

SPORTS & RECREATION COMMITTEE meeting of June 21, 2000**Minutes**

A regular meeting of the Sports & Recreation Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Media Room, First Floor of the H. Lee Dennison Building, Veterans Memorial Highway, Hauppauge, New York, on June 21, 2000.

Members Present:

Legislator Joseph Caracappa - Chairman
 Legislator Ginny Fields - Vice-Chair
 Legislator Cameron Alden

Members Not Present:

Legislator Vivian Fisher - Excused

Also In Attendance:

Legislator Brian Foley - District #7
 Ellen Martin - Aide to Presiding Officer Tonna
 John Ortiz - Legislative Budget Analyst/Budget Review Office
 Mary Skiber - Aide to Legislator Fields
 Elizabeth Nostrand - Aide to Legislator Fisher
 Peter Scully - Commissioner/Suffolk County Parks Department
 Greg Lauri - Assistant to the Commissioner/SC Parks Department
 Kenneth Knappe - County Executive's Budget Office

Minutes Taken By:

Alison Mahoney - Court Stenographer

(*The meeting was called to order at 11:02 A.M.*)

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

We're going to start the Sports and Recreation Committee meeting.

We have two resolutions on the agenda. First, let me state that Legislator Fisher contacted me, she has an excused absence for this meeting.

1646-00 (P) - Amending the 2000 Operating Budget to establish an Enterprise Fund and transferring funds from a Balance Sheet Account into the newly created Fund 620, Suffolk County Ball Park (County Executive). We have Mr. Knappe from the Executive's Budget Office. Could you just give us a brief overview of this resolution?

MR. KNAPPE:

Sure. Mr. Weiss asked me to come down here this morning, he's in a budget hearing right now upstairs for the Operating Budget.

The resolution before you, IR 1646, we worked that out with the Budget Review Office; Jim Spero is on board with it and Fred, also the Comptroller's Office is up for it. And basically what we're doing is separating the ball park revenues and expenditures away from the Operating Budget so this way everything is in its own collective fund, any revenues that are collected are going to be deposited into this fund. We will also be including it in the Operating Budget cycle for next year.

If you look at it, it's not all the expenditures or revenues that are going to be coming forward to the ball park, I would like to make that clear. But when we go through the budget process and we have more firm estimates for both revenues and expenditures, you will be seeing that in the County Executive's recommended budget.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

So basically what we're doing is through the complex stream of revenues that come in through the ball park and the way we set up the contract, it would be much easier to keep tabs of exactly what we're receiving back from this venture through an enterprise fund.

MR. KNAPPE:

That's correct. The Comptroller's Office is very happy that we're creating this enterprise fund. It's truly one of the enterprise funds that we have in the County; a couple of the health programs are set up as quasi enterprise funds. From the research that we did, it's going to be very similar to the way that the Smiths Point Bridge was done back I think in the late 60's, early 70's, the way that was established, where all the revenue is going to be tied directly into the ball park.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Legislator Fields?

LEG. FIELDS:

I think, you know, I would support this. But I also wanted to make a comment about the tie that he just stepped in with to this particular committee.

MR. ORTIZ:

Sports and recreation.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

That's John, he's always a man of the times.

LEG. FOLEY:

No curve balls, John.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

And later -- well, yesterday at Public Safety, did you have like a gun on your tie or something?

MR. ORTIZ:

No, but I wore a flak jacket.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

A flak jacket, correct; helicopters.

LEG. ALDEN:

I just have a quick question on this.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Legislator Alden.

LEG. ALDEN:

Why are they doing that, then?

MR. KNAPPE:

The main reason is we want to make sure and to show the taxpayers that the ball park is not costing us any money. We are projecting a fund balance, if our estimates hold true for 2000 and 2,001, and we just want to make sure that everybody's aware that the ball park is not costing the taxpayers any money out of the Operating Budget.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay. Then authority to spend money out of this account, it lies with who?

MR. KNAPPE:

I'm sorry?

LEG. ALDEN:

The authority to expend the money out of this account, where does that lie?

MR. KNAPPE:

It relies with a couple of different departments in the County. Public Works is going to have a majority of the responsibility with the accounts; the comptroller's office is, of course, responsible for paying out the debt that the County has incurred on the building for our portion, that will also be coming out of the fund. And the County Executive's Office, of course, and the Legislature will be working with DPW on their portion.

LEG. ALDEN:

After you pay all the bills and things like that, and you do anticipate having a positive balance in there, right?

MR. KNAPPE:

At this time.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay. What happens with that money?

MR. KNAPPE:

The money is going to be staying in the fund. Through our agreement that we have with the New York State Development Corporation, there is a certain pool of money that has to be set aside for a Capital Reserve.

LEG. ALDEN:

Right.

