

Suffolk County-Wide Senior Citizens Task Force



IS IT GOOD TO GROW OLD IN SUFFOLK COUNTY?

October 2007

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR STEVE STERN, CHAIRMAN

REPORT TO

COUNTY EXECUTIVE STEVE LEVY

AND THE SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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Task Force Membership

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Town of Brookhaven:	Nicholas Maletta
Town of East Hampton:	Christopher Halucha
Town of Huntington:	Susan J. Harty
Town of Islip:	Elizabeth Lorenz
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Suffolk Countywide Senior Citizens Task Force

Is It Good To Grow Old In Suffolk County?

October 2007

Suffolk County Legislator Steve Stern, Chairman

Vision Statement

In January 2007, Legislator Steve Stern, 16th L.D., authored legislation creating a Suffolk County-wide Senior Citizens Task Force to study the present and future needs of senior citizens in Suffolk County. Legislator Stern, who also serves as the Chairman of the Veterans and Seniors Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature, envisioned a working Task Force that would study issues facing seniors and make recommendations for solutions to problems facing older adults in our community today and in the future. Legislator Stern also hoped to create a useful tool for County officials and agencies that seek to serve this vital segment of our society.

When speaking in support of passage of his proposed legislation, Legislator Stern explained, “We all know that Long Island, and particularly

Suffolk County, is an aging population. We must plan accordingly to meet the challenges that seniors and their families face today as well as recognize the need to plan for the coming age wave in the near future.” The Suffolk Countywide Senior Citizens Task Force was created with the passage of Resolution No. 1535-2006.

Although aging issues are considered at the Federal and State levels of government, it has become very clear that this challenge must also be addressed at the local level. The once-a-decade White House Conference on Aging was most recently held in Washington, D.C. in 2005. However, even though the conference is convened by the White House, President George W. Bush skipped the White House conference -- making him the first president not to speak to delegates in the event's half-century history. In fact, while the conference delegates were meeting in a hotel uptown, the White House motorcade set out in the opposite direction, to Greenspring Village, a high-end gated retirement community in suburban Virginia.

Although the conference delegates represented the best and brightest throughout the nation in their various disciplines, the forced theme of the conference was to minimize the role of the federal government in planning for the aging of the American population. Speakers repeatedly discussed

“family and community roles” in assisting seniors, and stressed that it’s now critical for those approaching retirement age to take personal responsibility in planning for their own retirement. The 2005 conference will be remembered for emphasizing nongovernmental roles in dealing with the issues raised by an aging population. Indeed, it might well be dubbed the “Your-Federal-Government-Is-Out-of-Here White House Conference on Aging of 2005.” With the disappointing abdication of this administration, it has become clear that the best innovation for providing services to and for the benefit of seniors will have to come from the private sector and local levels of government.

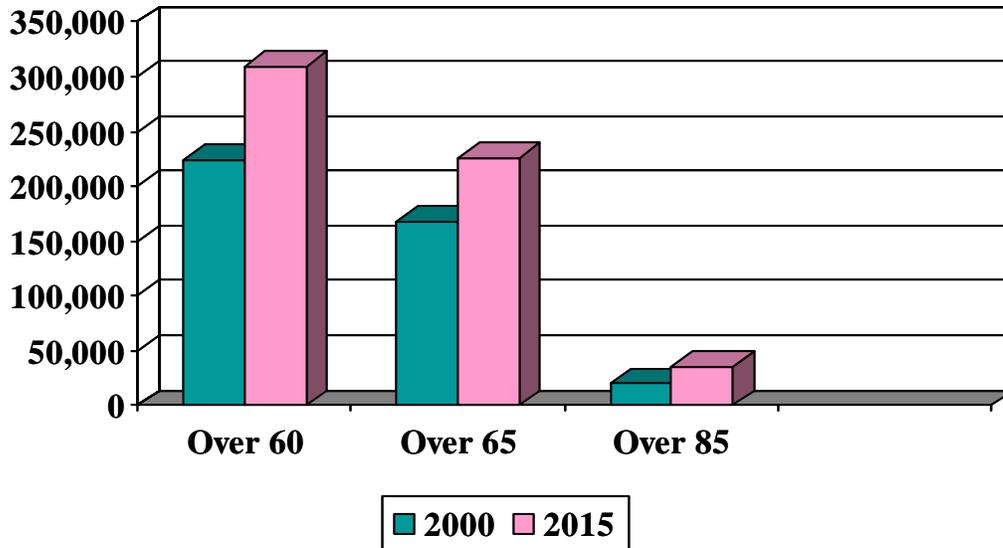
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING AND PROJECT 2015

At the organizational meeting of the Task Force, Chairman Stern distributed a report that had been provided to the Office for the Aging entitled *Project 2015: Suffolk County Planning for the Future*. The purpose of Project 2015 was to provide information and education about Suffolk County’s changing demographic profile and to enable those at the local level to address the County level impact of changing demographics. One trend identified in project 2015 was Suffolk County’s aging population.

The County's median age increased from 26 years in 1970 to 29 years in 1980, and now exceeds 36 years of age. This increase is due to the aging of the baby boom population, the leading edge of which those born in 1946 is now over the age of 60.

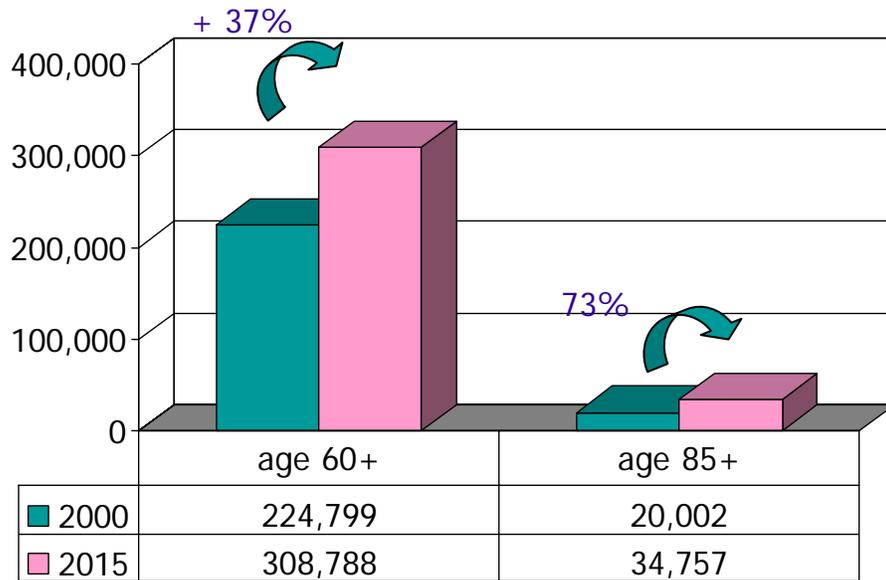
Another important trend is of those over the age of 85. The expected growth of those over 85 in Suffolk County is exponential. As can be seen below, Suffolk County's elderly population growth from 2000 to the year 2015 is significant. It is expected that those over the age of 60 will increase from approximately 225,000 in 2000 to approximately 309,000 by the year 2015. Even more significant is the expected trend of those over the age of 85. In 2000, there were approximately 20,000 Suffolk County residents over the age of 85. By the year 2015, that number is expected to grow to approximately 35,000 residents.

