

**SENIORS & CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

A meeting of the Seniors & Consumer Protection Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on May 23, 2016.

Members Present:

Legislator Sarah Anker - Chair
Legislator Tom Cilmi
Legislator Al Krupski
Legislator Tom Muratore

Not Present:

Legislator Steve Stern - Excused Absence

Also in Attendance:

Amy Ellis - Deputy Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature
George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
Benny Pernice - Budget Review Office
Alyssa Turano - Aide to Majority Leader
Robyn Fellrath - Aide to Legislator Anker
Catherine Stark - Aide to Legislator Krupski
Debbie Harris - Aide to Legislator Stern
Bob Martinez - Aide to Legislator Muratore
Lynne Bizzarro - County Attorney's Office
Rick Brand - Newsday
All Other Interested Parties

Minutes Taken By:

Gabrielle Severs - Court Stenographer

(The meeting was called to order at 12:29 p.m.)

CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:

Welcome to the Seniors and Consumer Protection Committee. Please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Cilmi, who is walking today. Yay. All right.

LEG. CILMI:

Who is jogging a little bit.

(Salutation)

CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:

Please remain standing for a moment of silent meditation and prayer as we think of those protecting our freedom.

(Moment of Silence Observed)

Thank you.

I just want to put on the record Legislator Steve Stern will have an excused absence. I see no correspondence or cards today. We will go right into a presentation, so if -- Nancy, would you like to come up, please? Nancy Campo is with the PSE&G payment assistant outreach coordinator, and she will present Long Island's low-income programs and services that are available to our residents. Welcome, Nancy.

MS. CAMPO:

Thank you. Kim is going to just hand out a packet for each of you, which includes the PowerPoint for you to follow along and some of the information that I'll be talking about.

So just to give you a quick overview of who we are, PSE&G Long Island, we are an electric company, electric only. We manage the transmission and distribution systems for LIPA, and we employ 2200 people. We serve 1.1 million customers throughout Long Island and the Rockaways. We have customers service centers; we have one in Rockaway and four in Nassau County. We also have a call center that's open from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. The Rockaway office is open 8:00 to 4:00. We also have seven offices in Suffolk County. Right now, our Patchogue office is undergoing renovations. It's actually just about finished and waiting for a C.O. and then that will be opening up shortly.

Our low-income programs and consumer advocacy staff consists of five people. We have Gail Massaro, the senior supervisor, who oversees low-income programs, consumer advocacy, and our D.S.S. group, which is the group that processes benefits from social services; myself, I'm the payment assistance outreach coordinator and my job is to develop, train, and communicate low-income programs. Samantha Eddy is the payment assistance outreach assistant. She manages the advocacy information and referral line, and she assists myself. We have Tonya Simmons and Susan West who are consumer advocates. Tonya handles all the referrals that come through for eastern and western Suffolk, and Susan handles Nassau County and the Rockaways.

So the services that we have available for our customers, we have a number of them, as you can see here, we have the information and referral line advocacy. We have a household assistance

rate, a REAP program, special protections for medical emergencies. We have a critical care program, friendly follow-up, peace of mind. We also offer bills in large print, braille, and Spanish. We have the TTD services for hearing and speech impaired; and we office balance billing and a direct pay program.

So I just want to start with the consumer advocacy information and referral line. As you can see, the number is posted there. People can contact our consumer advocacy department by calling that line or by e-mailing at ConsumerAdvocacyLI@PSEG.com. I'm going to get into consumer advocacy and exactly what they do, but this is the first step. This is when somebody is having a difficult time paying their bill, experiencing a hardship, or whatever. They can call this special number, which is different than the main call center number, and they can speak to somebody about whatever it is that's going on in their life to get some help. Samantha Eddy, who manages that line, takes in all the information. She keeps a recording of it so this way we know how many people are calling, our seniors, people who are unemployed, or what the issue is so that we have a better understanding of the issues when addressing Long Island. Samantha will try and help the customer on that first phone call. She has a huge resource book that we develop over time. As I'm out at different meetings and the advocates are out there in the community, we bring back all the programs, and Samantha puts it -- files it away in that book, and if she can help the customer, sometimes that's all they need is a little bit of information and then they're on their way and they are okay. However, if they present with a little more difficulty than just a phone call can handle, she will escalate it to a consumer advocate.

