

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Hate Crimes Task Force

Minutes

The Suffolk County Hate Crimes Task Force Meeting was held at the William H. Rogers Legislative Building in Smithtown, New York, on Tuesday, August 19, 2009 at 3:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. DuWayne Gregory, Chairman
Laura A. Ahearn
Reynolds E. Hawkins
Dr. David Scott Kilmnick
Chief Inspector Ty Mojica
Rabbi Steven Moss
Renee Ortiz
Reverend JoAnn Barrett
Reverend Roderick Pearson
Det. Sergeant Robert Reecks

MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

Candido Crespo
Mohsen Elsayed

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Maxvel Rose, Aide to Legislator Gregory
Edwin Roldan, LI Immigrant Alliance
Ted Hesson, Long Island Wins

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Gabrielle Skolom, Court Stenographer

[The meeting was called to order at 3:07 P.M.]

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay. We are going to get started with today's meeting of the Hate Crimes Task Force. We felt it was important we meet once again before we have the public hearing coming up this Tuesday. We're just going to be at the Wyandanch Nutrition Center. Did everyone get a chance to see the flyer that went around?

[Affirmative response given by panel]

Okay. And everyone knows where the Center is?

MR. MOJICA:

My TomTom knows where it is.

[Laughter]

REV. BARRETT:

I was going to say the same thing.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Detective Sergeant Reecks is going to do a presentation at 5:30.

RABBI MOSS:

He's the early show?

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

He's the early show, right. He said it's going to take approximately about a half an hour --

DET. SERGEANT REECKS:

I don't think it's going to take that long; 15, 20 minutes, tops.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay -- up to a half an hour. Then the public portion is going to start at 6:30. So we'll have a little break. Everyone can go to the restroom or whatever. So we have that date. The legislation that established this Task Force talks about four public hearings, so Renee and I have been working on securing three dates for the remaining public hearings, and I'll ask Renee to report what she has at this time.

MS. ORTIZ:

Okay. So we were looking at -- we were going out like every two weeks -- going out two weeks after each hearing. And we're looking at Riverhead, and there is an option. We were able to easily secure the Suffolk Community College Culinary Arts Center. They have significant space there, and the gentleman that is the manager there, Dave Bergen, is very gracious, and he had hosted the Legislature for our last two meetings in Riverhead.

[Dr. Kilmnick entered]

So they can accommodate us and set up audio and everything for us as well. I don't know how everyone feels about that location or if you know where that location is. It's right off of Main Street -- it's right on Main Street, actually, in

Riverhead. I don't even know the address off the top of my head. You could see it on the -- you know, on the website. And their availability is very open, so we were looking at the week of September 21st, and they're available any evening Monday through Thursday, so we can submit paperwork to secure that location.

The other suggestion that was made was Riverhead Town Hall, but I know there had been some concern about holding it in a government office. But the suggestion was made that Riverhead Town Hall might be a little bit more accommodating for this type of venue. But we've had our Legislative meetings -- several Legislative meetings in the Riverhead Culinary Arts Center, and it was fine, and there's a public portion during our meetings, and everything worked out fine, so I don't know what feelings are on that.

RABBI MOSS:

That's fine.

MS. ORTIZ:

And then -- so we just need to secure a day that week, any evening Monday through Thursday of September -- the week of September 21st is available, so we just have to secure a day that week. And then the other was Brentwood, and I spoke with the folks over at the Suffolk Community College Grant Campus, and I'm sure most of you know they have the -- Sergeant Reecks, what is it; the health and -- that building where the PD is.

DET. SERGEANT REECKS:

Where?

DR. KILMNICK:

Brentwood.

MS. AHEARN:

The police academy?

MS. ORTIZ:

Is it the Health and Well -- what is that building called?

DET. SERGEANT REECKS:

Oh, the Sports Center.

MS. ORTIZ:

The Sports Center, they have a small auditorium. It's a lecture hall. We're going to reserve that space. So they have availability on Monday, October 5th and Tuesday, October 6th. The College is a little more -- the College is a little more tricky because they have, you know, evening classes and things that we have to work around.

RABBI MOSS:

My best day is Tuesday.

MR. MOJICA:

Same.

MS. ORTIZ:

That would be Tuesday the 6th?

RABBI MOSS:

Either one, the 22nd for September and the 6th for October.

MS. ORTIZ:

If you guys could try and use your mikes, just for the stenographer, and you have to press the button. I know, it's so annoying.

