

PUBLIC HEARING

On the

VICTORY GARDEN TASK FORCE

A Public Hearing of the Victory Garden Task Force was held at the Brookhaven Town Hall, One Independence Hill, Farmingville, New York on March 24, 2010 at 10:00 AM.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

**Legislator Vivian Vilorio-Fisher, Chairwoman
Tom Lyon
Caroline Kiang
Pamela Greene
Richard Meyer
Joe Gergela
Jane Corrarino
Susan Wilk (Not Present)**

Also Present:

**Seth Squicciarino, Aide to Legislator Vilorio-Fisher
Mike Haynes
Beth Reichert
Elizabeth Gundlach
Elizabeth Takakjian
Iman Morghoob
Paul Tenyenhuis
Nicole Spinelli
Thomas Williams
Joanne Massino
Vincent Cirasole
Sharon Frost
A. Grasso
And all other interested parties**

MINUTES TAKEN BY and TRANSCRIBED BY:

**Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer
Denise Weaver, Legislative Aide
Debbie Coleman**

THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 10:17 AM

(*SOME PARTS ARE INAUDIBLE AND/OR IN NARRATIVE FORM AND NOT VERBATIM BECAUSE OF POOR ACOUSTICS IN AUDITORIUM*)

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Good morning everyone and welcome to the public hearing for the Victory Garden Task Force. Thank you very, very much for coming out here and sharing your ideas with us.

Our first speaker today is Mike Haynes. Mike, you're coming from Long Island Cares. Come on up. And we generally like to -- I don't have my stop watch with me but we ask people to talk about 5 minutes so we can give other speakers an opportunity on speak.

MR. HAYNES:

Hello everyone. I'm Mike Haynes from Long Island Cares. This is my first time doing something like this. Last week I spoke with Tom and where I feel Long Island Cares can fit on this is that if the Victory Gardens take off and become a viable option in Suffolk County, Long Island Cares is a network over 550 community partners which include food pantries, soup kitchens, group homes, low income day-care centers that we work with, we supply them with food. And if by some chance the Victory Gardens wanted to help the vulnerable population of Suffolk County, we would facilitate that. We can help the food that these people grow, get the people that need it.

As you guys are well aware from the Hunger Study, there's 283,000 hungry Long Islanders right now, 110,000 which are children. And anything we can do that will help feed the hungry people on Long Island and especially the children and senior citizens, we're going to -- we're going to try our best to just help you guys get the food to those people that need it. That's basically all I have to say.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you, Mike. I think that's very important information. Just for the record, can you tell us who published the Hunger Study?

MR. HAYNES:

The Hunger Study was -- it's through Feeding America, but it's composed based of research that Island Harvest and Long Island Cares did. And there was a policy group Feeding America contracted out called Mathematica.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Can you say that again.

MR. HAYNES:

Mathematica.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Mathematica.

MR. HAYNES:

Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

I guess it's about numbers. Anybody have a question?

MS. CORRARINO:

I have a question. I know there are two arms to Long Island Cares. One is a food bank and one deals with more social justice and teaching people **(inaudible)**. I was wondering if you can talk to us a little bit about this and seeing if there's any opportunities within the structure to, you know --

MR. HAYNES:

Well, Long Island Cares traditionally when it developed was a food warehouse that's supplied food pantries and soup kitchens with the food that they needed. But it's also -- it's grown in time to include vocational programs, educational programs, advocacy which is my part of the company. And it's constantly growing. Just yesterday we were out, we have been mobile, mobile outreach resource enterprise, which is our MORE van. Yesterday was the first day we took it out. We took it to Legislator Denenberg's in Nassau County and we helped approximately 12 to 15 families get food. And we also set them up with food stamps, with their eligibility and helped them start applying.

We also have a mobile pantry where if people call us and say they're hungry and say they need food. We'll just bring it to their house. And if -- there is a stigma attached to the issue of hunger. We've also met them in places that, you know, may be around the block, maybe in a parking lot. But, you know, we have the mobile pantry, we have the Mobile Outreach Resource Enterprise which is simply Long Island Cares on Wheels. It's an office inside that van. It's a great thing. We help people apply for food stamps. We help -- we carry hundreds and hundreds of pounds of food in the van -- in the Mobile van. A little less in the Resource Enterprise van, but, still, we're helping people -- no longer is it if you are hungry, that if you can't get to us, then, you know, you have a problem. We'll go anywhere and bring the food to you.

We have Hunger 101, which is where our community outreach coordinator goes in the local schools, high schools, middle schools and just gives a seminar about proper nutrition and stresses the importance of food groups and, you know, what to eat, what not to eat. It also just lets people know how -- Long Island as you all are well aware is a very -- very diverse. And I know when I was away in college, people hear Long Island and they almost treat you like you like you're from Orange County. But Long Island isn't just simply affluent areas. Long Island has some areas that are really hurting as we're all well aware. And, you know, that's part of our education.

We also have people come in here, come in, they have vocational opportunities in the warehouse where they can get board certifications where they can learn inventory. But we also have people -- we just have job skills programs. We have people working on computers. We have people learning how to type. We have staff helping people beef up their resumes, beef up their cover letters. It's really -- its mission is growing because, you know, unemployment's the primary driver of hunger so we're trying to help people get employed, stay employed and also we're helping get people food that need the food.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Tom? Tom Lyon.

MR. LYON:

Yes. Just a quick question. I know we talked a little bit about your graduate degree and you were wrote a paper on service learning. And part of this in addition to providing food we obviously hoped to educate students, just I don't know if you'd like to speak to how that -- you know, that role with gardening and more increasing gardens on Long Island and how that basically might fit in.

MR. HAYNES:

Well, I think that be would something that would kind of be determined over time. But I can definitely see where -- I mean through the Victory Gardens programs, educational issues arise in health, nutrition, the environment, ecology. So there's a lot of great opportunities to tie service learning into this, especially if you're working with teenage kids. I think honestly the possibilities for service learning with this to me almost seem endless because there's just so much you can build off of. Like you were saying that your family member had a -- they had a field trip to a supermarket. I mean if you had a field trip to a victory garden, you could talk -- I mean you could even talk about

the nitrogen cycle. You could talk about water, you could talk about irrigation, you could talk about Long Island history because Long Island's history is, you know, up until what, 50 or 60 years ago from, you know, basically here out was all farms, right? So I think the possibilities for service learning and educational opportunities within the victory gardens is endless.

MR. LYON:

Welcome back to Long Island. Glad you have to you back.

MR. HAYNES:

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Any other questions from the task force. Thank you again for being here.

MR. HAYNES:

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

We'll be in touch.

MR. HAYNES:

Okay.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Beth Reichert from Habitat For Humanity. Beth, welcome to Victory Garden.

MS. REICHERT:

Hi, good morning. My name is Beth Reichert. I'm here representing Habitat for Humanity, Suffolk. I wasn't expecting to speak but I was here more so to gather information about victory gardens, but I did want to go on the record saying that Habitat is very interested in getting our homeowners involved, especially a concern that most of our houses are built in the Town of Brookhaven, Shirley, Mastic, Mastic Beach, North Bellport, East Patchogue, in Rocky Point so we think it would be a wonderful opportunity for our homeowners to complete their community service requirements. And personally I'm just very excited to learn more as an individual. I'd love to see more gardening, and, you know, more initiatives in that area so thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you for being here, Beth. Any questions? Yes.

MS. CORRARINO:

How many houses a year do you rehab and what are the community service requirements there?

MS. REICHERT:

Rehab or build?

MS. CORRARINO:

Both.

MS. REICHERT:

We average about twelve to fifteen a year. Again, most of those homes are in the Town of Brookhaven. Most are in East Patchogue, North Bellport area. And then our community service requirement at this time, we require six community service days and it's usually a full day about six to seven hours each day.

MS. CORRARINO:

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Since we have number of people here who are interested in victory gardens, after our last card we'll explain a little bit about what our goals are and what we are doing and what we are looking at so everybody knows where we're headed. Okay. Thank you. One more question.

MS. CORRARINO:

Sorry. But my brain is going this morning.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

That's okay.