So what the advocates do is they assist vulnerable customers experiencing financial hardships. They partner with community agencies to coordinate services, they manage accounts to secure benefits and maintain electric service, and they advocate for customers who encounter obstacles with the benefit process. Our advocates are onsite, as you can see, at all these agencies, Department of Labor, Family Service League, United Healthcare, Community Resource Center, Family Service League, Opportunity Resource Center in Huntington, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, and Nassau County D.S.S. We're also working on setting up an MOU with Suffolk County DSS so Tonya can spend Fridays there as well.

And the reason they're there is, as you can see, we only have two advocates, and I'm sure you're all familiar with the size of Long Island. Tonya is the only one in Suffolk County, which is huge, so in order to reach the most people possible, they go to the agencies that are serving people already. So for instance, the Department of Labor, people are unemployed, they're at the Department of Labor. If Susan is sitting there on Tuesday during the day, when people come in, she can give them information to help them with their electric bill. The same goes for the outreaches, the resources centers, and what happens is that the people who are at all these agencies know our advocate schedule, so if they have any customers or clients of theirs who are coming in and they have -- one of their is their electric, they will let them know what day the advocate's going to be there and to come in that day and speak with them; this way, way they can have that one on one. Some of the referrals and benefits and assistance programs that they make referrals to would be, for instance, HEAP, the home energy assistance program; emergency assistance benefits through the Department of Social Services; the SSI guarantee, which is a benefit for people who are very low income, struggling, who are elderly, blind, or disabled; Project Warmth, which is Long Island's fuel fund; 211 Long Island, which is an information and referral service, as well as various community programs and services. That's, as I was talking about, the resource manual, and also the PSE&G Long Island customer centers for payment assistance, when somebody needs to make a minimal payment agreement. They can go into the customer office and meet with one of our reps.

The household assistance rate is a reduced rate for low income people. The eligibility requirements

is fairly simple. They complete a one-page application. I've included it in the packet -- it's an orange copy -- and they just need to attach one of the following: The reason that it's public assistance identification card, Medicaid, SNAP, so forth, or their award letter, or the HEAP award letter is because these people who are getting any assistance from have already been qualified as low income. We're not actually doing the qualifications. They've already been done by the programs already in existence. They are automatically enrolled in this rate when notification is received by one of the assistance agencies and/or the completed application and proof of eligibility is provided. It's a 14-month program. On month 11, an automatic enrollment letter is sent out to the customer for renewal just in case something has changed. And once they've been approved, the customer will know it because their rate code on their bill will have a "D" in front of the rate code.

So the household assistance is part of the rate description on their bill, and the customer will get a bill message on the first month they are put on the program. It's not a lot of money, but the average customer who has electric just for their lighting, it's about \$5 a month, and for the customers who have electric heat, it's about \$10 a month.

We also have the REAP program, the residential energy affordability partnership. One of the things, and I can say for many years I was an advocate with the electric company, going way back, and a lot of times when people are having difficulty paying their bill, one of the most important things we can help with them with is to lower their usage, and what I've learned is a lot of people don't really know how to do that because they've just never learned. I mean, we all know, who work in the utility company, because we know the things that are high-usage items and so forth, but a lot of people who are struggling financially have absolutely no idea.

The REAP program is a wonderful conservation program and an educational program. It's free weatherization offered by PSE&G Long Island designed to help save energy and lower energy bills, and the participation includes an in-home energy survey by a REAP technician and installation of energy-saving measures. So we're actually coming out to the home, which is a lot better to be in somebody's home and see what they're using and see how they can best help them to cut back on their usage. So the eligibility requirements are listed there. It's an income guideline. It's for people who live in a one- to four-family dwelling and meet those guidelines. It's very simple, and as you can see, these guidelines are fairly generous. It's really more not just low income but middle income people as well. And in order to participate --

LEG. CILMI:

I'm sorry, Nancy. These are household incomes?

MS. CAMPO:

Yes.

LEG. KRUPSKI:

I'm sorry, since Legislator Cilmi set the precedent, I have a question about that program. So you said that some of the people on assistance were getting like \$5 off their monthly bill, when you go through and you look at the energy savings through the infrastructure of their home, do you quantify -- say we did the weather stripping or new windows, whatever, your old bills for the last few years were this much, now this is what you saved. Do you demonstrate and quantify those savings after the program is done?