[Laughter]

RABBI MOSS:

Oh. Tuesdays are my better days. She heard that.

MR. MOJICA:

Mondays are usually tough, but any day of the week is fine.

MS. ORTIZ:

So Tuesday works pretty much for everyone?

[Affirmative response given by panel]

So I'm going to reserve Tuesday, October 6th with the campus.

RABBI MOSS:

And September 22nd.

MS. ORTIZ:

And September 22nd. Okay.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

I had worked on -- last time, we had spoken about going to the Brookhaven Town Hall. I had reconsidered that. I spoke to some members of the Task Force, and I thought that maybe it was appropriate that we actually go to Patchogue. And then we had the accident in Patchogue, so it even kind of reenforced the idea and the conversations that I've had that maybe we should go there. We had spoken to Briarcliffe College, and we have a date of --

MR. ROSE:

September 10th.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

September 10th, which is a Thursday.

MS. AHEARN:

That date works for me.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

So it's a good date for everyone?

MR. MOJICA:

Yeah.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

And all the public hearings will be the same. It will be 5:30 to 9:00 with the idea that the public portion will be at 6:30. We may want to schedule some other presentations early at the 5:30 portion. We're trying to be consistent about it. We

want to try to solidify the dates so we can get the flyers done, start promoting it.

I know that Newsday is looking to run an article about the Task Force, and I'm sure they would like to talk about the dates. We want to try to get the word out as best as possible so that we can have as great attendance as possible and get as much feedback as possible. So we appreciate your solidifying these dates. It's going to help us move forward so we could focus on other issues. So everyone is fine with that?

[Affirmative response given by panel]

I also wanted to talk about -- I've been having some meetings with some members of the Latino community, the immigrant advocacy organizations, and they had some concerns about the makeup of the Task Force, and so I had decided to, as of yesterday, I laid a bill on the table to amend the makeup of the Task Force. Originally, there was a slot for the District Attorney's Office. They had asked to recuse themselves or not participate because of their investigation and, you know, the case in Patchogue, the original case back in -- the Lucero case. So I amended the makeup of the Task Force to include a member of the Hispanic community or someone who is familiar with Hispanic community issues or immigrant advocacy issues.

So that bill will be before the Legislature next month. I do have a person in mind that I would like to recommend. I'll keep her name -- it is a her -- I won't mention her name now, but I thought that given her background -- she's the editor of a newspaper on the East End -- I thought it was appropriate that we kind of balance out the makeup of the Task Force and have someone from the East End.

[Reverend Pearson entered]

So I had asked her when possible she can attend the meeting so she can be kept abreast and up-to-date on what we're doing, so when she is appointed, she won't be behind the curve. I just wanted to inform you on that.

I wanted to -- Renee and I had been talking about just the public hearing, and we thought it would be appropriate to have someone talk to us as a committee about what to expect. We'd spoken to a gentleman by the name of Mr. Miranda who is a member of National Association Of Latino Officers, or National Latino Officers Association, and he's worked with the Southern Poverty Law Center in training law enforcement and communities all across the country in how to deal with Latino communities or minority communities and how to build better relations and just to talk to us about what to expect as a Task Force. We've kind of -- we had a little bit of a dialogue about it last time about what we're going to see, and I think it's important that we maybe see it from maybe an independent, unbiased perspective. So he can give us insight and some, you know, some advice on his experience on how we may want to seek to handle our public hearings because it's a touchy issue. It's a sensitive issue where a lot of people have -- it's an emotional issue where people are -- you know, they are going to voice their concerns and not necessarily quietly. But I think from our perspective, it's important that we not engage them back and change the whole makeup and the dialogue of what's -- what possibly can transpire. So I think, you know, it would be important to hear his input, and I thought maybe the members would find it beneficial. Does anyone have any comments?

[No response.]

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay. So we're going to actually -- he's going to call in, and we're going to speak to him that way.

[The following testimony of Anthony Miranda was taken via telephone.]

MR. MIRANDA:

Hello?

MS. ORTIZ:

Anthony?

MR. MIRANDA:

Yes.

MS. ORTIZ:

Hi. It's Renee.

MR. MIRANDA:

How are you?

MS. ORTIZ:

You're speaking before the Task Force, so maybe you want to introduce yourself, and then we can take it from there.

MR. MIRANDA:

Okay. So let me move. I'm going to be inside here. Okay. Can you hear me? Can everybody hear me now?