Suffolk County Elderly Population 2000-2015



Suffolk County’s population, although expected to grow only 3.4 percent overall between the years 2000 and 2015, is clearly going to be aging with an expected 37 percent increase in those over the age of 60, and a very significant 73 percent increase in those over the age of 85. And although the aging population will be seen all over Long Island and in metropolitan counties, Suffolk County is expected to have an even larger growth rate than Nassau County.

Suffolk County Population Expectations



Suffolk County's population, although expected to grow only 3.4% overall between 2000 and 2015, is clearly going to be aging -- with a 37% increase in those over 60, and a 73% increase in those over 85.

In Nassau in the year 2000 there were approximately 256,000 residents over the age of 60. Compare that to Suffolk County's smaller number of 224,000 in the same year. In contrast, by the year 2015 Nassau County will have a projected growth to 284,000 residents over the age of 60, while Suffolk County will exceed that number with a projected population of approximately 309,000 residents over the age of 60 in 2015.

There is an additional trend that is not necessarily reflected in those statistics. Population trends and forecasts are based on those residents that are currently residing in Suffolk County. It does not necessarily take into account those seniors that once lived in Suffolk County, or who have relatives or close family friends who are currently residing in Suffolk County, but are currently residing in another county, region, or even another state. Many retirees who originally were Suffolk County residents, who have since moved to retirement states such as Florida, North Carolina or Arizona and are living the retirement lifestyle, will experience loss of a spouse and/or challenges of illness. Those seniors will want to be near family and friends in later life at a time when they need assistance. Thus, inevitably there will be a large number of elderly who will be returning to Suffolk County in their later years, perhaps the most frail of their lifetimes, seeking assistance, family and friends. This “boomerang” generation will only add to an aging population and the challenges that we must meet.

As the population grows older and more diverse, communities will be impacted in many ways. Some examples include:

- Public Transportation
- Roadways / Signage
- Health Care
- Home Care
- Housing
- Banking
- Educational Institutions

PUBLIC HEARINGS AND AN OPPORTUNITY

FOR SENIORS TO “SOUND OFF”

How to meet those challenges is the focus of the work of the Suffolk Countywide Senior Citizens Task Force. Four public hearings were held throughout the spring of 2007. Below are the places and times of those public hearings.

- Tuesday, March 27, 2007, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, Suffolk County Legislature, Hauppauge, NY
- Thursday, April 26, 2007, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm & 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm, Suffolk County Legislature, Riverhead, NY
- Thursday, May 24, 2007, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, Suffolk County Community College, Selden, NY
- Thursday, June 28, 2007, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, West Islip Community Center, West Islip, NY

Public hearings were held throughout Suffolk County, in the east end, in the west end, the north and the south, as a way to give all seniors and their families and those interested in this subject matter the opportunity to participate. The Task Force was fortunate to hear from hundreds of seniors and family members, as well as representatives from the aging community and those organizations that provide services to senior citizens and their families throughout Suffolk County. Below is a list of those aging professionals, representatives of organizations, as well as government officials and department heads who testified before the Task Force.

Suffolk County Senior Citizens Task Force Public Hearings

Tuesday, March 27, 2007-Suffolk County Legislature, Hauppauge, NY

SPEAKERS

ORGANIZATION

Hon. Glenda Jackson	Councilwoman, for Huntington Supervisor Frank Petrone
Irving Toliver	Director, Town of Huntington Human Services
Charles Gardiner	Director, Suffolk County Office of Consumer Affairs
Robert Mitchell, Esq.	SC Legal Aid Society, Senior Citizens Division
George Roach, Esq.	SC Legal Aid Society, Senior Citizens Division
Laurette Mulry, Esq.	SC Legal Aid Society, Senior Citizens Division
Lisa Tyson	Director, Long Island Progressive Coalition
Bruce Blower	Director, Suffolk County Office of Handicap Services
Tara Purcell	Social Worker, Broadlawn Adult Health Program
John Seaton	President, Moriches Nutrition Center
Paul Arfin	President, Intergenerational Strategies
Kathy Rosenthal	Vice President, Long Island FECS
Ellen Katz	Project Director, Jewish Association for Services for the Aged (JASA)
Jim Gallagher	Member, Seniors Against Discrimination (SAD)
Donald Clark	Board of Directors, Huntington Senior Center

Thursday, April 26, 2007-Suffolk County Legislature, Riverhead, NY

SPEAKERS

ORGANIZATION

Paul Connor	CEO, Eastern Long Island Hospital
Paul Arfin	President, Intergenerational Strategies
Pegi Orsino	RSVP
Robyn Berger-Gaston	Family Services League
Daphne Shuttleworth	Comfort Keepers
Brigitte Castellano	National Commission of Grandparents
Andrew Licari	Citizens for Property Tax Relief
Vincent Rutkowski	Seniors Against Discrimination (SAD)
Jim Gallagher	Member, Seniors Against Discrimination (SAD)
Hon. Scott A. Russell	Supervisor, Town of Southold
Tom Ronayne	Director, Suffolk County Veterans Services Agency
Laurette Mulry, Esq.	SC Legal Aid Society, Senior Citizens Division
Edna Steck	Town of East Hampton Department of Human Services
Ira Bernstein	Brookhaven Senior Advisory Board
Louise Massaro	Brookhaven Senior Advisory Board

Thursday, May 24, 2007-Suffolk County Community College, Selden, NY

SPEAKERS

ORGANIZATION

Hon. Brian X. Foley	Supervisor, Town of Brookhaven
Tom MacGilvray	Director, Suffolk County Community Mental Hygiene
Robert Shinnick	Director, Suffolk County Transportation Division
Bruce Blower	Director, Suffolk County Handicapped Services
Laurette Mulry, Esq.	SC Legal Aid Society, Senior Citizens Division
Jim Gallagher	Member, Seniors Against Discrimination (SAD)
Ira Bernstein	Brookhaven Senior Advisory Board
Maura Sullivan	Town of Southampton Senior Services

Thursday, June 28, 2007-West Islip Community Center, West Islip, NY

SPEAKERS

ORGANIZATION

Hon. Phil Nolan	Supervisor, Town of Islip
Bruce Blower	Director, Suffolk County Handicapped Services
Laurette Mulry, Esq.	SC Legal Aid Society, Senior Citizens Division
George Roach, Esq.	SC Legal Aid Society, Senior Citizens Division
Ellen Eichelbaum	The Speakeasy Group
Roberta Monat	National Association of Social Workers
Eileen Verity	Catholic Charities
Elizabeth Geary	Day Haven Adult Day Services

Edward O'Connor	Advanced Funding
Wanda Rivera	Day Haven Adult Day Services
Mary Kern	Seniors Against Discrimination
Ira Bernstein	Brookhaven Senior Advisory Board
Rose Hunt	Brookhaven Senior Advisory Board
Louise Massaro	Brookhaven Senior Advisory Board
Emily Chappell	Town of Islip Senior Citizens Services

During the first organizational meeting, Task Force members met to discuss issues that they had experience with within their communities as well as begin the process of identifying those issues that the Task Force would like to identify and consider throughout this process. However, it's important to note that the Task Force itself came to the public hearings with no preconceptions about what subject matter seniors and those testifying at the public hearings would wish to discuss. Task Force members came to the public hearings to listen and to hear from seniors and their advocates. The Task Force heard testimony from elected officials, government department heads, senior advocates, representatives from senior organizations, but most importantly compelling stories from seniors and their families themselves. Hundreds gave testimony, and several common themes emerged.

