

VETERANS & SENIORS COMMITTEE
of the
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Veterans & Seniors Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on Tuesday, **May 4th, 2004**.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Daniel P. Losquado, Chairman
Lynne C. Nowick, Vice•Chairman
Leg. Jon Cooper (absent)
Leg. Andrew A. Crecca
Leg. William J. Lindsay
Leg. Cameron Alden
Leg. Elie Mystal

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Mea Knapp, Legislative Counsel
Ilona Julius, Deputy Clerk
Fran Siems, Aide to PO
Holly Rhodes•Teague, Office of the Aging
Bob Smith, Veterans Service Affair Office
Kevin LaValle, Aide to Leg. Losquadro
Anthony Manetta, Aide to Leg. Crecca
Ben Zwirn, Assistant Deputy County Executive
Lynne Bizzarro, Assistant County Attorney
Michael Pascal
Phil Lorito
Harold Chapman
John J. Gaeta

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Kraus, Court Stenographer

(THE MEETING WAS CONVENED AT 12:38 PM)

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

I'll call this Committee to order. Please rise for the Pledge led by Legislator Nowick.

(SALUTATION)

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Thank you. I understand we have a number of individuals who come before us to speak. I have two cards. Would Mr. Phil Lorito please come forward? You can either use the podium or have a seat at the table, sir. Just make sure the microphone is turned on before you speak.

MR. LORITO:

My name is Philip Lorito. I'm representing Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9486 in Ronkonkoma, New York. The few of us that are down here today are, I believe, appealing to the Legislature, Legislators that are here today concerning the issue of grants that various veterans organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, Amvets, from time to time apply to receive funding that they desperately need. I don't think any veterans organization requests money that they don't need. And, as you're all aware, there's been a lot of changes made in the County when it comes to spending taxpayers' money. And apparently these changes are starting to have an impact on veterans in the community who count on some of this money to keep their VFW post and American Legion Post and Amvet Post operating. I'm not an expert on Legislative law in Suffolk County, but I believe the Legislature can go to a great length to help in a situation like this with the executive branch of the government making the changes that they are making. So we are appealing to you to give some very serious consideration to using whatever influence you have and authority that you have to affect the change in the way monies are doled out to help the veterans in the County.

Legislator Levy appeared at a legislative breakfast prior to election in November in Centereach at the VFW post. I personally asked him a very direct question. And the question was with your platform of budget cutting and your campaigning about reforming spending in the County, do you anticipate cutting veterans services or cutting the veterans service agency, which does a

great job serving veterans in the County. His answer was no, that he has no intention of doing that. Now, you're all elected officials. And you can understand how distasteful it is for veterans or any segment of the community to feel they've been lied to. So, that's where we stand. We've been lied to. Cuts are being made. And it's hurtful.

We're at a war •• in war right now, this nation. Six out of seven covers of Newsday are showing and illustrating the death of American soldiers serving in Iraq. The few gentlemen that you have here represent World War II veterans, Viet Nam veterans, Korean war veterans. And decades ago we were the fellows that were doing what the boys in Iraq are doing today.

The last thing I want to say and then I'll stop my long•winded conversation monologue, whatever, you have to keep in mind, and I'm sure you do, that this is not your money. This is not Steve Levy's money. This is the taxpayers' money. Mr. Zel Miller wrote an interesting book about Legislators in this day and age not voting their mind and conscience. You have to ask yourselves would the taxpayers that are giving you the •• entrusting you with this money, would they want the veterans of this County to be hurt? That's the question. So, with that I'll leave it to your own conscience to do the right thing. Thank you

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Thank you, Mr. Lorito. Does anyone have any questions? Legislator Mystal. Mr. Lorito, if you could just wait one moment, please.

LEG. MYSTAL:

How are you doing, Mr. Lorito? How are you doing? One question for you. Are there any specific cuts you can identify for us? That you see that are being made or you think are coming down the pipe?

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

If I just may interject, Mr. Lorito, when you were referring to grants, I believe you may have been referring specifically to member item money from individual legislators? Was that part of what you were referring to?

MR. LORITO:

What I had commented on is I'm not an expert on how the process works.

Okay. So, you'll have to forgive me if I can't answer in •• but there might be, for example, other gentlemen here that have more experience in this issue. But what is going on right now in the community, in the veterans community, it's becoming common knowledge that there is

no longer funding available that had been there for years and decades to help the veterans in this County; that everything is being scrutinized, you know, very, very •• in a very different light than it had in the past. And I would defer to some of my fellow veterans that might be more knowledgeable about the actual mechanics of how this works. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Thank you, Mr. Lorito. Next speaker, I have a card for Michael Pascal.

MR. PASCAL:

Good afternoon. My name is Michael Pascal. I am presently the District Commander for the Veterans of Foreign Wars which encompasses Suffolk County, Nassau County, Brooklyn and Queens. I'm a past County Commander for Suffolk County and a past Post Commander for VFW Post 9486 in Lake Ronkonkoma.

What has come up is that we are now looking at the grant applications that we put in for grant funding. And a portion of that application states that the monies that would be allotted to the 501 C organizations, such as our veteran organizations, cannot be used to purchase computers or copy machines, things of that nature. And also cannot be used for structural improvements. Now I have a problem with the word improvements because I don't know if improvements means repairs or extensions. Are we building a greenhouse or we fixing our roof? A lot of these buildings that we have are very old. As a matter of fact, I can tell you that the post in Lake Ronkonkoma, Post 9486 on Lake Shore Drive is over a 100 years old. It is rumored that that building was built in 1863. It is held up underneath by locusts posts. So you can see that we do at that particular post end up with a lot of repair issues.

Now, in the past we have been able to utilize the funds that we received from the County Legislature for repairs to the building. Now, just reading the way it is printed, structural improvements, if we put an application in to repair a roof, is that a structural improvement? I'm not sure if it is. I'm not sure if it isn't. I am sure that if we built an extension on the side, that that would be a structural improvement. But, then, again what do we need it for? We need it to serve the community. We have the Little League that meets at the Lake Ronkonkoma Post. I'm only speaking about this one post because that is the post that I am a member of. But we have gentlemen here from St. James Post over on Lake Avenue. I have visited every VFW post in Suffolk County at one time or another. And I can assure that you each and every one of them will need a repair one of these days. And they may not be able to get the proper funding for it from Suffolk County. What they may be •• what maybe their issue

would be, well, if we raise money and that money is filtered back into the community, we may have to use it to repair the building instead.

So, as you see, we're caught between a rock and a hard place. Also, many of the buildings, like I said, are 50, 75 even over 100 years old, do not meet up to ADA. Make sure I can see this clearly. American Disability Act. Okay? So that bathrooms are not accessible to the handicapped. Some posts or chapters may rent out their hall. Their hall is rented to a person that says no, there's nobody who's going to be handicapped coming here. They have a standard 24-inch doorway or a 28-inch doorway going into the bathroom. And the wheelchair is not going to get beyond that. It has to be in excess of 36 inches. So, these improvements may have to be made. Again, is it an improvement or is it a repair? What has to be done? Gentlemen, thank you. And ladies.

LEG. CRECCA:

I just want to make one comment. Mike, we •• myself, Legislator Lindsay and Legislator Caracappa have used your post, also.

MR. PASCAL:

Absolutely.

LEG. CRECCA:

To have governmental meetings there or community meetings ourselves. So I just bring that up that these are •• they are buildings that are used. And we didn't pay a fee for that. If it was done as a courtesy of the VFW.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

I know I can speak of my district, the post in Rocky Point regularly holds civic meetings and senior citizen meetings. I know it's commonly used for public gatherings.

MR. PASCAL:

I'll be there on Saturday. 6249.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

I'll be there as well.

LEG. NOWICK:

I just want to thank you for coming here and putting this on the record. As you know, most of us Legislators, especially when the member item money is put out, we try to accommodate our VFW's, our local posts. And we were just as frustrated as you all were when we were told that they were many things that you couldn't use the money for. It's a game with the money. And maybe putting it on the record, maybe somehow we could go back to the powers that be in this regard and just bring it to their attention that this is hurting you. We don't want ••

LEG. ALDEN:

We're the powers that be.

LEG. NOWICK:

Well, not really. Because the money •• we were usurped at this point. And it's not something that we wanted. I'm so glad ••

LEG. MYSTAL:

Are we going to wait for all the speakers to speak so we can ••

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Hold on. One at a time.

LEG. NOWICK:

We're glad that you can put this on the record and maybe we can bring it to the attention in this case to the County Executive. Maybe he just doesn't realize.

MR. PASCAL:

Part of the question that I am asking, in addition to making sure that this improvement statement is removed from there, part of the question I'm asking is, if a post puts in for a repair, will that be looked at as an improvement? If the roof is leaking on the Ronkonkoma Little League, that Andrew Crecca knows very well meets at our post, is it an improvement if we repair that leak? Or is it a repair? Which is it? Can't we use the thousand dollars or the \$2,000 that we would get to do this repair, which in my eyes is not an improvement. Although if you look at it and say are you using new shingles? Well, you have improved the old shingles to new shingles. What are we doing? Thank you.

LEG. NOWICK:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Thank you. Next speaker John Gaeta.

MR. GAETA:

My name is John Gaeta. I'm with the Amvets Post 48 out of Ronkonkoma. I'll be the new Commander as of June. Just keep it simple. Please don't cut us out. We got boys and girls over there dying every day. And I don't want to see when they come back, if they come back, they don't have a place to go. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Thank you. Next speaker Harold Chapman.

MR. CHAPMAN:

Good afternoon. My name is Harold Chapman. I'm with the Amvets State of New York representing the Amvets for the Department of New York. And I'm also the Regional Director which includes all of Suffolk County. And we have several posts here on the Island. And we are concerned that as Mike had said, some of the posts are in need of repair. And in the past we've always come to the County and asked for support to help us keep these buildings to where they are. I don't know how many of you have served in military, but we take an oath of office when we enter the military. And that's to defend our country and our people. And many of our veterans are over there today. And you know what they're doing. They're taking care so that we can get up in the morning and get in our car and go to work, which many countries don't have that luxury.

But then when these gentlemen and ladies come home, it's up to us to see that they're comfortable as much as possible. And it says in our Aims and Purposes in our charters that we receive from our national •• from your congressmen, that one of our aims and purposes is to bring our veterans back home, give them a place to meet and discuss their problems or whatever. And to see that they're taken care of through the hospitals and so on. And if we don't have these facilities, it makes it very difficult for us to do this. And I just •• I realize we have to cut the budget. I realize we all do at home and also, you know, all the government

offices. However, you got to think about what our men and women are doing over there. And let's not use them as a tool. I really wish you would think about that.

And the other •• one of the other Aims and Purposes we have in our by•laws that we have to go by •• you go by, you know, and like I said Congress •• Congress has set these rules for us, is that to serve our community. And, again, the boy scouts, the girl scouts, there's all different types of different types of people that we support in our communities. The St. Jude's Hospital, Maryhaven, is just •• you know, just a couple that I can think of. But it goes on. The list goes on and on and on. And this all happens because we have a building to meet and do these projects. And I'm sure all of you are aware of, you know, you just pick up the papers everyday that some where in there there's some veterans organization that has done something for a community project. And I just really wish you would consider that. I appreciate your time. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Thank you very much. I think some of our questions may be better posed to members of the County departments, these individuals. That is the last of the cards we have. I was going to ask is there anyone else wishing to be heard?

MR. LORITO:

If you don't mind •• my name is Phil Lorito. The veterans had asked Bob Smith, who's the Director of Suffolk County Veterans Service Agency to be here because he so very much cares about veterans and the issues in this County concerning them. And I'd appeal to you to invite him to speak to you.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

That was actually the individual I was referring to when I said our questions may be better directed towards that individual. Mr. Smith, if you would please come up.

MR. SMITH:

Good afternoon. My name is Bob Smith. I'm the Director of the Veterans Service Agency. I think I can answer the question because the member item grants come through the Veterans Service Agency. As of this time, my budget person has told me that all grants that have to do with structural repairs are not being honored or being dismissed or sent back. We cannot process them is what we've been told. I don't know anything else ••

LEG. NOWICK:

That was pretty clear.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Legislator Mystal.

LEG. MYSTAL:

It seems •• and this is not a question for you, Mr. Smith. It seems •• and I think the first meeting I attended as a Legislator, the County Attorney was at the podium and said something about the grant money member item that we have. And I remember myself clearly telling her not to mess with it. It seems to be, the problem we are having, is a structural problem between the way we want to spend the money that we have as Legislators and the way the County Attorney's Office thinks we should spend the money. And for what? And at that time I suggested that somehow we put a delegation between the Legislature and the County Executive to resolve the problem. The problem is not only with the Veterans Administration. This is not a problem just to a particular group. It's an endemic problem, a systemic problem that has happened to every agency that we have given money to. In my district I know I'm having the same problem. And I know I'm going to have a screaming match with the County Attorney, Ms. Bizzarro, who's sitting back there •• how are you doing there •• because we've been funding money for •• to different agencies for a long time. And all of a sudden this year the rules have changed failing them; that they cannot use the money in certain ways.

My suggestion was let them use the money the way they have used the money in the past this year. And let's work to some kind of formalized way for next year as to how they should do it. To spring this thing up on all the different agencies this year, say you cannot use the money for this, when they had already planned for it. I can tell you right now in my district, they're going to have a serious problem because I'm going to be at their throats because I give them the money, they've used it for that in the past for structural repairs, whatever they have to do with the money. I don't care what they do with the money, as long as they do it legally. They have new rules. Those new rules are going to have to be put aside for this year. Let's work on this year. And this is my suggestion to the Legislature as a whole and to the County Executive. If they want me to go the County Executive and say that to him, I'll say that to him in a minute. Let's suspend all kind of rules this year and come up with new rules or whatever that everybody can agree on for next year. That's number one thing.

Number two problem, our budget cuts. The budget cuts somehow •• you guys are going to have come back to us when we have our operating budget next September and remind us again. Because that's when you're going to see the budget cut. And I for one I'm not going to stand for any budget cut in the Veteran Administration. I can tell you that right now.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Thank you, Legislator Mystal. Legislator Lindsay.

LEG. LINDSAY:

The only thing that I wanted to say, and I mean it would just repeat what some of my fellow Legislators say, is the value of our veterans organizations throughout the County. VFW 9486 is maintaining a park, a County park in my district. Like, they adopted a small park. And they do a wonderful job. I met in many of their halls over the tenure I've been in office for public events. Besides the service that they provide to our constituents, the people that fought for our country in the past and the people that are fighting for our country now. On a very practical note, Mr. Chairman, what I would like to see is collectively either through Mr. Smith or through the veterans organizations, if we could acquire a list of who's been denied, who was the Legislator in the area, what year was the money appropriated, is it '03 or '04 money, and let's get the list together. And as a committee, why don't we collectively work on trying to get this money restored?

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Thank you.

LEG. MYSTAL:

Just hear for one minute. Instead of just one •• my point is it's just one agency you're talking about. The veterans agency. This is an endemic, a systemic problem in the whole process as to how we deliver the member item money. And I think, you know, if we're going to collect data as to who's been denied, who's been rejected, we have to do it for all the different agencies. Little League •• Little League in my district right know, they are telling them they can't use the money to do certain things with the money. So that's the problem I'm talking about. It's endemic. It's a structural problem this has to be resolved one way or the other.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

I agree. And this committee will specifically focus on the problems relating to these

individuals. Legislator Alden.

LEG. ALDEN:

And I agree with Legislator Mystal that while this Committee definitely has to focus on the veterans that have been denied funding, we as Legislators have to look at a broader scope. And I took the liberty of asking legislative counsel to get the memorandum. And while maybe we shouldn't go into it today. But when I read it, I think I interpret some of the sections that were cited in there a little bit differently because •• especially in the preamble when it says to •
• basically if it's going to benefit a service group like the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign War, Amvets, Disabled American Vets, things like that, I believe that my interpretation would be a little bit more broad that they actually other could use it for bricks and mortars rather than just programs. So I think that if we give legislative Counsel a little bit of time to analyze, you know, like that memorandum that came over to us and then we're going to have to form a committee •• you know, it's going to have to be bipartisan. The way Legislator Mystal's speaking, I wouldn't mind having him be the liaison or the ambassador that we send to, you know, go and work this out with the County Executive's Office on a broad scale because we can't deny funding to these groups.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

You're absolutely right and ••

LEG. MYSTAL:

You're on.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Legislator Crecca.

LEG. CRECCA:

I was going to ask Mr. Zwirn to just join us up here for a moment. I guess my concern is this and it goes beyond the veterans groups, too, is that this was brought up several months ago to •• and I know you weren't here then or you had just gotten here •• about this problem with groups who were experiencing in receiving legislative appropriations for their groups. And at that time I think we had cited even some examples of past grants that were given while Steve Levy was a Legislator, too; that certainly were no different than the ones we're talking about here today. And I guess there is a universal acceptance at this horseshoe. I have yet to hear

from a Legislator that doesn't think these grants should be given out and honored. And I guess we're waiting for an answer as to whether or not the practice is going to continue to deny these or not. And if you can't answer now, I didn't mean to put you on the spot. But, you know, we're talking about sending Elie out. We sent the message loud and clear and we need an answer.

MR. ZWIRN:

I'll certainly take the message back. And we've talked about it before. I'm late coming in because one of the things we were talking about right now is Legislator Nowick has sent over some information to us to try to open up our parks to veterans who are serving our country right now who are on active duty so that their families can use the parks without entrance fees this year as a recognition. We're working out some veterans things while I was coming over here. And we're getting a meeting set up with the Parks Department so we can resolve that issue for the next meeting so that certainly by Memorial Day that will be done. But I will take all of them back as a group. Maybe we ought to have just a meeting where we can sit down and hash out the ones •• I know some of them •• there were some confusion at least between agencies and bricks and mortar as Legislator Alden has said. We're trying to work it out so that it's done properly. We also understand that Legislature has broad discretion with the legislation and with sending out money out to the member items. And Mr. Levy comes from this body and he has great respect for it as do I. And I think we can get this thing resolved and we'll try to get it done as quickly as possible.

LEG. CRECCA:

I mean, Ben, just so you're aware, I mean if you •• Steve gave the same money to the same groups when he was a Legislator. And it's disingenuous of us •• I mean, I don't know if you were here when I said •• but we've gone to Mike Pascal and used his post for public meetings and community meetings on a regular basis. He's never asked us for a fee or anything else like that. It's just done because their post is open to the public. It's used by various user groups. You know, we're not asking that something be done that shocks anybody's conscience. But •• and I know Elie said before that, you know, we give this money and I understand what you're saying; but we don't even give this money. This is taxpayer money. And these members items are used to help fund small community things. This is grass root stuff. And it's extremely important to us. And, you know, now it's gone on for several months and we're hearing again from more groups that there's still problems. We need to get this resolved. Otherwise you're going to put the Legislature in a situation where we're going to have to, you know, direct the

County Executive to do something. I'm not so sure that we want to be in that position or that we can be in that position. But, you know, it's •• we want our appropriations and we want them taken care of. And we want the County Executive to spend those appropriations and give out the money.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Thank you. If I could just put into the record, I have a copy of the Suffolk County contract form for the member item grants. And the first thing that it says under purpose of funding, it says agencies must perform a service which demonstrates a public benefit. Now, I guess you can whittle that down as far as you want. But as far as I can tell those individuals behind you perform a great public benefit. And I don't think you're disputing that. But, as we have seen, there have been many denials of funding ••

MR. ZWIRN:

I can't speak ••

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

•• for these various agencies. And I don't know how far we want to whittle this down. I have •• I know that I have given money to an organization to purchase a new 30 by 20 foot flag. That's an \$850 flag. Does that demonstrate a public benefit? Are they going to be denied the purchase of this new flag? So I agree as Legislator Mystal has brought up, as many of us have brought up, I think there are some serious problems. It is a systemic problem as Legislator Mystal has referred to. And it's something that we're going to have to come to a conclusion on. Thank you.

MR. SMITH:

Excuse me, if I may. Let me just be very clear on phone calls that my office is receiving so there's no gray area in today's conversation. The veterans organizations that are calling and asking leaky roofs, toilets that are leaking, potholes in the parking lots to get black topped, installing an air conditioner because they can't breathe in the post any more, it's a 100 years old, things like that is what's being asked of me. My office at this time are not processing those applications because it says no structural repairs. And that's how I interpret it. Unless I'm interpreting it wrong. But that was my instructions.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Legislator Mystal.

LEG. MYSTAL:

Maybe some other question should be addressed to the County Attorney. Lynne Bizzarro is here. I understand the need for the County to comply legally as to how we spend the money. And I don't have any problem in streamlining and formalizing the way we spend the money. That's not my problem. And I do •• Ms. Bizzarro has presented some instances where maybe things are being done which they cannot justify legally. And I understand that. I think what has to happen, we have to find some kind of way to solve this problem. And what I am asking is there some kind of way that the County Attorney's Office and the County Executive's Office can somehow suspend those rulings for this year while we •• by "we", I mean the Legislature and the County Executive and the County Attorney's Office, work through the process in formalizing legalizings within the County Attorney and our Counsel and the Legislators, a way of how to do things. At least that would give us a year to inform our agencies how they should go about spending that money. I don't know if that is a possibility. Because if we keep going that way, we're going to have rejection over and over and over and over.

MR. ZWIRN:

Can I just respond?

LEG. MYSTAL:

Go ahead.

MR. ZWIRN:

I think •• I think what we have to figure out is on both sides, what you want to do with money that's available, that's been designated or you want to appropriate. And see if we can find a way to meet those requirements and also conform to the law at the same time.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Legislator Crecca.

LEG. CRECCA:

Ben, we're telling you now •• if anybody disagrees with me I ask you to chime in •• we have no problem with them fixing a leaky roof or a toilet. As long as their facilities or providing services to public or public groups. I certainly think this Legislature supports maintaining those facilities so that they can continue to be used for public purposes. So, we don't have a problem with that. And if you can't figure out a way to legally validate those contract, I don't want these

guys •• you know what, we can tell them to write down something else on the contract. But that's not the way we do business. They should be honest and be able to be honest on the contract form. And we should have enough confidence in them and the organizations that they're going to continue to provide those public services in there. So, I mean, that's the bottom line. I mean, you know, I guess they're talking •• they have a very specific request today. And that is can they put in there that they're going to make repairs or maintain their facility which is open to the public. And that's how I would advise, you know, me personally, would advise the veteran agencies to fill out their contract forms, you know. And that you'll continue to allow your facility to be used by both public groups and government and elected officials for community meetings.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Thank you. Mr. Zwirn, I'm sure as you can tell this is a much wider ranging issue than just the veterans and seniors affairs.

MR. ZWIRN:

Veterans are a pretty special group.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Yes.

MR. ZWIRN:

My dad is 89 years old and was a member of the 289th combat engineers in the Battle of the Bulge in the Seventh Army under General Patch. And when I was a young man, my dad took me back to Europe and we retraced his steps through the war and visited the American cemeteries in St. Av Ale and Normandy. So, I have great respect for the past veterans and the ones that we have serving now. I know our County Executive does and we will do everything we can to try to help these gentlemen who helped us so we could be here today.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

I don't think anyone doubts that. If you could please come back to the meeting •• the general meeting on Tuesday, give us an update on your findings relating to this matter ••

MR. ZWIRN:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

•• I would appreciate it. Thank you.

MR. ZWIRN:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Mr. Smith, if you could just •• since we have you here, if you could just give us a brief overview of any events that may be upcoming for Memorial Day for the County.

MR. SMITH:

Well, before we get to Memorial Day, May 15th the County Executive is holding assembly Armed Forces Day where we are going to rally to support our troops and also remember our veterans. It's going to be a very nice ceremony. We have a •• Army National Guard going to give us a fly•over. We got a Marine Corps.league going to give us a gun salute. We got 5•gold star moms, three of which lost sons in Iraq that will place wreaths. County Executive will be there. Hopefully most of our elected officials. Every elected official who shows up I promise you can speak for a minute. If you send an aide, I promise you that person will not speak.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

That will be held at Armed Forces Plaza; correct?

MR. SMITH:

Yes. And also ••

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

What time will that be held?

MR. SMITH:

Excuse me?

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

What time will that be held?

MR. SMITH:

Eleven o'clock.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Eleven o'clock. Thank you.

MR. SMITH:

Also, Memorial Day, there are a number of events going on. Each community's going to have a parade; so whatever your district is, you might want to check with the post near you. That day I'll be in the Ronkonkoma parade at 10:00. I'll be at Calverton National Cemetery at 1:00 and I'll be at Bald Hill at 5:00. That's my day off.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Thank you very much.

MR. SMITH:

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Moving onto the other half of our Committee, Holly•Rhodes Teague, do you have anything to add; give us a brief update?

MS. RHODES•TEAGUE:

I'll just give you a real quick one. The Medicare issue that's out of the papers every day, we're working on meetings. We've got ten meetings; one of each in the ten towns that are scheduled between yesterday and June 8th. And we try to get the information out to the Medicare beneficiaries about what the new Medicare card is going to do for them or not do for them. And what they need to look at before they pick a card. So, if you have constituents who are calling and saying we know this card's out there, we don't know what to do about it, it is a pretty complicated issue. You can ask them to call our office at the 853•8200 number. We can either assist them ourselves or direct them to the high cap volunteers. There's also Medicare.Gov website that has a lot of information. And there's also a Medicare 800 number to call. So, you're going to get phone calls in your office. You can just direct them to our office and we'll do what we can to help them out.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

I know that is a very complex issue. And we've already started to receive some phone calls about it. You and I have spoken about it.

MS. RHODES•TEAGUE:

Yeah. There's just a lot of information that's •• and information's changing every day. The most important thing you can tell somebody that's trying to figure out what to do about the

Medicare prescription drug card is to tell them to wait, look at all the options, don't rush into making the decision because honestly, all the information on each card is not out there yet. So they should try to hold off from •• you know, it's not as if they can't make the decision in June or July. They don't have to make it right away. They can just wait a little while and wait for all the information to come out.

LEG. CRECCA:

Holly, can you get that schedule for us of when the meetings are and where?

MS. RHODES • TEAGUE:

You didn't receive them in your office yet, did you? I think Public Information had them out.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Legislator Crecca, I have them.

MS. RHODES • TEAGUE:

I can get them out to you, though.

LEG. CRECCA:

Just fax it over to my office.

MS. RHODES • TEAGUE:

I'll have the office fax them out.

LEG. CRECCA:

Thanks.

MS. RHODES • TEAGUE:

They should have been there, but •• does anybody have ••

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Legislator Mystal, did you have a question?

LEG. MYSTAL:

If I wanted to invite you to my district to hold a meeting with a group of seniors, because I have a number of senior citizen housing and homes, to come and explain to them what's going on with these cards, would you be able to do that? Or your staff or people from your office?

MS. RHODES • TEAGUE:

Our staff •• we're working with Empire Medicare Services. And that's who's providing the information at each of our ten town meetings that we have scheduled. So, I would try first to see if they would be interested in doing it because they're really the experts in the field on it. We could assist on an individual basis better than we can on doing group stuff, but we'll do whatever we can to help out. So give us a call and we'll do what we can. Okay?

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Thank you very much. I don't see any other questions. I appreciate your coming down.

MS. RHODES • TEAGUE:

I'll make sure that all the offices get that information faxed again. And May 13th is the luncheon at Villa Lombardi's next week. You all received invitations.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Yes.

MS. RHODES • TEAGUE:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Thank you. I believe that closes our discussion. We only have one item on the agenda today. That is **Sense Resolution S039 • 04 • (Sense of the Legislature Resolution in support of increasing pay and providing improved benefits for Members of the Armed Forces.)** Do I have a motion?

LEG. LINDSAY:

Motion.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Motion by Legislator Lindsay, second by Legislator Crecca. All in favor? Opposed?
Unanimously approved. **(Vote: 6 • 0 • 0 • 1)**

Nothing else on the agenda, meeting is adjourn. Thank you.

(THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 1:17 PM)