PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

OF THE

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Operating Budget Minutes

A Special Meeting of the Public Works 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 October 21, 2015, to discuss the matter of the 2016 Operating Budget.

***Members Present*:**
Legislator Al Krupski - Chairman
Legislator Tom Muratore - Vice-Chair
Legislator Tom Barraga
Legislator Kate Browning
Legislator Steven Stern

***Also In Attendance*:**
D.P.O. Jay Schneiderman - District #2
Legislator Kate Browning - District #3
Legislator Robert Calarco - District #7
Legislator Leslie Kennedy - District #12
Legislator Robert Trotta - District #13
George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature.
Catherine Stark - Aide to Legislator Krupski
Christina DeLisi - Aide to D.P.O. Schneiderman
Greg Atherton - Aide to Legislator McCaffrey
Debbie Harris - Aide to Legislator Stern
All Other Interested Parties

***Minutes Taken & Transcribed By*:**
Alison Mahoney - Court Stenographer

(*The meeting was called to order at 9:38 AM*)

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
I would like to have the public hearing begin. If we could all rise for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Barraga.

Salutation

I do have one with card from Kathy Malloy, if you would like to address the committee.

MS. MALLOY:
Good morning to Suffolk County Legislators. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak. My name is Kathy Malloy representing Suffolk County AME President Brian Macri.

I'd like to go on the record as just stating that based upon both our and your Budget Review Office review, the budget is not adequately balanced and services need to be provided. This Capital Budget has not addressed the structural, fiscal problem that has existed in the General Fund for over at least the last ten years, which is the absolute need to raise reoccurring revenue. Sending a message to other taxing jurisdictions has only negatively impacted the County's fiscal standings and has resulted in the General Fund being less than a mere 1% of our total property taxes here in Suffolk.

Suffolk County AME has borne the negative impact of this policy in making a no-pay agreement for no layoffs, a hiring freeze and a deferred payroll. As Suffolk County Legislators, I am sure you recognize that our greatest asset are our County employees, and AME represents the largest number of County employees. Our members have been described as the backbone of Suffolk County government, which they rightfully are, and yet in my history working with the County, I experienced two lag payrolls. Although a quick solution might be to tap into a reserve account to offset the current imbalance, but that would only make the fiscal problem more severe in 2017. We need a recurring revenue source.

Since most budgets tend to be incremental, the only realistic short-term solution, which could result in becoming a long-term solution, is to increase property taxes. The financial impact, although symbolically scary, is actually quite negligible per household. The average household property tax is $9,875 annually; out of that, only $88 goes to the County's General Fund. If we consider incremental tax increases -- for instance, over a four-year period, say 50% in 2016, 33% in 2017, 25% in 2018, and 18 and a quarter in 2019 -- do you realize that would result in an annual County tax increase of just about $4 per household per year. But after the full year of incremental General Fund tax increases, the average homeowner like myself went from paying $88 a year to paying $266 per year into the County's General Fund and for all the services that I'm thankful to receive.

However, the full and final goal is in the 570,418 housing units here in Suffolk County -- and I got that from Suffolk County Census Facts dated 2014 -- which would result in 106.5 million additional and recurring revenue to the County's General Tax Fund, with the County General Fund receiving an average of 27 million more per year based on this formula that I've given you, and the formula would close the General Fund and Police gaps in four years. In the long-term, it is necessary to focus on those taxing jurisdictions that have created this problem, and AME is willing to work with you in resolving these issues for all Suffolk County residents, because we are, too.

There are many people we can blame, many ideas that haven't worked, but the bottom line is better targeted towards solutions, not blame, we understand that. And we are here to work with you for viable and long-term solution to this recurring deficit which could be resolved by thinking of that word recurring but using it with income. We are here to work alongside the Suffolk County

Legislators and we hope that you will call us in to work together. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Thank you, Kathy. Do you have a question, Legislator Barraga?

LEG. BARRAGA:
Not so much a question, but really a discussion. Because Kathy has made that presentation, I think yesterday you made it as well?

MS. MALLOY:
Yes, sir, I did.

LEG. BARRAGA:
And realistically, certainly the County portion of a property tax bill, as you pointed out, is $98.

MS. MALLOY:
Tiny.

LEG. BARRAGA:
Okay, it's tiny, but it's not the only item on a property tax bill; it is one of 16 or 17 items. But collectively people look at the bottom line, and in many cases it's usually five figures at least and maybe 10, 15, 20, 25, $30,000. And the people that I represent are having an extremely difficult time, Kathy, just making ends meet. I mean, it's not -- certainly we always talk about property taxes, but just take a look at the overall cost of living in Nassau and Suffolk County. I mean, I studied this the other day, where they took the ten most expensive areas, not in the State, but in the nation, and Nassau and Suffolk as a region came in number two.

I mean, when you go home today and I go home, there's another bill there. I mean, cable television; I mean, did I ever expect to pay 130, $140 a month? When I was in the State Assembly, I had those people come up to me and tell me that I should vote to sort of decentralize cable, and instead of a $19 bill we would get a $15 bill, and now the bills are like 130, 140, just to watch lousy television. And take a look at the net dollars and the gross you have to make just to pay that bill, or your i-Phone.

MS. MALLOY:
I don't have one.
LEG. BARRAGA:
Well, I have to have one, and most people do have i-Phones.

MS. MALLOY:
I don't.

(*Legislator Browning & D.P.O. Schneiderman Entered the meeting at 9:43 A.M.*)

LEG. BARRAGA:
But, I mean, you're talking about 90, 100, $125 a month, your home insurance, your car insurance, your car payments, your kid's going to school; this is an extremely expensive place. And when you come along -- and you're right, it runs about $100 per household -- but the reality is, if I heard you correctly, what you're talking about is an increase in the General Fund of 50% the first year, 33%, 25% and 18%. If we ever did that, if we ever did that, even though the dollar figures, you'd have 18 new members here. There's no way politically you can go to the people of Suffolk County and say to them, *Look, we're going to increase the General Fund taxes 50%*; in their minds, you know,

they have so much on their mind, they're so diversified, you'd be out of office. You just can't do that. And what you're dealing with, and this is a real problem in Suffolk County, that General Fund thing is 50 million bucks; even if you increase it 10%, you're going to go to 55 million.

