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ORIGINAL

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
VICTORY GARDENS TASK FORCE

Public Hearing
Brentwood Library
32 2nd Avenue
Brentwood, New York

March 10, 2010
7:00 p.m.

BEFORE:

LEGISLATOR VIVIAN VILORIA-FISHER

ALSO PRESENT:

RICHARD MEYER
TOM LYON
PAMELA GREENE
CAROLINE KIANG

REPORTED BY:

THERESA PAPE, Court Reporter/Notary Public

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2 (WHEREUPON, this public hearing
3 convened at 7:00 p.m. Off-the-record
4 discussions ensued, after which the
5 following transpired:)

6 (Time noted: 7:14 p.m.)

7 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Welcome
8 to tonight's public hearing providing
9 information to the Victory Gardens Task
10 Force.

11 (WHEREUPON, there was an
12 interruption in the proceeding, after
13 which the following transpired:)

14 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Sister,
15 would you like to hold the mike and
16 introduce yourself and talk to us a
17 little bit. And you can sit down while
18 you do it.

19 SISTER CLARK: Okay.

20 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: You can
21 just grab the mike and sit down with it,
22 because we don't have such a huge crowd
23 here.

24 SISTER CLARK: I thought everybody
25 would be here.

2 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: You
3 know what? So did we, but people can
4 wander in --

5 SISTER CLARK: Yes.

6 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: -- in a
7 little while.

8 SISTER CLARK: I'm Jeanne Clark,
9 and I founded Homecoming, which is a
10 not-for-profit organization in -- well,
11 it was around 1993. And one of the
12 projects -- Homecoming's purpose was to
13 bring people home to Long Island with a
14 new mind. Understanding that the Island
15 is also the water and the land and the
16 roads, and that -- the community that
17 sometimes leave us out. And one of the
18 projects we picked immediately and began
19 was Sofia Gardens, which is at the
20 mother house of the Dominican Sisters.
21 So we're given that land to use. And we
22 began the -- we -- the first year, we
23 just experimented to see what we can do,
24 and then we began, and our garden is
25 15 years old now.

2 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Wow.

3 SISTER CLARK: Uh-huh.

4 And we are CSA, which means we have
5 to have shareholders --

6 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Right.

7 SISTER CLARK: And -- and so people
8 come to pick up their -- we're certified
9 organic. And folks come to pick up
10 their vegetables either every other week
11 or every week, depending on how much
12 they want.

13 We're -- we're now on three acres
14 of land, and we cultivate about -- just
15 about an acre and a half of that. But
16 an acre and a half, you know, you'd be
17 amazed at the amount of food that we can
18 grow.

19 I don't know what other things
20 that you'd like to know, but --

21 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Do any
22 of the members have questions?

23 (WHEREUPON, there was no response.)

24 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Do you
25 have any questions, Rich?

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2 MR. MEYER: No, not at this point.

3 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Okay.

4 I -- I do.

5 So you're -- you're strictly a CSA,
6 so it's not the kind of community garden
7 where people have a little piece of it?

8 SISTER CLARK: No.

9 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Who
10 does the work on the garden?

11 SISTER CLARK: We hire a farmer.

12 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Oh --

13 MR. MEYER: Oh.

14 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: -- you
15 hire a farmer. Okay.

16 You put out an ad for that? How --
17 how does one find a farmer?

18 (Laughter)

19 SISTER CLARK: Well, on the
20 internet, actually.

21 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Okay.

22 MR. MEYER: On the internet.

23 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Very
24 good.

25 SISTER CLARK: There are lots of

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sites. And there are lots of young farmers that can come in.

It is amazing that a lot of families here were land based and are farmers, and not where the farmers are coming from. But they're young people who have no land --

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: No?

SISTER CLARK: -- and they don't come from farm families. It's -- it's very interesting, the phenomenon.

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: But do they come to you with the expertise that they need?