MR. KNAPPE:

That was part of our agreement that we had with the State for the ball park. And I think that the County Executive's main goal is to make sure that the park stays in pristine, you know, shape that it is in today 15 years from now, 10 years from now so this way this stays as a state-of-the-art facility.

LEG. ALDEN:

But if we start running, you know, \$50,000 -- after we fund the reserves and all that kind of stuff, if we start running 50,000 or \$100,000 balances in here, do you have to come back to us to approve any funding or any transfers out of this account, or is it solely at the discretion of the County Executive?

MR. KNAPPE:

The way that we set it up through the Enterprise Fund, it's only going to be entitled for uses within the ball park itself. So I believe that we will not be able to transfer this money from the ball park, say, to the Operating Budget to cover a shortfall, that is not our intention at all.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Without a resolution.

MR. KNAPPE:

Without -- I don't even -- the way that it's set up, I would have to check with the Comptroller's Office, I'm not even positive if we have even the ability to do that.

LEG. ALDEN:

Yeah, I'd like to find out. In the future, if we do end up with a big balance here, the ball park's operating perfectly and everything else, you know, what can we do and what's the mechanism to actually do something with that money?

MR. KNAPPE:

I'll call the Comptroller's Office today and I'll get that information -- before Tuesday.

LEG. ALDEN:

Thanks, I'd appreciate it.

MR. KNAPPE:

-- before Tuesday.

LEG. ALDEN:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Legislator Fields?

LEG. FIELDS:

Is that going to come in with a CN then?

MR. KNAPPE:

Actually no, it's on the table, I think it's the regular order of business for Tuesday.

LEG. FIELDS:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

We have the bill in front of us, if it's approved now it will be on the agenda for Tuesday. If there are any questions that you need answered before then that we can't answer now, we'll make sure that information is relayed to either you or your district office prior to Tuesday or we'll have that information for you on Tuesday.

LEG. FIELDS:

If we could get it prior to Tuesday, there is so much to read when you're sitting there on the floor.

MR. KNAPPE:

Certainly.

LEG. FIELDS:

Thanks.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Legislator Foley.

LEG. FOLEY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As a follow up to Legislator Alden's comments, and this is first to the Chair. One of the ways that we were able through you particularly and others of us who persuaded our colleagues to support the ball park was that the revenues would be used to cover the cost of the interest on the bonds and the like, but the point made by Legislator Alden is well taken. Revenues in excess of that -- maybe I wasn't listening but -- I mean, I was listening,

but maybe it just needs to be further clarified. Revenues in excess of those that are necessary to retire the bonds, how will those additional revenues be utilized?

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Well, first there's the Capital Reserve Fund that we're mandated to create by the grant agreement with the State.

LEG. FOLEY:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

On top of that, it will sit in a fund balance, that's the question we have now, how will we get to those funds if we need them in the future. So we'll have that answer.

LEG. FOLEY:

Okay.

MR. KNAPPE:

We also have some other ideas of what we can use the fund for. For example, we're all aware that some of Suffolk County Police Department located for each game for traffic safety and stuff like that. And if our revenues are coming in as projected, we're not in the position yet of doing that but it's certainly something that we can look at, doing a transfer to the Police District to cover the Police District's costs for the police that's there for other type of security that the County might have to incur.

LEG. ALDEN:

That's something that -- sorry.

MR. KNAPPE:

Our main goal is to have the ball park be completely self-sufficient.

LEG. ALDEN:

Good.

MR. KNAPPE:

And by itemizing everything within Fund 620, our goal will be able to be met that way.

LEG. ALDEN:

Good. I support that, but I would like that to come back to the Legislature to, you know, approve that type of a transfer.

MR. KNAPPE:

And the only way we would be doing that would be through the budget process also.

LEG. ALDEN:

Good. Okay.

MR. KNAPPE:

So we'll all be able to have a roll in that.

LEG. FOLEY:

So just to clarify again, then. You envision using some of the -- I'll call them surplus monies for maintenance of the ball park; Because maintenance is under whose responsibility, DPW?

MR. KNAPPE:

It would be along with DPW. And it's not --

LEG. FOLEY:

So part of the monies, then, would be used for upkeep, let's say --

MR. KNAPPE:

Not necessarily, because it should be clarified because we do have -- well, actually the Long Island -- the Ducks have a lot of the responsibility for the daily maintenance and stuff like that of the ball park.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

All the responsibility.

LEG. FOLEY:

For daily maintenance.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Daily maintenance and the upkeep of the ball park. When it comes to capital improvements, it's the County's facility and that's why we're mandated to do the Capital Reserve Fund so it is self-sustaining.

LEG. FOLEY:

Okay. So as far as all the landscaping and the rest that's on the outside, who's responsibility is it to maintain that?

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

The Ducks.