MS. CORRARINO:

Are there other Habitat Humanity chapters across the country that are involved in this type of initiative that you know of?

MS. REICHERT:

Well, there are many --

MS. CORRARINO:

I think it would be a wonderful marriage --

MS. REICHERT:

There are many affiliates around the country that do require community service. I know that when I was in New Orleans, I was working with Habitat for Humanity. And there was an opportunity for the volunteers to go and work, I guess, you could say it was a community garden. We weren't planting but we were clearing land. It was just a very desolate piece of land that we were asked to help remove, whatever, and that's just one example but, you know.

MS. CORRARINO:

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you again.

MS. REICHERT:

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Our next speaker is Elizabeth Gundlach. And Elizabeth is from St. Joseph the Worker. We talked about your article and used your name in vain.

MS. GUNDLACH:

Well, I came to the --

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Well, you're a good model.

MS. GUNDLACH:

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Elizabeth, if you would like to speak, we have yellow cards up here. I just saw you come in. I thought you might want to fill one out. Go ahead.

MS. GUNDLACH:

Well, I came to the garden last year because, I guess, Tony {Fazillo}, he's big in the neighborhood, he wanted to beautify -- he wants to build up -- make the community a lot nicer. And it just came about we went to one of his fundraisers. And my husband -- he mentioned something about gardens, and my husband said well, if you want to talk about gardens, talk to Beth.

So I came up with a plan for another area actually in the community. And it didn't work out with that, but he said why don't you talk to Father Tom who was rejuvenating the garden at St. Joseph's two years before that. So I came with my plan and he liked it and so we started it again. Because this garden dates back to the '70's when {Neal Prandagreten} started it with a number of people who were interested. And they worked it like a farm area, small farm because the plot is about a three acre plot that the church owns next to the their parking lot. And just a small part of it was farmed. But it ebbed and flowed throughout the years depending on how many people were interested and they'd come and go. And so Father Tom started just -- he's landscaper. Before he became a priest he was a landscaper and this is his passion so --

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Lucky you.

MS. GUNDLACH:

Yes. But he left. He left in September.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

I know. We called him to pick his brain. He was leaving.

MS. GUNDLACH:

Yeah. It was a real loss to us. But anyway, he started just clearing the area and mowing it, mowing the outer perimeter. And then people started coming in, were attracted to it and they started gardening with him. And then -- but every year they had to redo the whole thing. A lot of us are, you know, not 20 anymore. And it's hard to keep it going if it's just -- if it goes to weeds every year.

So my plan was to build raised beds and make it so that it doesn't have to be mowed so much. My husband and another man are, you know, the lawnmowers and it's a little bit of a burden for them. What my idea is so that it kind of self maintains itself, which I use a lot of mulch and we have the raised beds. So that -- actually the Town of Brookhaven gave us the cardboard from the {MERF} so we put down cardboard on top of the weeds and then we covered that with woodchips that are donated by local tree guys that just dump wood chips there. So that's my goal is to be kind of self sustained. So it doesn't have to be weeded and people constantly working it.

But what we do is we have about 23 raised beds so far. And there are people that put their names to the raised beds and they grow whatever they want to grow as long as -- we ask them to grow with organic methods in mind. And some people grow for the food pantry at St. Joseph's but most of us grow for our own needs. What my -- I want it to be pretty as well as functional because I think that's what's going to draw people in, you know, with flowers. And flowers are also good. They attract beneficial insects and pollinators so we want certain kinds of weeds to continue to grow. But after this section for the raised individual beds, I have another section that I'm working on a labyrinth that I'm planning on putting all kinds of perennial edibles in there. And I got a grant from the Greater Bellport Community -- it's a grant. It's another group in Bellport. They gave us a grant to build raised beds and this labyrinth and buy perennial edibles like berries and -- there are certain other -- perennial onions, and different things like that. So we have plans for that. That's about all.

And getting back to what Beth said about Habitat for Humanity, and people having their own houses and encouraging people to have their own gardens, that's really where I came from originally, that I would like to see more edible landscapes in peoples' yards, their front yards; doesn't have to be -- they don't have to be just bushes and impatiens. Edible plants and berry plants can be interplanted with perennial flowers. And it could be very beautiful. It doesn't have to be lawn and bushes. So

that's one thing that I would really like to see more of.

And I keep working on a design for my own yard and I haven't really nailed it down yet, how it could be beautiful and use -- we also have a couple of rental houses in North Bellport. And I would love for people to rip up their lawns and make an example of one house where this could be done and it could be really beautiful, but I haven't nailed down the design yet and I'm not so sure if the tenants would go along with it and maintain it, because I can't maintain all these gardens myself.

I guess that's about it. The one thing I want to mention Liz from Connie Keper's office asked me to mention that there's a garden on the property of the Town Hall. There's about five raised beds already planted there.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Right here?

MS. GUNDLACH:

Right here. And she just had a baby so she can't continue managing it so she would like me -- she wanted me to just mention it that it needs a manager.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

How large is it?

MS. GUNDLACH:

It's only five raised beds. I don't know where it is or what it looks like but she said -- she's been doing it for a couple of years, I think.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

I'm sorry that Caroline Kiang isn't here. She's the Director of Master Gardeners. And could probably, you know, she probably would invite you to join her Master Gardener Program for the questions that you have regarding how to work out your landscaping, etcetera. But there are also graduates of the program who pledge, I believe, it's 120 hours of community service. And that would be a place to go to see if we can get someone to help manage the town hall property.

I did have a couple of questions for you, which is -- first of all I did want to tell you something that one of the goals that you have is one of the goals of this task force which is to encourage folks to have their own gardens on their own property and maybe to have this part of our report in our final document, come up with some kind of "how to" for people who are doing their own gardens just to get -- regarding where to go for information.

I wanted to ask you about a couple of things, when you said there was a fundraiser, what kind of fundraiser was it and what was that for?

MS. GUNDLACH:

It wasn't a fundraiser. I asked for a grant.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

No, no, no. You said you went to a fundraiser.

MS. GUNDLACH:

Oh, that was in the very beginning. That was {Tony Fazillo} had a civic association. He's the president.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

I thought it was a fundraiser for the St. Joseph's Worker.

MS. GUNDLACH:

No, no, no.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay, I understand. Now you said you had a plan and you have raised gardens. Is this a community garden, is it individuals have one of those raised garden, one of those raised areas, is that how you have it divided?

MS. GUNDLACH:

Yeah. We had a workday and we just -- I asked for materials and people suddenly showed up like old fences and branches we used, just to delineate four by ten plots.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

And those plots are worked by individual families.

MS. GUNDLACH:

Yes. Or Girl Scouts, you know, or people from the parish who want to grow for the pantry. Whoever.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

It's open to grow for their on use also.

MS. GUNDLACH:

Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

And one of the other items that we'll be including in our report is, there's been a wonderful piece of information called Community Garden Tool Kit. It's put out by the University of Missouri Extension. And in fact I've been in touch with them to ask if we can use that materials. And they really give you step by step set instructions to people setting up community gardens, how to set up the rules for your garden, how to just organize it. So that will be part of our report as well. That's a very good resource to look at the --

MS. GUNDLACH:

And that's online.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

That's online, yes. But we will have it attached to our report. And our report will be online so you can have all those links.

MS. GUNDLACH:

Okay, good.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

That you have permission to use their work as part of our report. Because there's no reason why we shouldn't. Any questions?

MS. CORRARINO:

Two things, Betty. One is the Cooperative Extension just decided they have a spring gardening school, you might be interested in going to their website. I happen to sign up already, landscape design edible flowers so just that's a suggestion.

A gentleman came last time and spoke from with {Halfil} and Community Garden North Fork. And he talked about how some of community boards was very interested in this and that was what was driving it. And besides having garden plot, they had like a weekly kind of gardening club. I'm wondering if you have any thoughts about some of the successful components like that of keeping a

garden going, keeping people engaged in the process.