[Affirmative response given by panel]

Okay. So to start, my name is Anthony Miranda. I'm the Executive Chairman of the National Latino Officers Association. I did over 20 years in the New York City Police Department as a sergeant. So I run the organization nationally, headquartered out of New York representing predominantly Hispanic law enforcement officers, but we actually cover everybody. So it's not based on ethnicity, but we still call it Latino Officers Association. Is that good for an introduction, or you want to know more?

MS. ORTIZ:

Maybe you can tell them some of your work with Southern Poverty Law Center and your experience in this area that we're dealing with.

MR. MIRANDA:

Okay. Obviously, we've done some work with the ACLU and the Poverty Law Center and the Cardozo Group on various topics when it came to ICE investigation, toward improving procedures in some of the other states of, again, dealing with bias crimes. Obviously in New York and New Jersey, these issues have been going on for quite some time, and we've been at the forefront of working with other organizations such as the 100 Blacks In Law Enforcement Who Care and a few other groups like the Grand Council.

We advocate the changes from the law enforcement perspective, but we know what gives us the edge is our experience as law enforcement officers, being able to take the ideas of the community and kind of formulating a plan that works for both

entities. We've been doing this for a while. I understand -- I know that Long Island has been getting hit a lot with these cases and getting a lot of media attention, not only locally but nationally, they've been getting some attention as well. And I understand that you're currently going to engage in some public hearings, which we have engaged in. We've testified in different city councils from different states. We've testified in congressional hearings in the past, and we [inaudible] with the bases regarding different reports such as the Cardozo Group when they wrote the ICE report, we also worked with them in that perspective, our law enforcement panel. So we're -- we have a good position where we represent the community's interest as well as balancing the need for good law enforcement practices.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay. This is DuWayne Gregory. I'm the Chair of the Task Force. Can you talk to us a little bit about, because this is going to be our first hearing, public hearing on Tuesday -- what to expect or what you've seen in your past experiences, and how as a task force should we prepare to deal with that?

MR. MIRANDA:

Well, it's your first hearing and you're in a climate where this is still getting a lot of attention, so I would probably say that your first hearing is going to be very confrontational because they're -- the public is expecting a whitewash, so to speak; that what they are going to say has no results. So that's what they are going to be coming to you with. The -- and there will be some people that will attack the makeup of the board -- the makeup of your board in terms of, how fair can it be if certain people are serving on the board?

So it's being able to absorb the negativity and coming back with something positive. Most of the public hearings, especially in the beginning, they are extremely hostile, and it's expected. It's part of the norm. The process is listening through the hostility to getting right to what the points are. You calm a group down by setting the groundwork early, letting them know that -- whatever time limit you are giving each speaker, make sure it's reasonable and that if they take more than they are supposed to, then obviously, it would impede somebody else getting the chance to speak as well. And if you stress that point, they tend to work with each other to make sure the next person has a chance to speak on their case.

So you can expect some personal attacks. But again, it's not -- don't engage the people on a personal level or on an individual capacity, you have a number of people with different titles, so make sure if they attack individuals, that you're not -- don't engage them on that level, and the issue is we're here to gather information, and you're making it as easy for people -- if they feel that their time is cutoff -- because most of the time, people feel they are cutoff too soon, that they didn't get their point across. But again, time limits are what they are, and if that happens to anybody, then have somebody there by their table, wherever you're setting up the speaker at, where the person is going to speak from, and have somebody else make sure they approach them because they were cutoff and give them something to continue to write any additional comments that they want so it's preserved for the record. Protect the integrity of the process because otherwise speakers -- you know, some people will drag and you'll have your -- proportionately, you'll have some people that are what we call -- classified as EDP's, Emotionally Disturbed People, that will come and speak on crazy tangents, and you have to control that also.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay. The concern I have, is we do have two members on the Task Force that are

law enforcement, and we don't want to set up an environment where their integrity is attacked or any, you know, attacks on their professionalism. You know, they are here to give us a perspective, their law enforcement perspective when we finalize and do our final report. But in the meantime, we don't want them to be just a punching bag because we understand it's an emotional issue, but we're trying to set up an environment where everyone is respectful of each other, which I understand that's going to be difficult, but we're trying to be respectful and understanding of every side.

MR. MIRANDA:

They are going to be attacked because they're law enforcement officers, in general, and they represent the unit that is charged with the responsibility of conducting these investigations, so you understand that. They need to understand that also and not be overly sensitive toward any of that information. And take it in stride because the first ones are usually the toughest, and then people tend to calm down. I understand you are going to hold a series, more than one, so the first one is generally the toughest because that's the immediate reaction.