LEG. FOLEY:

It is the Ducks, okay.

LEG. ALDEN:

That's it.

MR. KNAPPE:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Thank you.

MR. KNAPPE:

I will get that information for you.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

There is a motion by myself.

LEG. ALDEN:

I will second.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Second by Legislator Alden. All in favor? Opposed? Abstained?

1646 is approved (Vote: 3-0-0-1 Not Present: Legislator Fisher).

1652-00 (P) - Adopting Local Law No. 2000, a Charter Law establishing the Division of Sports and Recreation within the Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation (County Executive).

It is up for a public hearing this Tuesday. I will make a motion to table pending public hearing, second by Legislator Fields. Anything on the motion, anybody have any questions at this point in time?

LEG. FIELDS:

Maybe we could direct this to Commissioner Scully.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Commissioner, why don't you come on up. Thanks for coming down.

COMMISSIONER SCULLY:

I understood that procedurally you would be tabling it, but I thought in case you had any questions I would attend.

LEG. FIELDS:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

We appreciate that.

LEG. FIELDS:

You thought well. Who would head this; it would be you, but would you have a second person under you that would take this aspect of parks?

COMMISSIONER SCULLY:

Here's what we envision. We envision a very small unit of government, four employees which we're seeking in the 2001 Operating Budget request that we've submitted. And we'll -- depending upon the level of interest and support that there is, we may look for a way to implement the division within the 2000 calendar year if we can identify offsets within our departmental budget.

The way that we're proposing to staff it would be with a Director of Sports and Recreation yet to be named or identified, an assistant or Assistant Director, and a single secretary, so three full-time employees.

LEG. FIELDS:

What would the fourth employee -- you said four employees before.

COMMISSIONER SCULLY:

We have a line in the budget request for temporary salaries for a summer college intern.

LEG. FIELDS:

Okay. And how would the department be broken up, what would come under Sports and Recreation that's now part of Parks?

COMMISSIONER SCULLY:

The Division of Sports and Recreation would really be in many respects an expansion of the department's mission, consistent with what I think is an interest on the part of both the County Executive and the Legislature in trying to expand the roll played by County Government in meeting the recreational needs of a growing population. It began I think with the Community Greenways Fund in which the Legislature said, you know, there's an awareness on our part that it's healthy that there's a growing demand for facilities among organizations for both youth and adults alike, but we all recognize that there simply aren't enough soccer fields, enough baseball fields and other types of recreational facilities. And I think out of that, the active recreational component of the Community Greenways Fund emerged and --

LEG. FIELDS:

So just to further my question, would it then break the Parks Department from, let's say, Timber Point or Bergen Point or whatever, would that then fall under Parks -- not Parks, Sports and Recreation?

COMMISSIONER SCULLY:

No. Our existing facilities, other than those few facilities where we have -- we have several active facilities, for instance, we have baseball fields at two locations in Ronkonkoma, at Ronkonkoma County Park on the north side of the lake and at

Raynor, east side of the lake where we have active agreements with youth baseball organizations; those types of situations would fall under Sports and Recreation. Where we have an active relationship between the department and an organization, we feel that that would be well suited for administration by this division, to give it an umbrella for an overall approach to these issues, in addition to giving a focused, administrative structure to deal with the active recreational component of the Greenways Fund. We have not as of yet, it is true, spent any of the Greenways money, but we do have several live proposals which are moving closer and closer towards fruition and we think that it makes sense to have that program, as important as it is to both the Legislature and the County Executive, to deserve almost full-time attention.

In addition to that, when we talked to the County Executive about this potential earlier in the year, and it was a subject treated in his State of the County Address, we foresaw possibly a broader role for the division in terms of looking at evaluating sports infrastructure throughout the County, seeing how adequate or where needs might exist, and then exploring the possibility of obtaining Federal and State funding to expand infrastructure, trying to act as a resource and a linking mechanism, if you will, for facilities that are available in groups which need to access those, having an active website where people can look for information, and perhaps getting involved in scheduling clinics and hooking people up essentially with the services that they require.

We would envision and we're lucky to have on staff in the Parks Department a gentleman by the name of Greg Lauri who has a background in these matters. We envision working very closely with this committee, should the Legislature support the creation of the division, to shape it's mission and to determine what it's priorities should be. I think that our experience as a County with the ball park at Central Islip and the Ducks has shown that great things are possible if we have, you know, a focus on a mutual objective and with everybody pointed in the same direction.

I'm sorry to have gone on so long. I hope I've answered the question.

LEG. FIELDS:

That's exactly what I was looking for. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Thank you, Peter. And just to go a little bit further and not to be redundant, but to just fortify the reason I believe that this is necessary.