MS. CAMPO:

After the REAP program? I don't know if they actually come out and do that, but it's usually kind of

obvious in the bill because the usage will go down, and as a result, the bill will go down. One of the things that they do is they give all the customers the energy saving light bulbs and replace the ones they have. My understanding is they also leave the old ones with the customer because very often somebody, maybe a senior, may say the lighting isn't the same and this way they have it if they want to change it out; but right there, that's a savings. One of the other things they do now is they will replace up to two air conditioners if they're not energy efficient, so depending on the age of the air conditioner and how they're running, they'll replace up to two window air conditioners. They'll also replace the dehumidifier. Those are very high usage items that a lot of people are going to be using now coming into the summer months, so it's a great program as far as teaching people -- it's also, they do a health and safety check when they go into the house to see what's going on in the house and, you know, if there's anything dangerous or whatever that they're going to alert their customer that needs to be taken care of.

So they will definitely see some type of change in the usage. I mean, we could probably all benefit from something like that because sometimes we're just -- we're using things we're not even aware of. We have this thing we call "phantom electric," and it's like -- the best way to describe it -- I heard someone say it this way once. I thought it was really great -- is at night if you shut all the lights off in your house and then you just stand there and look around and see everything that's lit up, you know, you'll see the -- I don't want to say VCR. You know what I mean. I know I'm dating myself, but, you know, all those things: the alarm clock, the clock radio, the microwave. There's things that people don't realize that's actually drawing electricity, so, you know, they might want to consider putting in the strip where they can shut that down when they're not home, the cable boxes, just lots of things that people aren't even aware of. Most of us would be surprised to see the ways we could save if somebody actually brought that to our attention.

Qualifying for REAP. Once they meet the income guidelines, it's really simple. All they have to do is call that 800 number or they can e-mail and say they would like somebody to come to the house. When the technician gets to the house, they just have to prove their income, which can be last year's income tax. It's very simple. It's not a difficult process at all, and that's it.

So we also have, just to let you know, that not every program that people need, it's not just for low income. There are a lot of situations that come up with our customers where they need some assistance, so one of the special protections we have is for medical emergencies, and what that does is provide additional time so payment arrangements can be made for customers or their immediate family who are ill or have a chronic medical condition. Now keep in mind, if you were the type of person, you got your bill and you paid your bill every month, and then you were going to be late, of course that's not going to be a problem. But very often, many of our customers fall behind in their bill and they build up an arrears, and now they owe a lot of money to the electric company, and they make payment arrangements where they're trying to pay their bill and something on the arrears, and really that's what this is for. It's for customers so that, if they are going to be, you know, they're going through something like a chronic medical condition or someone in the family is ill or whatever, the last thing they want to worry about is having to worry about the electric bill as well, but it could potentially be a problem if all of a sudden they stop paying the bill and they had a past-due balance. That's really who this is designed for, so it continues the electric service for 30 days and we will not terminate that. All they have to do is supply a doctor's note. The customer is still responsible for the bill, but at least it gives them that little reprieve to be able to deal with whatever it is they are going through.

We also encourage senior citizens, 62 years or older, and those with disabilities should also contact us so that appropriate protections may be provided on their account. So what we do is actually code the account so that we're aware of it. It goes into field collection and it's the middle of winter

or something, we don't shut the service off. We also have a critical care program. If the household member relies on life support equipment, they can file a medical certificate with us from a doctor or the local board of health, and by "doctor," it could be a nurse practitioner, physician's assistant, meaning that they have to prove there's a medical condition and tag the meter so that it's right on there. When we have -- a severe storm is anticipated, we'll call those customers so they can make advanced preparations. And the reason I say it's so important about the meter being tagged is so that let's just say something slipped through the cracks and it did get out the field, at least when the field collector went to the house, he would see that tag on there and not shut the service off. It's just kind of a backing for that, and these are all the machinery that would qualify as life support.

We also have a friendly follow-up program. This is a great program, particularly for seniors, I have found, anyway. Very often seniors -- when people begin to get elderly, sometimes they don't remember things and so forth, and this has been a great thing for their adult children who live maybe out of state or whatever. What it does is if a person stops paying the bill and all of a sudden they get a termination notice, the person who they designate will get a copy of the bill as well; this way, they'll know that something is going on with their parent and they're not going to be responsible for the bill, it's just that they're going to have notification that the bill has gone into arrears, and the person is getting a termination notice. It's just another safeguard for our customers.