Obviously, the one who is running the actual meeting has to control the attacks on anybody -- anybody on the panel. But as a law enforcement officer, I would tell them ahead of time to, you know, put on their tough vests because the first day is going to be a tough vest day where they're going to shoot a lot of comments at them: What are they doing? How come they haven't gotten the results? Maybe they've gotten the results but haven't gotten the attention. But the objective there is not to engage them on that level, to have some general information available about the unit because that law enforcement unit itself has had some success. So having some information about them separate and apart just available for people to read and to be informed was also an edge so you don't have to engage in that individual fight. You can say, "There's some information about the unit and the people responsible for the unit that's available for everyone to read."

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Now, we're going to have a presentation by Detective Sergeant Reecks who runs our Hate Crimes Bureau, and he's going to pretty much outline what hate crimes are -- like what the law is. Is that type of method, has that worked in the past or has it been deployed? Have you -- I'm trying to understand the format of the public hearings that you've experienced.

MR. MIRANDA:

Well, they generally hand out information ahead of time about what constitutes -- there's probably some official reading that you would say, "This is what hate crimes are. This is what we're investigating," the mission of your panel. Once you get to that, you shouldn't have to go through redefining it. So you have something -- have some written material that says, "This is what it is," so that that's available for people to have so that you don't have to say the definition over and over again. If somebody is addressing something that's outside of the purview of your committee, then a simple answer would be, "We're concerned about what you're telling us. We would like to have something in writing, but that's not covered directly in what we're investigating at this point," because there will be people that will bring information that's not covered by your Task Force.

And giving a general once-over is okay as long as it's not a lecture -- doesn't turn into a lecture, something short and sweet. It's like highlights, details you provide on paper so that you don't have to engage people on that level and you don't expose the people from the agency -- from the department unnecessarily to a long reading. It's not a reading. You're calling the hearings for them, for the people to

come in and say what they believe and what they think, and then when you do your report, you're going to analyze like so many cases came in that were outside of the purview of the Task Force, and that's part of your analysis, how many other things came to you that really had nothing to do with the Biased-Crimes Unit, then you set those aside, and you give more opportunity for them to speak. I think that's the focus of it.

Traditionally, what has happened at some hearings is that law enforcement has done some presentation about statistics and how great, successful they are and, you know, tooting their own horn about everything they have done successfully. What's bad about that is right after they do their presentation, often they come in with a whole entourage of people with charts and all kind of things, and then afterwards, they leave and never stop to listen to what the public says. In your case, you actually have the supervisor involved on your panel, so he's going to be there, and I think that's a plus, you know? And that's what's promoting to the people. It says that he's not walking out of here as the other agency has done; he's here as the expert and to hear your concerns to see how they could make a marriage between the two. And right or wrong, whether they are hostile towards him because of his official capacity or not, they are not afraid of getting public information; I think that's extremely important. They are not afraid of the public, and it shows they are willing to embrace the community and say, "Come to me with your problems." So it works as a plus for them individually outside the Task Force as well.

But again, you know, the initial hits on the Task Force members and everything else is that people will -- they will be hostile and whatever negativity has already been said about the Task Force and its ability to be effective, and whether -- is this a white wash so that the people don't have to address the real issues of discrimination that are going on and the racial bias attacks, that is still going to be said; that doesn't go anywhere. The issue just comes -- okay, you say yes to it or you listen to it and it says, "We respectfully disagree. You have our mission in front of you." That's why I said it minimizes you having to engage each individual on that level because you have your mission statement set out there. "We'll take the position of disagreeing," whatever statements that make generally, and then say, "We would really love to hear your issues that you're bringing forth so that we can put an effective plan together."

Another question that you may be asked early on is, what plans do you guys have in terms of at the end of the hearing, what ultimately are your goals; what are the end results? You know, are you not doing anything about it?

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Are you asking or are you just stating?

MR. MIRANDA:

No. That's what I'm saying -- that's part of the thing they are going to be asking you.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Right.

MR. MIRANDA:

They are going to be looking and say, "Okay --" Somebody will eventually ask you in your hearing that says, "At the end of the day, what are you guys supposed -- what are you going to accomplish after you get all of our information?" So somebody has to be prepared to answer that question for them, at least give them

some kind of futuristic perspective as to -- hold on one second. [Inaudible] I'm sorry about that. I'm in the process of moving, and I have some workers in the house. I just have to pay them off here.