MS. GUNDLACH:

It's their interest. I've only started last year. And last year it was like, you know, what do we do? What do we do? We were kind of just like doing. We didn't really have a master plan or a big idea. We had, you know, a sketch that I was going with. And then everyday we just, well, we'll do this, we'll do this. We kind of just did it because of our love of gardening. And then it attracted other people who are also lovers of gardening. They just want to be out and get their hands dirty. I have this one woman who she's in her seventies, and she's so disappointed because her back is bothering her. She just can't be -- she was moving the dirt last year and she suffered all winter with her back. So now we have a couple raised beds that are waist high and she's going to be working in them, you know, so she doesn't have to bend down. But that's one thing, I think, is really valuable to have.

But, no, we don't -- we're making our kind of rules and plans and adjusting as we go. As far as keeping people, I think it's their interest. I call and I e-mail people and, you know, you need a central person, I think, though, too, to keep the whole thing going and pulling people in. And we're really sorry we lost Father Tom because he went out to the community, he knocked on doors, he brought zucchini with him and handed it out to neighbors. He was wonderful.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

He was a real minister.

MS. GUNDLACH:

He was.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you.

MS. GUNDLACH:

You're welcome.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Richard Meyer?

MR. MEYER:

Thanks. I think you probably just answered the question. You mention that you had people used organic methods.

MS. GUNDLACH:

Yes.

MR. MEYER:

Do you have any formal set of rules you're asking people to sign onto before they adopt one of the raised beds?

MS. GUNDLACH:

No. We talked about making a sign with rules.

MR. MEYER:

Okay.

MS. GUNDLACH:

And that's something that we have to, you now, we're going to redo the sign that's there. It's about 25-years-old. So we have to redo the sign anyway. And we're going to add a rules list. And that's one of them, please don't use any, you know, pesticide, chemical fertilizer or anything into the

garden. And if you have -- if you have trouble with anything, ask somebody and, you know, there's other methods.

MR. MEYER:

Thank you. Just one follow-up. You mentioned 23 beds. I think you said they were four foot by ten foot?

MS. GUNDLACH:

Yes.

MR. MEYER:

From what I understand. And you mentioned you started with the garden last so this may be premature. Do you sense the demand exceeded the number of beds? One of the gardeners, one of the groups that we talked with at the previous meeting, they had actually had a waiting list. And I was wondering your sense of that or the fact you didn't have all the beds up.

MS. GUNDLACH:

We didn't have all 23 going last year. And as the summer went on and people dropped off material, it just, you know, my husband just put beds together. And then we had a couple of people that had to do community service hours so they came and they, you know, situated these beds that were already built. And they had to move dirt, move it around to make it even. And like four of the beds I don't think -- four or five of the beds probably weren't even used last year but I'm expecting more people to be interested this year.

MR. MEYER:

Thank you.

MS. GUNDLACH:

You're welcome.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Are there any questions for Betty? Okay, thank you so much.

MS. GUNDLACH:

Oh, you're welcome.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Elizabeth?

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

What kind of irrigation do you have?

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

You have to come up because we have a stenographer.

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

I have a question for you about your irrigation. Do you have irrigation? And if so, what kind? And how do you pay for the water?

MS. GUNDLACH:

We have a hose and a man.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. GUNDLACH:

We have a man that likes to come. I don't know whether he goes to mass everyday or -- he's

always at the garden first thing in the morning and he waters everybody's plots, whether they need it or not. I keep telling him, you know, it doesn't really need to be done everyday but he likes -- that's what he likes to do. And Father Tom assured me that that gives him a reason to come everyday so let him do it. So, that's all we have.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you.

MS. GUNDLACH:

You're welcome.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Tell us about your program.

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

Okay, well, I had the good fortune in 2008 to become a Master Gardener through Cornell Cooperative Extension. And in giving back my 125 hours, I chose to give them to Hobbs Community Farm, which I had been slightly involved with my church the prior year but I --

MS. FLESHER:

Can you switch your seat to next to me? There's an echo in this room and it's hard for me to hear. Thank you so much.

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

Sure.

It was originated by a few local people to the farm who live in the neighborhood and it was donated to a church by the farmer who passed away. And a lot of stuff went on but eventually it came to be a farm that's being farmed. And the intent of the farm is to raise food for food kitchens and food pantries in Suffolk County. And last year we raised 12,000 pounds of vegetables. And it's all volunteer. Anything we have is -- we have it because it was donated. We try and fundraise and I think that's an important fact depending on how big you want to be. And some of the events are more successful than others. We tried spring festivals, fall festivals and garage sales. And garage sales seem to be the best for, you know, garnering income.

One of the things we were lacking that we were able to get this year from a grant through -- Nicole? Well, Tom can tell you this. We got an irrigation grant and we were able to put in a well and have drip irrigation for five acres this year, which is phenomenal because we have seven acres that we can farm. Last year we farmed about two acres with donated irrigation. That covered about one of the acres. And Annie, who's our lead go getter and farmer for the most of the project, insisted on planting out beyond our irrigation. And it was just incredibly time consuming and difficult and somewhat unsuccessful to try and hand water all that acreage. So I would say irrigation is really paramount for anybody who wants to set up a garden.

And as I said we do everything from donations so, you know, paying for the water can be an issue. This year I had the good fortune also to apply for another grant through Stony Brook University, which was partially funded. And through that grant -- I could have applied for irrigation, but since we had it approved for this other one, I used the money towards physical things that we needed, like a shed and soil enhancements, and tools. And I would have budgeted some of the money for -- for like -- I don't know the right term, like marketing. You know, all of the fliers I have to make and everything I have to print was not allowed to be in the budget. So I'm bearing that expense.

And reaching out to the public is an important part of the whole thing so we're doing it through the school systems in town because part of this grant, the limitation is that you service the community in which the area is established. So we're going to have -- the grant requires 20 beds. We're probably going to have 24 five by 20 beds. And the families will plant and harvest for their own

benefit. It's geared toward low income families. And the study -- actually it's not a study, it's an evaluation to assess how these families benefit from fresh vegetables and the experience of gardening.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Sorry, Elizabeth, can you pull the mike a little closer to you. I'm looking at the stenographer and she looks like she's having a problem. There is an echo in here. I'm a little confused. You said you have 20 beds --

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

The beds are five by 20 feet. That's what we decided to go with. With three foot paths in them because another gardener in the project said that was the most efficient use of space, you get the most square foot of farming to your area. And we're reaching out to families within the Centereach School District. The goal of the program is to reach low income families so I have an application. And we're requesting -- we're trying to model it after a CSA, which is Community Supported Agriculture, in which people pay a fee for the produce that they get for the season. And since this is a grant and all the produce or the plants that they're going to grow are being provided by Quail Hill Farm out in Amagansett, which is an organic CSA, he's donating all the planting materials for them. The -- I don't know if you're familiar with CSA, usually they're between 500 and 900 a season for the produce that you get.

We're asking for between 20 and \$75 for a family depending upon their income scale. And that cost is to offset the cost of water for the summer and also to provide us with funds for next seasons so that we can buy plant materials for like families. Because they're not going to be given to us forever. So it's an exciting venture, you know. I think it'll be successful.

Last year I established a garden area for the local schoolchildren to come at the farm. And the fourth graders come as junior farmers. And they're given a ten by ten plot that they design and they plant sometimes successfully, sometimes not but I think that's part of the learning curve. And you never saw happier kids, you know, in the garden. And one of -- I caught -- you know, I can't always hear all the good things, but I caught one little boy telling another one, *whoever knew hard work could be so much fun.*

(LAUGHTER)

I mean, they had a blast, you know. And, you know, it's a little -- it's a little difficult when you have these groups come when you're a volunteer organization as fledgling as we are because I didn't really have enough adult supervision. You know, the teachers would come, we'd ask for aides. And you work with what you get. But the kids loved it. And this past fall, two of the classes were able to come back as fifth grader classes just for the day to see what they had done. And they are just thrilled. The other two classes the teachers didn't want to take them. But it was a wonderful thing.

So, you know, I have that going on which is an interesting thing and that kind of is an education area for the general public. The Roots Garden, which will have those 24 plots for low income families is specifically for those families. Those families will harvest everything and have that themselves. Everything else that is harvested on the farm is donated to the soup kitchens and food pantries with the exception of the very little that we put out to the farm stand to help us cover our expenses. I don't know what else I could tell you.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Elizabeth, thank you for the great work that you're doing. It's a great model. If families that are going to be part of the CSA model, (inaudible) could their payment be food stamps?