SISTER CLARK: Well, that's the problem.

Our first farmer was an older man who had a great deal of experience, not in farming, but in gardening, and did a tremendous job. He was with us for I think two and a half years.

But each -- each farmer -- and then we had some farmers -- young farmers who -- who -- he had interned with a

2 real good farmer. But then we've had a
3 couple of young people who thought they
4 knew how to farm, but didn't. And -- or
5 they needed more experience, and when we
6 offered advise, they weren't so good at
7 listening.

8 So there's all kinds of situations
9 that you can have. I think if you have
10 housing, you could, in fact -- I think
11 the important thing is to find a farmer
12 who has had good experience with an
13 in- -- interning with a good farmer so
14 that they do know and they have the
15 skill.

16 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: What
17 were you going to say about housing?

18 SISTER CLARK: We do not have
19 housing, but -- and -- so that was a --
20 a drawback for us. Because most young
21 people -- and often, they want to come
22 to a rural area either. So if you're in
23 a -- if you're right in the heart of
24 suburbia, it's not that enticing to some
25 people either. But that's exactly where

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we would set it up.

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Now, is the farm financially self-sustaining?

SISTER CLARK: We are self-sustaining with one big fundraiser a year. And --

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: What is that?

SISTER CLARK: What is the fundraiser?

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: The fundraiser.

SISTER CLARK: Oh, we did -- well, we've done different things through the years. Sometimes we have musical events, concerts. And for the past about five years, we've been doing kind of like a dinner dance; very family-friendly with children and music, dancing. And we usually have kind of -- you know, an auction where people are -- things that have been donated to us, people come put chances on. Things like that.

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LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: What are your crops?

SISTER CLARK: We have -- we have over 25 different varieties of vegetables throughout our farm --

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: So you're using that one and a half acres?

SISTER CLARK: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

And, of course, with organics, the more diverse it is, the better it is.

MR. LYON: I wanted to know about the certified organic part, and especially the certified part. I know a little bit about it, but if you could elaborate and -- and -- maybe the pros and cons and the difficulty. I know, obviously, that doesn't happen the first year.

SISTER CLARK: No.

MR. LYON: It takes a while.

SISTER CLARK: There are pros and cons, and we had thoughts about it. There are many organic farmers who do not want to be certified now. If

2 they're -- if they're very small, I
3 mean -- well, there -- there -- there's
4 lots -- lots of complications with it.
5 It's -- the reason that we are
6 certified -- that we choose to be
7 certified each year is because we
8 usually do have farmers who don't have
9 too much experience, and we want to be
10 sure that they have these standards to
11 go by. But other -- other certified
12 farmers are choosing to -- to adopt --
13 well, I don't know if you've heard about
14 the farmers pledge, which is a NOFA --

15 MR. LYON: Yes. Yeah, I'm --
16 I'm -- I've been aware of it.

17 SISTER CLARK: -- a possibility
18 also.

19 MR. LYON: Sure.

20 SISTER CLARK: Which is really more
21 than certified, in a sense. But you
22 don't -- but it -- you don't need all
23 that paperwork on -- you know.

24 MR. LYON: Now, this is the
25 government certification you're talking

2 about; is that right?

3 SISTER CLARK: Yes.

4 MR. LYON: And how do you get that;
5 by inspection or --

6 SISTER CLARK: Yes. It's -- you're
7 inspected every year, and it's very
8 clear criteria of what you need to be
9 doing.

10 MR. LYON: And by who? Is it a --

11 SISTER CLARK: Well, it's USCA, but
12 it's -- but NOFA -- a certifier through
13 NOFA comes to certify you.

14 THE REPORTER: Are you saying
15 "NOVA" or "NOFA"?

16 SISTER CLARK: NOFA, N-O-F-A.

17 THE REPORTER: Thank you.

18 SISTER CLARK: North Atlantic
19 Farmer Association.

20 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: We
21 don't all know this.