REV. PEARSON:
Off the record.

[Laughter]

MR. MIRANDA:
I have to pay the bills; is that better? Okay. So I'm back. You got my attention again. Is there --

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:
There was a question while you were paying your bill that one of the members had asked. How do -- in the past, have you allowed dialogue back and forth or just -- here at the Legislature, we generally allow people to come forward and they just testify. Occasionally, we engage in dialogue. I'm reluctant to do that because it's such an emotional issue and --

MR. MIRANDA:
The dialogue to the -- to the extent of clarity on information that's being presented. You understand?

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:
Right.

MR. MIRANDA:
Not to -- it can't be an attack mode. People can't perceive it as being attack mode. Like, they will say things, and we are going to have to question the validity of their statement. So you don't say, "Hey, I need to find out whether you are lying to me or not." You ask a few probing questions to get clarity through details because you are going to need that afterwards when you start looking at trying to research what they're telling you, so that's real sensitive in nature. When you start asking questions to backup people, as long as it's probative -- you know, again, people will come in there and say some incredible things, and you'll be hard pressed to believe some of the things people say. The question is, okay, if they are not specific as to the time or date, then you want to get a little more specific as to the time or date. If people -- the other issue that can happen is that you need to make a presentation on the onset that if anybody doesn't feel comfortable publicly, making a public statement that maybe afterwards or they'll set two people aside somewhere else that people can go to them with total confidentiality of reporting their incident.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:
We're going to have at least one advocate or social worker, too, from our Crime Victims Center that will be able to take -- that will be doing intake.

MR. MIRANDA:
Right there at the hearing?

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:
Right, and we'll have a Spanish translator, so I think we'll have that covered. We've also publicized that people can come with written statements if they don't feel comfortable, can submit that instead of just publicly testifying.

MR. MIRANDA:

Right. Again, you're going to have organizations that are probably already preparing that have been vocal on this issue for a while, especially on Long Island. They are going to come in there prepared with their people and to make statements on the record. And that's why I said, time wise, you allow people to submit several copies of the report. The way the hearings are normally run -- the way the hearings are normally done is people come in with a written statement and then they are allowed to make a verbal statement if they choose to, and then they give their statement -- somebody collects their statement to make five or six copies so everybody has one. And then they are allowed to summarize, because obviously on paper, it's a lot more detailed than some of these general comments about what they encountered. And you'll get it -- this is not -- I don't think you are going to get anybody in there that's going to come in there -- and if you do, you're lucky -- that's going to praise how the agency is handled, issues of race crimes. Nobody is going to come in there and say, "I was attacked for being Hispanic, and the agency did 100% of what they are supposed to." The chances of that happening are close to not -- close to zero, okay?

So you understand that from the start, what you're looking at is, you're looking at a venue where people with hostile intentions, people who had negative encounters are the ones that -- are the ones that are going to be making their presence known at these hearings. And that's why I'm telling you, you don't engage them on that level. Make sure the people, the officers -- the commanding officers of the unit, the rest of you, don't take it personal, but that's their -- that's their feelings. At the end of the day, it's how they felt. And it could have been handled 100% properly, according to police procedures, but the person felt that, "Hey, police procedures just weren't enough for me," and that's pretty much what you're looking for anyway. You're looking for somebody to say, "This incident happened," and then later on, you'll investigate with the unit, and then they'll tell you, "Well, we did 'A,' 'B' and 'C,' and it was all by procedure," but the person still walked away with a feeling that they weren't serviced. And then that's where you begin to process or try to find the solution to where people feel -- you know, they feel they got something out of the encounter with the police agency, that they were respected, they were heard, they had a chance to voice all their concerns, which is essentially what you're looking for in your hearings.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Right. We have a question for you.

MS. AHEARN:

Anthony, hi. My name is Laura Ahearn.

MR. MIRANDA:

Hi.

MS. ORTIZ:

Can you hear her?

MS. AHEARN:

Can you hear me?

MR. MIRANDA:

Yeah, I could hear you.

MS. AHEARN:

I'm with the Crime Victims Center. We provide advocacy services for victims of

violent crime, and I had a question. You were talking about the population of those that came or your experience of those who come to hearings to testify or to submit written statements. In your experience, do individuals who have been victims of hate crimes, did those individuals who have not had contact with law enforcement also come to those hearings?