Among the most common were:

1. The need for senior citizen affordable housing.
2. Better access to public transportation.
3. Health care concerns, particularly home care.
4. Cost of living/quality of life.

With these four major themes having been identified as the most common concerns among seniors, the Task Force then divided into four subcommittees to begin the process of identifying solutions to the above problems which were raised by those who testified.

REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE

Senior Housing Concerns

It is an absolute fact that seniors want to remain at home, within the communities they helped to build. Whether it is the same home that he or she has lived in for the past 60 years or a new location, remaining in one's home is synonymous with maintaining dignity, independence and control over one's life. It is also perhaps one's greatest fear: not being able to remain in one's home due to illness, frailty, or the need for supervision and

assistance. Inevitably for many, remaining at home may no longer be possible. However, for those seniors that are still able to remain in the community as long as there are sufficient services available, people want to remain at home. The Task Force believes that all levels of government must do whatever can be done to insure that one who is still able to remain in his or her home has the opportunity to do so.

Ellen Katz, the Project Director for the Senior Center for JASA at the Suffolk Y JCC, located in Commack, addressed the challenge older residents in Suffolk County face when it comes to affordable housing. She explained rents for apartments in Suffolk County continue to soar, while the number of available apartment units continues to decline. Zoning restrictions forbidding two family housing contributes to the severe shortage, as does the limited number of apartment complexes in existence. She noted that the average waiting list for Section 8 housing developments is between two and five years. Too often an aging resident gives up their longtime home at the urging of their adult children. They move in with their extended family only to find that arrangement not working in the future, either due to personality conflicts or unrealistic expectations on both sides. She ended her comments by asking a question: “If million dollar McMansions are sprouting like mushrooms throughout Suffolk County, why can’t we build more affordable

housing for our greatest generation?” Affordable housing for Suffolk County residents of all ages continues to be a tremendous challenge. What can be done about keeping older adults in their own homes?

1. Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities

The Task Force was very interested in the testimony of Kathy Rosenthal, the Vice President of Long Island Regional Operations for FEGS, which is one of the largest health and human services organizations in the country, serving more than 120,000 residents in the New York Metropolitan area. Ms. Rosenthal spoke on behalf of FEGS and the clients that it serves, and discussed the idea of a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community, or “NORC”. A NORC is a model of service delivery that is designed to meet the diverse needs of people who are aging in place and want to remain in their homes. Services can be provided to seniors within the area by social workers, visiting nurses, meal delivery services, transportation services, affordable and reliable home repair and maintenance services, etc.

Ms. Rosenthal explained that there are hundreds of communities with more than 40% of its residents over the age of 60. Suffolk County’s suburban landscape creates a very compelling case for the development of programs like these, perhaps even more compelling than in New York City,

which has much greater accessibility to all types of services. There is significant isolation for individuals living in single-family homes, often without relatives in close proximity or the available time to assist. There are additional barriers to accessing care, particularly accessible transportation, maintenance of property and homes, which typically becomes more and more challenging as individuals age and become more frail.

Currently in Suffolk County, a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community is being formed in the Town of Huntington. The program, as conceived, promises to be an excellent way to insure that seniors receive the proper services that they need to be able to remain in their homes. Suffolk County Government and the Office for the Aging must encourage the establishment of NORCs in appropriate communities throughout Suffolk County. The Task Force also strongly recommends that the Suffolk County Office for the Aging continue to be in continuous contact with the Town of Huntington regarding the establishment and progress of its NORC Program. The Task Force also recommends that Suffolk County use whatever resources are necessary to enhance the Town of Huntington's NORC Program, to determine best practices and how Suffolk County Government can utilize its resources to assist additional towns throughout Suffolk County in establishing their own NORC Programs.

2. Home Share

Home sharing matches a senior citizen living in the community with what is typically a younger person who is in need of affordable housing. One important effort is the Home Share LI Program. In a home share situation, renters pay rent to the homeowners, which is usually less than fair market value. The renter may also assist the homeowner with work to be done around the home. Home share can be a significant way for seniors to be able to remain within their homes in the communities that they love, and be better able to meet the cost of living. But perhaps even more importantly, home share is a program that can provide much needed companionship for those seniors who are currently living alone.

The Family Service League is currently administering the Home Share LI Program. Presently, the program has produced over 40 matches. That's all being done on a very bare bones budget. This is a program that has proven that it can work. However, it remains under funded. The Task Force recommends that Suffolk County fully fund the Home Share LI Program in order to provide the personnel and public awareness necessary to increase the number of appropriate matches.

3. Intergenerational Zoning

In addition to those options that may allow seniors to remain in their existing homes, it is just as important for Suffolk County to consider new housing options for seniors and to work with all levels of government to be able to implement these proposals. One opportunity for new housing initiatives for seniors throughout Suffolk County would be a new zoning definition in our towns. Hon. Brian X. Foley, Supervisor of the Town of Brookhaven, commented during his testimony that land use and zoning decisions creates what he called “segregated housing.” Most often it’s a private retirement community of 55 and older, or single family developments with single family housing. Supervisor Foley suggested a need to reconsider general site plans for different types of site plans to look at intergenerational housing throughout the towns. The Supervisor suggested working with the Suffolk County Planning Commission to develop new zoning categories that promote intergenerational housing. This makes sense. A generation ago saw children growing up in a community that had a lot more interaction with those that were older. That’s a real benefit, the Supervisor explained, for any community.

This may be particularly useful in developments currently under consideration, such as the Yaphank property owned by Suffolk County. This is to be a model of smart growth development in Suffolk County that will encourage development of affordable housing, entertainment, business, office and retail. Suffolk County should use this opportunity to develop this new zoning strategy for intergenerational housing, which could require some set aside for affordable senior housing.

Of course, whenever talking about affordable housing, senior housing or workforce housing, or any other type of housing, infrastructure needs become paramount. In order to get the requisite density, infrastructure is critical, including sewer capacity. This year, the Suffolk County Legislature passed legislation (Resolution No. 554-2007) that requires a 20 percent set aside for affordable housing for those housing developments seeking to hook into the sewer system. The Task Force recommends that in conjunction with new zoning definitions requiring affordable senior housing, and in addition to the 20 percent set aside, an appropriate percentage of that require some form of affordable housing for seniors.

4. Redevelopment

Rather than continue the process of knocking down what could be many acres of pristine property for further development throughout Suffolk County, redevelopment needs to be strongly considered. Those areas that are blighted areas, those areas in communities that are seeking federal, state and local funding in order to revitalize their downtown areas, should also be a focal point for senior affordable housing, particularly in downtown areas which are close to shopping, entertainment, and other vital services, particularly for seniors. Senior affordable housing and downtown revitalization can and should go hand in hand. The Task Force recommends that Suffolk County, when seeking to award funding through its Downtown Revitalization Program, give priority to those projects in areas that have made a demonstrated commitment to creating and offering affordable senior housing opportunities.

