't have the manpower.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Can you just speak into the microphone?

MS. MC BRIDE:

I'm sorry.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Thank you.

MS. MC BRIDE:

We just don't have the manpower. We have 24 phone positions that can be manned. On a normal basis we only man approximately 13 of them. During the storm, we try and man every single one. We had people, as I mentioned, who worked 12 hours who got very, very, very limited breaks, because there just wasn't any manpower to facilitate those, and we know those phones have to get answered. If that had continued and went on for another day, another two days, those people just would have been collapsing exhausted. There's no way mentally or physically that you can continue at that pace for an extended period of time.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And because of the training involved, you can't just take a warm body from anywhere and plug them in in an emergency situation.

MS. MC BRIDE:

No. There are programs throughout the State throughout the country. I believe it's called a CERT Program where you can work with other outside agencies and they're able to send in reinforcement who can work the system, that are trained in similar systems, who can come in and help. I don't know if that's anything that our department has ever investigated, would be interested in investigating. It was my understanding, and again, I'm not sure if I have my facts 100% accurate, but I did hear that there were some people from other jurisdictions brought in to either FRES or EOC to help them answer some of their phones during their storm. It might be something to look into in the future for 911, because if we are faced with any huge storms, I mean, Sandy was a bad storm, but if I understand she wasn't even a category 1 when she hit. Anything worse and, yeah, I'm concerned that when my family needs to call 911 it won't be there for them.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yeah, and of course there are other types of emergencies that could occur that would mandate the same type of services needed, and I'm very concerned about the County's ability to at least keep up with the demand during an emergency situation. It's extremely important that we look at that. You had during your PowerPoint presentation a chart that showed budgeted positions as opposed to what's actually filled. I'd like to get a copy of that.

MS. MC BRIDE:

Certainly.

LEG. D'AMARO:

If possible, you can e-mail it to me, or the presentation if it's in e-mail form if you could send that to me I'd appreciate that. But I wanted to ask, just bear with me for one moment, I want to ask Budget Review, John, I know you've already stated that there are eight funded positions available in the 2013 Operating Budget.

MR. ORTIZ:

Correct.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Is that accurate?

MR. ORTIZ:

(Nodded yes).

LEG. D'AMARO:

All right. Is it also accurate that seven left from the early retirement?

MR. ORTIZ:

I would have to check that.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. So of the eight funded positions that are available, which positions are they?

MR. ORTIZ:

Well, it wasn't specifically stated in the Operating Budget, just the amount of permanent salaries that were included were enough to fill -- the ECOs starting salary is just under 33,000, and a Public Safety Dispatcher is just over 36,000, so I did on the math and I figured there was enough money for eight of those positions to be filled for a full year or as many as 16 for a half a year.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. What's that total dollar amount, please?

MR. ORTIZ:

I believe it was about \$250,000.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. What did the County spend in 2012, or whatever year you have available, in overtime for this unit?

MR. ORTIZ:

In 12 the estimated amount of overtime, but this was before Sandy hit, was about a half a million dollars. It would probably be quite a bit more than that in overtime. In 11, we were closer to 800,000 for the year.

LEG. D'AMARO:

So the overtime, as shown on the charts during the presentation, has been going up over the years.

MR. ORTIZ:

The last two years have -- the overtime has been almost successive because of the amount of positions that have not been backfilled.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Ms. McBride, if the County were to fill those eight positions, and I know it's never enough given the vital role and function of the Emergency Unit, would that relieve the overtime need, or would that simply make an intolerable situation slightly more tolerable?

MS. MC BRIDE:

It would make it much more tolerable.

LEG. D'AMARO:

You need to use the mic.

MS. MC BRIDE:

I'm sorry. It would make it much more tolerable, depending on how you filled those positions. If you were to fill those for positions with eight Dispatchers, eight PSDs, that would alleviate a lot of the pain because our Dispatchers, as one of my members pointed out, we do both job functions. We can also do the teletype function. So that would give the County a lot more flexibility, rather than hiring a POA who can only do a teletype function or handling an Emergency Complaint Operator who can only answer the phones. Our Dispatchers are trained or -- and can be trained to do all three functions. Up until recently our Dispatchers were not trained in the teletype function. Recently the department has begun training some of us to do the teletype function. That would probably be your best expenditure of money. It would give the department the most flexibility and help us out.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Just reiterate that for me. You're talking about the Public Safety Dispatchers.

MS. MC BRIDE:

The Public Safety Dispatchers. We are the most versatile of the three job titles that I mentioned because we can cover the other two job titles. It's considered to be part of our job function.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. What is the current staffing there on the Dispatchers?

MS. MC BRIDE:

For the Dispatchers we currently have 55 according to my numbers, and we're supposed to be budgeted for 68.

LEG. D'AMARO:

All right. And if we did go to the eight additional that's already included in the budget, you feel that that would help somewhat at least in addressing the emergency situation as well; is that correct?

MS. MC BRIDE:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

It would?

MS. MC BRIDE:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

That's vitally important. We seem to be spending ample amount in overtime. It would seem to make eminent sense that, and I'm not a budget expert, but I would defer to my Budget Review Office and to the County Budget Office as well, if you hire the eight or maybe even more, and I think Legislator Kennedy was dealing with this before and earlier, you reach a point where you're eliminating overtime. So it may just simply be more cost effective or it may not. I don't know how that plays out.

The problem is you have to eliminate the overtime because these folks are just simply overworked. And although even if it's somewhat more costly to hire on a full-time basis, you're just going to get the service and keep the folks in the unit operating at maximum efficiency, which is probably the number one concern that we have, especially during emergency situations. I mean, I don't want to downplay the day-to-day. The day-to-day is vitally important as you've described at length here today. But residents of Suffolk County during an emergency deserve that response. It's just, you know, I think everyone would agree with that. And we have to make sure right now while we're not really in crisis mode, that if a crisis situation hits, that we're prepared to deal with that.

So I look forward to hearing, Madam Chair, from the County Executive's Office as soon as conveniently possible about what the intention may be with the funded positions, and then we can have a discussion above and beyond that as well. So I want to thank you and all of you for your presentation today. Very informative. And most importantly, I want to thank all of the employees that work in the Emergency Unit for a fine job well done. And you have our attention and we'll do whatever we can to try and help you. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you. I did have one last question, and I think you can answer it a little bit with -- when you talked about the Dispatchers being able to do the other functions. And you know, when you have an employee coming in, you know, sometimes it's good for them to be able to move around, and not have to be stuck on the same function all day. I -- you know, I'm just curious with the Performance Management Team, and having them come in and sit down with you as employees, not with anyone else, but to sit down with the employees and say how can you do your job better. And I think that they could tell you how they could do it better. Maybe it would reduce the stress, maybe eliminate some of that overtime, but when I'm looking at \$800,000 in overtime and it's what did you say, \$250,000 for eight employees, I'd say if you hired 16, you're still saving money. So it just seems to make sense like Legislator D'Amaro said. It just makes sense to hire 16 employees, and you know, bring them in and you'll save on the overtime. You know, it's simple math, I think.

But I do think, I don't know if Mr. Vaughn is still sitting over there, but I would like to also make a request that the Performance Management Team start looking at working with you to see what they can do to help you, because you know your job, you've been doing it long enough, and you know how it could be done more efficiently, maybe to create less stress for the employees. So I'll definitely be making a request that they sit down and speak with you.

Again, I think your presentation was phenomenal. I couldn't ask for a better presentation. It certainly opened a lot of eyes here. So I don't think anybody here can say that they don't support what you do. We're very thankful for what you do. And we will definitely be looking to the County Executive to get SCIN forms signed, because we know it's going to be six months before you're going to get anybody working.

So, again, thank you. Thank you to the 911 Operators. I know I'm going to be paying you a visit in a couple of days. So I look forward to coming and seeing you. And like I say, especially after the storm, you know, we can't say enough thank you's for everything that you guys have done.