MR. MIRANDA:

What you'll encounter, some people will come to hear and the people you will hear from are the ones that are most pissed off. But people -- victims will come and participate as far as listening to the conversation and the dialogue to see if they are really going to get a response or not.

MS. AHEARN:

So basically to see if it's safe enough for them to make that report for the first time?

MR. MIRANDA:

Correct. They want to see if the climate is safe whether -- whether people are really interested in hearing them with their report and make a complaint or not. So you will have a lot of victims that will come and -- just to see the process or to be informed of how the process went. Was the process combative, or was the process very accommodating? You know, it's like the touchy-feely stage for you guys; you got to touch and feel them so that you can get the proper response at your second hearing where you'll get more people coming forward or in between the hearing you have a lot more people trying to make reports.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay.

MS. AHEARN:

Thank you.

MR. MIRANDA:

A lot of -- again, you may get one or two victims that say, "I never reported this," and they'll speak about it publicly, but the majority of people who will speak will be organizations that represent those people or there will be individuals who are just so T'd off about the whole process, their whole encounter and the fact that they felt they got no response from the agency; those are generally the ones that will come out first. That's why I says when you encounter these people, don't feel offended; don't shy away from the conversation. Show real concern about what they're saying, give them -- express to them an understanding that you're trying to find a solution to the problem. And I think if that's the total message upfront -- you know, again, there have been -- I've been to some really hostile ones, and they were able to calm the people down by their general tone. They took a lot of -- you know -- excuse my French -- they took a lot of crap in the beginning, but it worked out in terms of -- this process has to be not confrontational but open enough that the people that are listening will go back with something positive.

Again, and you guys are more familiar with the people -- the advocates -- the public advocates, the people who are doing press conferences against you the whole time, who -- they're gonna go ahead to have a show and to look for a confrontation. And then it's your job to say if it's an open investigation, you're not commenting on it -- obviously, nobody can -- but you'll be gathering -- that will be part of your report because I know you have some active investigations that people may be concerned about. And so you have to have some response to them that to

-- general standards, general things that the agency is doing to sort of -- you know, you had an assault almost in the same location; two individuals, one died, one was assaulted. So now the proximity of that attack will beckon people especially to come out and say, "Well, okay. This happened twice now. One person lost their life, another person got hurt. What can you tell me -- you know, what has this Task Force been able to do?" And then you're able to say, "This is one of the things that we're working for; to identify patterns, to identify areas that are more susceptible to racial attacks that are identified by reporting," and say, and that's another reason you want people to report it, so that if a pattern develops, y'all can respond to it better. But, like I said -- does that answer you, what you asked of me?

MS. AHEARN:

Yes, it does. Thank you. I appreciate that. Just logistically, if you could, and I'm not sure it's sort of on the top of your head, but about what percentage of those individuals who speak at hearings or who were submitting statements are individuals that would need crime victim intervention, meaning that have been victims of hate crimes, whether they have reported it to the police or not compared to the community organizations who are coming to testify of the experience that they've had with those they serve. So, in other words, what percentage of those individuals would actually be coming as victims of hate crimes compared to organizations?

MR. MIRANDA:

Anywhere between 40% -- generally speaking, you don't get high unreported because the community-based organizations have already gotten some type of report from them or social workers. The importance of the people that are testifying with it are organizations or lawyers or whoever they are, even individuals. The important thing that's going to make how effective you guys are is going to be the reception that they get and the immediate follow up.

MS. AHEARN:

That's why I'm asking the question because our crime victim advocates, if it's one person after another speaking, just logistically, in terms of how the hearing's organized, if there's one person speaking after another and there are a number of those individuals that will need intervention, we will have our advocates present to be sure that that does happen.

MR. MIRANDA:

Yeah. Having that is very important. And again, if you become overwhelmed by individual cases, then the process will be having an alternate from that date. In other words, if the people taking the report, being reported by the victims, they say there's too many, that they are overwhelming people that are there, then be prepared to give them an alternate date. In other words, "I'll meet you here tomorrow," or, "Two days later will be our next date, and we'll be back here with just dealing with documenting cases." Not for a hearing, but just to follow up with the people and have prepared the next date, if you need it so that they're not -- they are not figuring out a date; they're not walking out of there with information. They want to walk out -- you want to walk out of there with something from you that says -- okay. I don't what date your hearing's going to be, but if your hearing is on a Monday, then if it's two days, 24, 48 hours, you want to meet with the person again and give them -- "We didn't get a chance to speak to you that night, but you have an appointment two days later right here at the same location," 'cause they came out once, they're familiar with the location, try to book the location again at least two days later, just for the purposes of reporting incidents, not for a public hearing.