5. Mobile home protections

Mobile home ownership has been a viable and affordable housing alternative for many of our senior population. Unfortunately, mobile homeowners do not have the same rights that tenants may have under the New York Landlord Tenant Law. Laurette Mulry, Esq. of Suffolk County

Legal Aid, Senior Citizens Division, explained that seniors may be in a compromised position should the mobile home operator decide to sell the mobile home park. She suggested that seniors should have the protections afforded by a right of first refusal.

The right of first refusal exists in many other states, such as Florida and California, with high senior citizen populations. According to Ms. Mulry, they have been a great success because it allows the mobile homeowners to unite in an attempt to come up with the necessary financing in an effort to purchase the lots themselves, rather than be tossed out. Attorney Mulry suggested that a Home Rule Message can come from the Suffolk County Legislature as a request to the New York State Legislature to amend the applicable provisions of the New York Landlord Tenant Law in an effort to provide mobile homeowners with a right of first refusal.

The Task Force recommends that the Veterans and Seniors Committee work with Legislative Counsel to determine what, if any, possibility there may be in a Home Rule Message from the Suffolk County Legislature regarding a right of first refusal for mobile homeowners.

6. Safety and Evacuation Plans

Appropriate housing also means being safe in one's home. Suffolk County Fire, Rescue and Emergency Services (FRES) currently operates a program known as the Joint Emergency Evacuation Plan (JEEP). It is a constantly evaluated evacuation program, particularly for those most vulnerable in Suffolk County. According to FRES Commissioner Joe Williams, there are appropriate evacuation plans in place, particularly for seniors and the disabled. These plans are constantly evaluated, and have been updated in response to the tragedy of Katrina along the Gulf Coast in the Fall of 2005. However, Commissioner Williams has advised that although there may literally be thousands of seniors who may be in a position to require assistance during a natural disaster, that very few have signed up to be made part of the evacuation plan.

It is the recommendation of the Task Force that an improved, much more effective public relations effort be made on the part of Suffolk County to continue to raise awareness of the need for an evacuation plan, particularly for seniors, in the event of a natural disaster, as well as to promote the JEEP Program and to insure that seniors who may need assistance under those circumstances sign up to be placed on the evacuation list.

7. Visitability

The underlying principle of “visitability” is that all new construction, even single family housing, should be constructed under federal regulations which requires construction that allows a person with disabilities or a person that is wheelchair bound to have the ability to get in and out of one entrance for that particular residence and, be constructed so that there is accessibility by a wheelchair into bathrooms and kitchens. The intent is to ensure that if a resident becomes disabled in the future or if someone with disabilities moves into the home in the future, that it does not require significant reconstruction. Present construction would not require the inclusion of handicapped facilities, such as grab bars, at the time of construction. It requires only that the layout and foundation be able to accommodate such changes if necessary in the future without major modification.

Bruce Blower, Director of Handicapped Services of Suffolk County explained that the Americans With Disabilities Act, and the Fair Housing Amendment Act, which are both federal laws, only affect apartments or condominiums that have 15 or more housing units. Smaller unit townhouses and single-family houses, which are much more predominant in Suffolk County, do not have such a requirement.

It is the recommendation of the Task Force that there be a requirement in Suffolk County for universal design and visitability design features in all affordable housing units built on property owned by Suffolk County. This should be considered and implemented as a part of Suffolk County's plan to develop property in Yaphank for such housing.

HEALTH CARE

Health care continues to be a tremendous challenge for all Americans of every age. As our nation ages, health care needs will only continue to grow, putting additional stress on a system already experiencing severe shortages in many areas.

The Task Force recommends that the Suffolk County Health Department recognize the growing need and conduct an evaluation of the allocation of Health Department resources to insure proper planning in order to meet the needs of an increasing senior population.

1. Home Health Care

All of us want to remain in our homes, particularly when we are aging. We desperately want to age in place, but for many seniors, remaining home alone may no longer be possible. There is an increasing need for quality

care at home. However, Suffolk County, like so many municipalities all across the nation, is experiencing a severe shortage of home health aides. Whether it is due to the challenging nature of the work, difficult hours, physical strain, and/or relatively low compensation, Suffolk County is experiencing a severe shortage in home health aides, and it is a problem that will only continue to become more challenging in the future.

The Task Force recommends that Suffolk County establish a comprehensive plan to address the shortage of home care aides. This can include a public relations campaign, working with area schools in order to promote training programs and, entering into partnerships with home health care companies in order to develop new home health aides. The Task Force recommends an evaluation of a proposed tuition reimbursement plan for those that are trained and certified as home health care aides who then work for Suffolk County providing services to seniors throughout Suffolk County. This program could provide that during employment, participants can receive pro rata assistance in paying off any outstanding college loans in order to have obtained home health aide certification.

2. Mental Health

Mental health is another important component of overall health care needs for the elderly in Suffolk County. Although mental illness is not a normal part of aging, it's estimated that 20 percent of the elderly have a diagnosable mental health disorder. Tom MacGilvray, the Director of Suffolk County Community Mental Hygiene, explained current mental health services were designed nearly half a century ago, when Suffolk County was a very young suburb. Today, mental health housing, case management, and treatment services are still geared toward a younger clientele. People with long-term psychiatric disabilities continue to be expected to go to work, to a day treatment program or to work toward independence. For many, these goals may no longer be realistic or even welcome for that matter.

Mental health disorders that come late in life include anxiety and depressive disorders. These disorders can cause social isolation and inactivity. Disorders involving alcohol dependence and misuse of prescription drugs may also develop in later life. Thus, he explains, mental health services must be designed to meet the needs of older adults. They must be made more accessible. The introduction of older adult services and

mobile treatment teams would enable older adults to age in place. He suggests that it is a much more economical and dignified alternative rather than institutionalization.

In addition, Roberta Monat, the Chairperson of the National Association of Social Workers Committee for the Aging in Crimes Against Elder and Family Violence agrees that one of the crucial issues is the lack of mental health services, especially for the homebound elderly. She commented on a program that had existed years ago in Suffolk County; a mobile team that consisted of a geriatric psychiatrist, a social worker and a nurse, which went to homes of those with depression and provided medication, information and follow-up services.

The Task Force recommends reintroduction of mental health mobile teams. It is the recommendation of the Task Force to continue to work with the Department of Health in order to re-establish the geriatric screening team.

3. Government Benefits for Home Care

Our current health care system, particularly as supported by New York's Medicaid Program, is a program that is entirely upside down. It is a

program that is geared towards institutionalization rather than remaining in the community. For example, in order to be eligible for Medicaid, an individual can have very little in the way of assets in his or her name (approximately \$4,000), and may be able to keep approximately \$600 a month in income. Any amount that exceeds \$600 a month in income has to be used towards the cost of that person's home care. There is literally no way that the average senior citizen even on modest income can be able to remain in any community in Suffolk County living only on \$600 a month. What may be an appropriate allowance to be able to meet monthly expenses in Des Moines, Iowa or even in some of the upstate counties in New York, is certainly not in Suffolk County.

It is the recommendation of the Task Force that Suffolk County Government use all of its influence in order to lobby the New York State Government to increase the allowance that can be retained by an individual in order to be able to meet monthly expenses in the community. This may include a process of seeking a federal "waiver" with the Department of Health and Human Services.

TRANSPORTATION

Long Island, and particularly Suffolk County, is the land of the automobile. It is not only the key to transportation in our area, it is also the key to our society. And particularly for seniors, transportation, the ability to go where you want when you want, is the key to maintaining dignity and independence. For many seniors, with age comes many challenges in being able to drive. Driving with diminished capacity to see and hear and be able to appreciate distance and speed is not only dangerous for the driver, but for every motorist. For many of our elderly neighbors, there comes a time when they are no longer able to drive themselves, which means that they become dependent upon others for transportation. However, today many children have moved away to other communities or even other states and even if the family unit is still relatively close together, demands on time often mean that family members and friends just are not available to drive seniors to destinations. This is a critical issue because seniors who are not able to drive themselves not only have challenges in going shopping and to other destinations, this may also mean that they are not able to get to doctors offices for important visits or to be able to obtain essential services available in the community.

The case, then, for senior transportation is simple. No wheels, no services. If you can't get seniors to the programs that they need, they remain in their homes, furthering isolation, perhaps mental illness, depression, and other serious decline in health. Transportation, particularly public transportation options, continues to be a major challenge in Suffolk County. Town transportation services, funded through the Office for the Aging and local municipalities, seem to be the most popular manner of transport for seniors who rely on this service. Local transportation departments mostly prioritize medically related trips and food shopping. This tends to drain resources from other transportation destinations, especially for the five eastern towns.

Bob Shinnick, Director of Transportation Operations at the Transportation Division of the Suffolk County Department of Public Works, appeared before the Task Force to discuss access to public transportation. Mr. Shinnick explained that Suffolk County Transit is the largest transportation system within Suffolk. He also explained that there are buses operated by the Village of Patchogue and the Town of Huntington, and that the entire bus system has grown dramatically over the past several years. Approximately nine to ten percent of the riders are 60 years of age or older. Mr. Shinnick confirmed that presently, there is no Sunday service.

1. Sunday Service

It is the recommendation of the Task Force that the Suffolk County Transit System expand to provide Sunday service. This is critically important because when considering access to public transportation for seniors, it's not just seniors themselves, but those who provide services for seniors. Home health aides are those that are oftentimes at the bottom rung of the economic ladder and don't have automobiles themselves and rely on Suffolk County's public transportation system. The need for home care doesn't take the weekend off. Health care workers that are dependent on the public transportation system need to get to work and provide those essential health care services for our elderly. Providing Sunday service is an important part of insuring that homebound elderly are not left alone just because it happens to be Sunday.

2. Create a Suffolk County Integrated Regional Transportation System

SCAT is a transportation reservation service for those people with disabilities. This is a service provided by a reservation. SCAT service is provided as long as the trip is three-quarters of a mile off of the main bus line at either end of the trip. SCAT is growing at a tremendous rate. Presently 1,150 trips are provided each day. In 2006, a total of 250,000

rides were provided. If Suffolk County bus service is not available and SCAT services are not appropriate, seniors have very few other options. Taxis are very expensive, and many look to transportation services provided by the individual towns. However, the Task Force learned of several situations where seniors required medical services and needed to visit with a medical specialist, who happened to be located in a town outside of the town in which the senior resides, were not able to utilize transportation services provided by his and/or her home town.

For example, a resident in the Town of Brookhaven may not be able to utilize transportation services provided by the Town of Brookhaven in order to visit with a medical specialist in the Town of Smithtown. This is because transportation services may only operate within the borders of each individual town. This is an issue that must be addressed on a regional basis. Like so many other issues such as development, sewer capacity, infrastructure and economic development, the days of balkanization must come to end, and it is imperative that we start thinking and acting on a much more regional basis.

It is the recommendation of the Task Force that the County Executive call a transportation summit, including transportation officials from all of the

ten towns, to discuss creative ways where towns may better pool their transportation resources in order to provide more seamless service to Suffolk County seniors. For example, if the Town of Babylon has several vans for transportation available but not enough drivers and the Town of Huntington has many volunteers but insufficient number of vans, there should be a matching system in place that can best coordinate available services, available volunteers and those to provide those services. There must be a better collaboration of all available transportation systems at every level of municipality. Transportation systems being coordinated between the towns and the County may actually reduce the duplication of services and may be able to obtain more of existing funds available for additional services to those County residents in need of transportation.

This analysis should also consider the use of a “feeder system” in areas where there are fixed routes, but with a feeder system which can go to particular communities, make pickups for those who want to utilize them, and then bring them back to the fixed route and coordinate to either the County bus system or the town van system. The County Department of Transportation must coordinate with each and every available method of transportation provided among the various towns in order to coordinate one larger and much more effective transportation system.

With the proliferation of senior and over 55 communities throughout Suffolk County, it is important to identify those communities and to better coordinate transportation services to those communities. For example, the Task Force heard stories of senior communities that were sold to individual seniors with the promise of transportation services. In some cases that transportation was never provided.

The Task Force recommends that there be a requirement, whether at the town level or working in conjunction with Suffolk County when site plans are being reviewed, done with consideration in proximity of existing or planned public transportation, that there should be a requirement in approving the site plan that transportation be provided to residents.

Mr. Shinnick of the Transportation Department also advised the Task Force of an ongoing analysis being conducted of the entire Suffolk County Transit System. It is the recommendation of the Task Force that representatives of the company currently conducting the analysis of Suffolk County Transit meet regularly with representatives from the Office for the Aging, town senior services entities, and members of the Veterans and Seniors Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature, in order to best coordinate much needed services for senior citizens throughout Suffolk County.

3. Use of Taxi Transportation

In those situations or areas where public transportation simply cannot be provided in a coordinated and efficient manner, it is the recommendation of the Task Force that Suffolk County and other municipalities consider contracts with private taxi companies and other private providers in order to obtain affordable fixed costs for seniors who require those services.

4. Use of School District Resources

It is the recommendation of the Task Force that Suffolk County take the lead in investigating whether the County and/or the towns can enter into agreements with school districts to provide transportation services utilizing school buses, vans, etc. to provide transportation at times during the week and at times of the day for seniors when they are not being utilized for school.

COST OF LIVING AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Of course, individuals need to take personal responsibility in planning for retirement. However, with ever-rising costs of living, especially on Long Island, local government has a role to play, even when it means merely sending a positive message to the private sector and leading by example.

1. Mature Workers

Demographic projections show that older workers will continue to make up a rapidly growing percentage of the work force. With the aging of the Baby Boom generation, lower birth rates for generations immediately following the baby boom, longer life expectancies and younger people unfortunately leaving Long Island to work elsewhere account for the fact that our population as a whole is getting older. White House Conference on Aging Resolution #11 seeks to remove barriers to the retention and hiring of older workers. Legislation has been introduced in the New York State Legislature to establish a Mature Worker Employment and Training Program to help workers, ages 55 and older, prepare for continuing their employment after their retirement and/or to train or retrain for a second career. This program would provide resources to employment training service providers to train, retrain and retain older workers.

It is the recommendation of the Task Force that Suffolk County aggressively support New York State Assembly bill A.5566 and New York State Senate bill S.3060, which would establish a Mature Worker Employment and Training Program to prepare the mature worker over the age of 55 to continue their employment after retirement or to train or retrain for a second career.

2. Volunteerism

Senior citizens in Suffolk and across the nation, many of whom live on fixed incomes, are finding it difficult to remain in their homes with rising property taxes and health expenses. These increasing property taxes place a huge burden on senior citizens and often force them to relocate to other parts of the country. It is imperative that all levels of government develop ways for seniors to be able to remain in the communities they helped build.

There are many seniors who wish to volunteer as way to give back to their communities. Although volunteerism comes from the heart, municipalities can also increase the number of seniors to volunteer by offering an incentive, such as a tax reduction to those who perform volunteer services. This would undoubtedly have a positive impact on local communities in Suffolk County and would provide a way to recruit and reward volunteers. Indeed, this effort would further the goal of White House Conference on Aging Resolution #56: Develop a strategy for promoting new and meaningful volunteer activities. Legislation has been introduced in the New York State Assembly that gives communities the option to offer a reduction in property taxes to senior citizens who perform volunteer services.

It is the recommendation of the Task Force that Suffolk County support New York State Assembly Bill A.947A that gives communities the option to provide senior citizens who perform volunteer services with a reduction in property taxes. Support for this initiative sends an important message: that Suffolk County supports our seniors and encourages all who are able to participate in volunteering their time and experience to do so in order to benefit our entire community.

3. Property Tax Relief

While many seniors on fixed incomes may be able to keep up with ongoing household expenses, property taxes on Long Island have forced many senior citizens to sell their homes and move out of the area. So many elderly residents fear that they may need to do the same. While property tax is a concern at every level, by far the largest part of a resident's property tax bill is for school district expenses. This is particularly frustrating for seniors who may not have had children enrolled in the district for decades. Homeowners throughout New York State benefit from the STAR program. Further, New York State provides an enhanced STAR exemption for eligible senior taxpayers. Many seniors who have served our nation in the military are also eligible for a veteran exemption. However, even the combination of

these programs so often does not afford our seniors the ability to meet the property tax burden.

Establishing a fixed school tax rate for persons aged seventy years and older who qualify for the enhanced STAR program exemption, would provide additional tax relief to seniors. Legislation has been introduced in the New York State Legislature to establish a fixed school tax rate for eligible seniors. This legislation would permit a school district which provides a capped real property school tax rate to be eligible for reimbursement by the State Department of Education for 100% of the direct costs involved in implementing the cap. Such a structure would provide incentive to control costs, and allow for seniors to remain in their communities.

It is the recommendation of the Task Force that Suffolk County support an amendment to the New York Real Property Tax Law establishing a capped real property school tax rate for persons seventy years of age or older who meet the eligibility requirements for the enhanced STAR exemption. Further, the Task Force recommends that the County Executive's Budget Office and/or the Legislature's Budget Review Office conduct a financial impact analysis to determine the feasibility of such a program at the County level.

With the present and oncoming age wave will come an increasing number of retirees in Suffolk County. With more free time, retirees will seek opportunities to give back to their communities. Volunteers are motivated to serve. Some believe in the importance of helping others, derived from religious convictions, family values and personal history. Others seek community service as a way to improve the quality of their own lives, embracing it as an opportunity for meaningful “work” or as a reprieve from loneliness or loss. For some, the availability of a program stipend is an important source of financial support. Volunteers enjoy the challenges and rewards of service. Many appreciate the mental challenge of learning new skills and see volunteer activities as a way to “stay sharp”.

4. Suffolk Senior Corp.

In 2005, Suffolk County created the Suffolk Commission on Creative Retirement to explore the changing face of aging within our society and to reflect the County Executive’s commitment to the interests and needs of our retirees. Led by Chairman Paul Arfin, the Commission focused on many different aspects of involvement of older adults in civic engagement, including volunteerism and community service. The Commission Report cited research which explained that most nonprofit leaders have few plans, if any, to tap into the retiree pool. In addition, the

Commission Report cited a 2003 Fortune magazine article, “Candy Striper, My Ass,” which discusses the frustration of highly qualified managers to apply their talents in the nonprofit world.

Also cited in the Commission Report is the official policy of Suffolk County regarding volunteer assistance in its departments. According to Standard Operating Procedure #B-03 of 2001, “Suffolk County has the right to utilize volunteers as long as these volunteers do not take any jobs away from the Suffolk County workforce and as long as no employees laid off are replaced by a volunteer. This procedure applies to all present and future volunteer programs.”

It is the recommendation of the Task Force that Suffolk County create a Suffolk County Senior Corp. In addition to providing opportunities to seniors who are interested in volunteering within their communities, a Senior Corp. can also create opportunities for those who wish to volunteer their time and expertise within County government. It is also the recommendation of the Task Force that the County Executive request each department within County government to evaluate how it can best utilize potential volunteers.

5. Public Information

There are numerous reasons why growing numbers of seniors are finding it so challenging to meet the high cost of living on Long Island. For some, fixed incomes have not risen to keep pace with the increase in expenses. For others, increased health care costs due to illness are substantial. As the Task Force continued to hear testimony from seniors and their family members during the public hearings it became apparent that a severe lack of information about available resources, programs, services and opportunities exists. Such information, it seems, could very well make the difference for many seniors throughout Suffolk County in having the ability to meet expenses. Indeed, not only seniors, professionals and Task Force members themselves reported that too many seniors just do not know about the many services that are available.

It is the recommendation of the Task Force that Suffolk County establish a relationship with an appropriate institution of higher learning to design a curriculum focusing on financial matters. Issues such as basic financial planning, avoiding scams, use of debit and credit cards, mortgages, and money management would be included. The Task Force strongly suggests that such a program be developed in conjunction with professional faculty and taught by faculty members, as the best method for providing objective

information rather than by industry professionals, who too often present information with a sales-oriented agenda. The Task Force also recommends that such a program be offered at senior centers throughout Suffolk County for those seniors who may not have the ability to attend the program at a college campus.

It is the recommendation of the Task Force that Suffolk County pursue a more substantial program of Public Service Announcements through local media outlets. Suffolk County has a new Department of Information and Technology which should be made a part of this effort. In addition, the County should partner with utilities, such as LIPA, as a way to distribute information about local services for seniors by mail and other methods.

CONCLUSION

The Suffolk County-Wide Senior Citizen Task Force believes that addressing these concerns through an appropriate mixture of Suffolk County legislation, Executive Order or administrative change will improve the lives of seniors significantly. Perhaps even more could be accomplished through communication and coordination, with Suffolk County taking an important leading role.

Is it good to grow old in Suffolk County? With an appreciation that our County must adequately prepare for the coming Age Wave now, and with the implementation of these Task Force recommendations, there is only one acceptable answer.