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

I don't know. We don't as an organization have the capacity to cash them in so I would say no. One woman who --

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

I don't know what it would take to be an --

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

Yeah, I mean we are a not-for-profit, but I don't know that parameter.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

You know what? Maybe Long Island Cares -- maybe Mike Haynes might be able to answer that question from Long Island Cares. I don't know. But it's just something that I'm throwing out there.

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

One woman who did sign up for it with her family was concerned about the cost. And her price point was \$40, so I said to her, well, I said -- she actually -- she offered up. She goes, well, can I pay \$20 this month and \$20 later in the summer. And I'm like, absolutely. But --

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

I'm sorry, we have an answer right here on our Task Force, Joe Gergela.

MR. GERGELA: (NARRATIVE FORM)

There is a program. It's called the WIC Program, Women, Infants and Children Program. And the farmers that participate in farmers markets are eligible to take those coupons; however, probably not food stamps.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

But that is a program where low income families would have that.

MR. GERGELA:

Correct.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

It's just another way to help those and maybe tie in different programs.

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

Well, you know, and I'm trying to evolve a set of rules and things because I like things very structured, you know, so I'd like the tools to be put back since they're, you know, on loan to these people. But it is kind of difficult, you know, the scale of our operation there's a lot of different people in and out of farms and stuff so I'm hoping because we are only twenty families, that it'll be a good model and we will be able to keep it very structured.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Any other questions? Okay. Well, thank you very much.

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

You're welcome.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

And when is your shed coming?

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

Actually they were going to come between nine and ten this morning so now it's kind of open ended. I'll have to sit at the farm all day, but you know, that's how it goes.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you.

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

You're welcome.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

I did impose upon Elizabeth and asked her if she could please come here because she has a lot to share and some important models. And she postponed waiting for her shed until later today. Tom, you have a question?

MR. LYON:

Well, I would ask Iman to step forward because Iman is the administrator of a grant that Elizabeth probably has a little more details about it.

MS. MARGHOOB:

Iman Marghoob. I don't want to repeat what Ms. Takakjian mentioned so if there's anything that I can fill in, I'd be happy to.

MR. LYON:

Maybe just talk about grants.

MS. MARGHOOB:

So initially, just backing up --

MS. FLESHER:

Use the mike.

MS. MARGHOOB:

Backing up, this was a grant that was applied for by the University -- Stony Brook University through the Family Medicine Department. And it was a grant that was awarded by the New State Department of Health. {Joseph Conglascone} was the person who actually applied for the grant and was the Director of this program. And I'm the Community Gardens Coordinator for this Roots Community Gardens Project. It's a five year grant. And the goal of the grant is to establish ten community gardens over the next five years in low income neighborhoods in Suffolk County. And the purpose of the grant is through the State Health Department is to help improve the nutrition of low income families that don't normally have access to organic vegetable gardens. These gardens will be maintained and managed organically. We will have support from an organic farmer out in Amagansett and he's being subcontracted to help train the gardeners, the garden liaisons; I should say. And he'll be providing organic seed and seedlings. And throughout the growing season he'll also be assisting us in any which way, you know, as far as training is concerned.

This year we did award four gardens in Suffolk County. One of them is Hobbs. The other are Wyandanch Fresh, which is in the Wyandanch Youth Center in Babylon, one is in Tuckahoe School District. The third, it's called the Quick Circle Outreach Garden in the Town of Huntington property. Is there a fourth?

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

What was in the Town of Huntington?

MS. MARGHOOB:

It's on a school property. It's on a school district property in Tuckahoe school.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

No, Huntington.

MS. MARGHOOB:

Oh, I'm sorry; Huntington. It's on the existing community garden -- an existing community garden. And what they've done is they've given us -- they've given is Quick Circle Outreach Garden through

LI (Ken) is the organization that applied. And a lot of the specific space for this project to be -- to service low income families.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay, that's great. So it's very geographically dispersed.

MS. MARGHOOB:

Yeah, it is. It's Suffolk County throughout.

START NARRATIVE FORM

MR. LYON:

Iman, if I'm not mistaken, does this have something to do with diabetes education?

MS. MARGHOOB:

Say it again, please.

MR. LYON:

Something to do with diabetes education.

MS. MARGHOOB:

What is that?

MR. LYON:

The grants, doesn't it say something about the motivation?

END NARRATIVE FORM

MS. MARGHOOB:

No, it has nothing to do with the diabetes education. It's more to do with nutrition improvement to see if families who actually had access to organic produce actually improve their nutrition and increase their physical activity. So our role then is to actually serving -- we'll be serving the gardeners throughout this process and seeing, you know, how many actual hours of physical activity are they, you know, have been put in towards the gardening specifically, how many cups of vegetables specifically we'll be consuming as a result of this garden. And then we'll be seeing, yes, has this helped them improve their consumption of fresh fruits, fruits and vegetables. And many in these communities don't have access to, for example, Wyandanch has one supermarket in the entire area. I live in Mt. Sinai. I can get to about seven supermarkets within a couple of minutes. And oftentimes these supermarkets do have -- my supermarkets have access to organic vegetables. The people in Wyandanch, I'm sure, organic vegetables are out of reach for them.

As far as affordability this will be something that will be, you know, will be labor consuming, it'll be time consuming but I think the rewards will be tremendous for them. And we intend on doing food demos, nutrition classes. We want to make it more of a community based organization and give people a sense of true community ownership of their food in these gardens.

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

If I could say, I think, what Tom was referring was, there's a Miss Wilks through Cornell who's applying for a grant to research the diabetes.

MR. LYON:

Susan Post?

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

She's been here at the Task Force. And we were talking about that grant.

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Susan came to several of our meetings.

Well, this sounds like a good partnership.

MS. MARGHOOB:

We also, I want to mention, had a partnership with another -- Long Island Compost who's also going to be donating tons and tons of compost to these gardens so that's going to be a big plus because you can't start a garden --

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

That's great. Joan mentioned that at our very first Task Force.

MS. MARGHOOB:

Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Isn't that where you made the connection?

MS. MARGHOOB:

That's where we made the connection, yes. I have a meeting with them the first time today. So you can't start a garden without good soil. So compost is definitely part of it.

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

And soil testing. Cornell has testing programs.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Any other questions? It's good to see you again.

MS. MARGHOOB:

My pleasure.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

It's very good to see you again. Elizabeth, thank you for coming down and postponing waiting for your shed. Sorry about that. But it's important information. And we have spoken about Hobbs Farm quite a bit.

I just have a couple of more questions just to get it straight. You work how much of the garden? How much of the farm is --

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

I oversee the neighborhood garden area, which is the part that's kind of open to the public to come and enjoy and view and help with labor. The other back fields are what we consider all the production area. And all that exclusively is given to the food kitchens and food pantries. And Annie supervises that.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

And who works that?

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

Ann Pellegrino. And she's actually going to be recognized by the Town of Brookhaven Woman in History for her -- as a -- - tomorrow night as a volunteer.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Now did Annie farm or does she have a farmer that works with her?

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

She networks we a lot of people and we've have made a lot of progress in the last two years.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Who does the physical work?

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

Ann does a lot of the physical work. And she gets a 100 volunteers to come from all different walks of life. We have home school children who volunteer, we have handicapped young adults who volunteer through like YAI in Commack free. And I know she made some other connection. We have church groups that come. We have Girl Scouts, we have Boy Scouts. We have a lot of volunteers.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

I'm just trying to get it straight in my head because the difference between the neighborhood garden and her large garden, you both use volunteers.

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

Yes. The difference is the neighborhood garden is set up more like something you might have a piece of in your backyard with grass between the paths and things like that. The fields are farmed like a farm field, you know --

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Grow crops --

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

We use tractors. Within the neighborhood garden we use only hand tools. And that's it. You know, maybe initially when we started we used a rotter tiller but we don't anymore.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

And how large is that garden?

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

Well, she has up to like six acres to use.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Because I know Hobbs Farm isn't that big.