MS. AHEARN:

Right. So basically we'd be setting our appointments for intakes at our agency for crime victims services, and we'd have to work something out with law enforcement, if somebody hasn't reported it, if they wanted to report it that day or at another date.

MR. MIRANDA:

Yeah. Within two days is good. If you're becoming overwhelmed by the victims themselves coming forward, by the people who are in the audience, and then when they find out there's two people back there who are taking the reports of people who weren't reported, this is their first time, and it becomes more than they can handle, then, like I said, be prepared to say, "Okay. We can handle 20 people that come forward. Number 21 through 40 will be two days later, and anybody above 40 to 60, we'll take them on the third day." You know, so have alternate plans in place. You may not even need it, but be prepared for it because this is the first time that you're doing it.

MS. ORTIZ:

So, Anthony, it's safe to say that this first hearing, the success of the Task Force, in general, will basically be based not on the turnout of the first hearing or not on how many unreported crimes we obtain but just in the tone and in the interaction that the Task Force has at that first hearing with the community?

MR. MIRANDA:

Sure, because that's where you get the majority of your publicity, from the newspapers and the stations that are going to cover it. They are going to highlight it, they're going to -- news always likes to catch the confrontations, so don't make it the confrontations; make it how accommodating we were, how nice we were about -- you know, this -- you know, somebody said something more on a sensitive nature -- you know, "I was raped," "I was sexually abused," "I was --" something, one thing or the other, then obviously that was something one thing or the other, then obviously, you have to offer that person the opportunity to speak confidentiality [sic] and say that, "I want to protect their confidentiality," and, "We'll take you right over to the side and have one of our people speak to you immediately."

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Anybody else have questions?

MR. MIRANDA:

Is that good? Yeah, you can sense the unity -- the more people you have at the hearing, the greater response that you are going to get for your second hearing. And if the word gets out from the media and from the people who were present that they had the ability to make the report; they had the ability to make public statements; they were not treated on a hostile note; nobody was asking about identity or -- not identity -- whether they are citizens or not, that whole thing --

MS. ORTIZ:

Status.

MR. MIRANDA:

And if that's the message, "We don't want to know what your status in our country, but we want to know if you're a victim," and that's the message that's printed, then you should have the reverse happen at your second hearing where you are going to have more victims come out and less public statements by organizations.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay. Well, thank you, Anthony, for your comments. I think they were very well received, and we appreciate you giving us some of your time. We'll certainly be in touch with you if we need any more advice.

MR. MIRANDA:

Again, I appreciate you reaching out. I apologize I couldn't make it out there. My schedule was already tied up 'cause I'm in the middle of moving, but I plan on coming out to your public hearing just to observe the whole process as well. If anybody in between then has any questions -- like I said, I think it's a workable process, that it could be both positive for the agency, law enforcement agency, and tremendously positive for the Task Force being effective.

And, I said, the other result is make sure that -- people are going to ask you -- that big question is, what's going to make you different than anything else, and what's your plans at the end. When everything is said and done, your holding four public hearings. Depending on the information, not to prejudge anything, but you're going to present a report and who your suggestions are going to go to; you know, is your report going to the Legislature, is your report going straight to the police commissioner to make some changes that would be positive? Then, you know, those are things that you can speak on that are different avenues available to you because you're in a powerful position to present it to everybody. So you could say, "These are the options of where we have to go or where we will go at the end of our public hearing."

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay.

MR. MIRANDA:

And again, any way we can help you as an organization, any way I can help you, we are more than willing to help and participate with you. I wish you the best of luck. If you need me before then, I'll be speaking to you before then.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay. Thank you very much.

MS. ORTIZ:

Thank you, Anthony.

MR. MIRANDA:

Thank you. Thanks a lot. Buh-bye.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Buh-bye.

Okay. I think that was helpful. I think -- I mean, we're all going through this for the first time. We can -- I think it's, you know, always best to plan for the worst, expect the best.

