

***HATE CRIMES TASK FORCE***

***Of the***

***Suffolk County Legislature***

A regular meeting of the Hate Crimes Task Force was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium at the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on September 1, 2009, at 3:00 PM.

**Members Present:**

*Legislator DuWayne Gregory - Chairman/Legislative District #15*  
Det. Sgt. Robert Reecks - Commanding Officer/Hate Crimes-SCPD  
Roderick Pearson - President of the Islip Town NAACP  
Inspector Aristedes Mojica - Commanding Officer/5th Precinct-SCPD  
Reynolds Hawkins - Social Worker/Amityville High School  
Laura Ahearn - Executive Director/Crime Victims Center  
Reverend JoAnn Barrett - Co-Chair/Interfaith Anti-Bias Task Force of SC  
Renee Ortiz - Chief Deputy Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature  
Co-Chair of the Latino Jewish Council

**Members Not Present:**

Rabbi Stephen Moss - Chair/SC Human Rights Commission.  
Co-Chair/Anti-Bias Task Force of Suffolk County  
Director/Stop Bias  
David Kilmnick - Chief Exec Officer/LI Gay & Lesbian Youth Center  
Candido Crespo - Hispanic Advisory Board

**Also In Attendance:**

Maxvel Rose - Aide to Legislator Gregory  
Colleen Ansanelli - Coordinator/Criminal Justice Coordinating Council  
Jill Porter - Suffolk County Probation Officer

**Verbatim Minutes Taken By:**

Alison Mahoney - Court Reporter

*(\*The meeting was called to order at 3:12 PM\*)*

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay. I thank everyone for coming on short notice, but we thought that it was important that we meet prior to the next public hearing and kind of get some feedback on how the first public hearing went. And with the holiday coming up, we know it's probably going to be difficult to get people together. So I don't anticipate that we'll be together too long, but I thought that it was important that we do get together.

The brief -- the comments that I've gotten from the first public hearing were positive. So I don't know if anyone else heard anything else other than that, but I think that it's important that we do kind of -- you know, we spoke about it, we had the telephone call with Mr. {Moranda} from the Latino, National Latino Officers Association, which I think was helpful, but I think we need to think again or be reminded that this next meeting is probably going to be a more passionate meeting. I suspect that there will probably be more people just because of the location and given recent events. So I think we all need to be mindful that the next meeting more than likely won't be like the last meeting, hopefully it will be, but we should be prepared nevertheless.

So does anyone have any comments about how the first meeting went? Should we do it differently? I tend to think that Sergeant Reecks' presentation was excellent, it answered a lot of people's questions, if they had any. It certainly informed them of what the law is and the limitations as to law enforcement, as to what people's perceptions are and their responsibilities because they have to work within the confines of the law, so I think that was informative. Any comments?

**INSPECTOR MOJICA:**

One thing that I thought was good was that sure as heck somebody was going to show up and speak, and in their mind, they're not lying, but they believe what they're going to say and they're going to be factually incorrect and Bob getting it out there out in the open. They might say it anyway, they might not even hear what he has to say, but mostly everybody else will. So, you know, at the very least, "Well, he just said that," and the other guys is like, "Okay, it's easy enough to figure out, you just go look at the law book," you know, it's easy to do. So I think from that perspective it was helpful.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Yeah. And from my recollection, there were several people that even mentioned as Sergeant Reecks stated in his presentation, so they were paying attention, they understood that maybe what they had originally had intended to say was inaccurate and they reflected on their comments and they were able to talk more informatively. So I think in that way it was a double impact.

I want to back up for a minute. I know as a group we had discussed about certain people making statements and comments and I kind of backtracked on that, and I only did that because the evening before I got a call from the County Executive and he had asked me to allow a representative, and that was Inspector Rios, to make a statement about the forms that the Police Officers use, and so it's my understanding that that was what the context of his statement was going to be; of course it went beyond that. And so then Assemblyman Ramos asked to make a statement, I thought it was fair, if we give one elected official or a representative of an elected official the opportunity to speak, that we allow someone else to speak, and I think it was okay. I mean, you know, I'll just leave it at that. It didn't go over board.

So I'm sure there may be more requests. I'm not sure if the County Executive is going to again, you know, make a request to make a statement, similar to the last time. I assume that he would in every format, every forum or public hearing that we have, he's going to want to do that just to make sure his message gets out, and we'll just have to accommodate just out of fairness, I think, other people. I hope that they'll be respectful in their comments and contribute to the process and not make it more of a political thing than anything else.

*(\*Roderick Pearson entered the meeting at 3:17 PM\*)*

Does anyone have any comments? I know there were some comments about that. I know Rabbi Moss had made a comment, but he's not here today, he's on vacation. How are you doing, Reverend?

**MS. AHEARN:**

I think that Detective Sergeant Reecks' presentation set the tone for the whole evening, and I would suggest that we have him do that presentation, if he's amenable to that, at each hearing.

And there were at least two points where speakers contradicted what Detective Sergeant Reecks said in terms of the definition of a hate crime. And I wonder if there can be an opportunity, when somebody is speaking, for that information to be corrected in an appropriate way. Because at one point there was another definition put out and, in fact, barriers to the successful arrest in cases where there are potential hate crimes, and it confused me because I was very clear, after you did your presentation, what a hate crime was, what criteria need to be met and I think that that was contradicted, probably inadvertently, by two of the speakers. Is there any opportunity, is there any way in this format that Detective Sergeant can correct that? Because the law is the law and if somebody leaves with misinformation, we haven't really done what we should do.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Right.