Our problem is we are so heavily dependent on sales tax. And like any CEO of any major corporation, visibility -- it's very interesting to sit back and say, *Well, you know, this year we're going to do 4.85%.* When I take a look at that number, this is eight or ten months ago, I believe the County Executive's Office said 4.75, our Budget Review people said 5%.

MS. MALLOY:
Uh-huh.

LEG. BARRAGA:
They had talked to Moody's and Finch and S&P, they felt that that was going to be the growth; and wow, everybody was wrong. I mean, not only the 4.85% is not there, we're running in the negative compared to last year. We get about 58, 59% of our total budget comes from sales tax. That property tax, the General Fund tax that you're talking about, it's 50 million. Even when we try to increase it four or 5%, you don't really get the dollar volume out of that, but we are locked in to a situation where, you know, we're heavily dependent on sales tax, the rest are items that -- but that sales tax is the key. I don't know how we turn around to people, in this day and age, in Nassau and Suffolk County and increase the General Fund 50% or 40% or 30%; they would be enraged by that. Because most people, they're thinking about the property taxes; *My God, it's going to go up so much*. And I'm tired of hearing about, *Well, we're a hundred bucks, but somebody* -- in the end, the average homeowner is the one paying this and they cannot deal with this anymore. We're not only losing our younger people, and you and I would agree, we're losing people my age, the people who are retired, who have money, whose sons and daughters are no longer here. And what do they do? They're turning around and saying, *Hey, why do I have to stay here for? What am I here for? I might as well go to Florida or Texas or Tennessee, or go with my kids.*

The situation here, it's just not a good one fiscally. And yet the problem in Suffolk County, and in Nassau County for many years -- and I've been in public life a long time -- is that people don't like taxes, but you know, Kathy, they want services.

MS. MALLOY:
Uh-huh.

LEG. BARRAGA:
And your people have to provide those services. It's always a balancing act. I mean, after this, after you speak, there's going to be people coming in here demanding we do more things, spend more money that we really don't have. I mean, how many stabilization funds can we raid? This is a tough situation in Suffolk County and it's been tough for many, many years. You know, I understand where you're coming from as far as your union and what you people feel has to happen, but that General Fund thing, percentage-wise it's never going to fly.

MS. MALLOY:
Can I add to that, since you've thrown out a few more. When you commented on all the bills, and say, for instance, 25 years ago I was paying $19 a month for cable -- and it's crappy TV, by the way -- now I'm paying 180 a month and I've accepted that. Every single thing has gone up. The school taxes, whenever they put them up, I haven't had children in school, my youngest is 40 years old, I never vote down that budget because there's children in my neighborhood and we need to educate our young people or they're never going to make something of their lives. I never vote down that budget and I always accept that those taxes go up systematically each year. LILCO, PSEG, cable, my phone, everything goes up. What makes the County General Fund so different that

you can't understand -- and by the way, Islip Supervisor Tom Croci, 48% he voted his budget to go up when he recognized that the former Supervisors continually did what you're doing now and said, *No raise, no raise, no raise*, and little by little services were less and less and less, and he said, *"Look, bottom line, we've got to raise them,"* he was reelected overwhelmingly.

I think the bottom line is, as with my union, we have to educate our members, you have to educate the general public that $44 a year -- which is, my goodness, $4 a month -- is relatively affordable. And to educate them by saying, If I pay $4 more a month, my neighbor, who's legally blind and has a guide dog, that SCAT bus picks him up every day to go to work, and when he goes to work he is a productive member of society; but without that SCAT bus he's home, and what good is it having him home? He doesn't want to be home. There's nothing wrong with him, he was born without a site, there's nothing wrong with him; the man has a Master's Degree, he's brilliant. He needs the buses. So I know I'm moving on into another area, but it's because it's a passion of mine as well. I believe that as elected officials, myself as a labor union official, we need to educate our members, our public on what's important. And we are no different than that i-Phone and cable, sad to say, but we're much, much more important.

I disagree with you, Legislator Barraga. I understand where you're coming from, but I saw Tom Croci, not only was he overwhelmingly reelected, then he was overwhelmingly elected into the Senate after he raised taxes more than 48%. By the way, I voted for him because I understood the bottom line. I need those services to be performed.
So that's my bottom line.

LEG. BARRAGA:
You and I respectfully disagree.

MS. MALLOY:
Of course.

LEG. BARRAGA:
You want to go with Crocci --

MS. MALLOY:
We have for years.

LEG. BARRAGA:
I'll go with the County level with Pat Halpin and what happened to him. I mean, I just don't think our people are in a position to take these increases. And what would hurt politically, frankly, is the percentage you're talking about; you're not talking about two or 3%, you're talking 50% the first year, 33% the second year --

MS. MALLOY:
Forty-four dollars a year, that's what I'm talking about.

LEG. BARRAGA:
But the point is those percentages are the ones that will be hung around the next political year --

MS. MALLOY:
But that's when you can't use percentages, you've got to use dollars.

LEG. BARRAGA:
Well, you're the one using percentages.

MS. MALLOY:
I have to teach you.

LEG. BARRAGA:
Understand something --

MS. MALLOY:
But the PR has to be an actual dollar amount.

LEG. BARRAGA:
As you finish speaking, Kathy, there'll be another group in here that will be doing -- that particular group you're talking about.

MS. MALLOY:
Yes.

LEG. BARRAGA:
So when you're saying educating the public --

MS. MALLOY:
Who pay taxes.

LEG. BARRAGA:
The average person, the average person has a life to live, they have children, they have responsibilities, they're not following this closely. If they pick up a paper and they see a 50% increase in the General Fund tax; my God, they'll think the world is coming to an end.