MS. MC BRIDE:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

With that, I see we have -- Mike. I'm drawing a blank on your title, Deputy Sheriffs Department. Do you have anything you'd like to report? Do you have anything new on the jail?

CHIEF SHARKEY:

No.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

No new information on the jail.

CHIEF SHARKEY:

(Shook head no).

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. And Deputy Inspector Nieves, do you have anything new, additional, you need to add?

DEPUTY INSPECTOR NIEVES:

No.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Commissioner Williams was going to -- he did contact me. As many of you know, there's still a lot of work going on at FRES, so he is unable to attend, and that's completely understandable. Dr. Marmo is here, I believe. Is there anything?

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Dr. Marmo was here, but he had to leave.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

He just left. Does Probation have anything that they need to report or comment on?

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

No.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Did I miss anybody?

LEG. HAHN:

Can we make sure Probation, somebody from Probation is here next time?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Sure. So Patrice, can we, I guess next committee meeting, if someone could make sure they're here for the next committee meeting, that would be great. Okay. So with that, we'll go to the agenda.

TABLED RESOLUTIONS

Okay. ***1943 - Directing the Suffolk County Police Department to offer drug treatment referrals to individuals receiving Narcan (Hahn).***

LEG. HAHN:

I am going to make a motion to table for one more cycle. We've got some really great input. I met with Dr. Coyne and Jeff Reynolds and we're going to tweak it just a little bit. So I just need

one cycle for that.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

So motion to table. I'll --

LEG. CALARCO:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Oh, okay. Second, Legislator Calarco. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? It's tabled. **(Vote: Tabled 7-0-0-0)**

LEG. HAHN:

I do have to say the Narcan, the 911 Operators also know which cars have it, you know, which sector car operators have been trained. That's another thing they got to know. It's really, you know, again, they do so much and I just wanted to point that out. So thank you. In addition we added that to what you have to do but we appreciate it because it is saving lives, over 20 already. So, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. **2014 - Directing the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to study the effectiveness of the County's Alternative to Incarceration Programs (Hahn).** Motion?

LEG. HAHN:

Yes. I would like to make a motion to table one more cycle. Kate, you and I met with Errol and we are still working on this. So if you don't mind, a motion to table.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

No problem. I'll second that. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? It's tabled. **(Vote: Tabled 7-0-0-0)**

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

Introductory Resolutions, **2086 - Extending the Narcan Pilot Program to the entire Police District (Spencer).**

LEG. SPENCER:

I would like to make a motion to approve, and I have some information on the motion.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. There's a motion to approve. A second, Legislator D'Amaro. And you have something?

LEG. SPENCER:

Sure. On the motion, I just -- this is cosponsored by myself and Legislator Hahn, and just out of the respect, I mean this Narcan program has been absolutely phenomenal. Lives have been saved. And I know that after the -- initially the pilot program was supposed to be over a two year period of time and then that information would be reviewed I guess at the State level in terms of looking at training requirements and -- but when you have something that is saving lives and it's in a pilot program, and we see this done all the time in scientific studies, if you have someone that's receiving a potential treatment, someone that's receiving a placebo and you find that the potential treatment is actually saving lives, then you don't wait. And so I applaud Legislator Hahn. I appreciate her letting me bring this forward together. And we need to get this out to the entire district and we will continue to report to the -- I think was it Bob Delagi, Lora?

MS. GELLERSTEIN:

(Nodded yes).

LEG. SPENCER:

Who we have spoken and we are working. We need to get this throughout Suffolk County, and we need to do it right away. So that's what this resolution does. So that's why I would like us to move this if we could.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Kara.

LEG. HAHN:

Yes. I would -- thank you, Dr. Spencer, for recognizing the success of this. I'd like to thank our Police Officers, our -- you know, Dr. Coyne, and their willingness, and their -- just the implementation, just, you know, how excited they were and how quickly they got this up and running, and it is saving so many lives already. And the potential is there to save so many more. And I just -- I want to thank everybody here, the colleagues that have been so supportive of the program and I'm looking -- you know, there clearly is this epidemic going on, and these lives are being saved, and we need to commit also to work together to get more -- you know, save as many as we can but also get them the treatment they need. And thank you, Dr. Spencer.