SUMMARY OF TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Senior Housing Concerns

1. Suffolk County Government and the Office for the Aging must encourage the establishment of Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC's) throughout Suffolk County.
2. Suffolk County must devote all necessary resources to enhance a NORC established by a Town and must determine best practices in order to assist additional towns throughout Suffolk.
3. Suffolk County must promote Home Share LI and should fully fund the program in order to provide the personnel and public awareness necessary to increase the number of appropriate matches.
4. Suffolk County, through the Suffolk County Planning Commission should work with each of the Towns in order to develop new zoning categories that promote intergenerational housing.
5. Suffolk County, when considering awards through its Downtown Revitalization Program, should give priority to those Towns that have made a demonstrated commitment to creating and offering affordable senior housing.
6. Suffolk County should determine what, if any, possibility exists to legislate a Home Rule Message regarding a right of first refusal for mobile homeowners.
7. Suffolk County must increase efforts to promote the Joint Emergency Evacuation Plan (JEEP) in order to expand the list of those who may require assistance in the event of a natural disaster or emergency.
8. Suffolk County should require universal design and visitability design features in all affordable housing units built on property owned by Suffolk County.

Health Care Concerns

1. Suffolk County must establish a comprehensive plan to address the shortage of home care aides.
2. Suffolk County should conduct an analysis, including a fiscal impact statement, on the feasibility of a tuition reimbursement plan for those that are trained and certified as home health care aides who work for Suffolk County.
3. Suffolk County must consider the reintroduction of mobile mental health teams.
4. Suffolk County must use all of its influence to lobby New York State government to increase the allowances that can be retained by an individual under the state's Medicaid program.

Transportation

1. Suffolk County must expand its public transportation system to provide Sunday service.
2. Suffolk County must take the lead in creating a County-Wide Integrated Transportation System.
3. Suffolk County should consider contracts with private transportation companies to fill the gaps in the public system.
4. Suffolk County should conduct an analysis as to the possibility of utilization of school district resources.

Cost of Living and Quality of Life

1. Suffolk County must aggressively support New York State legislation establishing a Mature Worker Employment and Training Program.
2. Suffolk County must support New York State legislation that provides property tax reductions for volunteers.
3. Suffolk County must support property tax relief for senior citizens.

4. Suffolk County should create a Suffolk Senior Corp to provide volunteer opportunities within County government.
5. Suffolk County must establish a more effective method of providing retirement planning information to its aging workforce.
6. Suffolk County must develop more effective methods of distributing information regarding available services to seniors and their families.

Opening Statement of Legislator Stern

“My name is Steven Stern and I am the Legislator representing the 16th District to the Suffolk County Legislature representing parts of Huntington and Babylon.

It is also my privilege to serve as the Chairman of the Legislature’s Committee on Veterans and Seniors. And I tell this story all the time. I’m a little league coach for my older son, and there isn’t a game that goes by where someone doesn’t come up to me and ask, “Mr. Stern, can you bat my son a little further up in the order for this game, or can you put my daughter out on the pitcher’s mound, their grandparents are here and this is the only game their grandparents will get to see this season because they live so far away?”

And because of my interest in this incredibly important issue, I will get to talking with the family and we’ll talk about why mom and dad live so far away and what made them leave. And of course, it’s great to hear these stories about how they worked hard and they contributed to their community and now they wanted to have a leisurely lifestyle of playing 18 holes of golf everyday in Florida. That’s wonderful, but as everyone here knows, more often than not, the story goes that it just became too expensive to live here on Long Island, and that grandparents had to move away in search of a lower cost of living and a better quality of life.

And we all know, certainly I experienced it in my family, how important it is and how wonderful it is to have that close family relationship that spans for generations and how we all know that something is missing when families are spread out all over the country for whatever reason they need to go, but that seniors have to leave their families and communities that they helped build in search of a lower cost of living and better quality of life and better services in their golden years.

We know that’s just wrong and so today we begin what I hope to be, what I think we all know will be, an important process of beginning a dialogue, beginning a process where we examine so many of the critical issues that affect our seniors and their families.

And in creating this Task Force, the vision really was not to create a committee of a housing expert or a transportation expert or a long term care

specialist. The goal was to create a committee of those people who are not only seniors in their own communities, but also those professionals that work with seniors, that deal with seniors and their families on a daily basis.

I say all the time, we can come up with great policies at the federal level, at the state level, even here at the county level, but ultimately the delivery of services and the day to day function of working with seniors, the disabled and their families really lies with the towns.

And so, you'll see that the makeup of this Task Force is comprised of these professionals that have dedicated their careers to working with seniors at the most local of levels, because ultimately, they're the ones that will have to take policy and implement it. And this Task Force is also joined by those that have a committed expertise, demonstrated interest in working with seniors, fighting for the rights of seniors and just seniors who, of course, are the focus and most important part of these proceedings.

This Task Force was formed to hold public hearings and to focus on the challenge of meeting the needs of older adults in Suffolk County. And it is a significant challenge to prepare for. I'm sure many will say that it is already a challenge and that we're perhaps already behind, given the current numbers of our senior citizen population here in this area and throughout our nation. Certainly, it is a challenge that will continue to grow as our senior citizen population continues to grow exponentially.

And if you haven't already, I ask you to take the time and look at some of the charts that we provided today, which show, not only our already significant elderly population, but the trend, and we all know where the trends are going. And the question is whether or not we are prepared, and what do we need to be prepared for?

We need to be prepared for access to long term care, which will only increase. We need to rethink how and where those long term care services are provided. And I have yet to meet anybody who said that they would rather receive their long term care in a nursing home rather than at home, rather than in our communities. And how can we, at the most local of levels, help with what needs to be a shift out of the institutions, out of the nursing homes, and back towards a more community based setting.

We also need to think long and hard, not just about the number, as reflected on those charts, but so many of us know that we have elderly parents who live out of state who say what? Well, when I get sick who's going to be the one to take care of me? They say, my kids are going to be the ones to take care of me. So that will mean, and we're starting to see this already somewhat here and certainly in other parts of the country, that those seniors who are living the retired lifestyle out of state, when they need assistance, they look to their families to provide that assistance, and where do they get that? That means that they're coming back. They're coming back here to New York and to Suffolk County. And those numbers that will be a part of the "boomerang generation" that we're going to be experiencing and have to deal with in the future aren't even really reflected in the numbers that we're already aware of today. How we acknowledge that and how we plan for that in the future is also a critical issue.

But serving on this Task Force means that we need to take a continuing hard look at affordable housing, recognizing the value of family caregivers, understand that our families today are more nontraditional than in the past, but not only recognizing that, but how you work that into our system.

Also, we must recognize the tremendous amount of stress on family caregivers, who those of you as part of the baby boom generation know that you are also referred to as the "sandwich generation", working so hard to care for an elderly parent while at the same time, raising your own children.

And this isn't just a family issue, but also very much an economic issue. The cost of family caregiving in this nation is staggering. A recent study reported that over \$90 billion is lost in lost wages and services and loss of promotion opportunities because of the responsibility of family caregivers. So, we also need to come up with innovative ways to attract, support, and I think most importantly, retain quality caregivers, social workers, home health aides, nurses, and other professionals right here in Suffolk County.

And of course, it's not important just to care for the sick, or the aging, for those who have current needs, it's just as important to reach out and provide services and a quality of life to those who are approaching retirement or those who are healthy and enjoying a retirement lifestyle. We

must also focus on those who have retired and need to maintain their independence, and most importantly, control over their lives right here in our own community. We have to encourage businesses to adopt policies now to attract and retain workers as they are confronted with the coming labor shortage here in our area.

