

HOMESTEAD A-SYST TASK FORCE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

A meeting of the Homestead A-SYST Task Force was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on March 9, 2007.

Members Present:

Legislator Vivian Vilorio-Fisher
Dr. Sal Scarpitta - Suffolk County Health
Amy Juchatz - County Executive's Representative
Neal Lewis - Neighborhood Network
Pat Voges - Nassau-Suffolk Landscape Gardeners
Caroline Kiang - Cornell Cooperative Extension
Eileen Anders - Master Gardener

Also Present:

Renee Ortiz - Chief Deputy Clerk of the Legislature
Beth Fiteni - Neighborhood Network

Minutes Taken By:

Lucia Braaten - Court Stenographer

Minutes Transcribed By:

Kim Castiglione - Legislative Secretary

(The meeting was called to order at 11:10 AM)

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Good morning. This is the public hearing as called for under the legislation that convened the Homestead A-SYST Program. Madam Clerk, has the meeting notice been published?

MS. ORTIZ:

It has.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you. Okay. And we do have a quorum. There are cards available out in the lobby for people who might want to come and address our board. Is there anybody in the audience who wants to say anything at this point?

Neal, can you do me a favor, because we do have the stenographer, can everybody please pull their microphones closer to them in case you want to speak. There is a button towards the top, towards the head of the microphone and you simply slide it up.

MR. LEWIS:

Hello. Mine seems to be working.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Some of you know the drill, some of you are not as familiar. Okay. And just say your name the first time you speak so that the stenographer has that.

MR. LEWIS:

Sure. Thank you. Neal Lewis, with the Neighborhood Network. One of the people from our organization is here, but she wasn't planning to speak today, and that's Beth Fiteni, the Issues Program Director. I think she's going to give comments at one of the next meetings on some of the educational materials we take as an approach to all this.

I know that we're all kind of looking back at the law and still trying to get a sense of exactly what the end work product might look at -- look like, whether we're talking about like a relatively short flier or whether we're talking about something that would be longer, whether it's something that's more of just giving references to various websites or whether it's going to be more detail. We are still trying to get a handle on that. I don't know if you want to say anything about that just to give us some direction as to what kind of comments would be helpful. But we do want to, you know, give comments, but we weren't planning necessarily to do it today.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Thank you, Neal. As far as the comments that would be helpful, because this is the public hearing, you know, it's not really one of our regular meetings, we have spoken -- and anyone who wants to add to this, you know, just jump in. We had spoken about education being a major component of whatever we do, and so there would be website links, there would be inserts in the Water Authority bill that would have a number of different sites and bullets. Well, websites for, you know, that people could go to.

We also have been looking, as Commissioner Meek-Gallagher mentioned to us last week, that we would be looking at the retail establishments and the kind of signage that might be helpful to have there, so we're looking at that.

I have downloaded all of the Assembly and Senate bills that have to do with restriction on these. You know, Carrie Meek-Gallagher had mentioned some of them. I stayed here and did some research and looked at the ones that had companion bills, because at some point we may want to recommend that we have legislation, a memorializing resolution supporting the legislation on the State level. So those are all different issues. And as I said, I have -- I downloaded those but I

haven't made copies, because I'll be -- I'll have them for the next meeting. But I do have them here in this building, so if you want to look at what I've downloaded I'll be happy to give it to you before we leave today. Anybody else who wants to look at any of those, it's a lot of paper so I didn't make copies, so we'll peruse them and if anybody wants to look at them then we'll make copies. Is that helpful, Neal?

MR. LEWIS:

I think that is. I think that's helpful. It gives us some direction.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Sal, did you want to add to that? Did I miss something in the direction that we're taking?

DR. SCARPITTA:

I don't have the minutes physically in front of me.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

We're just playing from memory.

DR. SCARPITTA:

Yeah. The websites were the key --

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Can you just say your name and talk into the mike. Sorry.

DR. SCARPITTA:

Sal Scarpitta. Amy had provided a list of websites at two meetings ago and I understand there's going to be a Suffolk County website that will be set up on this issue and those websites will be included as the ones that the Chair has just mentioned.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Thanks, Sal. Amy, do you want to add to that?

MS. JUCHATZ:

No, only that I think we're -- sorry.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Come on, after Vector Control you still don't know how to do these?

MS. JUCHATZ:

I'm still learning, sorry. Amy Juchatz, Suffolk County Department of Environment and Energy. I think, you know, we've hashed at the different meetings that we've had so far, a lot of different ideas. I think we've come up with some ideas that we know we want to follow-up on that have been discussed already.

I think part of the reason to have these public hearings is to solicit more ideas, to hear from the public what ideas that they have so that we can finally congeal our ideas and come up with a plan. So I think that's part of the purpose of having these public hearings is to -- we have some ideas of our own, but then also to hear from the public on what ideas that they have as far as what the actual educational campaign should be, and then also what should be included in those materials that we develop.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

And, you know, we asked the Clerk if the meeting notice was published and she said it was, but I think Amy mentioned a suggestion so that we could try to get more members of the public. And if anyone has any groups that they think might be interested in coming to the next meeting, because our time is valuable and the -- we don't want the public hearings to just be something that we're

doing because it's called for in the legislation.

I have found with other task forces that I have put together, the Welfare to Work Task Force being one that's been working, they've kind of been running on their own steam now for three or four years. I set them up four years ago and I was the Chair of Social Services then. I no longer am and they keep going. They just had a wonderful report that they did and a lot of the information came out of a public hearing. These are really helpful venues and if we could try to see if there are any groups that we think might be interested in coming and give giving us their ideas. The more we get the more we're able to put together.

I'm a little disappointed that we're sitting here with an empty auditorium, but, you know, I'm not blaming anybody. We did the public notice, if there were a hue and cry out there. But maybe I can put out a media, you know, just a little press release and see if maybe if I have an interview with a few newspapers they might do a little piece on it. People don't read public notices unless they're advocates and they're looking for it.

MS. JUCHATZ:

I think maybe as members here, we know groups and we have mailing lists and perhaps we can do, you know, a little effort on our part, too, to send it out to the list that we have to let them know about the subsequent hearings that we have to get a little bit more interest and the real reason is to get input from the public.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Neal, can I ask Beth some questions about the group of people who went to your -- that fair that you had?

MR. LEWIS:

Sure.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

What was that called?

MR. LEWIS:

We call it the -- thank you. Sorry. We call it the Annual Organic Turf Trade Show and there's also workshops in addition to the trade show.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Hi, Beth. Beth Fetini from Neighborhood Network.

MS. FITENI:

Hi. Beth Fiteni. F-I-T-E-N-I.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

I reversed the vowels. I'm sorry. Beth, I went to the trade show and I think you guys did a great job with that.

MS. FITENI:

Great. Thank you.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

I was wondering, would it be possible to send some kind of blast to some of the people who signed up and attended that trade show? Because just walking from booth to booth and talking to people when I ate lunch, I really felt that there was a lot of energy there and a lot of really good different

types of ideas. I know some people came from far away. I had a really long talk with the woman from Cacadoodledoo. I liked her. But she was from where, Pennsylvania?

MS. FITENI:

Somewhere in the midwest, yeah, they're based.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

But I'm sure that there were enough local people who were there that might --

MS. FITENI:

Yes. Yeah, our final head, we were so happy, was about 250, which was the biggest one we've had yet. I know it doesn't compare to Pat's shows, but we did have -- State parks sent like 20 people, which was amazing. We had a few school districts there, we had quite a few landscapers. We had a couple of universities. So I can send it out to them. And there's always activist groups like Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition is the first one that comes to mind and also Grass Roots Environmental Education and other, like pesticide activist groups and breast cancer groups, so we can get the word out to them.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Thank you, Beth.

MS. FITENI:

Sure. You're welcome.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Pat, where did you get over 250 people? Make sure your mike is on and say your full name.

MR. VOGES:

Hello. From municipalities, landscapers, garden centers, basically anybody in the green industry, nurseries. Our attendance was over 1,600 and our --

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Oh, way over 200.

MR. VOGES:

Yeah. We took 1,600 books and we ran out about lunchtime, so it was very good. I just want to say for the record, and I don't know if this is the time. I missed the last meeting of this committee.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Yes.

MR. VOGES:

I -- maybe it was my fault, but I don't believe that I was notified for the last two meetings. I found out one through the grapevine and the other one I never knew about. I did not know about this public hearing until Wednesday at a Green Industry Leaders forum meeting breakfast, and I am totally unprepared. But I will be -- I will have the Green Industry here for the next public hearing.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

That's really great, thank you, because it's so important to have someone from the industry. I thought that we had a group in our office with everyone's e-mail on it, you know, one of those group e-mail blasts. And I know Ginny has been doing those. But, please, put your e-mail back on there, because maybe there was a letter missing or something.

MS. SUHR:

It didn't come back to me.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

It didn't come back. So, you know, Ginny --

MR. VOGES:

I'll put it on --

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

-- Sal always sends us the agenda and then Ginny always sends out a blast e-mail to everyone in the group.

MR. VOGES:

That lady out there, she knows the thing, I don't.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. And, you know, Pat, it's interesting because when we were driving here today I said to Ginny, well, we'll probably have people from the industry because they'll know about it. I'm sorry that really -- that's very important that we have people from the industry here.

MR. VOGES:

I found out from {Gail Moyer} on Wednesday morning, like I said, at a breakfast, so I'm totally unprepared for this. And I didn't know that we had a wrap up meeting.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

You know what, we're going to have another public hearing so that will give us an opportunity. You'll get the agenda from the meeting we had last week. We have a meeting coming up and we'll make sure you have the date before you leave, because it's really -- your input is really important so we don't want to miss that.

But we didn't get the e-mail back, you know, we didn't get one of those mailer demon things saying we got the mail wrong. So we'll check into what happened.

MR. VOGES:

My e-mail person in the red jacket out there.

D.P.O. FISHER:

Okay. We've got it covered, we've got it covered. Are there any other comments or any other suggestions on how we could do better outreach? Is there like an alumni association of master gardeners, Mrs. Kiang?

MRS. KIANG:

Yes, I do have newsletters go to master gardeners. It's monthly. I think we missed this one. It just, you know.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. So you'll put the dates of the other --

MRS. KIANG:

Sure, yeah.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

That would be really great, because those are obviously people who are interested in this.

MRS. KIANG:

And I also have a couple of gardening meetings coming up, you know, I do public education for the last maybe 30 years. We have another one coming up, the Spring Gardening Symposium. It's

going to be held on Saturday, March 17th, and I have a program brochure here, and it's going to be held at Suffolk County Community College.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Yes, I got one of those at my office.

MRS. KIANG:

On the Brentwood campus, right. We try to rotate this kind of meeting in different parts of Suffolk County. In the fall we have one at Community College and also we have spring gardening schools. Those are -- most gardening -- most classes are taught by trained master gardeners. We're going to have three coming up in April and probably we'll miss this -- the public hearing, I guess. Our days are April 14th, 21st and 28th.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. So I don't think that we're going to be having any people coming in. I did say that we'll wait until 11:30, so we can just recess and so you don't -- you could turn off your mikes and we could just relax and if anyone shows up by 11:30 we'll reconvene, go back on the record, and then we'll adjourn at 11:30 if no one has come. Okay?

(The meeting was recessed from 11:25 AM to 11:28 AM)

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Counsel's office has advised that since we have had no one sign in that we can adjourn the meeting and so I will call this meeting adjourned. Thank you.

(The meeting was adjourned at 11:29 AM)