MS. MALLOY:
Forty-four dollars, that's your job to do.

LEG. BARRAGA:
But they don't remember that. They will not remember that, you'll see the percentage. You know, it's an area -- that General Fund, it's an area that we really can't look to it for dramatic increases, we have to come up with other alternative revenue sources, and every time we do there's screaming. You know, you don't like the red light cameras, you don't like casinos, you don't like this; these are revenue generators but they're also legally -- there's a need for those. I mean, there are people who want to gamble. What's forgotten, and I hear this all the time, it was a referendum, the people had the right to vote on this and they did, they passed it statewide. I mean, in Brookhaven I think the percentage was 65%; in Islip it was 64%. I go to a delicatessen, I get in line to get a loaf of bread, but I see people up there spending 10, 15, our people like to gamble. No one wants it in their particular area, but the overall, people in the State of New York voted for it.

When you talk about red light cameras, the people in here are screaming against red light cameras; they're the ones that got the tickets. They're the ones that violated the law, all they have to do is get down there and see the film. But every time we move in a certain direction you've got people screaming, you know. But that General Fund tax, percentage-wise it's just -- we don't get anything out of it, and we're in a box because we cannot -- like major corporations, the visibility to determine the increase and the sales tax from one year to the next is extremely difficult. And other revenue sources, you know, we face a hard road. Hey, that's all right, Kathy.

MS. MALLOY:
I will continue to go on the record.
LEG. BARRAGA:

I know.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
I would like to just make a comment, too, because I do agree with what Kathy had to say.

(*Legislator Trotta entered the meeting at 9:52 A.M.*)

I mean, if you look at -- there is a need for reoccurring revenue.
If we continue to borrow for operating expenses --

MS. MALLOY:
It doesn't work.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
-- that's so unsustainable. And people can say, *Well, people can't live here*; well, I'm worried about the people today -- we talked about, you know, the cost of the i-Phone, the cost of TV and all those other things that people kind of take for granted and don't even question. If you look at the cost of County government per household, it is very low. And my concern is not so much for today, but if you look at the next generation, if we continue to borrow for operating expenses in any government, whether it's local, the village or town or local level or State level and higher government, that's just going to be a big problem for the next generation. So we get termed out here in 12 years, we have to be responsible and we should at least make things better for the next generation of Legislators.

MS. MALLOY:
Yes.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
I mean, some people will serve 12, some people move on because there's greener pastures that they move on to and I understand that, but regardless, we have to be responsible for our actions today. So I do agree with you.

MS. MALLOY:
Because if you keep borrowing, you're setting up the future generation of Legislators, that's the scary part.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
And that's a problem. So if we don't borrow and we said we're going to cut services because we don't believe in this, we don't believe in that and we don't think these services are important, you know, that's one way of looking at and that's fine; but if we borrow for those services, that becomes a problem.

MS. MALLOY:
Uh-huh. Thank you.

LEG. BARRAGA:
Hey, it's a good morning.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
(Laughter) We're off to a good start. The second speaker, Michael Giacomaro; Michael is from the East Yaphank Chamber. On deck is Michael Platt.

MR. GIACOMARO:

Mr. Chairman, Legislators, my name is Mike Giacomaro, President of the East Yaphank Chamber of Commerce. I'm one of those people that you were just talking about for services. So I've worked hard and long with Suffolk County Bus Transit to expand Route 70 with the East Yaphank loop that covers East Yaphank and the East Yaphank Industrial Park. This could become a hub incorporating the Long Island Expressway, which covers north and south, the William Floyd Parkway which covers -- I'm sorry, the Long Island Expressway which covers east and west, the William Floyd Parkway which covers north and south, the Long Island Railroad with ties to Nassau County and New York City, Calabro Airport, and the lynch pin of the hub is Suffolk County Bus Transit. As we speak, the Meadows at Yaphank is fast becoming a reality with phase I, the apartment complex rising quickly. The other phases are on the drawing board and all will need bus service. So may I please ask that you ensure this part of the bus service be viewed as a necessity and a work-in-progress that is the growth of Long Island. We need this service.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Thank you, Mike. Does anybody have any questions for Mike?

LEG. BROWNING:
Mike, it's a long time since I've seen you.

MR. GIACOMARO:
Yes, it has been long.

LEG. BROWNING:
It's good to see you. So, again, I know this bus service issue is really a killer for all of us. You know, I showed up a little late.

MR. GIACOMARO:
It started late, it's okay.

LEG. BROWNING:
Yeah, but, you know, it's going to be very, very hard. We just don't have anywhere to find the money. You know, I truly sympathize for anybody because I know in my district who's using the buses; in fact, I have one of my constituents who comes all the time for the SCAT bus. I think that anyone who is here to support putting funding in the bus system should be calling the State representatives and saying, *Why does Nassau County not have to put as much money in as Suffolk County and why is Nassau County getting three times as much from the State as Suffolk County?*

So, again, obviously we care about it. And anyone who is here, you know, don't just do press conferences outside this door, go across the street, you know? That's what I think; go across to the street and go to Albany and start making a lot of noise because that's the only way we're going to get the money.

MR. GIACOMARO:
One thing also I'd like to mention, because I know I was also a member of the Community Advisory Council of the Brookhaven Laboratory, and part of their five-year plan is expanding that area as well. So you have two big developments taking place very close and we need this hub. It will make the area grow better and faster and also increase the tax base for the area, especially for the Meadows at Yaphank, and that's why I bring that up.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Thank you.

MR. GIACOMARO:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Thank you, Mike. All right, Michael Platt; and on deck, Jacquelyn Etherson.

MS. ETHERSON:
Hi, I'm Jacquelyn.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Good morning.

MS. ETHERSON:
Good morning. I take SCAT to go to my program, YAI in Brentwood. Mike, do you want to say anything?

MR. PLATT:
My name is Michael Platt.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Good morning.

