

**VETERANS AND SENIORS COMMITTEE
of the
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Veterans and Seniors Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on **November 14, 2002**.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Legislator William J. Lindsay - Chairman
Legislator Martin W. Haley - Vice Chairperson
Legislator Cameron Alden
Legislator Lynne C. Nowick

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Legislator Crecca

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Terrence Pearsall - Aide to Legislator Lindsay
Ed Hogan - Aide to Legislator Nowick
Carl Yellon - Aide to Legislator Crecca
Art Lozeau - Director, Veterans Service Agency
Sean Clancy - Budget Review Office
Robert Lipp - Budget Review Office
Nicole DeAngelo - County Executive's Office, Budget
Ed Stateman - League of Women Voters
Other Interested Parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Ana Grande- Court Stenographer

1

(THE MEETING CAME TO ORDER AT 10:45 A.M.)

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Okay. We're going to call the Veterans and Seniors Committee to order, and Legislator Alden will lead us in the pledge.

(SALUTATION)

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Okay. We only have really two items on the agenda. Art, do you have anything for us?

MR. LOZEAU:

Art Lozeau, Director of Veterans Service Agency. The only things I have is that the Veteran's Day activities went extremely well, to include the dinner dance, very well attended and everybody had a very nice time.

The upcoming, on the 24th, which is a Sunday, at noon there's the rededication of the Hauppauge Honor Roll. It's a Vietnam Veterans monument or memorial, the form of a big board, that was at the intersection of Old Willets Path and Vets Highway. It was going to be torn down, they had no place to put it, because of road widening.

And so it is now installed and will be rededicated on the 24th at Bill Richard's park at noon. That's just the other side of Blydenburgh Park. We had a hard time. Actually Kevin O'Hare was the prime mover on this with the Vietnam Veterans of America. And the Town

Supervisor

Vecchio offered that spot, which is right at the entrance walkway of the Bill Richard's park. So that's going to be noon on the 24th of October.

Our Toys for Tots Program is going to kick off the beginning of December. We work with the Marine Corp. Reserve collecting toys and handing them over to them and they get distributed. That's all I have.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Any questions from the committee?

LEG. ALDEN:

I have just one question.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Legislator Alden.

LEG. ALDEN:

Art, last weekend at our budget meeting there was a proposition put forth to combine your -- you know, Veteran's Services with Women's Services and a couple of the other ones. Is there any possibility of continuing service and doing any kind of consolidation, so to speak?

We defeated the resolution, because, you know, there's some of us here that feel that we want to make sure that the veterans get, you know, all kinds of guidance, any kind of help, anything that's necessary for them, but in your mind is there any way that that can be consolidated?

2

MR. LOZEAU:

I'll only comment that what our Veterans Services Office does is very unique, to include having to do research and medical terms and also getting power of attorney from veterans organizations to put in claims, it's a very unique system.

LEG. ALDEN:

And they're all busy as advocates and all that sort of thing, right?

MR. LOZEAU:

Absolutely.

LEG. ALDEN:

That's what our feeling was, that there was no way that that can be consolidated into anything else and to lose any positions there would be a travesty and a non-service to the veterans.

MR. LOZEAU:

It would diminish support to the veterans, because I would like to tell you that the V.A. regional office in New York City is sitting there with people eager to just accept claims from veterans, but they don't give them the breaks we deserve and we're also hounding them,

so

you need advocates that will actually fill out the claim properly and give them all the help they can get.

LEG. ALDEN:

Good.

MR. LOZEAU:

There's just too many denials. So I, you know, beyond expanding as to consolidation and all, I don't really have any comments on that, all I know is what the Veterans Services Agency does with its Veterans Service Offices is very unique.

LEG. ALDEN:

That's what our sense was, that, you know, you can't really do anything with that. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Thanks, Art. Is anyone from Seniors here that wants to talk to us?

MR. LOZEAU:

She's at a meeting. Holly asked me to pass on she's at a meeting with New York State, something to do with obviously Aging that she was unable to attend.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Okay. But she didn't have anything for us then?

MR. LOZEAU:

And she doesn't have anything.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:
Okay. Thanks.

3

MR. LOZEAU:
Thank you.

TABLED RESOLUTION

2039-02 Local Law defining income for senior citizens real property tax exemption.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:
Okay. Maybe Budget Review, we have, it's lifted as a tabled resolution, but we don't remember it ever being tabled, 2039-02. Could somebody explain that a little bit to us, would you guys be able to help us with that?

MR. LIPP:
Robert Lipp, Budget Review Office. Resolution 2039 would increase the income limits on senior citizen exemptions by one thousand dollars. Do you have the resolution in front of you?

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:
Yes, I do.