22 SISTER CLARK: Okay.

23 MR. LYON: Yeah, it's Northeast --
24 Northeast --

25 SISTER CLARK: Northeast --

2 MR. LYON: -- Organic --

3 SISTER CLARK: -- Organic --

4 MR. LYON: -- Farming --

5 SISTER CLARK: -- Farming --

6 MR. LYON: -- Association.

7 SISTER CLARK: -- Association.

8 MR. LYON: Yeah. And there's a

9 NOFA-New York chapter as well.

10 SISTER CLARK: Yeah.

11 Once you know what the
12 certification process is, it's fairly
13 easy to follow. But it's very
14 stringent. You know, you -- you need to
15 keep track of every single thing that
16 goes into the soil; you have -- you have
17 a certain amount of organic seeds; and
18 you have to prove that if you couldn't
19 get them, that you tried three different
20 places to get them. Things like that.

21 I remember one year we tried three
22 places, one of our first years, because
23 our farmer didn't realize that one of
24 the posts that he put up was -- was not
25 cedar, it was treated wood. So --

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MR. LYON: Uh-huh.

SISTER CLARK: -- you know,
questions like that.

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: How did
you do with the tomato blight last
summer?

SISTER CLARK: We were one of the
ones who had lots of tomatoes.

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Oh.

SISTER CLARK: Because -- I -- I'm
not sure. You know, I know that a lot
of people had difficulties, but -- we
got -- we got the late blight, which
came later but was not that bad. You
know, we were real careful about if
anything looked suspicious at all, we
would take it out immediately, we'd
clean it, and try to keep it.

MR. LYON: If it's okay, for the
record, just -- just a couple of details
about numbers of families and how much
they pay per share, if you could.

SISTER CLARK: Sure. Our share --
we just raised our price this year by

2 \$25, and our share this year -- this
3 coming up season will be \$375 for the
4 season for a half share. And what we
5 use -- what we define as a half share is
6 a person who comes every other week to
7 pick up. And a full share is 750. What
8 some of our families do is, two families
9 buy a full share and -- because they
10 want to come every week, and they share.

11 MR. LYON: And your season runs
12 from?

13 SISTER CLARK: Our season is -- is
14 usually the beginning of June to
15 October. Sometimes a little bit into
16 November, depending on the sea- -- you
17 know, the weather.

18 MR. LYON: Right.

19 And the number of families?

20 SISTER CLARK: I -- because I'm not
21 the person now who -- who oversees the
22 whole garden, I think -- I think last
23 year we had something like 111 families.
24 And usually, we always have a waiting
25 list, too.

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MR. LYON: And you're -- you're --
One of our goals is really to get
more growing going, and this probably is
not as complex as you're doing.
Obviously, maybe down the road, but --

SISTER CLARK: Uh-huh.

MR. LYON: -- some intermediate
steps. Obviously, with the -- you know,
with schools or churches that have some
land in order to get started. And I'd
be interested in your comments about,
should people start out and try to eat
organic, and then how -- how do they --
that certification, is there a limited
size for that or -- you know, if someone
has 100 by 150 garden, would they need
certification or -- or apply for that
or --

SISTER CLARK: Well, if you're
going to call the food organic, you
would need to be certified. You can't
call it organic if it's not certified.

And as far as the question about
whether you should go -- eat organic or

1
2 not, I'm -- I'm pretty passionate about
3 organic, so I -- I think it's really
4 important to eat organic food. That's
5 my opinion. I -- I think putting all
6 these chemicals in our food, that's --
7 that's one of the reasons we began
8 Sophia Garden. Because it affects the
9 water systems, it affects the wildlife,
10 and it certainly goes into our blood.
11 So for the future of children and
12 health, I'm pretty clear that -- that
13 organic would be -- if it's possible, to
14 be the best call.