MR. PLATT:
I take SCAT.

MS. ETHERSON:
I live in the East Setauket. And SCAT helps me to go to my program so I can go home -- instead of being home all the time.

MR. PLATT:
I live in Huntington.

MS. ETHERSON:
We take SCAT so we can go to program; if not, we don't go, so please save SCAT.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
All right. Well, thank you for coming and thank you for your comments.

MS. ETHERSON:
You're welcome.

MR. PLATT:
Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Take care. Next Anita Halasz; and on deck, Aaron Lopez.

MS. HALASZ:
Good morning, everyone. Sorry it took me so long to get up here, I actually don't know how to use phones, even though I look young. My name is Anita Halasz, I'm the Executive Director of Long Island Jobs With Justice. I'm actually really excited to be here, I've never been here and I've never testified before the Suffolk County Legislature, so this is quite an experience.

Jobs With Justice works very closely with bus riders on Long Island. We actually helped to found the

bus riders union which is a voice for bus riders across Long Island, and we work very closely with many Legislators as well as community advocates here in Suffolk County to expand services for bus riders in Suffolk County, and I think we've done a really great job at doing that.

I know that Legislator Browning said don't hold press conferences just outside this building; incidentally, we did just hold a press conference outside the building, but it was largely to express concern with what's happening with the buses. We absolutely understand the pressure that the Legislature is under right now in order to fund the buses and we have been at the doors of the State for many, many years right now calling on them for funding, and it's been quite a challenge but we're going to continue to fight to do that because we understand the pressures that County governments are under as well.

I'm actually here today to share a testimony of a bus rider, if that's okay with everyone. They sent us their testimony, they were unable to come here today but they wanted us to read it, so I'm going to go ahead and read that:

"My name is Brian Rossi. I urge you to vote against County budget cuts which threaten basic, vital services, including public transportation for people who cannot drive and domestic violence help. I was born with a disability, I am legally blind. When I've spoken here in the past, I have visibly needed assistance getting across the room and I certainly cannot drive. I have to depend on the SCAT bus system to get anywhere a friend or a relative can't take me. I live in Ridge which has only one fixed-route bus. Not only must I depend on the S-5 so I can have a SCAT route, I also live down the road from an elder village, called Leisure Village, full of people whose senior needs include that many are no longer able to drive. If the County gets rid of routes like ours, none of us may be able to leave our homes to carry on any kind of adult, independent lives."

"I'm back in Suffolk because I had to leave an abusive relationship. I had to leave a County where I had public transit seven days a week and 22-hours a day to come back to only six days a week until 8 PM. I could no longer live with such an abusive girlfriend, I could not find a roommate in the area and I've never known all the skills to keep up a house on my own, so I had to move back with my family, and now the County is threatening the basic services so I can live here. We as a County should be expanding and preserving basic life or death services. We should be working to make public transit live to an equal seven-day a week and nighttime service instead of talking about abolishing it altogether for communities like mine. We should be making it easier for people to escape abusive relationships, not making it harder. There are human lives we are talking about, not just dollars and cents. I ask you to consider human lives like mine and people down the road from my house. Thank you, Brian Rossi."

And I think that it just shows how much pressure and fear a lot of bus riders are feeling right now. And I know that many of you hear these stores of bus riders and we completely understand that you really are under pressure and it's really hard to find these funds. So as an organization that supports bus riders and that supports the hard work that you all do to ensure that the County continues to run every single day, we do just want to tell you that we are going to continue to put pressure on the State, we are going to continue to meet with our elected officials to ensure that there isn't such an inequality between how much our suburban bus systems are getting funded between the two Counties. But at the same time, we do continue to urge you all to really think about potentially new, innovative ways that we can fill these gaps, because it really will be a hard hit for bus riders in Suffolk County. And while we may not feel it the day after buses are cut, we're definitely going to feel it a year after buses are cut, especially within our economy, because as you've heard from many people, people use the buses in order to support our local economy and when those buses are no longer there, our local economy will not be able to thrive as much. So thank you for having us here today, giving us the space to talk to you, and wherever we can be support in terms of putting pressure on the State, we'll definitely be there. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Thank you, Anita. I just -- we've got a comment from Legislator Schneiderman but, you know, we spoke earlier this morning and you mentioned innovative ways of funding the bus system and how important long-term public transportation is, and you are absolutely right. And we did talk about the fact that I asked Budget Review to talk -- you know, to give us some analysis of what a fare increase would look like and then to work with DPW on how that would mitigate loss of service. So I think all those things are being discussed, but I really appreciate you being here and your comments.

MS. HALASZ:
Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
And Legislator Schneiderman has a question.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
I'll be brief. First, Anita, thank you for your advocacy. You know, through the years -- and the County has faced some pretty tough financial times, and this is like the one area where the County actually has grown some service levels; we've added some runs, we've added some evening service, we've added some Sunday service, not throughout, and I don't think there's anybody at the Legislature who wants to see any cuts in public transportation. I think we understand that a lot of our workforce depends upon public transportation, doesn't have other options, too expensive to own a car, have car insurance, etcetera. And I think the County Executive doesn't want to see any reductions in our services, wants to see them grow as well.

So the way this process works is the County Executive proposes a budget, and I think County Executive Bellone understands that we haven't been getting our fair shake, our fair share from the State, not even close, so Nassau is subsidized at a much higher level. So we get a budget and that's the way the process works; the County Executive develops a budget that takes this sector and shortens it by roughly $10 million, six million in public transit and 4 million in SCAT.

We now -- and I'm not on the Budget Working Group, I know my colleague, Legislator Krupski, is -- but now has to respond back with the incredible challenge of trying to come up with $10 million in a budget, you know, where sales tax continues to under-perform and create all kinds of problems for lots of contract agencies. So it is very challenging and nobody wants to see any reductions. So we're in this very difficult position of trying to figure out how to just maintain the current level of services, and I think a lot of the battle will go to the State no matter what. And, you know, I will stand with you guys, and I'm sure a lot of people will, to try to fight for what is our fair share.

