

PUBLIC WORKS & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

A regular meeting of the Public Works & Transportation 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 January 27, 2009.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Legislator Brian Beedenbender, Chairman
Legislator Steve Stern, Vice Chair
Legislator Wayne R. Horsley
Legislator Daniel P. Losquadro
Legislator Edward P. Romaine

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

George Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature
Lance Reinheimer, Assistant Director of Budget Review Office
Kevin Duffy, Budget Review Office
Rosalind Gazes, Budget Review Office
Robert Doering, Budget Review Office
Gil Anderson, Commissioner of Department of Public Works
Kaitlin Boyd, Aide to Leg. Beedenbender
Barbara LoMoriello, Deputy Clerk
Ben Zwirn, Deputy County Executive
Deborah Harris, Aide to Leg. Stern
Debra Alloncius, AME Legislative Director
All Other Interested Parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Kraus, Court Stenographer

THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 2:06 PM

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Since we have a presentation to start, Legislator Stern could lead us in the pledge, please?

SALUTATION

Okay, welcome everybody to the first Public Works Committee meeting of 2009. What we're going to start with today, I asked the Commissioner of Public Works, I made a request about a week or two ago for him to come down and have a discussion with this Committee about the status of the Suffolk County fleet.

If you review the committee jurisdiction, the fleet does fall under Public Works and Transportation so I've asked him just to share with us some information, the age of the fleet, the size of the fleet, the breakdown in terms of hybrid diesel, gas, whatever else for power, Flintstones, whatever the power we're using at this point just so we have an overview. And I have a few questions as I'm sure other Legislators will have a few questions as well.

So, Gil, if you could just take five, ten minutes, whatever you need to just share with us the information about the fleet.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

To be frank with you, I really didn't expect -- I didn't look at the agenda to see the first thing.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Well, we called like two weeks ago.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

I know, I realize that. That's my fault. But I'll give you what information I know at the present time.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

All right. Well, you know what? This isn't pressing. And I'd hate to have to do it twice, so, Gil --

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Yes. Next time I will be ready.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

We can do this next time?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

All right. So with that, then, we'll skip over that. And we're going to move to the agenda.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Moving right along.

TABLED RESOLUTIONS

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Yes. I guess this means, though, I definitely don't have a car waiting for my outside.

To the tabled resolutions, **IR 1710, authorizing a GPS pilot program in the Department of Public Works. (Romaine)** I will offer a motion to table. Gentlemen? Do we have a second on the motion to table? Second by Legislator Stern. If there are no comments, all in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **IR 1710 is tabled. (Vote: 5-0)**

IR 1848, to expand the County's recycling program. (Romaine) Given the comments we had last time, I will again make a motion to table.

LEG. STERN:

Second.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Second by Legislator Stern. If there are no comments, all in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **IR 1848 is tabled. (Vote: 5-0)**

IR 1891, to improve and strengthen consultant procurement policy. (PO Lindsay) I'll make a motion to table.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

I'll second that.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Seconded by Legislator Losquadro. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Is this still in public hearing, George? Oh, okay, no. Sorry. Okay. Well, it's tabled. **(Vote: 5-0) IR 1891 is tabled.**

IR 2025, a local law to promote accurate cost estimates for capital projects. (D'Amaro) I believe this still needs to be tabled for a public hearing. I'll offer the motion.

LEG. STERN:

Second.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Second by Legislator Stern. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **(Vote: 5-0)**

IR 2043, directing a study on the feasibility of the use of compressed natural gas to fuel Suffolk County vehicles. (Alden)

LEG. ROMAINE:

Motion to approve.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Motion to table.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

We have motion to approve by Legislator Romaine. We have a motion to table by Legislator Horsley. The motion to approve is seconded by Legislator Losquadro. And the motion to table is seconded by Legislator Stern. The motion to table takes precedence. Is there anybody who would like to comment on the motion? Legislator Romaine.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Yes. I understand that Legislator Stern has offered a motion to table. Could I understand his thinking? Maybe I can be convinced to vote with him if there's a reason for tabling this and not bringing this forward.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Legislator Stern. Gil, did I see that you -- did you want to say something as well? Legislator Stern, go ahead.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

There's a couple of issues.

LEG. STERN:

Why don't we defer to the Commissioner first.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Okay.

LEG. STERN:

And then I'd be happy to address Legislator Romaine.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Maybe the Commissioner can answer on your behalf.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

The concerns we have with this legislation, I've met with Clean Energy which is a natural gas company and, you know, discussed the project. The main problem we have with this idea is there's only one fueling station currently in the County which is right down the road from us, you know, on the state side of our complex here. The -- you know, I know there is talk of one going further out east being installed but as of yet that alone is an issue that would basically, you know, shoot this down if we were to go ahead and start purchasing the vehicles. Certainly we can look at them but, you know, we do have concerns with that.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Well, Legislator Stern is going to go first; then Romaine and then Losquadro.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Let Dan and then me.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Okay. No problem. Legislator Stern, if you have anything further?