15 And I don't think -- some people --
16 I know I've read statistically, but some
17 people think that organic does not
18 produce as much food as the other, but
19 I -- I don't think that's true.

20 MR. LYON: I guess the other
21 question had to do with just the labor
22 and -- like what percentage of the
23 actual harvesting --

24 SISTER CLARK: Well --

25 MR. LYON: -- in the fields is --

2 is done by the farmer --

3 SISTER CLARK: Okay.

4 MR. LYON: -- themselves --

5 SISTER CLARK: Yeah. Another
6 requirement --

7 MR. LYON: -- versus volunteers --

8 SISTER CLARK: -- we have is that
9 each member -- it's 15 hours of work for
10 the season, which isn't really very much
11 for the whole season, but when you have
12 that many members, you know. So we have
13 people coming to help. We also have
14 interns -- we have a paid intern.

15 MR. LYON: And how does that work;
16 from the school or from --

17 SISTER CLARK: Yes. That is --
18 that intern is returning to us. She's
19 studying in Vermont in -- in college,
20 and interns in the summer, yeah.

21 MR. LYON: Great.

22 And the other question we're
23 concerned over is the concerns of
24 education and, you know, getting in --
25 the message out to young people in

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elementary schools and things like that.

Do you have farm centers? Do you know what I'm saying?

SISTER CLARK: Well, we have a -- see, that's what Homecoming is. It's -- it's -- because Sophia Garden is just a private farm center, one of them, the other is our learning center. So we have a learning center, and we do a lot of programs with children. But we teach children all about composting, and the transfer of soils, and we really educate them about how they are apart of the web of life.

Because that was the other purpose of Sophia Garden. It wasn't just to grow vegetables, although that's pretty important, but it was to connect people back into the land because they're so disconnected. And -- so it has that purpose also.

When -- when people came to volunteer, we used to kid that, well, you know, people are paying a lot of

2 money now to go to places -- I mean, I
3 used to say Jack Lalanne, but that's
4 probably old -- old now --

5 (Laughter)

6 SISTER CLARK: -- but we said, you
7 can come here for nothing. You know,
8 and -- or people are spending a lot of
9 time on therapists and -- you know, and
10 that's necessary for some people -- but
11 if you get out and you're working with
12 the land and -- there's a mental health
13 aspect to it, too.

14 So all of those things are
15 connected to people, and I think that's
16 a very important piece. That's why I
17 wanted to -- I came tonight, because I
18 thought, oh, wow, to -- to be -- to
19 get -- to -- because I -- I haven't
20 heard about this -- I just heard about
21 it last week. But to get people -- to
22 get more food growing on Long Island, I
23 mean, especially because we don't
24 realize how important the land is and
25 it's just disappearing before our eyes.

1 That's what we teach the children.
2
3 We have a regimen where we ask them to
4 search how long do they think it takes
5 the earth to grow -- to make an inch of
6 topsoil. And they kind of guess, well,
7 weeks and months and -- in this region
8 of -- of the world, it takes 500 years.
9 And then I told them, when I saw all
10 those bulldozers out there every day, I
11 weep, because I know the earth has
12 worked so long to do this. And so to
13 get that kind of aura in -- in
14 children's minds is about six or less.
15 Because it -- it is our future. It's
16 our life, and we're treating it as if we
17 can get food with- -- without it.

18 So -- so all of those -- all those
19 things are important; you know, the
20 education --

21 MR. LYON: Now, the property is
22 owned by the Catholic Church; is that
23 correct?

24 SISTER CLARK: It's the Dominican
25 Sisters.

2 MR. LYON: All right.

3 SISTER CLARK: We've been --

4 That's another thing, we've --

5 we've been there since -- since 1876 --

6 MR. LYON: Uh-huh.

7 SISTER CLARK: -- on this land.

8 MR. LYON: Is this technically

9 owned by the diocese or private --

10 SISTER CLARK: No.

11 MR. LYON: Oh, it is --

12 SISTER CLARK: It's owned by the

13 sisters. Uh-huh.

14 MR. LYON: Okay. Are you aware of

15 any other Catholic Churches that are

16 doing anything similar on the Island?

17 SISTER CLARK: On the Island, I

18 know -- Newsday did a big story on

19 Sophia Garden. I forgot what year it

20 was, and I got a call the next day from

21 a woman at -- in Bay -- in Bay --

22 Bay Shore, I think it was at --

23 MS. KIANG: St. Peters?

24 SISTER CLARK: -- St. Peters by --

25 MR. MEYER: St. Peters.

2 MS. KIANG: St. Peters.

3 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: The
4 farm at St. Peters.

5 SISTER CLARK: Yeah.

6 MS. KIANG: Jennifer Campbell?

7 SISTER CLARK: Yes. She said she
8 wanted to do -- to do that also.

9 But they -- she said they wanted --
10 they want to sell the farm to their
11 immediate (inaudible), and I told her,
12 we had to do it, and I guess they have
13 to do it like at Sophia Garden. But
14 they've been -- they've been there for
15 quite a while now.

16 MS. KIANG: Ten years, yeah.

17 SISTER CLARK: Ten years.

18 But there are lots --

19 MS. KIANG: I'm sorry.

20 SISTER CLARK: -- across the
21 country -- there are lots of religious
22 orders of sisters who are about --
23 get -- having their lands be set aside
24 for this purpose. Some people even make
25 lands trusts to do it.

2 MS. KIANG: Uh-huh.

3 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER:

4 Caroline, did you have a question?

5 MS. KIANG: No. No, I don't
6 have --

7 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Oh,
8 okay.

9 MS. KIANG: Sorry, I can't -- I
10 just want to make sure that --

11 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: I
12 thought I heard you starting to say
13 something.

14 Sister, part of the impetus for my
15 putting this task force together is that
16 we have a great need, there are many
17 people who are hungry, and many of the
18 folks who -- who need our help with
19 nutrition are not making the right
20 healthy choices. And so -- you know,
21 the obesity issue, the hunger issue,
22 diabetes, those are all tied together --

23 SISTER CLARK: Right.

24 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: -- and
25 those are all a piece of why I -- I

2 wanted this to move forward.

3 Now, how could you envision making
4 that accessibility in that education and
5 hands-on approach more affordable to
6 people, because we're trying to have
7 community gardens where people have
8 little plots of land where they can --
9 that they can work for their own
10 families, or community gardens --

11 Tom worked for Avon and Hobbs Farm
12 up in Centereach where the producers all
13 stone neighbors. So it's all sweat
14 equity, it's -- the farmers -- it's all
15 volunteers, and, you know, I was just
16 curious if you have any ideas going in
17 that direction.

18 SISTER CLARK: Right. It's
19 something very -- very close to my
20 heart. And -- because I've -- I've
21 ministered with many people who don't
22 have resources. And when -- when we
23 began the garden, I knew that this would
24 be only for people who would be able to
25 afford it. Because they were trying to

1
2 change the face of agriculture, to put a
3 new economy under agriculture. Because
4 most of -- foods is government
5 subsidized, and that's why it's cheap.
6 But when you're growing it, you're not
7 subsidizing it, and that's why it really
8 costs.

9 So -- and so I knew that we
10 couldn't include -- well, the one thing
11 we did, it's a very meager gesture, but
12 we have in our brochure for any of our
13 members, if they would like to pay a
14 little bit more -- and we would be able
15 to offer this to families without the
16 resources, and usually, we are able
17 to -- we usually have about three
18 families who are members of the garden.
19 Nobody knows who's who, but they -- they
20 are -- they're just all members. And
21 then they can participate also in the
22 community life.