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

Well, in total it's an 11 acre piece of property. And seven of the acres can be farmed.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

But I remember that's why we couldn't buy it in Farmland Preservation in the County because it was too small; it didn't qualify as the size farm that we usually require development rights on. So Brookhaven did it.

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

Right. That was done. And that was a big benefit to us moving forward.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Of course, it was a great start. Well, thank you so much.

MR. LYON: (NARRATIVE FORM - INAUDIBLE)

Two comments. We've gotten a lot of support from Hobbs Farm, John {Markers} from Suffolk County manager, very, very supportive. And because Caroline's not here, we should mention that Elizabeth, major award for her from the --

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

Cornell.

MR. LYON:

Master Garden Program this year.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

And that's what started it.

MS. TAKAKJIAN:

Yeah. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

There's a couple of people in the audience who I know have a lot of information like Paul Tenyenhuis. Paul, could you come please just talk to us for a couple of minutes. Because I know -- with Nicole, would you mind? Because I know that the District has been involved in food policy issues.

MR. TENYENHUIS:

I didn't want to talk.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

You didn't want to talk? When you speak, say your name because we need to make sure we have your name right on the record.

MR. TENYENHUIS:

Okay. All right. Good morning, I am Paul Tenyenuis. I'm the District Manager for Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District. And of course a couple of you are on the board.

We offer services to all the homeowners and municipalities, homeowner groups throughout the County for soils information, for irrigation information or design depending on, you know, not for homeowner design but for farming. We do soil erosion and sediment control, drainage issues, pretty much anything that's dealing with the soils. And I know that we're working directly with Hobbs Farm on an irrigation design right now. Nicole's been working on that. I suppose that if other community groups wanted to put in irrigation systems, then we could help them out.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. That's really an important resource for people to know. Because I know that part of this stewardship program also involves helping people learn good irrigation techniques so they're not wasting water. And that's a critical piece of that.

MR. TENYENHUIS:

Right.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Because so much what of they put in the soil can be washed --

MR. TENYENHUIS:

Correct, yeah. But these are going to be organic farms with no chemical fertilizers so it may not be an issue for that.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Right. Anybody have any question for Paul now that I made him come up here and reluctantly spoke? But that was an important piece of information.

MR. TENYENHUIS:

Good.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Nicole, can you tell us a little about your relationship with Hobbs?

MS. SPINELLI:

Sure. My name's Nicole Spinelli. I'm with Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation. I've been about working with Hobbs Farm in order to secure grant funding for their irrigation. And they recently received funding through the USDA farm bill under the AMA Program. And the way that they qualified for that is because they do sell some items local product. A typical community garden wouldn't be eligible for that program because it is for farming operations. So they have been approved for that. And I am working on a design for that farm. And they're going to be irrigating with drip irrigation.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

So you work with CSA?

MS. SPINELLI:

Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Any quick questions?

MS. SPINELLI:

I just wanted to add I thought another way that we could be involved with this project is perhaps during the site selection process. I'm not sure what the actual process is, you know, there's an inventory of possible lots that could be used as gardens. We could help like prioritize the sites by looking at the soils, looking at, you know, if there's any drainage issues, things like that, you know and identify --

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Well, since you offered, last week at CEO there was a presentation by our historical sites director, Richard Martin. And he was speaking about Deepwells Farm in St. James. And how part of the property there is going to be converted to farming. And so, of course, I made the link with this group and looking at that as a wonderful spot for a community garden because it's a large piece of property. There are three churches within walking distance. And I thought it would be a good place. So I think that would be a good place. It's County property. And it's already been in agricultural use in the past, in historical use for that piece of property. And there was questions about drainage, etcetera, so it would be very, very helpful to link on that.

MS. SPINELLI:

Yeah, we would be happy to look at links.

MR. TENYENHUIS:

Right.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

And Pam Greene, who's our Director of Real Estate, actually, I believe, has been trying to link sites. And so I think it'll be very good that this is a very good link.

MS. GREENE:

The Division has been asked to identify properties that the County owns that would be appropriate for community gardens. There are a number of parameters including income guidelines. But it'd be wonderful to have a resource such as yours and thank you for volunteering your service.

MS. SPINELLI:

Sure. You're welcome.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Tom.

MR. LYON:

Yeah, if I could just state for the record, (inaudible) extremely professional and has just been a pleasure to work with all you guys.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

This is Soil and Water. Joe and I are both -- Directors?

MR. TENYENHUIS:

Correct, Directors.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

We just go to the meetings but we never use our titles.

(LAUGHTER)

MR. TENYENHUIS:

No.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

But the Soil and Water District consists of Paul, of course, is our main man. But our directors are myself and Dan Losquadro, are the two Legislators who serve and Joe Gergela, who's a farmer and we have representatives from the USDA and --

MR. TENYENHUIS:

Bob Gordon. George Fraes is the Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

He's the Chair.

MR. TENYENHUIS:

And Phil Schmidt is the farmer on the board. Other people that come to the meetings are Becky Weisman from Ag Stewardship.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Can you hold the mike a little closer to you? You have a soft voice.

MR. TENYENHUIS:

Oh, thank you.

(LAUGHTER)

MR. TENYENHUIS:

Did you hear I said Becky Weisman from Ag Stewardship comes. Allen Connel with USDA NRCS, Liz Rolden, also with USDA NRCS. Am I missing anybody? I don't think so.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

There is a lot of good work that is done by the Soil and Water District. And thank you very much for educating me on one more thing that you do. Thank you for coming to our meetings and talking about the big farm in our community. So this is really great. I love the tie in. Thank you.

MS. SPINELLI:

You're welcome.

(CAROLINE KIANG SITTING IN AUDIENCE)

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Caroline, come on up. We need you up here. We've been talking about you. We need you up here. This is our great Master Gardener, instructor and the person who inspired so many master gardeners for us in the County. Caroline Kiang.

Tom, would you mind coming up because I know that you have can offer your experience. And there's some questions that you'd like to ask us. Thanks for being here, Tom.

MR. WILLIAMS:

Well, you're welcome. Thanks for holding -- I hadn't thought I would speak, but I can. I'm Tom Williams from the Post Morrow Foundation in Brookhaven and formerly of Cooperative Extension.

A couple of things, one is and I don't know whether you know the Bellport Gardening Club is instituting a program in the Village of Bellport to encourage as many and everyone to have what I guess they're calling cottage gardens. Last year they initiated a program to get people to develop flower gardens in their front yards. And I think they're expanding it to vegetable gardens. You might want to contact them. {Davis Kurvinsky} who is a Master Gardener, is leading that project. It's an interesting idea.

I live next door to a Community Supported Agriculture the Hamlet Organic Garden. And there's a lot of public involvement there. And they've sold to other areas. So that's a piece. The Post Morrow Foundation does let them use about six acres of our property for farming. So we're glad to do that.

I'm also a board member of the Peconic Land Trust. And of course Quail Hill is one of our operations and Scott Chaskey who's donating the material to the Hobbs Farm; has been a terrific leader in this. And I don't know whether you've reached out to him to get -- to get their testimony. It might be of interest. And I'm not sure what else -- it's a wonderful project. I am also assuming you may be hooking up with the Leave No Child Indoors effort through WIC, The Early Years Institute. I would think they might be a resource for you.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

I've spoken with Donna and -- **(INAUDIBLE)**

MR. WILLIAMS:

Great. And of course Jim Goldman in Huntington with Friends of Huntington Farms might be another resource. He works in the Probation Department.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Are they involved with Froehlich Farms?

MR. WILLIAMS:

Yeah, Froehlich Farm, yeah. So there's another big site. There's a lot of property there I know they previously farmed.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Tom, can you describe what cottage farm gardens are? I don't know what that is.

MR. WILLIAMS:

Well, I think it's traditionally that really out front of your kitchen, you know, a kitchen garden, in front of your house you have a very small plot and you grow herbs there, things you can just jump out your front door and get some --

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Oh, I have a cottage garden. I had sage all winter even under the snow I was pulling it out.

MR. WILLIAMS:

It's a nice idea. And I think it's a small way for people to get involved in this knowing that they can grow things like that right outside their doors. A lovely idea.