How to keep and integrate seniors to have a positive impact on the strengths of our economy, and also encourage volunteerism within our community, and to do all we can at all levels of government to support continuing education, particularly for our senior citizens. And as our residents age, we need much more focus on public transportation, services for the disabled, which not only need to be affordable, but also reliable.

And, of course, we also have to be proactive and not just reactive when it comes to protecting seniors from scams and ID theft, proactive in the fight against the scourge of elder abuse. We need to strengthen our programs to keep seniors active in and involved which, of course, is critically important, not just for their quality of life, but also for mental health. And not just mental health, but to do what we can to stem the growing tide of suicide among seniors. It's kind of ironic, actually, that in this day of advances in medical technology, particularly to help our seniors, that it is unfortunately those same seniors that choose more often to end their lives.

But I think that everybody would agree that we have wonderful programs already out there. There are already great ideas on the table. But I think everybody would also agree that with anything else, there's a need for a better coordination among services, service providers, better coordination among all levels of government. And we need that coordination in order to strengthen our local aging network and to maximize the effectiveness of the wonderful programs that we already have in place. We need, like all other issues that we face here on Long Island, certainly in Suffolk County, to take what we do well locally and coordinate it in a more regional approach to maximize effectiveness.

The purpose of this Task Force is to ask the question, 'Is it good to grow old in Suffolk County?'

I'm excited to begin this process, eager to hear everybody's thoughts, engage in meaningful and productive dialogue and to answer that very important question, not just for our seniors, but for our entire community."

Intro Res. No. 2513-2006

Laid on Table 12/5/2006

Introduced by Legislators Stern, Romaine, Cooper, Schneiderman, Mystal, Eddington, D'Amaro, Losquadro, Browning

**RESOLUTION NO. 1535 -2006, CREATING A
COUNTY-WIDE SENIOR CITIZEN TASK FORCE**

WHEREAS, the senior citizen population in Suffolk County continues to grow at a rapid pace; and

WHEREAS, seniors today are facing life altering decisions with regard to housing, health care costs, long term medical care, transportation, and available government benefits; and

WHEREAS, the creation of a Task Force to study the present and future needs of senior citizens would be a helpful tool for County officials and agencies that seek to serve this vital segment of society; now, therefore be it

1st RESOLVED, that a special County-Wide Senior Citizen Task Force is hereby created to study the needs of senior citizens, both current and future, including, but not limited to, the availability of affordable housing, transportation, long term health care, nutrition, and available government benefits; and be it further

2nd RESOLVED, that this Task Force shall consist of the following sixteen (16) members:

- 1.) the Chairman of the Suffolk County Legislature's Veterans and Seniors Committee, who shall serve as Chairman of the Task Force;
- 2.) the Director of the Suffolk County Office for the Aging, or designee;
- 3.) a representative to be selected by the Presiding Officer of the Suffolk County Legislature;
- 4.) a representative to be selected by the Minority Leader of the Suffolk County Legislature;
- 5.) a representative from each of the ten Towns, representing the Town's Senior Citizens Office or Department;
- 6.) a representative from AARP; and

7.) a senior consumer advocate, appointed by the Chairman of the Veterans and Seniors Committee; and be it further

3rd RESOLVED, that the Task Force shall hold its first meeting no later than thirty (30) days after the oaths of office of all members have been filed, which meeting shall be convened by the chairman of the Task Force, for the purpose of organization and the appointment of a vice chairperson and a secretary; and be it further

4th RESOLVED, that the members of said Task Force shall serve without compensation and shall serve at the pleasure of their respective appointing authorities; and be it further

5th RESOLVED, that the Task Force shall hold regular meetings, keep a record of all its proceedings, and determine the rules of its own proceedings with special meetings to be called by the chairperson upon his or her own initiative or upon receipt of a written request therefor signed by at least three (3) members of the Task Force. Written notice of the time and place of such special meetings shall be given by the secretary to each member at least four (4) days before the date fixed by the notice for such special meeting; and be it further

6th RESOLVED, that nine (9) members of the Task Force shall constitute a quorum to transact the business of the Task Force at both regular and special meetings; and be it further

7th RESOLVED, that the Task Force may submit requests to the County Executive and/or the County Legislature for approval for the provision of secretarial services, travel expenses, or retention of consultants to assist the Task Force with such endeavors, said total expenditures not to exceed Five Thousand (\$5,000.00) per fiscal year, which services shall be subject to Legislative approval; and be it further

8th RESOLVED, that clerical services involving the month-to-month operation of this Task Force, as well as supplies and postage as necessary, will be provided by the staff of the Suffolk County Legislature; and be it further

9th RESOLVED, that the Task Force may conduct such informal hearings and meetings at any place or places within the County of Suffolk for the purpose of obtaining necessary information or other data to assist it in the proper performance of its duties and functions as it deems necessary; and be it further

10th RESOLVED, that the Task Force may delegate to any member of the Task Force the power and authority to conduct such hearings and meetings; and be it further

11th RESOLVED, that the Task Force shall cooperate with the Legislative Committees of the County Legislature and make available to each Committee's use, upon request, any records and other data it may accumulate or obtain; and be it further

12th RESOLVED, that the Task Force is hereby authorized, empowered, and directed to hold at least four (4) public hearings throughout the County of Suffolk to assemble the data and information necessary to complete the valuation, study, and

report required with all reasonable efforts to be made to ascertain the views, wishes, and opinions of the residents of Suffolk County; and be it further

13th RESOLVED, that said Task Force shall issue a written report, after a comprehensive study of the needs of senior citizens, both current and future, including, but not limited to, the availability of affordable housing, transportation, long term health care, nutrition, and government benefits; and be it further

14th RESOLVED, that this special Task Force shall submit a written report of its findings and determinations together with its recommendations for action, if any, to each member of the County Legislature and the County Executive no later than one hundred eighty (180) days subsequent to the effective date of this Resolution for consideration, review, and appropriate action, if necessary, by the entire County Legislature; and be it further

15th RESOLVED, that the Task Force shall expire, and the terms of office of its members terminate, as of September 1, 2007 at which time the Task Force shall deposit all the records of its proceedings with the Clerk of the Legislature; and be it further

16th RESOLVED, that this study shall not be performed by any outside consultant or consulting firm unless explicit approval and authorization for such consultant or consulting firm is granted pursuant to a duly enacted resolution of the County Legislature; and be it further

17th RESOLVED, that this Legislature, being the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) lead agency, hereby finds and determines that this resolution constitutes a Type II action pursuant to Section 617.5(c)(20), (21), and (27) of Title 6 of the NEW YORK CODE OF RULES AND REGULATIONS (6 NYCRR) and within the meaning of Section 8-0109(2) of the NEW YORK ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION LAW as a promulgation of regulations, rules, policies, procedures, and legislative decisions in connection with continuing agency administration, management and information collection, and the Suffolk County Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) is hereby directed to circulate any appropriate SEQRA notices of determination of non-applicability or non-significance in accordance with this resolution.

DATED: December 19, 2006

EFFECTIVE PURSUANT TO SECTION 2-15(F) OF THE SUFFOLK COUNTY

CHARTER, RETURNED BY THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE UNSIGNED DECEMBER

26, 2006