We have a peace of mind program that's for hospitalized customers. It extends the due date for an additional 30 days. I love that program. I've had customers who have called, they're very upset, they're going in the hospital, they're having surgery, they're afraid, I don't want to come home and my lights are out. It's nice to be able to reassure them, don't worry about it, we'll code your account. We actually put a code in which stops all collection for 30 days. So it's really nice because, well, not too many people are in the hospital for 30 days at this point. They're usually released early, but to be able to tell the customer, When you get home and you're feeling a little better, give us a call, and then we'll work on making arrangements.

And then the additional services are large print, Braille, and Spanish bills, hearing and speech impaired TTD services. We also, in our call center, have Spanish-speaking representatives. We also have them in some of our customer offices, and one of the things we offer is balanced billing. For many of our customers, it's so much easier if they can budget in what their monthly costs are for their bill. Some people are going to have high bills in the winter and low bills in the summer, and some are going to have the opposite. What balanced billing really does is it takes the usage over a 12-month period, divides it by 12, and then that's the amount that the customer will pay every month, and that'll re-evaluate itself every few months so that in the end, they don't have a debit or credit, hopefully not. Then we also have direct pay program, which is somebody can give the information for their banking information and have the bill taken out right from their account.

So some of the additional commitments in my department is to provide information for community advocates, and the way we do that is by doing quarterly newsletters, let them know what's going on, what programs and services are available. We offer spring workshops. We just completed them. We were in Rockaway, Hempstead, Bellport, Riverhead, and Deer Park, and we do for the community advocate so they can come in and get all the information about programs and services and then they can share that with their clients who come in who need the information.

In the fall, we hold an annual energy forum, which is pretty huge. Usually it's at IBEW Local 25 in Hauppauge, and we invite again all the community advocates. It's usually attended by about 400 people. Throughout the year, we hold tabling events. We use social media. One of my jobs is to get information that's out there onto social media, so we do that through Facebook and Twitter. All

of us in the department, we're on different committees. We have membership on advisory committees and so forth, and we do a lot of training. Anybody who asks us if, for instance, a huge agency, Catholic Charities or somebody, a very large agency would like us to come in and present our programs, we would be happy to do so, so we promote our programs through social media, press releases, bill inserts, brochures, fliers, posters, quarterly newsletters, internal training communications, external training communications, and tabling events. And just when we think we have really done everything we can, we always come up with a new idea and a new way to get information out. It's kind of like our commitment to figure that out.

As I said, the committees, we're on the Suffolk County Department of Social Services Advisory Boards, the east end, Brookhaven, southwest, Smithtown, and the commissioner's advisory, the Health and Welfare Council and the Antihunger Task Force. Community Development Corporations, program coordinating committee of their family self-sufficiency program. I was just there this morning. The Long Island Coalition For the Homeless continuum of care in Amityville, the New York State low income forum on energy. I'm a member of the life steering committee. Saint Vincent De Paul Society, Nassau County Department of Social Services, Adult Service Advisory Council, and Family and Children's Advisory Council; the Senior Umbrella Network in Nassau and Suffolk Counties; Rockaway United Coalition; and the Sunshine Center for Youth and Families. Our social media resources for all the latest information on any low-income programs, energy saving tips, slum tracking, job openings, community events, we always encourage people to like our page on Facebook and follow us on Twitter, and we do post all that information all the time.

We also have a website, which on the website we have downloadable brochures. I don't know if I hit that if it'll take me to it, or if that's something you'd like me to do. This is our website for PSEG. Customer Service, Financial Assistance is right here. This has all our programs, the HEAP, the household assistance rate, Project Warm, which I mentioned is Long Island's fuel fund which happens to still be open if anybody needs any assistance. They are going to stay open until the money runs out, which hopefully won't be for a little while yet, and all of these are our brochures: Financial Assistance, Balanced Billing, and 66 Ways. People can actually click on them and download those brochures.

CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:

Well, thank you so much for your presentation. Thank you for bringing this information not only to us but also to the residents, and I know how difficult it is sometimes to locate those residents that are in need of the services that you have, and, you know, we're here to represent those individuals and also the communities. I have a large number of -- a senior population in private communities, and I have to tell, Tonya was at Leisure Knoll on Sunday morning, or afternoon, where I was also, and she was very informative. She had one of my favorite pieces of material that you have is the 66 Ways To Save. I love this book. This is great. I want to compliment you on that.