LEG. STERN:

I have nothing further. I was just going to say I share the concerns with the Commissioner.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Okay. Then Legislator Losquadro.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Trying to take me off my game. Historically about -- from -- I know when we were doing some of this analysis when we were looking at bio diesel, other alternative fuels, I know that some of this information has already been analyzed. But there are specific questions that come up especially when it comes to infrastructure with natural gas, which is one of the reasons why I was a proponent of bio diesel because you can use existing infrastructure but -- doesn't 70 percent of our overall usage come out of the north complex here? Our overall fueling usage or is it less than that?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

I would -- I can get you that information, but I would assume it would be less to be honest with you.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Because I'm thinking if we could -- if we could regionalize within -- because of the geographic size of this County I know that makes certain applications nonviable especially when it comes into covering the east end. But if we could even regionalize within our own fleet within our own infrastructure, if we could see an area where we do a large volume of our business so to speak in terms of our fueling, then, perhaps we could use vehicles within a particular segment of DPW or Transportation, whatever it may be, that would have access to a fueling site that you could regionalize. So just something to think about there. I thought it was -- I didn't think it was that high but I think it's close to that.

So I know this needs more looking into which is the reason why I think you do sort of need a feasibility study but perhaps it's something we can even work out ourselves if we ask the right questions. So if that's something -- that is something you could get us the answer on because I have a feeling this isn't going to move forward today. So when we can discussions at the next meeting about the status of our fleet, that is something I would be interested to know if we could perhaps regionalize even within our own county and our own infrastructure. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Okay. Any further comments? Legislator Romaine.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Thank you. Commissioner --

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Yes.

LEG. ROMAINE:

I believe that Legislator Alden, who has proposed this bill, is just looking for a feasibility study on not only compressed natural gas but I believe the amended version also calls for propane. Correct me if I'm wrong, but aren't there several commercial fleets currently in operation that operate on either propane or natural gas in Suffolk County?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

To my knowledge there are two. Town of Smithtown has --

LEG. ROMAINE:

Not governmental; I'm talking private sector now.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Ones that come to mind I know that Bay Gas has a fleet that runs on propane. Again, they have, I believe, one sole, you know location. They're a small --

LEG. ROMAINE:

They serve the entire east end and Brookhaven.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Correct.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Right.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Correct. The only other one that comes to mind other than CNG would be MTA which is, you know, out of the city and out of Nassau County.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Right. And the two municipals that you're aware of?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

The one municipal I'm aware of is Town of Smithtown uses CNG on their waste fleet, all their garbage trucks.

LEG. ROMAINE:

And what about the Town of Brookhaven where I live and, I believe, Legislator Beedenbender and Legislator Losquadro.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

I do live there.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

I don't know. They may very well, but I didn't know.

LEG. ROMAINE:

I believe they've put out for bid. And their garbage fleet in the Town of Brookhaven has a huge land mass.

MR. ZWIRN:

We heard there's a lot of gas in that particular area.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Ben, come on.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

I do know that they just opened up a new CNG facility, you're right, at Brookhaven Landfill.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Right. Yes. And they run all their garbage fleet which is extensive because there are many roads -- I think there's over 2000 miles of roads in Brookhaven Town.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

I'd like to look into that because I would find it difficult that, you know, their entire fleet is converted over because most of the trucks, I believe --

LEG. ROMAINE:

These are private sector trucks under contract to the town.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Right. And I don't know that the private sector has converted their entire fleet over to that.

LEG. ROMAINE:

That was a requirement of the RFP.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Was it really?

LEG. ROMAINE:

Yep. So --

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Again, I'd be glad to look into that, you know --

LEG. ROMAINE:

I think at this point, no one's asking anyone to move forward with this. But obviously Suffolk County should not be the last to move particularly when we're concerned about climate change, particularly when we're concerned about the resources, you know, gasoline is cheap now. It's \$43 a gallon, I heard in the way -- barrel over here so -- I mean the price per gallon is, you know, \$1.89, \$1.91, \$1.95 depending on where you buy it. But those prices are clearly going to go up. This is a scarce resource. And this resource is maintained by nations that are always not friendly to the United States and we have to export a -- import a great deal of oil.

I think this would be a good time to at least start a feasibility study. That doesn't mean just because we authorize a feasibility study it's going to be done this year or even next year. I voted for studies that took two years that I thought should have taken six months but for some reason they took two years. But at least let's start on a feasibility study so we have options as we move forward.