And I know the Garden Club, the Bellport Garden Club, was recognizing people who created this cottage gardens in front of their homes.

Another thought I had was I know when I worked in the Youth Bureau for the Town of Brookhaven, we did work with the Suffolk County Infirmary and we created raised gardens for people in wheelchairs who had difficulty with access. And that was very successful. They had a lot of interest. It allowed people to garden from a wheelchair so they didn't have to try to bend over. It gave them a sense of purpose and they could also encourage growing food. And that was a very nice project. We got kids to build these raised gardens and the people in the infirmary used them. It was --

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

I think Betty mentioned doing that with some of the older members of her group?

MR. WILLIAMS:

Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

And I know at Hobbs also built the raised gardens for handicapped access. Right?

MS. CORRARINO:

A few of them, yes.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

That's a great idea. I was wonder if there would be an area -- that could be done at John J. Foley?

MS. CORRARINO:

Sure, there is.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Joe Gergela has a question.

MR. GERGELA:

Tom, it's good to see you.

MR. WILLIAMS:

Hi, Joe.

MR. GERGELA:

Just a question for you at Post Morrow because that's a tremendously big piece of property. Do you have surplus land for a community garden if it was interested in your area?

MR. WILLIAMS:

In Brookhaven?

MR. GERGELA:

Yeah, at Post Morrow?

MR. WILLIAMS:

At Post Morrow? We might be able to.

MR. GERGELA:

I was just curious.

MR. WILLIAMS:

Yeah, it's possible. Of course we have Bob Nolan's farm which is a working farm. But we might have some property, yes.

MR. GERGELA:

How far away is North Bellport to you?

MR. WILLIAMS:

It's very close. I know that operation, I knew {Yopin} He created it. He also created a labyrinth there, which was kind of a meditation area.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Now where is that? I couldn't hear you.

MR. WILLIAMS:

That's where {Megan Dunlap} is working at St. Joseph The Worker.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER: (NARRATIVE FORM)

Okay. And wasn't it the Bellport Garden Club that gave the Worker a grant, someone started to mention a MT grant, it was somebody from Bellport?

MR. WILLIAMS:

I didn't think it was the Garden Club. Oh, it was the old {Cakers} money, yeah the {Cakers} School Benefit money, that's what that was, yeah. We also use that for, I don't know whether you're encouraging shellfish gardens in this effort of yours, but we have a couple of people in Bellport that are growing oysters along the shore. And I know that it's a Cornell program, a SPAT Program.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

The SPAT Program. We have a number of people in my district who are doing that as well.

MR. WILLIAMS:

Right. So that you might want to look at that as part of the community gardens effort. Because there's a lot of interest in that, I think.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

I don't think we thought of that. That's a great idea. See, I asked you to come up because that's an important part of our program. Many of the people in my district are doing that and growing their oysters. And I've tasted them. They are good.

MR. WILLIAMS:

They are good.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

You know, one of the things you just reminded me of is something that Iman said when she was here regarding access to healthy food. You know, there's been a lot written about that recently. And usually they are speaking about urban communities. And I don't think that there's enough awareness of how much this occurs and how often it occurs in suburbia where there are neighborhoods that don't have the access to healthy food, and sometimes any kind of food. You have one supermarket in a large area. Iman talked about in Wyandanch. And there are deserts all over where there is no access to healthy food. That's part of our impetus in trying to get this going.

MR. WILLIAMS:

Absolutely. It's a great effort. I really applaud you for doing this.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you, Tom. Any other questions or comments? We have to ask you to come back up because we need you to speak into the mike. Thank you.

MS. MARGHOOB:

Iman Marghoob again. I just forgot to mention that the Town Community Gardens that we'd like to establish over the next four years, by 2014, we only have four this year so we are looking over the next course -- you know, the next four years, we are really looking for new additional gardens that qualify. So this is a great networking farm. I forgot to mention something very important. So, I am soliciting somebody in Brentwood next week to look at their garden. But we don't have anybody lined up for the next six gardens that will be awarding grants for the next --

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Is that Sandra Gill?

MS. MARGHOOB:

It's Anna Torez.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Because I just spoke to Sandra Gill in Brentwood about their community garden -- it may be --

MS. MARGHOOB:

Sandy Gill is working with Anna. Anna is with Shepard Academy and it's a daycare center from what I understand, she has an existing garden. And that definitely qualifies because it can be an existing or a non-existing. We can work with both.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

That's what's you're doing.

MS. CORRARINO:

The County got a grant that they're working with Sandra.

MS. MARGHOOB:

Sandra Gill.

MS. CORRARINO:

Has developed a garden at the Center.

MS. MARGHOOB:

At Shepards Gate.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you, Tom.

MR. WILLIAMS:

You're welcome.

MS. CORRARINO:

They're working on getting equipment and a shed.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

And there's something critically important about that because when I spoke with Sandra, it happened to be when I was at the Central Islip High School with many of the residents from both Central Islip and Brentwood were there. It was a very difficult meeting regarding prime, interest prime, and the parents who live there had lost children. And Sandra and I met that night and then we spoke again at the Latino Teachers Association Breakfast. And we see the garden not only as an oasis there but get kids out and have them -- introduce them to healthy food and show them what hard work can produce, and creating another activity for kids who feel that they belong to something and get their community connection.

MS. MARGHOOB:

That's been shown over and over again in different communities in the City where, you know, Bryant Park was a good example where it was, you know, drug infested park. And as soon as they, you know, did some landscape design and brought, you know, the plants back in, crime went down, the property value went up and now everybody flocks, you know, year round to Bryant Park in the city. And different gardens in the Bronx as well. And it's known, you know, just saying -- repeating what you were saying. It's definitely a positive influence. Anyone can reach me at the Family Medicine Department at Stony Brook.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you. Is there anybody else who would like to address the Task Force, please come on up. Please just identify yourself for the record and fill out a card.

MS. MASSIMO:

Hi, my name is Joanne Massimo. And I'm working for Suffolk County United Veterans. We have a shelter in Yaphank and we also have some houses in the North Bellport area. So we're a member of the Greater Bellport Coalition that has -- one of the projects is the community garden. But another one of the projects that I'm involved in is Youth Market. So there's not a supermarket close by in the North Bellport area. And there's low income people. So this market is going to be opening July 11th and we're looking to, you know, get food stamps to be accepted there. We got approved by the New York State Department of Agriculture. And we didn't meet with the farmers yet, but we're interested in, you know, selling produce. I think that it could be, you know, donated produce or --

MR. GERGELA:

My professional capacity as the Executive Director of Long Island Farm Bureau. I represent all the farmers. So if you contact me at Long Island Farm Bureau -- I just put a list together of farmers that are willing to sell produce to community farmers markets and working with Sustainable Long Island. And we are going to be doing two community farmers markets. And one of the reasons that community groups are going to be doing more farmers markets is there's not enough farmers to go around --

MS. MASSIMO:

Right.

MR. GERGELA:

-- and have the time to actually be vendors at farmers markets. So I have a list of farmers that are willing to sell to community groups.

MS. MASSIMO:

Oh, great. We are working with Sustainable Long Island. We have a meeting tomorrow with them. And that's what -- that's great. That's going to be fun. It's going to be good for the community.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

We had Jeffrey (inaudible) from Sustainable. He came to our first meeting Task Force.

MS. MASSIMO:

Oh, so we might be interested in -- that lady that said grant money would be available for the community garden. That would be great.

(LAUGHTER)

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

I just have a question for you. Can you please tell me what kind of criteria there was for you to reach the level where you could become a vendor where you would be able to use food stamps.