You know, I have been advocating for years for more State money with the hope that we could expand services, we could finish the roll out of Sunday service, we could do more evening hours with that extra money. Now we're fighting for just trying to maintain service levels with that money and I'm not happy about that, but it's a battle that likely will have to go to Albany. You know, certainly I won't be here at the Legislature, but wherever I am I will come up with you guys and lobby because I realize how important that is. Okay?

MS. HALASZ:
Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Thank you, Anita. So up next, Aaron Watkins-Lopez; and on deck, John Siebert.
MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ:

Good morning. My name is Aaron Watkins-Lopez, I'm with the Long Island Bus Riders Union. I'm a bus rider. I went to Stony Brook University, I went to Dowling, I'm a Long Island resident through and through, and for me to get around without a car is impossible. But for me to get around without a car and there's no bus means that I'm not going to be able to get anywhere. Ever since the implementation of Sunday service, it expanded my own and, you know, the lives of hundreds of thousands of people across the Island.

I think that, you know, in 2014 when we got that money and we were finally able to roll out those ten routes, it really kind of showed that if you build it they will come. If you start cutting service now when we finally have made some headway, and if we start raising fares, which statistics show have a direct correlation with decreasing ridership -- this is the first -- you know, we've seen a 20% increase of ridership in Suffolk County since 2000. Why would we stop now? This is not -- this is not a service that can be taken lightly, this is a service that brings people to the malls across Long Island, it brings people to our several universities. Stony Brook University, one of the best medical universities in the country; are we going to deny them public transportation service and then wonder why people my age, ages 24 and younger, don't want to stay. Long Island is no longer about cars, its no longer about how far can you drive. Long Island needs to be the more vibrant communities that people my age and over the age spectrum want. We want communities that are walkable, we want communities that have good public transportation. Why are we spending so much money on economic development for, you know, transit-oriented development if we're not going to have any transit?

We understand at the Bus Riders Union that Suffolk County is disproportionately under-funded compared to Nassau County, we know that it's not right, but we are more than willing to stand with this Legislature, you know, with the members of the community across the Island, with the Chambers of Commerce to tell the State that it's time for them to pay their fair share.

Last February, myself and several other bus riders from across the Island went up and we spoke to some of our Senators. And, you know, luckily we had Senator Boyle who understands the issues, we have people in the Assembly that understand the issues, but then we have other Senators that looked me dead in the eye and said, *Well, I don't understand why the buses need more money.* That's what we're up against. We need to change the mindsets of the people on the Island and we need to change the mindsets of the people that we're sending to represent us in Albany; if we can't do that, then we'll never see this money.

This $10 million, at the end of the day, is a gamble. Suffolk County has been calling for 10 million for years and the State has not complied. If this doesn't go through, what do we do then? Because fare increases and service cuts are not going to be enough and eventually we're going to be left with a skeletal system that does not serve anyone, especially those that have disabilities. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Thank you.

Applause

John Siebert; and on deck, Amparo Enriquez,

MR. SIEBERT:
Hi, good morning. John Siebert with Vision Long Island, Friends of Long Island, we represent some folks that are still recovering from Superstorm Sandy.

Don't want to beat a dead horse. I mean, we all know it's an issue, we all know that Albany and the

State is not giving Suffolk County its fair share compared to Nassau County and Westchester. We have been going up to Albany for the past several years advocating for that and we'll continue to do it, we have these conversations with our Assembly and Senators and we'll continue to do that. But for -- and I know that Suffolk County has concerns right now, especially with the decrease in sales tax revenue and other expenses that are increasing, but to cut certain aspects of public transportation, especially SCAT and some of the fixed routes, is just, you know, cutting your nose to spite your face.

We're trying to work on the downtowns, get the downtowns going, keep the millennial generation in. It's been a big focus with a lot of people right now, keep the 18-to-34 year-olds in, and we're doing that in certain areas. You know, Suffolk IDA is helping with the Boost Program for Biosciences and IT to keep those folks in. But if they don't have bus connectivity, how are they going to get around? If you look at other areas, Phoenix, Arizona, Tucson, Arizona; 24/7 buses in an area where the income's 33% less, and it helps them prosper economically. The Sunday buses, when they were expanded, helped our downtowns, brought people to the downtowns safely. People that would not have that connectivity, low-to-moderate income folks, disabled folks do have that opportunity to spend that money in our downtowns, saving our tax revenue in the area. So it's very important to try to preserve it where possible.

And I understand the politics and, you know, trying to get the money from the State while trying to fill a hole in income, I understand it. But to not be able to have people go to work. You know, the bus provides the north/south connection for public transportation, we don't have a light rail or a train in Suffolk County that will go north to south. So for the people that live on the South Shore that need to come to work in Hauppauge or over by Stony Brook where they're trying to put so much money into developing these areas, how are they going to get to work? They can't afford to.

One other, you know, important thing is that, you know, Long Island Railroad -- and I know that's not a County issue, but it has -- the delays have been more and more throughout the past year, especially over the past couple of months. And these folks also rely on the bus service to act as a backup, you know. I think that last year, last fiscal year, loss of productivity on the Babylon rail line alone was $68 million. By cutting additional Suffolk County Transit buses, it's only going to increase that while the MTA tries to get their part of it together.

We were talking to Legislator Krupski outside and we just did have a fare increase last April, I believe, and I know it's being looked at additionally as well as smaller bus routes, which I've seen done in different municipalities, reducing the overhead cost on maintenance, also, you know, connecting people that are in more rural areas up to other forms of transit. I know it's $10 million, I know we need to get money from the State, we're continuing to try to do it, that's going to be the next call today is going to be over to the Assembly and Senate, but we need to try to preserve the funding as much as possible. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Thank you, John. All right, the final card I have is Amparo Enriquez.