MR. LIPP:
So, for instance, if you look at the second page, which has the annual income table.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:
Actually, ours has it starting on the first page.

MR. LIPP:
Okay. So it breaks between those two pages, this one has it on the second page. It lists on the left side annual income and on the right side percentage of assessed value exempt. What the exemptions are, the percent of your assessed value. So, for instance, the lowest income levels would have the largest exemption of forty-five percent.

It used to be, okay, and here it reads "M". "M" is defined as this maximum income, which is twenty thousand five hundred, and it would

go

up to twenty-one thousand five hundred. So that's the one thousand dollars. So, effectively, your forty-five percent exemption would go from twenty thousand five hundred to twenty-one thousand five

hundred,

that range. Now it would up it one thousand dollars to go from twenty-one five to twenty-two five.

And then as, as your income gets higher and higher, you have less of an exemption. What happens for people that are lower than the income of twenty-one thousand five hundred, they would receive, at least in theory, New York State income tax exemptions by the provisions of the Circuit Breaker Program for New York State.

You're smiling, you don't quite understand what I'm saying.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

No, I understand it, it's just the way it's written. I don't know why they just didn't write in the amounts instead of "M" plus a thousand, you know, that was the part that was confusing, what, you know, what

4

was it. Go ahead.

LEG. ALDEN:

What you just said as far as like, you know, when they start hitting the minimums and things like that, New York State, would that trigger for the Federal Government that way, even for New York State, that minimum tax?

MR. LIPP:

No. The income tax -- the Circuit Breaker provisions, you mean?

LEG. ALDEN:

No, no, not the Circuit Breakers. Just, you know, their income when it gets to a certain level, even when it's down in that certain level, are they subject, even if it's a senior citizen, are they subject to that minimum tax provision?

MR. LIPP:

To my knowledge, this has nothing to do with that. It's not connected in any way.

LEG. ALDEN:

It's not. I'm just asking if in your knowledge or in your experience, are senior citizens subject to that minimum tax provision?

MR. LIPP:

I think so, but I'm not sure.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

And the income includes social security income?

MR. LIPP:

Yes. There's a stipulation in here that states what's included and excluded, if I could find that. Okay, here we go. In Section C of the legislation it cites that such income shall include such security and retirement benefits, interest dividends gained from sale or exchange of capital assets, all that kind of stuff. So, we're not talking rich people here, I guess is one way of looking at it.

LEG. NOWICK:

I just want to ask one question here.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Go right ahead, Legislator Nowick.

LEG. NOWICK:

As I understand this, this is the combined income of the husband and wife?

MR. LIPP:

Yes.

5

LEG. NOWICK:

Twenty-one five is going up one thousand. What I don't understand is this table, twenty-one five plus one thousand, this forty-five percent. So, does this mean you can make more than twenty-one five, this table here?

MR. LIPP:

What it means is, okay, you have each category, so that the largest exemption would be the forty-five percent of your assessed value. And that would --

LEG. NOWICK:

That's if you make twenty-one five --

MR. LIPP:

To just under twenty-two five.

LEG. NOWICK:

Right. So you'd get forty-five percent off your tax bill.

MR. LIPP:

Yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

Right now it's -- if it's twenty-five -- twenty thousand five?

MR. LIPP:

Yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

Is that -- is this table a new thing, this thousand, two thousand, or this has always been there?

MR. LIPP:

This has always been there, it's just that the State provision is bumping up the income limits by a thousand and piggy-backing.

LEG. NOWICK:

Right. And it can go up to seventy-five hundred over the twenty-one five, is that correct?

MR. LIPP:

Well, actually --

LEG. NOWICK:

Less than eighty-four?

MR. LIPP:

Yes. So that would be twenty-nine thousand, twenty-eight thousand nine -- eight ninety-nine, twenty-nine thousand eight ninety-nine and ninety-nine cents. Just under -- just under twenty-nine thousand nine hundred.

LEG. NOWICK:

Okay. What am I not -- item C, no exemption shall be granted if the income of the owner or the combined income of the owners of the

property for the income tax year immediately preceding, because that's what they base it on, right?

MR. LIPP:

Right.

LEG. NOWICK:

The date of making application for exemption exceeds the sum of three thousand, what is that? I thought it was the sum of twenty-one five. What is the three thousand? Some that exceeds the sum of three thousand, but isn't it twenty-one five? Maybe that's something I'm just missing.

MR. LIPP:

I'm not sure about the wording, I have to look at this.

LEG. NOWICK:

Or such other sum not less than three thousand dollars, not more than twenty --

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Not more than twenty-one thousand five hundred.

LEG. NOWICK:

Why do they say exceeds the sum of three thousand? What's that three thousand? I just don't know what that means. I know it's combined income of everything they make.