You know, it's funny, the Commissioner, the Police Commissioner called me up and said, "You know, I was a little skeptical, I thought maybe we'd have two saves a year." He was like, "I can't even believe it with over 20." It's been an amazing success. So thank you so much, and thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Legislator Kennedy.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Doctor, you hit the nail on the head, and it has been something -- actually, from what I've heard, when you look at all of the vollies in the different areas that are involved, it's almost 39 lives at this point.

I would like to go on as a cosponsor. My only question to you is I saw the fiscal impact statement. The list of the departments that were chosen to become involved in the expanded program -- I'll ask the question two ways. How do I get some of my local departments on, or how did you select those ones that are in the list of the fiscal impact statement?

LEG. SPENCER:

Well, the Narcan administration does require a certain level of training or --

LEG. KENNEDY:

AEMT is I think at least, right?

LEG. SPENCER:

Right, to be able to do it. And I think we were looking at those departments that would readily have that expertise kind of available to expand it sooner. But I think that -- is there someone here who could also address that question?

LEG. KENNEDY:

You know what, I can contact Delagi, I guess, over in Health. I'm almost positive Nesconset sent an AEMT level, I see Nissequogue is on the list. So, you know, as many departments as we can get on I think are beneficial. They must -- there's an allocation of doses. I read the fiscal impact statement, about what 300, 350 doses, I believe.

LEG. SPENCER:

Yes.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay. So I'll talk to Delagi. But definitely, you know, you're right, there's no reason to wait. We need to move it.

LEG. HAHN:

Can you expand a little bit? I'm sorry. John, do you mind telling us a little bit about the Fiscal Impact Statement? I didn't see that and I'd like to understand what went into that.

MR. ORTIZ:

To be brief, this is a pilot program by the State Department of Health. They gave us 335 doses, which the EMS Department -- Division of our Department of Health then distributed amongst 23 different police, fire, and ambulance companies. Out of the 335, 119 went to the Police Department, the Suffolk Police. And then I believe EMS is holding onto about 30 doses, but we have a very limited supply right now.

LEG. HAHN:

But this costs \$3, \$5 a dose?

MR. ORTIZ:

Twenty-two dollars a dose.

LEG. HAHN:

Twenty-two, okay. I was told this is the nasal aspirator, right?

MR. ORTIZ:

Correct.

LEG. SPENCER:

We're not getting the best price.

LEG. HAHN:

Right.

LEG. SPENCER:

It shouldn't cost \$22 a dose.

LEG. HAHN:

I think that's true, because I've been --

LEG. SPENCER:

That's the government price.

MR. ORTIZ:

We didn't pay anything for it, it was given to us by the State. We haven't asked the State if there's more supply available.

LEG. HAHN:

Okay. We should do that. But, also, we're talking very minimal cost for a life-saving item that -- remind me its shelf life, I mean, we're not talking about something that expires really quick, if I'm right.

LEG. SPENCER:

I think the shelf life is about two years, but I'm not sure.

LEG. HAHN:

Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. So we had a motion to approve and a second. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? It's approved. **(Vote: Approved 7-0-0-0)**

2088 - Adopting Local Law No. 2012, A Local Law to set minimum safety standards for recreational boats in Suffolk County (Spencer). Motion to table for public hearing.

LEG. SPENCER:

Motion to table -- second the motion.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Second, Legislator Spencer. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? It's tabled for public hearing. **(Vote: Tabled for Public Hearing 7-0-0-0)**

2150 - Accepting and appropriating a grant providing 75% support, in the amount of \$400,219, from the United States Department of Homeland Security, and amending the 2012 Capital Budget and Program in connection with the purchase of marine and helicopter equipment (CP 3513) (Co. Exec.). I'll make that motion to approve; second by Legislator Calarco. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? It's approved. **(Vote: Approved 7-0-0-0)**

With that, we have no more on the agenda, so I'll make a motion to adjourn; second, Legislator Calarco. We are adjourned.

(*THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 11:33 A.M. *)