**DETECTIVE SERGEANT REECKS:**

My concern with getting into a he said/she said battle, I think that goes against what this panel was instructed or tasked to do; we're supposed to be listening. Originally I was only going to give the presentation to the board members and it has morphed itself into the opening statement. I think if we go any further, we're going to get into a debate that that's not what I -- I am led to believe this task force is for.

So I think we have to leave it up to the public that once we make -- once I make my presentation, which is all verifiable, each and every slide, and someone comes up and says something totally different, then I think it's up to this task force at that point to listen to both and we'll deal with the legal ramifications and the verifiable ramifications later on.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Right, and I understand, I think I understand your position. I don't want you to be in a position where you're defending the law, because you're not -- you didn't make the law, you just have to work within the confines of the law and that can present a hostile environment. I can see someone saying, "Well, see, you know, he supports the law that has no teeth and that's why we're in the situation that we're in," as opposed to you're working within the confines of the law, you know. Because some people, you know, they're going to be frustrated because of the way the law is and we don't want you to be in a position of defending the law that they're frustrated at and you have really no control over it.

**MS. AHEARN:**

I wonder if there would be an opportunity after -- if there is a belief that a speaker doesn't have the information clearly understood, if maybe the Chair, if you could say, "Would you like somebody to follow-up with you for further information?" And I would be willing to have our advocates reach out to them and talk to them about it.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Good, yeah. And speaking of our advocates, maybe you can talk a little bit about what they were able to do during the first public hearing so people have an understanding of how that worked.

**MS. AHEARN:**

We had four of our crime victim advocates present and two agency staff present as well. And it really, logistically it worked out well because Legislator Gregory had announced initially that the two gentlemen standing by the door were there for advocacy which worked out well, and then you also announced the four advocates. So there were two individuals who approached our staff and two very brief in-takes were taken and those two individuals are coming into the agency for further in-take and referral for services.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay. Great, great. And everyone that sees an advocate, they'll be directed to the appropriate agencies?

**MS. AHEARN:**

When -- normally, when agency staff have contact or advocates have contact with somebody who is requesting victim services, a very brief intake is done to get general information to know what direction the advocate will be going in, and then an appointment is made for an extensive intake which is normally about an hour to an hour-and-a-half. And at that point, a comprehensive assessment, not only of what the individual is requesting in terms of victim services might be provided, but also we assess the entire system, the situation the individual is in with health care, concrete services, housing, any information regarding any legal assistance, educational assistance. So it's a comprehensive assessment of what's happening for that individual and their family. From there, the case is presented to agency management and then from there referrals are provided, normally that's done within a very short period of time. So depending upon what the schedule is for the individual requesting services, we can be there -- we're 24-hours a day, so we can actually do it overnight even. But in these two cases, the first individual is coming in Thursday morning and the second one earlier next week, but they have had -- both of them have already had intakes and there has been a determination no emergency services are required, because that's the first assessment. And then from there, comprehensive services, normally up to ten referrals, are provided to those individuals, direct services that they need.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay, great. Reynolds, you had a comment?

**MR. HAWKINS:**

No, I was just going to say, in fairness, I think the two individuals that contradicted last week, one of them came in late after the presentation, so they didn't get the presentation.

You know, if brochures or pamphlets or some sort of information is just laid out there and making sure that everybody has an opportunity maybe at the beginning of the meeting to read it, you know, five minutes, ten minutes prior to so they can all have an understanding, you know, might be able to clarify some of the stuff before, you know, they get up there and start speaking and they don't know what they're speaking about.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay, that's a good point. Yes?

**MR. PEARSON:**

I had a question. Are we going to entertain a statement from the leadership of the County at each one of the meetings; is that appropriate? I was uncomfortable with it. I thought that Detective Sergeant Reecks gave a complete, thorough discussion of what hate crimes are and I was a little taken back by the presentation that came afterwards. And so my question is, is that going to continue, especially as we're going to Patchogue?

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Yeah, I had addressed that, probably before you came in. I had entertained a request by the County Executive the night before, the day before, whatever it was, and he had asked that a representative of his make a brief statement because there were some misconceptions, as he put it, about the use

of forms that the Police use in arrests -- well, in arrests as well as for victims, and he felt that it was important that, you know, the appropriate information be put out there. So I said okay, you know, I felt that there was no harm in that. Of course, his statement contained that, but it went a little beyond that. So I felt that, you know, that it would be equally appropriate that other elected officials, namely Assemblyman Ramos, had the opportunity to speak as well.

I would assume that the County Executive would want to make a similar statement, he hasn't -- I haven't spoken to him, I haven't spoken to anyone from his office, but I'm assuming he would want to make a similar presentation at every public hearing so he can get his point of view out there.

You know, I think that it's difficult. I'm trying to put myself in his shoes. It's difficult to have some impression out there, whether factual or not, and not respond to it, so I think it's only fair to give him that opportunity. I don't want it to be a whole big, long political debate, but I think, you know, giving -- I didn't see anything wrong with giving him an opportunity to kind of clear the air, if you will.

**MR. PEARSON:**

Not to belabor it; does that happen at every Legislative session, that there's a statement read before the Legislative session by the County Executive's Office?

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Pretty much.

*(\*Laughter From Panel\*)*

**MR. PEARSON:**

It's just that one of the media sources gave a lot of attention to that statement and gave a lot of coverage. Of course we have no control over the media, but the media, that one particular media just sort of made that the highlight of their reporting. So the comment's on the record and I'll leave it at that.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Speaking of the media, that's probably the one biggest concern that I had. You know, I would like to get your input or feedback from -- about that. I think we should have a designated area where the media should be located, because I was told there was at least one, on one occasion that there was a person, a Spanish-speaking person who wanted to make a statement, an advocate or a translator was requested, and by the time the translator came out to the lobby, the media just accosted this person and he said, "I don't want to speak anymore. I came to speak, I didn't come here to get interviewed by the media." So I think out of respect for those people that want to make a statement that, you know, the media has to really be cognizant of that and we should kind of -- that's one issue. And I couldn't hear it, but some of the members had said that they couldn't hear because the media were doing their interviews in the back. And poor Alison, I wasn't on that side, so I'm sure she could barely hear when she was doing the translation because they were all behind -- well, a majority of them were behind her.

So I would like to -- you know, I'm going to go -- we're going to be at the Briarcliff College at the next public hearing, I'm sure it's going to draw the same amount of attention as the first meeting. So I would like to designate a certain area where the media can be and keep them there so that it can be orderly and so that everyone can be heard and understood. Did any of have you any concerns about that?

**MS. AHEARN:**

There were --

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

I know Renee had --

**MS. ORTIZ:**

I did, yeah, I did. And I heard them in the back which, you know, they're going to -- we're not going to be able to control them, but we can at least ask them to be respectful and cognizant of the sensitivity of what we're doing.

And I also think that, you know, they're going to do interviews, they're going to continue to do interviews throughout the hearings, but I think if we can ask them to either step outside, either in the hallway or outside, I don't know what the setup is at Briarcliff, I don't know how it will be, but, you know, we can at least just ask them to be respectful and keep things in a certain area or outside, I think. Because it was brought to my attention about the one individual in particular who was -- I don't want to say accosted, but he got bombarded by media when he said that he was looking for a translator and wanted to speak and then he didn't speak, so that's troubling.

**REVEREND BARRETT:**

I think to use that, to let them know that someone wasn't able to have their voice, you know, they weren't able to be heard because of the media. So, I mean, that's where our concern is, you know, let them know that we really are focused and that's what we care about.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

And I try not to watch the news too much, I know as a politician that's hard to do, but I was able to catch one channel, I don't know what it was, but it was a gentleman that they interviewed and he said that he was a victim of a hate crime, and he didn't -- you know, I'm assuming if he's willing to go on TV and announce it, he would have been willing to come and speak about it and he didn't, so I don't know what that was about. So I just -- you know, of course we invite the media, we welcome them, but we should be really cognizant of the people that we're really asking to come before us and respect their wishes, you know, and not make them a media show because it's a personal thing for them and not to be used as part of the media, whatever; I don't want to say ploy, but agenda.

**DETECTIVE SERGEANT REECKS:**

Normally when we have a large function, we being the Police Department, we have a Public Information Officer who is controlling the media. Is that a possibility that you have in your power, to have the PIO officer keep control of it? I mean, we're going to have to have a physical body there to do that.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Kara Hahn was there, she's -- I'm not sure if it's Director of --

**MS. ORTIZ:**

Communications.

**MS. HAHN:**

Director of Communications.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

She was there in a kind of informal but working capacity, so maybe we can kind of formalize your capacity? I don't know if you're available at all the hearings, I know you were at last week's.

**MS. HAHN:**

Absolutely, that's why I came in when I heard you begin to discuss the media and any issues that may have resulted from -- I mean, it was fantastic, you had a great interest. There were seven cameras there, many -- a couple of them were network cameras from Manhattan.

I think the room led itself to -- one of the problems that I heard mentioned was that they were doing

their live shots from -- well, not live, but their shots from the back. So if we want to avoid that next time, you know, I didn't realize it was a problem at the time. If we want to avoid that next time -- obviously, like here, it's just -- there's not room for that, it's not appropriate. We'll have to set up the room, and I can help you do this, but set up in a way that it's just not possible for them to do that, whether it be roping sections off that they just don't -- know they just can't go into or just setting up all chairs, you know, in the whole room so that there's just not room for that kind of shot.

If someone comes in to speak, you know, it's -- there's the chance that they're going to go after them. I mean, it happens here where they'll chase somebody out and, you know, they'll ask them to speak afterwards. If we expect that this is going to happen again, we should have someone at the front desk where people are signing in that are going to escort people in, you know, the ones that state they are victims; the media was looking for that. When they were calling to find out about this, they asked, "Will there be victims that are going to speak?" And so what happened was they kind of -- he must have said it to someone and one camera got him and then they all rushed over, "Who do they got?" You know, they all rushed over and he spoke to every single one of those cameras and it was the same guy. You know, so it's not that he didn't want to tell his story, I think by the end of the night he just was tired of telling his story, which, you know, hopefully we got a card for him, I'm not sure if we did.

But what we should do then is have someone who's set up or several people to be waiting at the table and escort people in that might have this issue come up again. But I think there's things we can do with the physical setup of the room to avoid those shots in the back. We can have a press area so that they're contained, but we can't stop them from asking people who have already spoken or who are coming in to speak, asking them to speak, we really can't stop them from that. And it's a -- you know, it's a public hearing, so.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Right.

**MS. ORTIZ:**

After someone has spoken or after someone has already spoken with an advocate, if they choose to speak to the media, I think that's fine. But I just don't want them to interfere or prevent people from coming in or from speaking.

**REVEREND BARRETT:**

That's what I wanted to clarify; was someone prevented from speaking is what happened?

**MS. AHEARN:**

Yeah, we were told they were. Somebody was actually -- that individual that you're talking about never made it to speak and never made it to any of our advocates. So, yes, of course the media, they're an essential part of this, they spread the mission, they spread the word for us. But in that situation, that individual never had an opportunity to meet with those individuals who were ultimately tasked with trying to help them.

**MS. HAHN:**

No, absolutely. And I think that we -- next time we can be cognizant that anyone who signs up, you know, to speak and that expresses that, we kind of usher them and try to help them in, because the media is going to do that. If they hear -- you know, and again, I don't know how much interest there will be the second time around, but maybe there still will be, especially in Patchogue.

You know, if we can work it out so we have people to help them get in and sit down and have a seat. Some people, though, you know, a camera wants to talk to them, they kind of like that. It seemed to me like he just was tired of telling a story after saying it eight times out there. I mean, because the radio crew got to him, too.

**MS. ORTIZ:**

See, my only concern with that is if that person needed assistance from an advocate and needed to report something or needed any type of help, they may have thought by speaking to the media that they were giving their -- sharing their story and giving their information, but now they're not getting the help, the assistance that they probably needed, the follow up to that.

**MS. HAHN:**

Absolutely. I think we should make sure that everybody gets -- you know, make sure that everybody gets a card as well, but having people to usher them in would help that.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

That's a good point that you make as far as the setup. We're working -- just so that everyone knows, we're working to get chairs provided for the next meeting. Briarcliff College doesn't have chairs, so they -- we may have to rent chairs from them at \$1.99 a piece. But I'm trying to -- I've called Commissioner Anderson from DPW, we're trying to see if we can get chairs from him. He called me this morning, I called him back. So we're playing phone tag, so hopefully I'll have an answer on that by tomorrow, but if not, I don't know what we're going to do or how we're going to work that out, but I'm sure it will be worked out some way. But when I do figure it out, you know, I'll certainly will coordinate a time so you can kind of help, maybe when I go out to visit and set things up.

**MS. HAHN:**

Yes, I would be willing to help, go out, do a previsit, help to set up the room. You might want to ask the local fire departments. I know that the ones up in the Setauket, Stony Brook area have lots of chairs that they sometimes are willing to lend out and, you know, if DPW can do the transporting, who knows, maybe they would be willing to share.

**MR. PEARSON:**

Legislator Gregory?

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Yes.

**MR. PEARSON:**

In our conference in the city, we had a separate room set up as a press media room and all the interviews had to be done in that room; is that possible? I don't know if Briarcliff, but if they don't have chairs, they may not have enough rooms either. But is there --

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

I'm sure they probably -- I've been there a couple of times. I'm sure they're going to want to be close to the action, if you will. And the room that we're going to be in is kind of far off from the other rooms that we'll be -- the other rooms are far off from where we'll be.

**MS. HAHN:**

I think that's worth looking into, if there's a separate room where a private interview can take place. You know, we still need to set up a pen for them to record what's going on in the hearing, but to have a place where they can go and speak to someone that has already spoken to you at the podium but then they might want to handle one-on-ones, that would be worth it, even if it was a short walk down the hallway.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay.

**MS. AHEARN:**

Kara, logistically, when we were talking before about the structure, you're going to pre-visit. When

you actually hand the card out, there is a check-in point, somebody, from what I can recall where we were, there's a check-in point and the card is handed to them. When the card is handed to whomever it is that's going to be divvying the cards out or giving them to Legislator Gregory, at that point a determination probably could be made if that's an individual speaking for themselves. And if that's the situation where they are speaking for themselves and we suspect that they're a potential victim, because you can't just come out and ask that, maybe at that point one of the advocates, or you could let us know and I could assign an advocate to each individual that we believe is going to be speaking about an experience they had as a victim.

**MS. HAHN:**

Yes. I mean, Legislator Gregory's staff was handling the cards and there were most -- it seemed like mostly advocates that had signed in and they would identify themselves as associated with an organization, but there were a few that said "for self". So that may be a way to go about at least escorting procedure.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Right. Okay. At this point, I wanted to ask Colleen Ansanelli to come forward. She's a great resource for us and she's sat quietly at most of our meetings, but she has a lot of information that she can provide. She's going to be working to compile our report in the end and I wanted to get -- yeah, you can sit here at the mike, Colleen.

**REVEREND BARRETT:**

Can I just ask a question before she's coming up?

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Sure.

**REVEREND BARRETT:**

Some of the reports that were suggested to us, like the Hofstra report, are we going to get copies of that and be able to read them to try to add to -- you know, make this more complete?

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Yes. Yep, absolutely.

**DETECTIVE SERGEANT REECKS:**

And one other thing, while we're on it. One of the comments that jumped out at me at the meeting was any color but green, I think, for the cards --

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Ah, yeah.

**DETECTIVE SERGEANT REECKS:**

You know, while we might smile, it certainly -- we're asking them to fill out a green card. I mean, it kind of slaps in the face of what's going on.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay.

**MS. ORTIZ:**

We have yellow cards.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

That's a good observation. Colleen, I just wanted to get your general comments, if you had any, about how the public hearing went and just your experiences in similar formats, any recommendations.

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

I think --

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

You have to hold the mike, sorry.

**MS. ORTIZ:**

You have to hold it the whole time.

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

Oh, the whole time.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

It's like a Dick Cheney torture technique.

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

It's to limit the time we spend on the mike.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Yeah, exactly.

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

Okay. First of all, the media; it's really going to be almost impossible to determine the effect that that had on this, but it's probably going to be tremendous. Just anyone pulling up, walking up and intending to come speak might have just turned right around. We have no way of knowing how many people were completely dissuaded from appearing because of the media.

I mean, I found it very distracting to be in the audience and to have cameras continually -- you know, I wasn't there to be photographed, I wasn't there to be on the news, I didn't want to be on the news, you know. So if I'm feeling that way and trying to duck cameras, you know, it was hard to be attentive and to keep track of how many cameras were literally on your face the entire time. You know, so that was -- I watched different people in the audience doing the same thing, I watched different people in the audience leave the room and not come back because they were trying to dodge the cameras, they did not want to be on camera and they just decided it was too much of a battle so they walked out. So, you know, we can't gauge how many people we lost, who might have entered the building. We can't gauge how many people left once they saw the media's involvement inside. I agree, it was distracting, you could actually overhear them doing their interviews.

The other observation I had was, you know, in just sort of doing some kind of an intake on the persons coming to speak for themselves or for an organization and what is their topic, just because -- like we've discussed this before, the things that stick with the committee or the persons assembled would be some kind of, you know, story that, you know, is kind of riveting or whatnot, but to have a guy come up -- let's just take the example of the guy who's just -- he's shooting a video, apparently.

*(\*Laughter From Panel\*)*

You know, it was distracting and it sort of minimized the impact of a lot of the other stuff that was good, I thought. So I think that if there was a way to kind of filter that out a little bit and say, "Although we appreciate the fact that you're shooting this video and this is probably going to be a very positive thing, this isn't the forum for it. You know, this is about speaking out against something that you know of specifically that's been going on in your community or to yourself." So those are my two basic observations.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay. Just hold on for a second. Oh, go ahead.

**MR. HAWKINS:**

I was just going to ask, I don't know how this is going to carry over, but does the media have to be in there with the cameras?

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Yes, because this is a public meeting.

**MR. HAWKINS:**

Only because of the location and the sensitivity of this particular meeting; you know, maybe not the others, but just this one in particular. Now, I understand that they're going to come in there and do their reporting in words, but the video is going to be crazy.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Yeah, I checked with Counsel and we really can't bar them from --

**MR. HAWKINS:**

Because my concern is the same thing, that people are going to be very intimidated. Because what was bothering me about this was that every single time someone went up and started speaking, there was one or two people up there throwing their mike right underneath them, you know, or adjusting it. And I know for myself, that would distract me or just discourage me, or if I was to be the next speaker, I probably wouldn't go up there now.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Right.

**DETECTIVE SERGEANT REECKS:**

Just from experience, the location where we're going, they'll probably be running live. The towers will probably be up by the time we get there, the trucks with the towers, they'll be running live-feed. And don't be surprised if you have CNN, the big channels there, especially since we're going to Patchogue. I really believe this is going to severely impact what this task force is all about, but we've chosen Patchogue and now we're going to have to deal with what we're going to get with it.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Well, I'm glad this topic kind of came up this way because it kind of -- it's a good segway into what I wanted to talk about next. And I think we missed an opportunity at the first meeting to capture as much information as we possibly can, so I was talking to Renee and some others about what if we did a survey. So if you come there, you can sign in if you want to speak, or not, but everyone would get a survey, a short survey or page or two the maximum, get demographic information and some information that we can use, that Colleen and CJCC will be able to put -- compile in their report. It wouldn't be scientific, of course, but information that would be helpful for us. I spoke to Colleen briefly about it, and what are your quick thoughts?

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

You know how the standard goes for social workers; as long as it's distributed in a certain way and everyone has an equal opportunity to get a hold of this survey and a place to fill it out. You know, we don't just hand it to them and expect them, you know, "Go take care of this," but give them a pencil and the time to give it back and put it in a box and make them feel that, "It's private. There's a box over there, just return it over there," and they're going to be a little less hesitant if you do that.

And then as far as the questions that we'll put together, that we want to -- the characteristics that we're trying to grab that we don't have already, you know, if you guys could compile what you think would be helpful for you to know in your experience that would be indicators of something that you

don't know enough about right now.

And the other thing, I was just thinking about this in the audience when I was hearing how there were a couple of interpretations. Some people could have been talking about Federal hate crime statutes and not necessarily the locality, like the law association that was there in particular. It might be helpful for your purposes to leave up on a screen one in Spanish and one in English what it is that Suffolk's -- Suffolk follows New York State, New York State's Hate Crime Law is this.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay, okay.

**MS. ORTIZ:**

As it pertains to a survey, is it feasible to not only accept them at the hearing but, you know, accept them outside? And in some conversation with some of the community advocates, particularly in the immigrant community, can we utilize our advocates to get those surveys out to people that may not feel comfortable to do it there or to turn it in there; does that effect your --

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

Outcomes?

**MS. ORTIZ:**

Your outcomes or your reporting?

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

No, not necessarily. It's just the more ways that you make them returnable, the fairer it is. So you're not limiting the information because the person wasn't there or able to fill it out at that point, "We would rather go home and have someone else fill it out", that's fine. But then you need to deal with, you know, postage, self-addressed stamped envelopes and that kind of stuff.

**MS. AHEARN:**

Also, the individual, if it's distributed through community organizations or if it's just distributed widely, the same person can fill it out ten times.

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

This is true, you can always have that.

**MS. AHEARN:**

So it's not very scientific. It's really so much better done at the hearings, if there's a way to do that.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

That's true. That's something that we have to consider.

**MS. ORTIZ:**

But we already know it's not going to be a scientific --

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Yeah, it's not going to be --

**MS. ORTIZ:**

-- survey, it's going to be an informal survey.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Right.

**MS. ORTIZ:**

But, you know, I'm just thinking to give the most opportunity to --

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

Okay. The Police Department, I know in some regards, in particular to help law enforcement and persons in the community who are dealing with persons with mental illness and they have issues on the other side, they do have an e-mail address that they make available for people to basically write and say what's going on, what they've observed, what's been happening. And the Police Department does monitor those e-mails, you know, read through them and get information, good information out of them and try to respond to as many as they possibly can that they can respond to if they're appropriate. So I don't know how you would want to do something like that, but that has some potential.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

We have an e-mail, we have a website link and it talks about the task force and it has the flier in Spanish and English of the dates and it has an e-mail address, my e-mail address, which I have enough e-mail already, but they can link on it and they can send an e-mail. I haven't gotten any yet, but it would go directly to my e-mail which I check almost every day. I don't know if that would suffice.

**MS. ORTIZ:**

I mean --

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

As long as you have someone on the receiving end that's going to sift through all those e-mails.

**MS. ORTIZ:**

The main reason I even suggest accepting outside of the hearings is because as a result of the first hearing, and I think it's a positive -- it says something positive for how the first hearing was conducted, but Legislator Gregory's office received -- well, I received three calls, I was -- three Spanish-speaking individuals were referred to me that contacted Legislator Gregory's office, post the hearing, to report incidents. So, you know, either the word got -- either someone was there and didn't feel comfortable doing it there or they heard after the fact and they felt comfortable enough as to the way the hearing was conducted that they could contact his office. It's a government office, they still called and I was able to refer two people to your office and another individual I left it to them, they didn't want to be transferred immediately.

So the fact that we got calls after the fact, I don't want to exclude individuals who maybe don't immediately want to fill out a survey or who aren't at the hearing and hear afterwards that, "Okay, it's safe to give this information."

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

Yeah, because they're looking at you, too, you know? They're looking at you to see what are these guys all about, and they might walk away and not at that moment know that may be trust worthy and maybe they would actually speak to you, but afterwards they might consider and say, "You know what? Let me give it a shot."

**MS. AHEARN:**

Maybe we can make periodic announcements during the hearing, that if somebody does not feel comfortable coming up to the microphone, that they can see an advocate and the advocates will be identified the way you did, and just keep reminding people of that? Because like Colleen said, if there are ten cameras, I found myself even walking around the cameras to avoid being filmed as well. So if I'm uncomfortable with that, then I'm confident there were people that were not comfortable. So periodic announcements as reminders that it's private conversation that you can have, I think it would be helpful.

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

You can probably anticipate, too, that once you identify the advocates in the audience the way you did this time, that the press is going to now focus on those advocates and watch to see who they were approached by and how they're approached and then follow that interaction.

**MS. AHEARN:**

Well, I'll tell you, we had two individuals that were there, two gentlemen if you noticed by the door.

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

Former law enforcement.

**MS. AHEARN:**

Yeah, and they were the ones who managed, the other former law enforcement, but they were the ones who managed. Actually, there was quite a conflict in the back of the room with somebody who was very agitated because the media were doing interviews and this person couldn't hear, so they were able to manage them. And I think also there were, you know, other supports present as well that were very helpful. So I think that if we're aware and the staff are aware that somebody might be trying to follow them, we can make sure that they're not followed out of the room, when they're giving -- after the intake.

**MR. HAWKINS:**

Can there also be a permanent or a person that's at the podium as a translator, just there?

**REVEREND BARRETT:**

Any announcements when you say there's other alternatives, they can say -- you know, translate that into Spanish.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

We did have someone there, she was sitting next to the stenographer. So maybe I can do a better job of --

**REVEREND BARRETT:**

Say the announcements in Spanish, you know, actually -- especially the ones about the survey.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Oh, right. Okay.

**REVEREND BARRETT:**

That their advocates are here; I mean, that should have been said in Spanish.

**MR. HAWKINS:**

Yeah. And also just a person just at the podium so that people know they can come up there, there will be someone there. Because I'm sure there were people that didn't want to come up there because they didn't have anyone that's going to translate and they didn't want to be a spectacle prior.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Oh, okay. Okay. All right. So everyone, what do you think about the survey idea? There will be -- you know, we'll let people know that it's anonymous, you know, like I said, something short. We do have something that the Southern Poverty Law Center did, it's like five or six pages and it asks for information I'm not necessarily sure that we need, but I'm sure you guys can put something together.

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

We have -- you know the research material I brought to your office? There's about four or five of them throughout.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay, great.

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

So I'll just pull some of those out and maybe forward them on to you to look at.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Yeah.

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

Okay?

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay. I think that's all that I had. So if anyone else had any concerns.

**DETECTIVE SERGEANT REECKS:**

I have a concern. The location we're going to, I'm sorry, if someone from the County Executive's Office will be giving a statement, and then we're going to have Legis -- I mean, various elected officials giving a statement; is there going to be a limit as to who is going to be giving statements? Because it's a hunch that the Mayor of Patchogue will probably want to give a statement and it's going to just keep snow balling till -- this is just going to be a night of statements. So are you going to put a limit on this?

**MR. PEARSON:**

That was my point.

**REVEREND BARRETT:**

You know, we're here to look at the sources of it. So if they have a comment on what the possible sources might be, put them to task in their statement --

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Right.

**REVEREND BARRETT:**

-- might be a way of offering it up. I mean, all it was was, "This is what I'm doing, this is what I'm doing. It's not my fault, it's not my fault," or, "This is what this one should be doing or should be doing," instead of like -- keep it more focused is what I'm saying. If someone is going to speak, keep it focused or shorter.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay.

**MR. PEARSON:**

I am -- I'm new to this process, so bear with me. I keep going back to the listening tour that the African-American Advisory Board did and those four -- and I keep going back to that format, and we just didn't allow it. We just didn't -- and again, I'm new to this public hearing thing, so I'm still learning. But if we're out to listen and to hear, while I appreciated some of the speeches and some of them I didn't, we just didn't allow it. This was a public hearing for the public. And I think that once all those speeches and all those presentations are done, it almost says to the audience this is not about us, this is another avenue for someone to talk about why they should be reelected, and I'm just concerned about it.

And again, I may have appreciated some of them and not some others, but is there -- there's just got to be a way, if we can't eliminate them, to somehow manage it, and I don't know how. The best way to manage it is eliminate it, but if you can't, I don't know. It just gives a message to the community that -- and it also what it happened for us, it damaged our credibility, because when statements were read -- and actually, in one of the listening tours, they actually came and it caused friction, and actually almost a fight. I don't know how to manage that other than by eliminating it.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

I don't think that it necessarily damaged our --

**MR. PEARSON:**

No, for us, in that setting.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Right.

**MR. PEARSON:**

The community felt like you brought us out here, you said you wanted to hear, but all we got was the first half hour, 45 minutes of how good I am, what I've done already. So that was that forum, not this forum, but in that forum.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay. You're right. I haven't -- as a matter of courtesy, I was going to call Mayor Pontieri and Legislator Eddington because it will be in their areas, I'm sure the Mayor would like to make a brief statement, you know. He's been in the hot seat, to put it -- say it bluntly.

**MR. PEARSON:**

Then he should call his own press conference and give a statement.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

To no fault of his own, but I think in a forum like that, I think in a sense, if I were a resident of that area, I think I would find it somewhat reassuring that, one, that my Mayor was there and that he made some remarks about how he's bringing the community together, or whatever he's doing, I don't know what he's doing; but I know he's doing stuff, I'm not saying that he's not.

You know, this should be a fine line, you're right, it shouldn't be a whole 10, 15 minute speech. You know, I respectfully -- I respected the request of the County Executive, I was told it was going to be a five minute statement, eight minutes in I think it was halfway through. So I think there's a balance and there will be people that come, I'm sure Assemblyman Ramos will be there, Mayor Pontieri, maybe Jack Eddington, maybe Legislator Montano, whoever, I don't know; I'm just throwing it off the top of my head.

**MR. HAWKINS:**

Can they be given a room with the press?

*(\*Laughter From Panel\*)*

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Yes, and I'm sure they would love that.

**MS. AHEARN:**

Is there a way to be -- I see what you're saying, you're trying to be fair here to everybody.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Right.

**MS. AHEARN:**

If our objective is to find the sources of racial tension in the County and make recommendations. Why don't we be fair, then? If we were saying that a victim, a potential victim of a hate crime or an organization that represents individuals who have been victims, they're limited to five minutes. So why doesn't everybody get that same courtesy? Five minutes in whatever order you come.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay, we could do that. I just don't want -- I'm trying to look at it from both sides. I know if I'm at a community or a public hearing and -- you know, we get it from both sides; if we're there we're grandstand, but if we don't show up, "Oh, he doesn't care." You know, so if they don't come they're going to say, "Well, we didn't really think he cared anyway and he showed that he or she didn't care," but if they come there and they talk too long, then it's all about them, so we have to balance that. And I think, you know, a statement within five minutes I guess is reasonable.

**REVEREND BARRETT:**

Have your little beeper go off, like you did with some people.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Yes, I have to put a big sub woofer.

**REVEREND BARRETT:**

Because then the rest of the people can see that they are going over and then it's on them now, it's not that we -- we offered it and it's on them that they took advantage of it and they're going beyond it.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Right. Okay.

**MR. PEARSON:**

Is there a limit of how many public officials you're going to allow to be able to -- because there could be ten of them.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

I don't think ten will show up, but I certainly think two or three will. You know, I mean, I'm sure the County Executive won't make a statement again, Mayor Pontieri --

**MR. PEARSON:**

Yeah, I was only saying that only because of this location, just because of this place; maybe not out in Riverhead, but here in Patchogue.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Well, I don't know if you want to just limit it to those elected officials in the area? Anyone can make a public statement, you know, if they fill out a card.

**MS. AHEARN:**

You can't pick and choose --

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Right.

**MS. AHEARN:**

-- who can speak or not, that's really -- it's a public hearing, so if an elected person wants to come, they put in a card, we have to be able to entertain that. Is it fair? I see what you're saying in terms -- I think it's fair to limit everybody to five minutes.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Right.

**MS. AHEARN:**

But now if we also say it's also the order that you put your card in, is that going to cause this tremendous amount of angst for those individuals who are coming to speak that are in political positions, or shouldn't we be fair and just let everybody speak as they come in, when they fill their card out, and that's fair to those who have been victims as well.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Right. I would tend to let the elected officials speak first because I'm sure their schedules won't allow them to be there all night, and that will benefit us, too, they'll just leave, hopefully, most of them. And then we can get on to the business, the real business, the real reason why we're there. But, you know, there's going to be people potentially from New York City and other places, Nassau County, that are going to be there, you know, advocates, you know. So, I mean, we don't know until we know, but I certainly think we'll get the same level of attention as the first meeting just because of the area, and maybe I'm wrong.

**MR. PEARSON:**

Is it fair, then, that you fill out a card and you're called in the order that you are, rather than a presentation in the beginning of all elected officials? It gives a certain message and it sets a certain tone, and especially since we're going to Patchogue. You don't want someone to give their spiel and it set off a riot and now the rest of the night is going to be tough for us. And so fair is you fill out a -- you get treated like every other public citizen who comes to give five minutes at that podium, that's fair.

**MS. ORTIZ:**

When you make your courtesy calls, tell them to be there early.

**MS. AHEARN:**

Exactly.

**MR. PEARSON:**

Yeah, that's fair.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay.

**REVEREND BARRETT:**

Tell them you had heat from your task force.

**MS. AHEARN:**

I think that sends a very powerful message to the community. We were tasked with finding the sources of racial tensions and making recommendations. Individuals in elected office were put in to those positions to represent those individuals, and they would be fair to those that would want to speak. So if they come early, then they'll be able to speak early; I think it's fair.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay. All right; anyone else?

**MS. ORTIZ:**

I just want to add that I got a lot of positive feedback, especially from the advocates in the community. And one thing that I heard, and I forwarded you an e-mail, but one thing that I heard from probably three different individuals was that, you know, they thought we set a really good tone and that we really at least appeared to be listening and that was the most important thing, was that the individuals that spoke felt like we were listening to them. And the few people that commented to me said, you know, "You guys really appeared to be really listening and concerned about what was being said, and that's the most important thing is that you listen." So I think that goes along

with everything else we just said and, you know, it's important that we continue to do that.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Yeah, I think we -- for our first meeting, I think we really did a good job, we set the right tone. I just want to be remindful that this meeting is potentially not going to be like that meeting, it's going to be very difficult, a lot of emotions. I tried to set the stage in the little statement that I made, maybe I'll do that again, I don't know. So -- but I think it went well and I think we did a good job and, you know, we're off on the right foot, so we'll see. So that's all I have.

**INSPECTOR MOJICA:**

Just something to keep in mind. In Patchogue, since November there have been a number of events and so you don't know which way this is going to go, but at a lot of these events people from all over came, some of them nobody came or very few. We had the six month anniversary of the homicide, it was in June, I believe, or may and we had an event and there was very little attendance, but we had events where a couple of hundred people showed up. So this has been going on and on, so -- and I've been to a lot of them and you see the same -- not every -- I'm not going to recognize everybody, but there's a core group that you see from one event to the next event to the next event, so they've been through it before. And it's not just been Suffolk County or Patchogue people, there have been people from New York City, there have been people from Nassau County.

I remember one meeting in the spring where there was a crew from California, that's the second time they were in Patchogue Village.

And so just -- so you don't really know which way this is going to go as far as the crowd and the makeup of the crowd and all that, but most likely it's going to be consistent with what's gone on in the past. They've had opportunities to either speak or hear people speak or to reach out or have an opportunity to speak to the Police Department or have, you know, members of the Police Department speak to them and invite questions and things of that nature, so a lot of that has been going on and this is really just one more in a series. There's a little bit more -- of course, there's a little more notoriety because, you know, it's a Legislative agenda, Legislative initiative and so on, but it's just one more in a series of events. So that's just -- so it just might -- you know, it not necessarily is going to be pent-up emotions because a lot of that has been expended in the past several months.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

I'm glad you mentioned that. Given -- and I was really alarmed by the statistics that you gave, Sergeant Reecks, about the age group. So given that we're going to be in Patchogue, given that there, at least to my knowledge, that there was some work if not I think a lot of work was -- with the Unity Coalition, really got the schools involved. Do you think, Inspector Mojica, that it would be worthy of us to extend an invitation to the high school, maybe the middle schools, to encourage them to come out and participate?

**INSPECTOR MOJICA:**

Probably, you know, just either to the Superintendent or the Principal of the high school. They have a brand new Principal this year going into it. The principal, Mr. Sansone, has been switched to another school, so they have a new Principal there. I don't -- I didn't see the school people around all that much. I mean, they showed, they had their own little events which I attended a couple of those and I was -- and the precinct was in contact with them on a regular basis for one reason or another. But I would just leave it to either the Superintendent or the Principal of the high school, you know, just keep it simple.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay. Also, I was called by News 12 earlier this afternoon, apparently there's going to be a news conference tomorrow, a press conference by the Southern Poverty Law Center and they've done a report about hate crimes in Suffolk County and they're supposedly going to release this report, whatever it says. So there may be a heightened awareness or attention to the public hearing just

because of this report, so I think we should all be aware of that as well.

**DETECTIVE SERGEANT REECKS:**

I don't think the report is going to bring the crowd, I think the activity in Patchogue is going to bring the crowd. While we were having the meeting in Wyandanch, we were arresting people in Patchogue. So to me, Patchogue school is in, it's going to be the first week of the high school. Between now and -- when is it, the 10th I believe it is -- we could have another incident; not that I'm predicting it because otherwise I would have won the Mega Million and I wouldn't be here. But it depends on what is happening right before this meeting. This could be *the* event of the -- you know, of the month, so we have to be prepared for that. It might get itself out of control and I am absolutely concerned that we are going to be running live towers, and when I say towers, I'm talking about the truck towers, with CNN, Telemundo, Television, it's Patchogue. And like the Inspector said, we have a California organization that's doing a documentary. I got a call from a lady who's writing a book about hate crimes in Ohio. So we are -- by going into Patchogue, we're literally going into the bee's hive, so we have to be prepared for that. And that's really all I'm going to say.

**MR. PEARSON:**

I'm riding with you.

*(\*Laughter From Panel\*)*

**MS. AHEARN:**

Renee, is it possible to have Detective Sergeant Reecks' What Defines a Hate Crime translated into Spanish?

**MS. ORTIZ:**

Sure.

**MS. AHEARN:**

I'll e-mail that to you?

**MS. ORTIZ:**

Please.

**MS. AHEARN:**

Great. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Yes?

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

Traditionally, you know, there are times of the year where you can expect things to happen with youth and this is. The beginning of the school year is the time because there's a lot of anxiety going back to school, and it's just adolescents facing a lot of fear issues, so there is more acting out. It's before holidays, after holidays and certainly after the summer break.

**MR. HAWKINS:**

Is there a possibility to send a letter to the Superintendent to possibly have them request the Principals and Assistant Principals from both the middle schools and the high school at the meeting?

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Sure. Yeah, I can do that. We'll see what response we get. Okay?

All right, thank you, everyone. And we'll be -- Colleen will be in touch through e-mail or through my

office with the survey, just to get your feedback, and we will see you Thursday. All right, thank you.

*(\*The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 PM\*)*

*{ } - Denotes Spelled Phonetically*