This is something even our new President has laid out for us that said it's -- you know, and he is moving the United States hopefully in an energy independent -- towards somewhat degree of energy independence, some reliance on natural gas which is abundant in this country. All propane, which is likewise abundant in this country. Why can't we do a feasibility study that would meet the letter of this resolution? Simply would require someone, for example, from your office to go down, contact the Town of Brookhaven, the landfill, what is five minutes from your office, take a look at what they're doing with their garbage fleet, go over to the Town of Smithtown, go out to Bay Gas, look at what other private -- I believe the PC Richards fleet is going to be converting over to natural gas.

Take a look at the private vector fleets that run large fleets over large parts of this Island and take a look at that. Now that's a gathering. And that could be a first phase of a report that would say we've looked at these both private and public and this is what we've determined. And then the second phase could be if the County did this, maybe we need a facility in Yaphank and Riverhead as well as Hauppauge where people could gas up and talk about what that would be, what the potential cost savings would be, etcetera.

I think a feasibility study is not that heavy of a lift and should be undertaken now particularly if we're concerned about the environment and Long Island -- and Long Island. If I am not mistaken is one of those counties that are so severely impacted by air pollution that under the Clean Air Act we have to file a plan with the EPA every year demonstrating how we're going to as a county government attempt to deal with the fact that we're one of the impacted counties in terms of air quality. This would be a huge step forward in filing that annual report that we're required to file with EPA each and every year.

So it's something to think about. And I certainly would urge my colleagues on the other side of the isle in the sense of preserving our environment, cleaning our air, making ourselves a little bit more energy independent to move forward with this. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

While this is -- and we certainly understand the need for CNG, the extent of the study that we could do by ourselves would be limited. We're not experts at propane. Certainly while we could gather information on CNG, to consider the feasibility study, really to do it right, to do a cost benefit, you know, analysis you'd really have to hire out somebody, a consultant that's familiar with those things, someone like Clean Energy or someone similar in that industry to provide us the information, to get us that analysis. There's no funding in this legislation. I'd be glad to look into this in -- you know, a little bit further to see what information is out there. Certainly we've talked about it, you know, with my staff issues such as the buses; the county buses.

You know, we purchase them. We give them to the contractors. They don't have the facility for something like that, which, you know, again it would be more than a simple lift to get that

information. I'd be glad to start looking into it but, again, to do a full feasibility study inhouse, we don't have the expertise and -- to go much beyond the initial gathering of information. And that's my concern.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Legislator Horsley wanted to go but first I just want to say I lost the over under bet. It's been exactly seven days before -- one of my friends from the other side of isle used our new President against our party. I thought it would happen much quicker. I know, Legislator Romaine, I'm making a joke.

Legislator Horsley.

LEG. HORSLEY:

I'm so pleased to hear that even our President would agree to something on green initiatives. That makes my day. But anyway, I thought that, you know, this all has merit. And certainly Dan's comment about the bio diesel and alternate fuels should be included in whatever proposal we come up with.

So I would like to echo basically what we all seem to be agreement on that we take a look at it as a larger picture, you know, where we serve best by green -- by going green, and, you know, whether -- what to do on the east end and the like. And so what we should be doing is doing a little preparatory work, talk to the Committee. And then we can move forward with a comprehensive bill that make sense on all fronts including, you know, different fuels including the compressed gas.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

There was a study done a few years back that looked at all different alternate fuels which maybe worth, you know, updating that --

LEG. HORSLEY:

Taking a look at just updating? That would be great.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Right. And, you know, and doing something like that. I'll review the actual report and report back, you know, here next time.

LEG. HORSLEY:

My suspicion is, is that this will be well received by all parties; you know, as long as it makes sense, it is affordable in this problematic year and we can make plans for the future.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Gil, could you make that report -- I know I don't have a copy in my office. And perhaps our Clerk has one but if either the Clerk or yourself can make one available to the Committee members.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Sure.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Just to give us some additional preparatory work as we continue to deliberate on this.

Legislator Stern.

LEG. STERN:

Yeah, thank you. I just want to reiterate everybody here I'm sure supports the underlying purpose of, you know, of this initiative. But it is very encouraging to hear from you, Mr. Commissioner, that we'd be able to do at least some of the preliminary groundwork inhouse, be able to get some important information that either is readily available or you can certainly do some further inquiry

and get back to us; and then we can decide together how best to proceed.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

Okay. If there are no further comments, there's a motion and a second to table. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **IR 2043 is tabled. (Vote: 5-0)**

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

IR 2233, authorizing transfer of surplus County computer systems and hardware to the Long Island Maritime Museum. (PO Lindsay)

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Motion to approve.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

I'll offer a motion to -- motion to approve by Legislator Losquadro. Motion by Legislator Losquadro, seconded by Legislator Stern. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **(Vote: 5-0)**

We are adjourned; and the fastest Public Works meeting in my history. I'm sure we'll do much to rectify that next time.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Pray for stimulus.

CHAIRMAN BEEDENBENDER:

That's right. Everybody pray for stimulus. That's a good idea, Legislator Horsley. We're adjourned.

**(THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 2:25 PM)
{DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY}**