Again, I'm looking forward to working with you to see what we can do to help our residents get through hard times, and, you know, that's what these programs are about. A lot of these programs are seniors, individuals who may have lost their jobs, people who maybe are going through illness and they're having financial difficulties, and these programs are incredibly important, so thank you. Legislator Cilmi has a question for you.

LEG. CILMI:

Thanks, Nancy. So can you give us an idea of -- sort of a snapshot of who these programs are, who is using these programs, you know, what sort of -- what percentage of seniors, what percentage ill? Do you have any statistical information?

MS. CAMPO:

I don't have any statistical information on me. I mean, we could certainly get that because we do track it, but I could give you in a snapshot, like, scenarios of what we're experiencing, but, you know --

LEG. CILMI:

Yeah, I could guess what you're getting. We're getting all the same things in our offices, but I was curious to see what the makeup of the entire pie is.

MS. CAMPO:

Yeah, I mean, I would say, you know, seniors, people losing their jobs, single parents who are struggling. Living on Long Island is just very expensive.

LEG. CILMI:

No kidding.

MS. CAMPO:

And we find that a lot of people are just getting by, so one thing just knocks them out, and, you know, electric is kind of something everybody needs and wants, and it's something that -- it's hard because people are struggling to pay their mortgages and their electric and their heat.

LEG. CILMI:

Do you have any idea what PSEGs investment in these programs is in total for Suffolk County?

MS. CAMPO:

No. I'm sorry.

LEG. CILMI:

You don't know? If you could see if you could get your hands on that information and maybe e-mail it to the committee or to me, I would appreciate that.

MS. CAMPO:

Okay.

LEG. CILMI:

Because I think -- correct me if I'm wrong -- maybe you don't have the answer to this question either, but PSEG, in this regard at least, operates much like government in that government needs to provide services for those who are in need for whatever reason. We get our revenue from taxes, obviously, and so those taxes that we collect support those programs that we offer. In your case, you're not taxing folks, but rather you're charge folks in their rate structure, so, you know, I suppose the entire rate base, the entire population of ratepayers would be paying for this program -- for these programs.

MS. CAMPO:

And keep in mind too that PSEG is managing the system for LIPA, which is government as well.

LEG. CILMI:

Sure.

MS. CAMPO:

And I think that's probably one of our challenges in that anything that we can do has to go through

LIPA and the public service commission.

LEG. CILMI:

Right. There's a long regulatory chain that you'd have to --

MS. CAMPO:

Yes.

LEG. CILMI:

Now are any of these programs mandated by New York State government or LIPA? I see a head shaking in the back. Could you come up, just for the sake of the clerk. Just state your name.

MS. SORELL:

My name is Kim Sorell (ph). I'm a manager of revenue operations at PSEG Long Island, and to answer your question in regards to some of the programs that are mandated, so the the medical emergency program is part of HEFPA, the Home Energy Fair Practices Act, in which we need to offer and extend out that 30-day hold for customers experiencing a medical difficulty in their home. In addition to that, the protections offered for the life support or life sustaining equipment is also part of HEFPA.

LEG. CILMI:

Is that a federal act?

MS. SORELL:

It's a New York State act in which we need to maintain services required and documented by a registered physician or registered nurse in the state. We do promote those programs as part of the low income and advocacy group because a lot of people don't know that those options are available to them, and they're afraid, as Nancy mentioned, that their service will be turned off because they have a medical issue in their home, so we make sure that our advocates across the Island are aware that those programs are in place and available to the people that are in need of that assistance.

LEG. CILMI:

The breadth of programs that you described today, do each of them have their own guidelines in terms of how long they are available to somebody, or are they all of them available in perpetuity or as long as the customer remains in that low-income bracket? Answer that question first, and then I'll follow up.

MS. CAMPO:

I think it depends on which program; for instance, the REAP program, it goes by physical location. So if somebody meets the income requirements, and they have REAP, they can't have it again for another 10 years; however, if they move to another location that hasn't had the REAP, they can have it again, so it goes by the location. In other words, they are going to go into that home one time every 10 years.

LEG. CILMI:

Got ya.

MS. CAMPO:

The other is as long as they qualify. It can continue with the medical and so forth as long as the doctor is writing a note and the person is in need, it can continue. And the HAR is 14 months, and again the renewal comes -- if they're still getting the qualifying programs, they can renew that.

Sometimes situations change and then they're not, and then they wouldn't be able to.

LEG. CILMI:

And as far as qualifying, you're using the same guidelines that our Department of Social Services utilizes for low income?