MS. ORTIZ:

Expect the worst, get the best.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Yeah, however it goes. But I think we have a better understanding of how to approach it. We know it's not going to be an easy process by any means. But as

long as we -- I think it's important that we get our message out what our task is. Keep people focused on what the issues are, as Detective Sergeant Reecks had mentioned last time. You know, we can expect people not to understand what the law is, and that's okay, but we really want to focus on actual accidents and people's thoughts about hate crimes and how we can improve the situation here in Suffolk County. I don't have anything else on the agenda, so if anyone else has any comments you want to make before we adjourn, please make them now.

DET. SERGEANT REECKS:

I would like to suggest that as the Chairperson, you're going to control the crowd. I assume you're going to be the one. We all can't, obviously, tell the person to sit down or they are running out of time. So I think we could vote now probably and designate you as the person who is going to tell the person to sit down or his time is up or call the next person. Is that how it's going to work?

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Yes.

MS. ORTIZ:

Shouldn't we agree on time limits and such?

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Yeah. Everyone -- they will have a five-minute limit. There are going to be cards, similar to our public hearings here, that they'll fill out when they come. We'll make sure we have a clock so we can keep track of the time. And, you know, it's going to be, you know, the first time is going to be interesting. We'll get through. I think he's -- I think Anthony's right. I think we'll have -- for the first meeting, we'll have a lot of organizations come forward, and we want that. We want them because those are the people that have tracked this issue; they are involved in this issue; they give us their thoughts, and that's the feedback exactly that we are looking for. It's also important that we have victims come forward too, but I think there's going to be more of an organized effort from organizations. We'll see more of a presence of them.

DR. KILMNICK:

Legislator Gregory, he provided us with a lot of good information, but I think there could be a danger in one of the things he did say to us, and that is all the information he provided could lead us to stereotype the speakers that are coming up as a grandstander or -- and I think we should just be aware that we should not stereotype the speakers who are coming up as grandstanding, they want a press conference, and just to really listen to what they have to say.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Right. Absolutely.

MS. ORTIZ:

I don't think so much -- I think he was just preparing us for those that might. I don't think every speaker -- I won't anticipate every speaker as a grandstander but --

DR. KILMNICK:

That's all I heard from him.

MS. ORTIZ:

We will have some. I mean, that's a given.

RABBI MOSS:

Well, I think that, to state the obvious, we need to treat each person as an individual and not to anticipate and to treat each person with respect. And also, again, to state the obvious, but unfortunately, being on the other side, looking at the Legislators here, I think it's obviously very important we appear, not just appearance-wise, but obviously that we show interest in every person in terms of the way we sit or -- you know, body language is very important. So that again, and I appreciate what he said, and that is -- is that our reaction doesn't become the news story because that would be a disaster and a shame. I do want to ask, I'm assuming that there will there be security present?

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

I haven't worked that out yet, but I can certainly talk to --

RABBI MOSS:

Detective Sergeant Reecks will be there.

[Laughter]

There should be security.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Yeah. We can talk to the Sheriff's Office or the PD, make a request.

MS. AHEARN:

I'll also make sure that we have our crimes victims literature, Crime Victims Services literature, available in English and in Spanish, and our advocates will walk around and make sure everybody has that literature. Sergeant Reecks, do you have literature from hate crimes?

DET. SERGEANT REECKS:

On your literature, do you have the hate crime definition on your literature? Because there's no need giving out double. We don't have the budget that the crime victim budget people have, so we were hoping that if you have it on your literature, that would obviously save a lot of running around, or I'll try to get a poster board, but there's no way we're going to be able to get cards made up of what a hate crime is.

MS. AHEARN:

If you would like to send me what you want us to duplicate, we can do that and just include it in our literature.

DET. SERGEANT REECKS:

I think that would be best.

RABBI MOSS:

Since we are having literature out, should we bring literature from the Human Rights Commission, which is also in Spanish, regarding the discrimination law and what's available through the Commission? As well as from the Anti-Bias Task Force, we have a listing, a brochure updated as well as a listing of all of the Anti-Bias Task Force and phone numbers.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Sure. We can do that. We'll ask them to set up a table so when people come in, they can pick up the information as they walk in or walk out.

REV. PEARSON:

Are people signing in? Are we taking a sign-in of all of who is in attendance?

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

No, I would be reluctant to do that. Only those who would want to speak. We don't want someone to feel if they just want to observe they were -- because there is a level of distrust that we have to recognize, and we don't want people to feel that we're monitoring them or trying to find out personal information.

Okay? All right. So we'll see everyone next Tuesday at 5:30 at the Wyandanch Senior Nutrition Center. Okay. Thank you.

[The meeting concluded at 3:56 PM]