First and foremost, back before Legislator Fields came on the Legislature, I know you attended some meetings prior to taking office, you may have heard the discussion and the debate about the Sports Commission that was needed in Suffolk County.

LEG. FIELDS:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

This takes on that role in a partial fashion. And when I defended the fact that we could do this cheaper and more effectively as opposed to doing a high budgeted Sports Commission, we can do it in-house such as with a Sports and Recreation Division, now we're at that point where we're about to implement it, or try to. Everything that Peter said holds true, the County of Suffolk -- since 1995, actually, when I was first appointed Sports and Recreation Chair, there wasn't much going on in regards to sports and recreation in the County of Suffolk. And this committee was an ad hoc committee and still is, by the way, but we now meet regularly due to the fact that sports involvement by this County has grown.

The residents in Suffolk County have actually turned past the townships which have historically dealt with parks and recreation and sports and things such as that to the County because we have really responded because of the request of the public; the ball park is just one example. And not so much our involvement in the ball park, but just look at the response of the ball park and what people are looking for. It's a clear indication that the County is going in the right direction, that we're doing it prudently and in a way that I think will be effective and through a Sports and Recreation Division with people who are qualified and have exceptional background in the sports business, if you will, in the sports area is the way

to go.

And I really only see great things in regards to promoting sports, PSA's with sports figures in Suffolk County such as the Nassau Sports Commission does, clinics with sports figures that children can get involved with, it's endless. You can tie the Health Department into some of these clinics such as we do with the ball park with Learn to be Tobacco Free Program, it is basically printed throughout the ball park and brochures and in clinics that they're going to be doing in the future. The possibilities are endless and I think they're all positive, so I think the time has come for us to look at this clearly and more concisely and actually move forward with it.

LEG. FIELDS:

I would just ask that -- two suggestion before committees regarding a website and the fact that Suffolk County really needs to do better marketing for the programs that we have and the events we have and all the work that people put into different things and then having a small collection of people get any benefit out of it because of the fact that we haven't marketed it. In, I guess it's four of the bill, it would be B4, and it talks about developing a website, I think I would, you know, want to have you discuss it with MIS and maybe that needs a person to put more time into it and effort, because that's a lot of work to have all events and sporting things. And it's something we really need, we need a separate department, I think, in the County just to do that kind of thing in conjunction with all of the other programs that we do have.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Well, that does -- excuse me. That does tie into the bill that you're sponsoring, that I'm sure will be addressed within in your legislation. And you're right, the real point for the website, beyond just promoting maybe clinics and things such as that, parents do not have the ability, other than through their local communities and hearsay through the smaller recreational programs, the ability to look anywhere to see when registration is for a soccer group or a little league, when it is, the age groups, do they have T-Ball, where do they go, where do they get the forms, can they get it off-line, where to send the check. And this clearing house website for youth activities, and even senior activities which are growing almost as fast as youth activities when it comes to sports and recreation, this will all be readily accessible to those who want to participate, and possibly increase those numbers of participants due to the fact that the information is at their fingertips.

And it's something, again, historically towns have done, but it's taken a new step. And Greenways is just another example of how popular sports and rec is and the County's involvement in it, so it's time to move forward.

LEG. FIELDS:

Do we need a motion or anything on this?

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

There is a motion to table and a second due to pending public hearing on Tuesday.

LEG. FIELDS:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

So all in favor? Opposed? Abstained? **The motion is tabled pending public hearing (Vote: 3-0-0-1 Not Present: Legislator Fisher).**

Is there anything else you would like to speak about, Commissioner, relating to this?

COMMISSIONER SCULLY:

Not really, just I appreciate the opportunity to have a preliminary discussion with you on the issues. It's beneficial for me personally and for the department, both in terms of being able to share with you our vision and to learn a little bit more about what you're thinking, which is very, very helpful to us.

As I indicated earlier, what we envision is a very close working relationship between this division, should it be created,

and this committee which is really a focal point in terms of policy on these issues for the County. So assuming that the proposal is viable, we'll really look forward to it, it would be an exciting expansion of our mission. I know that there are many things that this County is far ahead of its neighbor to the west, and most notably our financial condition, but Nassau County has traditionally had a broader roll in recreational activities than Suffolk County has and maybe this will give us an opportunity to catch up a little bit as we enter the new millennium. So I thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Okay. One request from the Chair to the Commissioner, I would suggest that either you or a designee come on Tuesday in case there are questions during the public hearing portion, okay?

COMMISSIONER SCULLY:

We'll both be there.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Okay. Hearing -- is there any other business that would like to come before this committee? Hearing none, seeing none, I make the motion to adjourn, second by Legislator Fields. All in favor? Opposed? We are adjourned.

(*The meeting was adjourned at 11:24 A.M.*)

**Legislator Joseph T. Caracappa, Chairman
Sports & Recreation Committee**