LEG. ALDEN:

With the Chairman's permission?

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Go right ahead.

LEG. ALDEN:

This was written by the County Attorney's Office?

MS. DE ANGELO:

Yes.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay. If we could get a clarification maybe from the County Attorney's Office, because there is some confusing language in there.

MS. DE ANGELO:

Yes.

LEG. ALDEN:

Thanks.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Well, the only thing about -- the only thing about the clarification is, is this time sensitive as far as next year's tax bills?

MR. LIPP:

Yes, it is.

LEG. NOWICK:

Well, this is -- it's time sensitive, but just so you know, it's not

going to show up. I don't see how it could show up in this years, because --

MR. LIPP:

Yeah. It says in terms of applicability in Section 3 that it would be -- that the law shall apply to assessment roles prepared on the basis of taxable status dates occurring on or after January 1st. So, it would miss the deadline for this year's tax bill, which starts December 1st.

LEG. NOWICK:

That's exactly right. As soon as the warrant is signed, the tax bill goes out.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

So this couldn't be implemented for the next round of tax bills anyway?

MR. LIPP:

Correct. The property tax year starts December 1st.

LEG. NOWICK:

This -- correct me if I'm wrong --

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

But this couldn't be signed into law before December 1st?

MR. LIPP:

Sure it can, but according to the wording of the resolution here, it wouldn't go into effect until --

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Until January.

MR. LIPP:

-- until next years.

LEG. NOWICK:

Just to clarify it, even if we signed it into law next week, understand that in three weeks the tax bills will be printed. They still have to apply for the -- I don't see how the tax bills are going to be changed by the time that tax bill goes out.

MR. HOGAN:

It doesn't take effect until January 1st, so no matter what you do, it doesn't make a difference.

LEG. NOWICK:

So, it's for next year's. It's not going to matter until then.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

So you want to table this for some clarification?

8

LEG. ALDEN:

Let them come down and explain to us.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Could the County Exec's Office get us some answers on this? Unless, do you want to discharge it and get some explanation next Tuesday?

LEG. HALEY:

Great idea.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Could you get us an answer by next Tuesday?

MS. DE ANGELO:

Absolutely.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Okay. Thank you.

LEG. NOWICK:

Just for that clarification, because what they're doing is just raising, from what I understand, they're raising the combined income, which would be very understandable, but I don't understand that three thousand dollars.

MS. DE ANGELO:

We will speak to the County Attorney's Office, get the clarification to you --

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

You have to put your name on the record.

MS. DE ANGELO:

Nicolle DeAngelo, County Executive's Office.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Thank you, Nicolle.

MS. DE ANGELO:

Do you want the clarification in writing or do you want it discussed at the meeting of the 19th?

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Well --

MS. DE ANGELO:
Or prior to that?

LEG. HALEY:
What difference does it make?

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:
Either way. Just as long as -- we're going to approve it, but I know our colleagues will have questions about it on the 19th, so we'd like the answers, you know. If you could get those answers back to us in writing, that would be very helpful.

9

MS. DE ANGELO:
Sure.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:
And specifically the Section 2-C seems a bit confusing, the wording, that's where the real questions have come up.

MS. DE ANGELO:
Sure, no problem. And I know there was a question as to why it was tabled and it was tabled because it had a public hearing, which was closed at the last general meeting.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:
Okay. Very good. Thank you.

MS. DE ANGELO:
Okay.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:
Thank you very, very much. See, ask questions, we get answers.

LEG. HALEY:
We get responses.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:
Stop being so cynical, Marty.

LEG. ALDEN:
So, motion to discharge?

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:
Well, I would make a motion to approve.

LEG. HALEY:

Yes.

LEG. ALDEN:
Okay. Second.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:
So we can get it out there. In case there's something that they're thinking about as far as being time sensitive, I would hate to be in the way of holding up some kind of --

LEG. HALEY:
Second.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:
Second. All in favor? Okay. (VOTE: 4-0-0-1) (ABSENT: CRECCA)
APPROVED

SENSE RESOLUTION

69-2002 Memorializing resolution requesting United States Congress to enact joint resolution authorizing use of force against Iraq.

10

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:
And we have one Sense Resolution, which was tabled in prime committee yesterday, so what, you know, I don't see much sense in us dealing with it. Anybody disagree?

LEG. ALDEN:
Motion to defer to prime then.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:
Okay. I'll second that. All in favor? Okay. (VOTE: 4-0-0-1) (ABSENT: CRECCA) DEFERRED TO PRIME

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:
Okay. If there's no other business of the committee, we stand adjourned.

(THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 11:05 A.M.)

{ } DENOTES BEING SPELLED PHONETICALLY