23 And we're trying -- we're -- we're
24 thinking -- I know there was a gentleman
25 who came to us with an idea of trying to

1 do a habitat for humanity, where you
2 have people volunteer, you know, to
3 build houses or a laborer to do the --
4 to volunteer and to use that model. So
5 we -- we're in duologue with him,
6 because we know, too, that we -- we
7 would like to open more -- more people
8 without resources.

9 I guess the other thing would be,
10 if you have the land, it -- it -- it
11 would take a lot of organizing, because
12 I know that communities --

13 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: We know
14 that.

15 SISTER CLARK: Yep. Because when
16 you open plots to the community, and
17 the -- still the folks aren't taking
18 care of it, or your next door neighbor
19 doesn't take care of it, you know, all
20 those questions -- so I'm not real- --
21 you know, I don't have answers. But I
22 think for people to be able to -- even
23 for -- if there could be a way that
24 people -- more and more people can be
25

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2 taught how to grow their own foods,
3 and --

4 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: And
5 that's part of our goal.

6 SISTER CLARK: Oh.

7 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: That's
8 part of the goal of this, is to have
9 that educational piece --

10 SISTER CLARK: Right.

11 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER:
12 -- where we're putting together a kind
13 of curriculum --

14 SISTER CLARK: Uh-huh.

15 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: -- to
16 bring to the schools.

17 We're not putting it together
18 ourselves. There are lots of resources
19 for this, because this is a very hot
20 topic right now.

21 SISTER CLARK: Yeah.

22 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: So I
23 think we're right there calling us to
24 where there's a lot of information now
25 on --

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SISTER CLARK: Uh-huh.

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER:

-- every time I go online, I'm reading more and more examples of --

SISTER CLARK: You probably heard about Alice Walker who creates the whole thing in high school --

I would say it -- I would encourage you, if you're doing this, to really find -- work with this and find what -- because we have to find ways. We have to find ways how to -- of doing this. And if you -- you know, if you have the land -- we know we have -- if you -- if you have the land, and I don't know if you have a parcel of land or --

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: We're trying to figure that out.

SISTER CLARK: Okay. If you -- if you do, and we know we have the people who -- I mean, I was just at the hunger conference last week, and the statistics of people without food, and -- and those people who are getting food also in food

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pantries and stuff, it's -- it's mostly processed food and canned food. So -- you know, I know it's food, but they have to have food.

So to be able to do this is such a challenging thing and a necessary thing. So if you have the land and we know we have the people -- so the things we don't have would be -- no, maybe we do have, people who have knowledge of farming and --

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Well, one of the members of our task force is Joe Gragella --

SISTER CLARK: Uh-huh.

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: -- of the Farm Bureau.

SISTER CLARK: Uh-huh.

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: So he's a very good connection as far as people with knowledge of farming. And, of course, we have Caroline Kiang who came in just a few minutes ago. You may know Caroline. And she is the Master

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2 Gardening teacher, so she is "the
3 person."

4 SISTER CLARK: Oh, well -- well,
5 wonderful.

6 Well, really --

7 MS. KIANG: Yeah, actually --

8 Yeah. We're going to have spring
9 gardening school held out -- I'll leave
10 you some --

11 SISTER CLARK: Uh-huh.

12 MS. KIANG: -- registration
13 forms -- yeah -- teaching people about
14 gardening.

15 SISTER CLARK: Yeah.

16 MS. KIANG: Yeah, so you can come.

17 SISTER CLARK: Yeah, we have --

18 MS. KIANG: We'll be at the --

19 SISTER CLARK: -- we've had many --
20 many folks from the -- from Master
21 Gardener. We had a farmer once who
22 wrote a Master -- started out as a
23 master gardener.

24 MS. KIANG: Yeah.

25 SISTER CLARK: So -- so --

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Okay. So then, you have that --

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: So we're heading in the right direction.

SISTER CLARK: Yeah. And then you need equipment.

You know, because I belong to a religious community and the sisters had -- the first year, they seeded -- you know, so we -- we didn't have -- we had the land and we didn't have -- we had some seed money, and then last year they -- they -- we asked for a tractor, and we got the tractor also from the sisters. So we've been fortunate in that sense. And you don't know -- and depending on the land, you know, you may not need a tractor -- you know, depending on how much land.

And you need somebody to oversee.

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Yes.

SISTER CLARK: So I -- but it seems like you're on the right track and you have many of the components. So probably, I think that I would suggest

2 that you use one place as a model and
3 get -- get it working well before you
4 can do other things at once.

5 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Well,
6 thank you very much.

7 MR. LYON: I just want to take this
8 time, and -- and if you could address
9 the --

10 Sister, I wanted to mention two
11 conversations that I had with two people
12 that wanted to come, and I don't -- I'm
13 not sure they were able to come to one
14 of the hearings, but one of them is --
15 is Jeanne Kelly from the --

16 SISTER CLARK: Oh, and I know
17 Jeanne very well because I used to work
18 for --

19 MR. LYON: Jeanne's wonderful and
20 is very, very supportive of --

21 SISTER CLARK: Uh-huh.

22 MR. LYON: -- everything we're
23 doing, but she had a caution, and I'd --
24 I'd be interested in your take on this.

25 She said that the vast majority of

1
2 the clients she's working with are
3 resource poor, even emotional in many
4 ways, and -- and to -- to ask them to do
5 like a garden of their own -- and if
6 they would poss- -- possibly not succeed
7 and -- and have no success with it,
8 that -- that could be rather
9 devastating.

10 SISTER CLARK: Right.

11 MR. LYON: And we want to make sure
12 there's a way to ensure success, and I
13 don't know if you would -- felt the same
14 in that direction.

15 And then the second -- no, not
16 the second, it's just strictly to have
17 it in the record, and that's Debra Wolf
18 who's an administrator in the Middle
19 Country School District in -- a long
20 time, and she's started to (inaudible)
21 with the children in different places as
22 all. And she said there's an issue with
23 elementary teachers, and those teachers
24 who might want a garden but they're also
25 afraid, they don't want to fail and they

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don't have any experience. And we need
to find a way to encourage them and --

SISTER CLARK: Right.

MR. LYON: I just want to get that
in the record, and also, just maybe you
had some comments --

SISTER CLARK: Uh-huh.

MR. LYON: -- regarding that.

SISTER CLARK: Well, I think it's
very good advice, yeah, because folks
without resources are usually in
survival mode. You know, they're just
trying to survive. And so -- and I
think both -- both appointed to the fact
that, perhaps -- perhaps, one of the key
things would be the educational piece
of -- of having people who really know
how to garden, you know. So either
teach other people, or using the model
of having people -- I don't know if
retired people would know how to garden
with -- with -- and then the -- given to
these other folks --

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: That's

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2 the model at Hobbs. It's not retired
3 people, but it's volunteer people.

4 At Hobbs Farm, that's the model.
5 They volunteer and then the food is
6 given away.

7 SISTER CLARK: Yeah. And I knew at
8 Huntington, I think --

9 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER:
10 Huntington --

11 SISTER CLARK: Frolic Farm --

12 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: -- has
13 a --

14 MS. KIANG: Yeah, the community
15 garden.

16 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER:
17 -- Huntington Community Garden.

18 SISTER CLARK: Frolic -- yes, and
19 Frolic Farm, I think, farms --

20 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Frolic
21 Farm.

22 SISTER CLARK: Uh-huh.

23 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Pamela
24 Greene had to leave, but she said she --
25 she just wanted to ask you, what is the

2 first step when you're starting
3 something like this?

4 Okay. You have the land, go -- go
5 beyond that one.

6 SISTER CLARK: Well, the farmer is
7 the key person. If you're going to
8 go the route of, you know, community
9 farms, you -- you know, there is --
10 we've pointed out the difference between
11 a CSA, which is what Sophia Garden is,
12 and a community farm, which is a
13 different -- a community garden where
14 people have different plots in their
15 garden.

16 MR. MEYER: Right.

17 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Right.

18 SISTER CLARK: But if -- if you
19 look -- if you go the route of hiring a
20 farmer, that's the key person. So I
21 don't know -- but that -- that would
22 mean that you'd need resources to do
23 that. And is that the way your model --
24 I don't know that that's the way your
25 model would really work well, because

2 you're thinking of putting these gardens
3 in many different places. You're not
4 going to be hire- -- unless you had one
5 farmer, you know.

6 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: You
7 know, I don't want to give the
8 impression that we are physically going
9 to be doing those gardens. I wanted to
10 get this a little further along so that
11 you could see what --

12 Part of what we're trying to do is
13 see what's out there already.

14 SISTER CLARK: Uh-huh.

15 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER:
16 Perhaps, help create a network of what's
17 out there so people can learn from one
18 another, because we already have some
19 good models.

20 SISTER CLARK: Uh-huh.

21 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: You're
22 a good model of a CSA. There are others
23 and -- you know, there's one in
24 Brookhaven Hamlet, I believe, and
25 there's -- they're all over.

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SISTER CLARK: Yes.

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: And there are also models of community gardens.

SISTER CLARK: Yes.

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: So I appreciate that you're here because you're giving us your experience.

SISTER CLARK: Uh-huh.

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: When we were in Riverhead, we had a couple who came from Hallockville who told -- and that's more of a community garden.

SISTER CLARK: Uh-huh.

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: So we're seeing the different models, and what we want to do is take what's already out there, because we think it's rezoned with the resources to go out there and do it, but there might be a parish where they have a piece of property at the church where they want to start this, and so we can lead people to other churches that have done that

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already, or you might have a school,
even --

I saw in a list that you had that
there's a -- a community garden at
Estee Lauder on Pinelawn. So I guess
some corporate entities that have large
pieces of land set aside it, and then --

So I don't want you to think that
we are going to roll up our sleeves and
start gardening.

SISTER CLARK: Yes.

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Does
anybody here think we're going to do
that, because --

MS. KIANG: Some of us.

(Laughter)

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Okay.
Tom, did you have any other
questions?

MR. LYON: No.

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: We've
really picked sister's brain tonight.

MR. MEYER: Yes. Yes.

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Thank

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you so much --

SISTER CLARK: Yeah. Well --

LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: -- for coming.

SISTER CLARK: -- I think this -- the suggestion I would add then, if -- if different institutions had land, and it's a wonderful idea if they could do it, what they would need would be a person -- because they -- they would need somebody to come in to help them to know -- learn how to garden --

MR. MEYER: Uh-huh.

SISTER CLARK: -- learn how to do it.

MR. MEYER: Right.

SISTER CLARK: Because they might have the greatest will in the world, but as you say, if you don't have the -- the person. And so just knowing what those needs are, the land, the -- the gardener or the person who's going to teach other people how to garden; those are the key things.

2 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: Some of
3 us grow weeds very, very well. I've
4 never been able to feed my family much
5 on what I -- I have in my garden. But
6 we've enjoyed it, lots of tomatoes and
7 basil.

8 SISTER CLARK: Come -- come and
9 visit us.

10 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER: I'd
11 love to.

12 MS. KIANG: Yes.

13 MR. LYON: Your address for us.

14 SISTER CLARK: It's 555 Albany
15 Avenue in Amityville.

16 LEGISLATOR VILORIA-FISHER:
17 Actually, you're on the list that
18 Caroline had put together and --

19 MS. KIANG: Yeah. I'd like to
20 visit your place. I -- I have been -- I
21 don't know who sends me that -- from
22 time to time --

23 I'm Caroline Kiang with the Cornell
24 Cooperative Extension, and the
25 coordinator for Master Gardner, which is