MS. MASSIMO:

Well, Erin from Sustainable Long Island did the work. And I think it was just a matter of filling out an application before a deadline, which I think was like March 15th, to get it in a book that advertises all the farmers markets that accept these things. And we're going to get a little machine. And I think you can somehow change your food stamp coupons for tokens that the farmers can get and pay with those.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

So now we know that at farmer markets will accept food stamps. Okay, so I think that's really important information especially when we're reaching out to those underserved communities, that people can have that capability. Now let me just ask you very briefly, because then you really have a very structured set up there. Is there somebody who is a full-time worker or --

MS. MASSIMO:

Yeah. Well, we're learning about it as we go. But it's going to be on Sundays from 11 to 4. And we do have to hire a market manager. They recommend that to hire a market manager. And we're going to use the kids from the summer jobs program to run it so the farmers don't have to be there. And we're going to actually -- we've met with the youth market in New York City that's running some of them. The kids will get a tour of other markets and learn about nutrition and tasting the vegetables, even learning what vegetables are what. You know, sometimes you go to a farm you don't know -- I belong to -- where you buy a share in the farm. And sometimes we get things and I didn't even know what it was. So, you know, they'll teach the kids what they are and let them taste it and we'll look into cooking demonstrations and menus, you know, recipes, and all that. But we have some AmeriCorps kids that are going to help us market it with the schools and the communities and advertise in newspapers, reach out to community groups, senior groups and try to get, you know, customers because that's the -- hopefully it'll grow after a while. We'll start off with maybe one or two farms and hopefully it'll expand.

And actually there's no supermarket in the area. And somebody did buy property to open up a market so he is interested in even letting us have it right next to his market because he said that it will bring customers to his market; somebody'll come to the farmers market and then buy other things at his market. So it's a win/win for the community.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay, that's great. So you're doing so many different things because you're also giving kids jobs.

MS. MASSIANO:

Right.

MR. GERGELA:

So this is the project that you're involved with Sustainable Long Island.

MS. MASSINO:

Right. Roosevelt.

MR. GERGELA:

I don't know if this is the forum for this but I met with Sustainable Long Island. I gave an idea about developing the community markets because of the demand that we're having for farmers markets. And particularly your project and there's another one, we're meeting on Friday with you guys.

MS. MASSIAO:

Right. Oh, good.

MR. GERGELA:

I think it's a really good project.

MS. MASSINO:

Yeah, it is. It's a lot of fun and it brings good food to the community. It's great. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you so much. Tom.

MR. LYON:

Just one other thing. Erin Thoresen's name been mentioned a couple of times she's taking the lead for Sustainable Long Island. That's interesting history, but to Sustainable Long Island has planners determine that they should establish a food equity task force based on all of these issues. And I think that's a major, major issue. And actually I'm inclined to take the lead in that. So I have joined that task force also. That's all of Nassau and Suffolk. And they are in -- they're in Bethpage so -- I think that concept of food equity is really central to what we're trying to do here. Everybody should have access to -- not just quantities but quality of food.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Tom, I think that the food equity concept is one of things that we were talking about under the broader conversation of food. What we were speaking about yesterday on our conference call with {Mark Winny} which is the Food Policy Councils. Food Policy Councils not only talk about access but food equity in terms of growing food, the food growers, the food providers, the retailers and the consumers. So it's a very holistic view of food. And I was talking about this earlier with Joe how these policy councils are made up of government officials, retailers, community advocates, farmers, and just a wide variety of stakeholders. And when you think about it and you listen to people speak about different points of view, we're all stakeholders in food. So I think with what we're seeing the First Lady doing that, with food and health, obesity and, you know, the Last Kid left outdoors, you know, all of these issues come together when you're talking about food equity and food policy. I think Long Island Cares when Mr. Haynes talked about all the different aspects that Long Island Cares is involved in, you really get a sense of how broad the policies are regarding food can travel. And thanks, Tom, for pointing out that food equity issue.

Okay. Thank you very much and good luck with that.

MS. MASSINO:

Thanks.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

You're welcome. Is there anyone else who would like to address the Task Force? Sir, come on up. You don't know how happy we are to see you. At our last public hearing we had one speaker -- one attendee. She was wonderful and it was worth it for us to go out and go down to Brentwood to the Brentwood Library because she really -- she was very inspirational and she talked to us about their garden, how she was --

Can you please tell us your name.

MR. CIRASOLE:

My name is Vincent Cirasole. I'm a market gardener in Copiague. I have -- in my backyard I have a garden, an organic vegetable garden. As gardens go, it's fairly large. It's 120 feet by 50 feet. And I sell vegetables from my garden.

I came here this morning for a couple of reasons. Number one, I'm very, very interested in this activity and in establishing community gardens and urban gardens. So I wanted to participate in some way.

Secondly, I have a few ideas that I might offer to you as suggestions. I don't really know where to go with them, but all of us thinking together, maybe we'll come up with some sensible new programs.

For instance, I've heard you talk a little bit about establishing community gardens on Suffolk County owned property. And that's something I've been thinking about. The White House has a garden and so do the state houses in Vermont and Oregon. And why can't our town halls have a garden? They're public buildings and public property and could be a center for some sort of community involvement. Same thing with the schools. All of the schools have a lot of land and something could be done there either incorporated into the curriculum or as a voluntary after school club activity.

And some other things. I came across something which I want to give to you. There's a grant being put out by the USDA. You may even be aware of it. It's a grant for the establishment -- giving funds for the establishment of farmers markets. Now with a little creative thinking, maybe we can establish some sort of a link between these community gardens that we're trying to establish and farmers markets that we also can establish which would be funded. This is a USDA program. Grants ranging from \$2000 to \$100,000 with no matching funds required. So I'm going to give you the literature and the information about that. And hope that you'll be able to utilize it.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Can you repeat your last name for the record?

MR. CIRASOLE:

My name is Cirasole; Vincent Cirasole. C-i-r-a-s-o-l-e.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Mr. Cirasole, you know we do have, again, our Director of Real Estate Division who actually is identifying properties -- County properties throughout Suffolk County. And I don't know -- because I don't know the Copiague area very well, but I would defer to our Director of Real Estate. I don't know what we have in that area, but maybe it would be interesting for us to explore that and see if we have someone, a willing and experienced gardener who might be interested in looking at something there.

DIRECTOR GREENE:

The Division is compiling a list right now of available County owned properties. And we are looking for input from the community to let us know which would be appropriate to then work for not-for-profits. The legislation required that not-for-profits be brought forward just to be given the chance for an RFP to then create gardens on those lots. So any input that the division can receive from interested parties on the appropriateness of the viability of these pieces of property would be

helpful. So again we're still in the stage of compiling those properties at this time.

MR. CIRASOLE:

And are you suggesting that I may be able to give you some suggestions about available properties around my area in Copiague?

DIRECTOR GREENE:

We're looking for an inventory right now. So once that inventory is streamed down to meet the primary legislation, we will then be making it available and looking for input on whether they would be the qualities that would sustain the gardeners.

MR. CIRASOLE:

Well you have my contact information here and I'll be happy to cooperate with you in any way that I could.

DIRECTOR GREENE:

Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

You also mention towns and school properties. You know, I'm trying to remember if -- wasn't there something on Babylon -- in Babylon Town, Caroline, the list that you gave us of existing community gardens? Did you have something on town halls?

MS. KIANG: (NARRATIVE FORM)

Not town hall. The Town of Babylon (inaudible), she was a master gardener in the class of 1978. And she's a retired school teacher from Brooklyn. Then she moved to Deer Park. Her dream is to have -- she actually has a farm in each town. And she started with the Deer Park, the organic garden. It's off Park Avenue, having moved twice. The first time it started was right behind a European American Bank in an industrial area in Deer Park. And I think she stayed there for a year or two and she was asked to move. The Town of Babylon took over. And they gave her an acre of land not far away from there. The garden is run by the Town of Babylon. And that's the very first organic community garden established -- well, not the very first one but first run by a master garden. There's another one in Huntington also. That's run by the Town of Huntington. That's a very big one. It's very well established. And overtime some of these gardens have evolved. And actually I think in Central Islip, I think at City Council they have an market garden. They have vegetables. They grow vegetables and also tree fruits there. And I don't know, one of the master gardeners who's been working there for a long time now I believe that town took it over. And I don't know how he's doing (inaudible) right now but the Town is doing that.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

So your town was one of the models, Babylon Town.

MR. CIRASOLE:

I'd be very interested in seeing this farm that Caroline is describing. I'll pay it a visit. I'll pay a visit.

MS. KIANG:

I'll give it to you.