MS. CAMPO:

For the HAR?

LEG. CILMI:

For any of the programs, or do you have your own guidelines for some of them?

MS. CAMPO:

Well, the REAP has its own guidelines, which are much higher than Social Services'. The HAR, it's based on them already getting services from the Department of Social Services, so they're just saying to us, We receive SNAP, or, We receive HEAP; therefore, they're are qualified.

LEG. CILMI:

And what are the guidelines for the REAP program?

MS. CAMPO:

They're based on the federal poverty level. They're in the packet there.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. I'll have a look at that.

MS. CAMPO:

It's also in my PowerPoint. I think it's 52,000 for a family of one and then something like 74 for a family of four.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. You don't have to -- I'll look in my packet. That's fine. And the REAP program is one that you described where you have an assessment on your energy usage in your home. Somebody comes to your home, looks at everything and says, you know, You could save money here, save money here, and then then PSEG will actually pay for some of the upgrades that are recommended including, as you said, replacement of humidifiers air conditioners.

MS. CAMPO:

Up to two window air conditioners and one dehumidifier, if it's not energy efficient. They have a way of determining. Usually the older ones are efficient or ones that are not ENERGY STAR. Those are the ones they'll replace because it's actually an energy efficiency program, and that's what they're looking for, where they can actually save.

LEG. CILMI:

Now so that brings up sort of an interesting question, and I apologize to the rest of the committee for asking these questions, but if I have an air conditioner that is old and not energy efficient, you will replace that air conditioner for me.

MS. CAMPO:

Right.

LEG. CILMI:

Let's say the person next door falls under the same, you know, category in terms of income, et cetera, and they don't have an air conditioner; do you provide them an air conditioner?

MS. CAMPO:

No, because it falls under energy efficiency, so if they don't have an air conditioner, they are not using the energy. You know what I mean? Like if they're using one that's not efficient, they're using a lot of electric.

LEG. CILMI:

So that's interesting, actually, from a consumer point of view, because if you're a low-income person and, you know, somehow you are able to have an air conditioner in your house, enjoy the benefits of an air conditioner but it's just not energy efficient, and your next door neighbor is a low-income person who never could afford an air conditioner in the first place, the one who could afford the air conditioner gets the new air conditioner and the the one who couldn't afford the air conditioner, sorry.

MS. CAMPO:

Right. I mean --

LEG. CILMI:

You don't set the policy. I understand that.

MS. CAMPO:

No, I know, but even just working with people and advocating for them, if they got me a hand-me-down that somebody was getting rid of and it was in the house, in the window, that could be replaced.

LEG. CILMI:

Got ya.

MS. CAMPO:

You know what I'm saying?

LEG. CILMI:

I do.

MS. CAMPO:

Because it's an energy efficiency program, they're looking at energy usage. If you don't have an air conditioner, you're not using that energy.

LEG. CILMI:

So residents need to get creative in terms of how they -- they need find an air conditioner somewhere, throw it in the window. All right. I think that's all the questions I have. Thank you very much.

LEG. ANKER:

Okay. Again, I appreciate your time coming out here, and we all look forward to working with you and reducing our electric rates, working with the energy renewable projects and also energy efficiency, like you were just talking about. So again, the legislators will probably be in touch with you to see if you could bring some of your programs into their communities like you did on Sunday

at Leisure Knoll, which was greatly appreciated, so again, thank you.

LEG. CILMI:

Madam Chair, we have contact information for Nancy? There's a business card in there. Okay. Great. Thanks.

MS. CAMPO:

You know what? I do have a card.

CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:

If you can give us your card.

MS. CAMPO:

What's in there is the information referral line for customers.

CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:

Okay. We will continue with our committee. We have a tabled resolution.

IR 1310, Adopting Local Law No. -2016, A Local Law to regulate pet grooming businesses operating in Suffolk County ("Ginger's Law") (Calarco). That's Rob Calarco's bill. I will make a motion to approve.

LEG. KRUPSKI:

I'll second.

LEG. CILMI:

Is he ready for this?

MR. NOLAN:

Hearing is closed.

CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:

On the motion, Legislator Cilmi.

LEG. CILMI:

The sponsor's ready for this to go?

CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:

As far as I know, we're good to go on that, and I just want to mention, I have received a lot of support for this bill. I know Legislator Martinez had some issues with pet grooming with her pets as well as I have there, so I think there needs to be some type of oversight for groomers, which there is not at this point.

LEG. CILMI:

Yeah, there was one -- I actually had a conversation with a couple of different pet groomers, and conceptually there was support for this legislation. One of the issues that was brought to my attention, and maybe Counsel can speak to this, if there was something in here that had to do with the grooming business somehow being responsible if there was an allergic reaction to some sort of product that was used on the pet. And I know one of the businesses that I spoke with said to me, Well, how are we to know whether or not the pet is allergic to -- is that still in here? And I had addressed this with the sponsor but I'm not sure that any changes were made.

MR. NOLAN:

The only thing I see regarding the allergies is there's a section that states that the business will keep and maintain records of all their clients and their pets including the name, address, phone number of the pet owner, any known allergies of the pet, services provided, dates of services rendered. So the pet owner would have to provide that information to the pet grooming business and they would maintain it.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. But in terms of the pet grooming business being liable in some way if there's an allergic reaction to something that was not -- that they were not made aware of, is there anything in there that...

MR. NOLAN:

No. If they were not made aware of that condition and something happened, they couldn't be held responsible for that if there was an allergic reaction. Could not be if they're not given that information.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. So the law requires them to, the grooming business, to maintain sort of a record of Fido's allergic allergies and...

MR. NOLAN:

Correct, and as part of that, it also talks about an obligation to make incident reports. If something bad happens with a pet, they have to make a record of that.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay.

MR. NOLAN:

The law itself does not impose liability. If something was to happen and a pet had allergic reaction, the law itself doesn't impose liability. The pet owner might have a civil action, I suppose, against the groomer, but this law doesn't really impose that or impose penalties for that.

LEG. CILMI:

I see that as part of the law, there are penalties for offenses, which, among other things, give the county the ability to revoke or deny a registration certificate to any pet grooming business which fails to file all required information, files falsified information, or is found responsible for more than three violations during any registration period of two years. Any pet grooming business or pet groomer whose registration is revoked or denied may reapply after a period of two years. Is there a process by which the grooming business can appeal any sort of determination to that effect?

MR. NOLAN:

Before that would happen, the department would have to have a hearing, give the business an opportunity to be heard. If after the hearing, the department does suspend or revoke the license, then the business owner can bring an Article 78 proceeding to challenge that determination.

LEG. CILMI:

But there's a -- there is the requirement in this law that there be a hearing before the department takes action?

MR. NOLAN:

That is not spelled out in the law, but that is the way it would have to be done. They would have to be given an opportunity to be heard.

LEG. CILMI:

Shouldn't that be spelled out in the law, then?

MR. NOLAN:

I'm sorry. I misspoke. It is in the law that there has to be a hearing and an opportunity to be heard by the violator, yeah.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. Thanks. You know what? Let me ask one other question. This is obviously the Department of Consumer Protection, Consumer Affairs is managing this. Who holds the final determination? When we say "the department," is it the director of the department who would hold the key to the revocation or any other penalty?

MR. NOLAN:

It's with the commissioner.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:

We have a motion. We have a second. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries.

Approved (VOTE: 4-0-0-1, Not Present: Stern)

IR 1463, Accepting and appropriating funds from the New York State Department of Labor through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) for the Dislocated Worker Training National Emergency Grant (Bellone). I'll make a motion.

LEG. KRUPSKI:

Second.

CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:

And please put on the consent calendar. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries.

Approved/Consent (VOTE: 4-0-0-1, Not Present: Stern).

Before we close today, I just want to thank Holly. Would you like to come up for just about a minute? There was a wonderful Suffolk County senior event at Villa Lombardi, and there must have been over 1,000 --

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

It was 600.

CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:

Oh, only 600, only 500. Incredibly successful, and I have to say, boy, can those folks dance. What amazing line dancing I saw at that event.

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

They would put us all to shame. Every one of them were unbelievable. They were going all day.

It was nice. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:

And again, I think we had the senior of the year that was announced.

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

Her name is impossible to pronounce. Irene is her first name. She said "Irene G" would be lovely because her name is all consonants.

CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:

The event was greatly appreciated by our senior community, and I do want to thank you for all the work that you did to put that event together and the many, many other events, so thank you, Holly.

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

I appreciate that. Thanks so much.

CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:

You're very welcome.

I see no further business. This committee is adjourned.

(The committee meeting was adjourned at 1:14 p.m.)