MS. ENRIQUEZ:
Good morning. I work for YAI, National Institution for Disabled People. And out the center, there's individuals that are taking the SCAT bus every day who used to do different transportation. It was very expensive and very difficult for them to get in the program on time. Today we are very happy that individuals that live so far away are able to come to the programs and come on time to do the activities that is scheduled. It is very important for us to have that, transportation, because that really helps. There used to be a different transportation that was very expensive. Please help us to keep the transportation so we can serve better those individuals that need it so much. Thank you so much.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Thank you, ma'am. What's your organization?

MS. ENRIQUEZ:
YAI National Institution for People with Disabilities, and I woke for Django Day Help Program.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Thank you.

MS. ENRIRQUEZ:
Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
That's all the cards I have. Would anyone else like to address the committee?

All right, now I guess I would like have the Commissioner come up and share his thoughts on the budget.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
Good morning.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Good morning.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
As you heard, there is -- this is a tough budget, we're aware of that. We understand the deficit that the County's faced, we understand the deficit that the transportation system faces. You know, certainly we're very aware of our constituency and the impact that it faces if the State does not increase their STOA funding; I don't have to repeat the numbers, but I can if you want. Again, I think as Legislator Barraga has said and everybody else at the horseshoe today, you know, we're faced with a tight budget. DPW will continue to provide the services as best we can. If we -- in the face of this budget, we expect it to be a tough year, but we'll be there and we'll do what we can to maintain our services.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
In light of -- could you give your opinion on -- and I asked you this question in a different way at the last committee meeting, about proposed or, rather, the possibility of fare increases and how that could help mitigate any service lost. We're looking to, on the Working Group, any way of increasing revenue, especially reoccurring revenue. There is a -- there certainly hasn't been any consensus in any arena, really, of where to find this increase in revenue, which is something eventually we're going to have to address as we continue to borrow more and more for operating and capital expenses.

And I come from a philosophy where the user fee is a fair way of increasing revenue. Could you give your thoughts on how an increase in the fair could affect or mitigate the loss of service? And, you know, SCAT and fixed line, both. And I know there's a whole schedule for different fares, I know that complicates it even more, but.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
Certainly an increase would reduce the deficit to some extent. The amount that would be needed to offset the County's current 30 to $35 million deficit would be significant. Generally when there is any type of fair increase, the first year, maybe in the first two years there's about a 10% drop in

ridership. It starts to bound back up slowly, we've seen that since we raised the rates a few years ago. It is something that we've talked about, but that's not something that we know is very favorable very politically, so we've not really as a department brought that forward.

We are in the process of improving our system. Obviously we've gotten grants to increase Sunday service and expand the three-quarter mile limit for SCAT service. So we're trying to improve as much and everyone that we can and we will continue to do that. We have our automated vehicle locating system which will be installed within the next year on all buses, that will give us an opportunity to analyze exactly the ridership, who gets on, who gets off, where, when; we're going to be improving and replacing our fare boxes in the coming year as well. So we, as I've said, will continue to look to improve services where we can, given the budget that we're faced with.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
I mean, but -- okay, in context of what was said earlier by Kathy Malloy, because really -- and you mentioned what's favorable politically. The only favorable political solution is to offer increased services and reduce taxes; I mean, that's probably --

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
And that's not sustainable, absolutely.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
I don't know if there's anything else, any other way to go there. But in context of what was said about increase in finding revenue, reoccurring revenue and increasing the property taxes, would that -- would part of that money have to be directed towards -- you mentioned the 30 to $35 million deficit in the bus system, or would that just be partially mitigate that deficit?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
It would be a partial mitigation. Whatever you increased -- I mean, I don't have numbers in front of me about how much you would have to increase to eliminate the deficit, but it would be very significant. Right now, you know, we get about $7 million a year in revenue. We have a deficit of about 38 -- well, $35 million, that's a big gap to fill, you know, but at -- in fairness, an increase in fares would reduce that, however it would impact the ridership which is at the lower spectrum of income.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Thank you. I know my colleagues would like to -- Legislator Barraga, is on the committee, I'll defer to him first, or Legislator Schneiderman.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
Well, based on that, Gil, you know, the roughly 7 million in fares that come in, you know, a 10% increase, let's say, in fares, which would be around a quarter, $0.25; it's only going to get you like $700,000.
You would still be $10 million, $9 million, it depends on who -- yeah, I think it's around $11 million in shortfall, so you're still going to be way short. And, you know, I guess my question is have you started to look at how you would achieve this. I mean, I know like January -- if this budget goes into effect the way it's proposed, there wouldn't be any service cuts January 1st, we'd be going to the State and looking for that money. And the State's -- I forget exactly when their budget is done, but I would say by mid-year we would know if we got the additional money from the State. And then if we didn't, you would have to then quickly put a plan in place. Have you started to figure out what that might look like? How you would approach this problem if it came to that terrible situation?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
We have not gone into it in any detail right now, but in discussion with myself and staff, we've

talked about obviously there are certain routes that just do not generate any real amount of ridership; those we might consider eliminating, possibly combining them with others. We've also discussed reducing the pick-ups, the number of pick-ups, the cycles, if you will. It would be some combination of that, it wouldn't just be an across-the-board slashing of routes.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
Reducing the cycle probably isn't going to save you very much because you still have the bus and, you know, the driver is out there, it's going to be, I think, a very small amount of savings because you're still paying that individual by the hour, maybe there's some gasoline savings or something. And reducing routes would eliminate service completely to certain people, so I don't envy the position you're in because there are no good choices here. I think a concerted effort to try to get what I think most people would say is our fair share of State funding through STOA, right now it seems like the best option, but it's a very difficult situation for you and for the County to be in with this projected $11 million shortfall.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
So just to put the record straight, though, a 25 percent fare increase would result in almost 1.6 million in increased revenue.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
So we're talking about two different things. A 25% fare increase wasn't what I was -- I talked about 10%.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
No, no.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
A 25-cent.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
That's what I said.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
Oh, I thought you said percent.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
A 25-cent fare increase would result in one point -- almost 1.6 increase in revenue.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
One point six million? Okay, I haven't seen that analysis. But Gil I think said that the fare boxes were collecting something like $7 million, so 10% of that would be 700,000. So I was talking about basically 10% on -- what's the current fare, two and a quarter, is that the current fare?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
I believe so.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
I've got a copy here.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
So 10% of two and a quarter would be a little bit over, you know, 20 cents, so 25 cents.

Is it something the numbers aren't adding up to.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Well, look, I'm a plant/science major, I'm not going to do the math for you, but here's the analysis I got. That's why I asked Budget Review to do the numbers.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
And this is across -- this is just in the full fare, right? You're not talking about increases in any of the other fares?

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
No, I think that's got --

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
Oh, it's 25 cents across the board, not just in the full-fare.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Right.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
So that's also your reduced fare, your seniors, students. Give me a moment to take a look at this.

(*Legislator Kennedy entered the meeting at 10:26 A.M.*)

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Not that that's being proposed, but at least -- you know, if you're going to have that discussion, you need to have the numbers so we can really consider everything.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
And I think the proposed budget --

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Legislator Barraga has got a question for the Commissioner.

LEG. BARRAGA:
Not so much a question, it's just that I think we all agree that this entire budgetary process, it's a very complicated one in terms of limited or reduced funding and what we can afford to do with various groups. Certainly there is a great disparity, as we both know, between the amount of money that the State gives to Nassau County versus Suffolk, tens of millions of dollars in difference. And as was pointed out by Legislator Browning and others, that it's time for the members of the State Assembly and the Senate to really deal with the issue, if they wish to deal with the issue. The problem you run into in Albany is that -- and all of us would admit this, there are certain major issues that take precedence, and it goes on for months and months and months. And then you'll read in Newsday where, you know, these four or five things have to be done, and the whole concentration becomes on those four or five issues and everything else falls off the table, even though there's a disparity here that should be corrected and should have been corrected years ago. I think that the Assembly-persons and Senators up there would have a very good case for additional funding, predicated on what goes to Nassau or what goes to Westchester versus Suffolk County.

But again, I'll go back to our situation from a fiscal perspective. You know, right now -- and someone can correct me if I'm wrong -- but the County Executive's budget already has roughly

$30 million we're borrowing from the Assessment Stabilization Reserve Fund, it's in his budget. And if you take a look at the shortfall and sales tax, which is running around 51 million according to his figures, maybe even be more than that, and a structural deficit of better than a hundred million, I can easily see some people saying, you know, instead of taking $30 million from the Stabilization Reserve Fund, we may have to take 40 or 50 because there's 81 million there. But all of that -- again, which nobody really wants to deal with -- has to be paid back, starting I think in 2018, we have to pay back what we've borrowed. And so far, with the 28 million he has put into his budget, we will have borrowed $93 million which has to be paid back to the fund. So it's no free ride.

(*Legislators Calarco & Muratore entered the meeting at 10:28 A.M.*)

The wild card on this is something I've read in the last 24-hours where the Attorney General of the State of New York, Schneiderman, has come up with a settlement with the tobacco companies, and a portion of that settlement is $15 million coming to Suffolk County. Now, that could change the terrain quite a bit, if it's a true $15 million coming to the County. But as some of you recall, and correct me if I'm wrong, back in 2008 and again in 2012, we did tobacco securitization where we decided to take a lump sum money upfront and forgo future payments down a number of years. The question is the way the article read, it looked as if 15 million was going to come in. If that's true, this bus situation and other things might be alleviated quite a bit without having to borrow more from the Stabilization Fund. But I spoke to the Director of Budget Review this morning and he's got his feelers out to check and see whether or not that money is coming to us, or is there an obligation predicated on securitization agreements if that money floats off someplace else. So as soon as he finds out we will find out, and that could make a difference in terms of this particular situation and others with reference to various groups coming in. If it's a true 15 million that we have coming in, is it coming in quick enough to effect the current operating budget so that we can make certain adjustments or changes. So we'll see.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Thank you. We have other guests here at the committee; no comments or questions for the Commissioner, on this or anything else with the budget?

LEG. TROTTA:
No one understands more than me how broke we are.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Okay. So Commissioner, do you -- besides, you know, the bus portion of the budget, is there anything else?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
No.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
Gil, I have a long way to go in terms of reviewing the BRO report, I just got it. But in terms of your overtime, how are you looking with funding for overtime? Because I know that sometimes comes in with snow storms and with dredging and other things. Is it adequate or have you seen major cuts there?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
Speaking of this year or looking at next year's budget?

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
Next year.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
Next year's budget, you know, certainly overtime is always a great unknown to us. You know, given the past few years and the storms that we've had to deal with, both in hurricanes and snow, it's a wild card out there. You know, how the budget is balanced, whether from the County Exec's proposal or your eventual settlement of that, you know, we'll do what we have to do.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
Your department to me is a public safety department, maintaining the roads and the bridges and, you know, the snow plowing and all the infrastructure that you're involved with. It's not an option; you know, we have to make sure that you have adequate funding to do your job. I just want to make sure that you feel like you can deliver on all the things you're required to deliver on.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
Well, I can tell you, given the budget that we're faced with this year, you know, right now we're not able to issue any overtime except in the case of an emergency. In the past we've looked and we've used other funds such as, you know, light, power and water to offset that; I'm a little concerned in the reduction that's proposed for that. Certainly, you know, we would look to get as much overtime as we can given the limited staffing we have, but we will make due with what we have, as long as, you know -- as long as we've got people, we'll keep trying.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
Are those reductions in light and power due to the energy conservation measures we've implemented, that we're seeing savings, or because the fuel costs, they're lower than they were in years past?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
I think that's part of it, but I would defer to BRO, it was in their report, which is always very thorough and, you know, we look forward to reading it. We use it during the course of the year.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
Robert, is that something you are prepared to weigh in on?

MR. LIPP:
We made a handful of recommendations about shortfalls such as overtime in our report. That being said, the difficulty is coming up with offsets to pay for that stuff. So there's an ongoing conversation in the Working Group as to what to do about that.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:
Okay.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
All right. Legislator Browning has a brief question.

LEG. BROWNING:
(Laughter) Why are you saying that? Well, when we're talking about costs, I have to say, you know, I know that the DPW workers are doing the best they can with what they've got. We received some messages about the Clerk's Office, and obviously that's a building where the public are coming in and that things are somewhat deteriorating, not through the fault of the employees, but just that there's just not enough of them to maintain the buildings, just janitors, custodial workers. Have we got anything in the budget for any more? Are you trying to get more custodial workers? Especially in buildings where the public are walking into.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Certainly the staffing that we have is low, we recognize that. We also recognize that the budget is what the budget is. In the case of the complaints that were received in the Clerk's Office, we immediately dispatched personnel out there to find out, take a look, see what it was. For the most part, we think the claims were unfounded, but where we did find issues we addressed them, even in having to issue some overtime to send crews out there to, you know, basically hit the buildings. And that's -- what we're trying to do right now, based on the funding that we have available, is to, you know, essentially issues issue teams of crews to go hit a building, get it cleaned up and then, with the other staffing, try to maintain them on a regular basis. But as I've said from the beginning, the two areas I really need staffing for is my Highways, Operations & Maintenance and my Custodial.

LEG. BROWNING:
Right, and that's the second part. I mean, I live off of William Floyd Parkway and, you know, the grass is growing up on the sidewalks; I mean, it's very unsightly looking. And, you know, I know people are not responsible, they're throwing out their cigarette butts. You know, the last time I saw a street sweeper I couldn't tell you, and just the general maintenance and clean-up. You know, I know that we have the DOL people that go in on occasion, I know that the Sheriff has sent out the SLAP program on occasion, but we can't really be dependent on that. So, you know, I think we should look at the overtime budget and see is there a possibility to maybe, rather than putting money in overtime, hiring bodies. And I know that generally we're always told that overtime is, you know, less expensive than people because of the benefits, but, you know, the fact of the matter is is that when we have a storm, when there's situations occur and we need everybody to work, you can't over extend them either, it's not fair to them. So hopefully we can have a conversation, Robert, about that to see what we could do.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
All right, thank you. If there's no --

LEG. CALARCO:
I've got one question.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Okay, Legislator Trotta, he had my --

LEG. TROTTA:
Just quick. We had talked earlier, I think Legislator Cilmi had asked this, to look at, you know, we're hiring architects for everything, 300,000 a year, 200,000 a year; did we ever look into how much we spent and if we should just hire one, it would be cheaper, than just keep subbing all this stuff out?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
In fairness, before BRO answers, they're waiting for information from me on that. So we have been working on it based on legislation and --

LEG. TROTTA:
You're a little slow on response, huh? But I thank you. I've got to tell you, when I do call for something like, you know, a storm drain fixed, I have to hand it to you, you get there, and I appreciate it and the constituents appreciate it.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
Legislator Calarco.

LEG. CALARCO:
Thank you. I just have a quick question for you, Gil. I actually have my concerns sometimes centered around our mechanics and our ability to do vehicle repair in-house, and I think that is an area where we might be better served putting in funding to hire a couple of more people to come out and do some mechanic work for us as opposed to sending vehicles out. You know, I don't know what a mechanic makes for the County, but I don't think it's quite the rate that we're charged per hour for when we send it out to people, you know, a vehicle for repair. Plus, there's a time lag in getting that vehicle back, and part of the reason we're sending it out is because we can't get to them in-house. So is there any thought to maybe it being more prudent for us to give you a couple of more mechanics and reduce the amount of money that we're spending on outside mechanic work?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
We've actually, in that division, been fortunate to have increased staffing over the past year, we brought people in. At the same time, Performance Management has been doing an analysis of that division to determine, you know, optimally how many guys we should need. I don't know whether that was ever completed yet, but that is being worked on.

LEG. CALARCO:
Well, it's not just even the big work. You know, if you have enough guys to do the regular maintenance, I mean, I think we send all of our cars out for oil changes, it's just -- if it's just a regular routine maintenance to keep the vehicles up in good shape, it would cost us far less over the long run than letting cars get worn down to the point that they need major repairs.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
Right. Certainly we could always use more staff, I won't question that. The question is, you know, how are they paid for and that's really, you know, the --

LEG. CALARCO:
Well, I think the trade off in my mind, and maybe this is the question I'm asking, isn't the trade off that we are going to spend less? You know, it takes a guy say an hour to do a brake job, but the book time that we get charged is two hours. So you're getting charged $60 an hour for two hours to get a brake job done by outside, somebody outside just on the labor cost alone, not to mention the parts, so if we have somebody in-house who can do it and it really only takes about an hour to get the job done and the guy is making, you know, $45,000 a year, it's probably not 60 an hour. Now we're at a point where it is much more cost effective to just simply have our own people doing the work and the savings is, you know, shaved off by the amount of money we have to spend in outside mechanics.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
Certainly, given the amount of staffing we have, I would think that if we added some more staff -- I don't know that -- and this is with all due respect; I don't know that oil changes would be what I would focus them on, because you get them pretty cheap. You know, they're pretty efficient, the oil --

LEG. CALARCO:
I would leave that up to you to decide what was the best.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:
Yeah, right. But the median repairs is where we would look to do them, or similarly in our heavy equipment as well, that type of repair. When you start getting to the super larger things like transmission replacement, things like that, certainly that's specialized enough that you want to send that out. So there might be some balance there, you know, in the mid-level scope of work. But at

the lower range, you know, right now I think you can get a better bang for just sending it out for the oil changes.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:
All right. Well, thank you. If there's no other questions, we are adjourned. Thank you.

(*The meeting was adjourned at 10:41 AM*)