MR. CIRASOLE:

Okay, fine.

MS. KIANG:

We've talked about it.

MR. CIRASOLE:

Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Oh, are you a master gardener?

MR. CIRASOLE:

Yes. I graduated the master gardener program a number of years ago.

MS. KIANG:

He helped with the Spring Garden school.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. All right. Very busy man. Thank you coming up and talking with us to.

MR. CIRASOLE:

Okay.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

And we'll share the information. Did you want to tell us something else?

MR. CIRASOLE:

I wanted to ask you something. When you use the term community gardens, are you thinking along the lines of the EcoFarm where individuals or individual families from the Town have a piece of land which they share, each person, with a small plot that's sort of their own private garden?

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

That's one of the models.

MR. CIRASOLE:

There are 20 or 30 of these on -- that's what you mean by a community garden?

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

That's one of the models that we're talking about. There are a few different type of models. But in strictest terms that's basically what a community garden, where individuals, families have plots on a piece of property. And they work out, you know, an organization and a set of rules that they work under. But we also have the model of Hobbs Farm where you have volunteers working and the produce goes to food pantries. There are several different types of models and in our final report we'll be including all of the different types of models.

MR. CIRASOLE:

That's very interesting.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

And how to start organizing them.

MR. CIRASOLE:

I'm particularly attracted to that model that I saw in co-farming. I think it does a lot. Great potential for community building.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Absolutely. It's great. And that's what I want to see happening in Brentwood with what we were just talking about, try to develop that.

MR. CIRASOLE:

Would you please send me some information about the task force? Do you have a list of members and --

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Yes. We will be putting a lot of the information including the minutes of our public hearings on the website, the County website because it's an official task force. There is a graduate student who has promised to come and do a whole Facebook page on us. Hasn't shown up yet. So as soon as we get her to come into my office -- actually she can't work in my office because we can't do social networking on the County computers but we'll find a place for her to work and have a Facebook page so what we can do with these is interactive conversations with people and spread the word. There are many, many organizations that are overlapping one another. We're finding -- you know, we have this slow food movement, we have the community gardens, you know, all of the different models, the Sustainable Long Island, what they're doing. We can just go on and on with all the groups. We're trying to work in the same direction. What we're trying to do is pull that information together so that people can access it. So we will have you on our list and we'll be in touch with you.

MR. CIRASOLE:

Good. Like Scott Chaskey whose name came up here before, I'm also on the board of NOFA New York. Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York. And if there's anything that our group can do to contribute to this in a more formal fashion, I'd be happy to get involved in that.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you very much. Thanks for being here.

MR. CIRASOLE:

Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Any other questions?

MS. KIANG: (NARRATIVE FORM)

Yeah, I just have some comments about the community garden we're talking about. Community gardens usually means like a {layman} garden in England, is people, they go to these -- to the garden, they each own a piece of a small plot and they garden themselves. And there's CSA gardens, community supported gardens, community supported agriculture project. And that's like Scott Chaskey's in, yeah. And EcoFarms, actually started as a community garden but now they have transitioned. They're going to become a CSA garden. And Peter Garden, another master gardener, he's still the farm manager. And I guess, you know, for instance Peters, the farm is Peters, it's a CSA garden.

MR. CIRASOLE:

Yes, it is.

MS. KIANG:

The one in Babylon, Deer Park that is a community garden, people go there and garden themselves. And Town supported one I believe. That's Town of Babylon and community garden in Huntington is strictly community gardens people, garden for themselves.

MR. CIRASOLE:

Okay. Well, thank you very much for hearing me. And please keep up the good work.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you very much. Is there anyone else who would like to address the Task Force? Come on up.

MS. FROST:

My name is Sharon Frost. And I just wanted to let you know about a project I got involved with about 17 years ago, pre-district. My kids were in elementary school. And I helped start a garden club, dig it and --

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Dig it?

MS. FROST:

Yes. And we grew on the school property a garden for the hungry. And the kids -- this is elementary school. The kids donated the produce to the food pantry. It was very easy to get started. You just need one crazy PTA mother like I was and a teacher. And we had maybe 40, 50 kids in that club. Met once -- not very often in the wintertime obviously but continued on through the summer -- in the summer rec program that they have at the school. And we had quite a sizeable crop. So I just thought I'd mention that. That's about it.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

I think the key is that there was a summer rec program. And there's where we get a lot of interest in schools. And you know you can get very enthusiastic kids and you get your crops started. But then there's no one there in the summer.

MS. FROST:

Right, exactly.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Then there's irrigation problems with the school.

MS. FROST:

Well, what we did was the summer rec program went through July. So August was an issue. But, you now, there's all these little cute timer gadgets you can get and sprinklers and hookups to an irrigation system if you have a few batteries. So that's how it worked out for us.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Thanks for sharing that. And what about now, is still going on?

MS. FROST:

Yes, it's still going on.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Oh, you have a legacy?

MS. FROST:

I know, I know, I just ran into one of the teachers in town. I live in Westhampton Beach School District. And, you know, she cursed me out for starting this thing and leaving it with them.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Anybody who's here who has a community garden, can you just let us know exactly where it is because as you can see I have a map of Suffolk County and I've tried to put little map tacks on it wherever people have come to speak with us and told us about their gardens. So, Sharon, I'm going to stick one up there. Okay?

MS. FROST:

Okay.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

To tell us exactly where you are.

MS. FROST:

Sure.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

And I'm planning on creating a much bigger map because we're going to have so many tacks that we won't be able to do it on that little map.

MS. FROST:

Thank you.

MR. LYON:

Just a follow up because I'm supposed to be the education representative. And this is the person who couldn't appear, I didn't even ask her, but her name's Alice Waters, as most of you know, she is the one that's usually accredited for the White House Garden and pushing the Obamas to do that. And this is her book. And this is called the Edible Schoolyard. I was just showing Joe. It's interesting that in the front of this, there's two pages of pictures from school yards in New York City with big factory chimneys in the background in the early 1900's. And one is on 35th and 36th Streets. But I think the point of the Edible Schoolyard movement, just to summarize it and get it into the record, they have principles. Only six. It won't take long. But the principles of edible education. And I think this is, again, what's drawing a lot of us here.

The first one food is an academic subject. Second, schools provide lunch for every child. Does not happen all the time, right. Third, school supports farms, partnership. Fourth, children learn by doing. Fifth, beauty is a language. And we all know the beauty in partners. Not to editorialize, but I think those should be in the record as an part of we're doing here. Thanks.

CHAIRWOMAN VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you, Tom. Thank you, Sharon.

Is there anyone else who would like to address us, share ideas? Thank you so much for coming. What's really, really a very important part of what the Task Force does is to listen to people in the community and tell us what they're doing. And the resolution that created this Task Force is on the Suffolk County website.

And just to share very briefly with you, the genesis of this was is a visit that I made to my niece's fourth grade class in Central Islip. And when I visit the classrooms, I ask kids to be legislators for a day. And I ask the teacher to have them come up with laws that they would like to see passed in Suffolk county.

When I arrived at this class, there was seven laws that they had on the board. And as we discussed them, we came down to two laws that they liked to see passed. One was to make their parks safer. And it's sadly ironic but three weeks after that was when a young boy was shot in the eye at Timberline Park in Brentwood, which is one of the parks that is close to me.

And the second one was how can the County help us to buy healthier food. And this little girl said to me, she said my mom wanted to buy the a big container of plain yogurt, the one that was organic but it was almost \$5 and we didn't have it.

So I invited that class to come to the Legislature to speak. And they presented their idea for this Suffolk County law. And I have to say that small voices can have a very big impact. Legislator Romaine introduced the legislation which directed our Division of Real Estate to look for properties where people could grow and have a community garden. Legislator Horsley introduced legislation that directed the Department of Social Services to inform people that food stamps can be used to buy seedlings and seeds to grow their own food. And I introduced my Victory Garden Task Force because there are children who want to be able to get healthy food and can't. So that's the primary motivation on this Task Force, is to bring good food to our kids.

So I really want you to know how important what you shared with us is today for all the kids in Suffolk County because this will be part of the County record. Thanks again.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 11:56 AM

{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY