

**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 April 15, 2008.

**Members Present:**

Leg. Steven H. Stern, Chairman  
Leg. Jack Eddington, Vice-Chair  
Leg. Jon Cooper (Not present)  
Leg. John M. Kennedy, Jr. (Not present)  
Leg. Edward P. Romaine

**Also In Attendance:**

Barbara LoMoriello, Deputy Clerk  
Deborah Harris, Aide to Legislator Stern  
Paul Perillie, Aide to Majority Leader  
Debra Alloncius, AME Legislative Director  
Paul Arfin, Intergovernmental Strategies  
Fred Cambria, Homes for Heroes  
Art Shamsky, Homes for Heroes  
Mike DePaoli, VA  
All Other Interested Parties

**Minutes Taken By:**

Diana Kraus - Court Stenographer

**Minutes Transcribed By:**

Kim Castiglione - Legislative Secretary

**(THE MEETING COMMENCED AT 2:00 PM)**

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Welcome everybody. I will call the Committee on Veterans and Seniors to order. I would ask everybody to please rise and join us in the Pledge of Allegiance led by Vice Chairman Eddington.

*(Salutation)*

I'd ask everybody to please remain standing and join us in a moment of silence as we keep all of our brave men and women fighting for our freedoms overseas in our thoughts and prayers.

*(Moment of Silence)*

Thank you. We'll start with public portion. Mike DePaoli. Welcome, Mike.

**MR. DePAOLI:**

My name is Mike DePaoli. I'm a Vietnam Vet and Suffolk County resident. I'm here today just to point out some problems associated with veterans in Suffolk County. Those members on the board already know that, if they are veterans, that veterans need help. There is over 4,000 soldiers that have been killed today in Iraq and Afghanistan. And all of our elected officials are very quick to march in the parades of veterans. All of our elected officials are very quick to maybe mourn those that have passed away. But where are our elected officials when it comes to walking the talk? Where are our federal, state, county and town municipalities in hiring veterans?

I just did a recent Stand Down. There were a lot of volunteers that came out. It was almost a one to one ratio in those that are coming out to help veterans, which was great, veterans helping veterans. Volunteer services federal, state, county, but there were no, no elected officials. That's a disgrace.

So I'm here today to bring a reminder to let the bell ring, to bring it home that veterans want jobs. They need jobs and they want your help. There is a lot of services that you can offer veterans, but walk the talk. How many of our Legislators in the County have hired veterans, have had veterans on their staff, including the County Executive? There is money for patronage, there is money for double dipping, there's no money for hiring veterans? Even our presidential candidates are a disgrace. Our new Governor in the State of New York, our members of the Assembly and members of the Senate, they are up for election this year. Where are they on hiring veterans?

So I bring it just home to this County Legislature and this special committee for veterans and the idea, just to reinforce the idea to hire veterans. Walk the talk. Do the job. There is patronage going on all over. How may veterans have you helped?

And I know it's in your hearts, I know it's in your souls, I know it's in your blood. I know it is in the American flag that you raise your hand up on helping veterans to be at the forefront.

Other suggestions or other ideas in veterans services that you can help veterans and probably help everybody else is maybe discounts of veterans on parks and services, on licenses, or bump it up. How about be the voice to the State or the Federal Government in giving out some free services to veterans? Help us to help ourselves. It's my hope that in the future that there will be no more veterans, but that's not going to be the case. We're paying the price, please help us. Hire a vet. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Vice Chairman Eddington.

**LEG. EDDINGTON:**

I would just like to respond. I happened to have served in the military for four years, from 1967 to '71, during the conflict.

**MR. DePAOLI:**

Thank you.

**LEG. EDDINGTON:**

I was an aircraft carrier radar man, second-class. I put my time in. I'm offended when you brush a stroke and put all of us in the same place. I'm a member of the Vietnam Veterans of America, I'm a member of the American Legion. I have sponsored workshops in Medford for my whole legislative district and others for workshops for returning veterans and veterans that are here looking for help. We just had one last week. I don't know if you were there, but we just had one in the Medford firehouse raising funds for returning veterans right now. I didn't see you there, but I was there. But I wouldn't suggest that you're not concerned because you were not at that one event. With the money that I'm allocated in my district I have supported the VFW, the AMVETS and the American Legion.

So I would say before you come here and say things broadly, check and see what all the Legislators here are because there is nobody that supports veterans more than the Suffolk County Legislature.

**MR. DePAOLI:**

I thank you for your commentary, but how many veterans do you have on your staff?

**LEG. EDDINGTON:**

You are asking one specific question.

**MR. DePAOLI:**

Legislator Eddington, you are a veteran. How many veterans have you hired since you have been in office? How many veterans does your wife, who is an Assemblywoman, have on her staff? How many veterans right now are staff members, paid salaried positions, with members of the County Legislature, including the Presiding Officer, including the County Executive? So you are a vet, Semper Fi, but please walk the talk and show by your actions that you are going to hire veterans. It's great the job that you are doing.

**LEG. EDDINGTON:**

We are concentrating on a lot of different groups. You are giving me one group. You know, how about women, how about blacks, how about Hispanics, how about Irish Americans. If you want to start looking at individual groups --

**MR. DePAOLI:**

Veterans encompass all of that, sir. Veterans encompass all of that. If you're a veteran you know that the makeup of the military is nonbiased, nondiscriminatory. If you are in a fox hole, if you are on the front end, you always look at somebody in back of you that's going to watch your back. You don't care what color, what race, what religion.

All I'm asking, all I'm suggesting and all I'm pointing out is if you are going to walk the talk, how many veterans have you yourself hired? How many veterans has your wife hired? How many veterans have you supported in the hiring for town officials, for County officials, for State officials, for Federal Government? That's all I'm suggesting, sir. And I don't want to mislead you or misguide you or say anything different. You are a veteran and I know a lot of Legislators have done a lot of work in helping, assisting veterans, but there is always that extra that you can do.

So I thank you personally for the efforts that you put forward. But please, if you could consider, hire veterans.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Mr. DePaoli, thank you.

**MR. DePAOLI:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

I have no other cards. Is there anybody else who would like to be heard? Yes, Paul. Paul, three minutes.

**MR. ARFIN:**

Sure, no sweat. Paul Arfin, President of Intergenerational Strategies. I know time is -- we have time constraints, so I just want to plant an idea here and move on with the agenda. I have something I would like to give each of you if we can just hand these out. And basically what -- I spoke with the Chairman of the committee before this meeting and we discussed the idea of forming an ad hoc group to think about the larger picture as it affects the changing demographics in Suffolk County. The aging of Suffolk County.

What we were talking about was forming, in effect, a policy think tank made up of people at the national congressional level, the state level, and the local level, who look at policy issues such as pension reforms, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, etcetera, etcetera, that are going to be facing tens of thousands of our older adults. We now have 350,000 people over the age -- I'm sorry. Over 600,000 in Suffolk County over the age of 55. As these people face -- enter those traditional retirement years, we're going to be facing some real challenges.

I wanted to come here today to plant the idea that this committee of the Legislature consider creating a think tank, that perhaps over a six month period we assemble representatives of federal, state and local people from government and outside of government to take a look at some of the recommendations that are put forth within this handout. They come out of a book by Marc Freedman called Encore, which is a book about the boomers and the changing face of aging. These are his policy recommendations. I think they cross political lines in their recommendations, and -- but I see them not as something to support across the board, but a place to start talking about these larger picture issues that we're going to have to face at a local level. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Paul, thank you. Thank you for being here today. Thank you for your continued leadership.

We're going to go to the agenda. We have one Introductory Resolution on today. It is IR 1250.

**Introductory Resolutions**

***IR 1251-2008, Adopting a Local Law Further Strengthening Protections for Residents of Planned Retirement Communities. (Romaine).***

Legislator Romaine, we need to table for a public hearing on this, correct?

**MR. NOLAN:**

You're right.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

I'll make a motion to table. Second by the Vice Chairman. All in favor? Any oppositions? Abstentions? Motion carries. **(Vote: 3-0-0-2 Not Present: Legislators Cooper and Kennedy).** It's on for public hearing.

There are no other items on -- no other Legislative items on the agenda, so we have a presentation

today. It is with pleasure that I invite Mr. Fred Cambria and Mr. Art Shamsky of Building Homes for Heroes to join us here today and tell us about the important work, very important work, that you are doing here throughout Long Island for Long Island veterans.

**MR. CAMBRIA:**

Thank you very much. Thank you very much for the time. My name is Fred Cambria.

**MR. SHAMSKY:**

Art Shamsky.

**MR. CAMBRIA:**

This is my partner, Art Shamsky. In case you are familiar with Art, he was a legend with the 1969 Mets.

**MR. SHAMSKY:**

A legend in my own mind.

**MR. CAMBRIA:**

But I'm here on a serious note here today, and something that has just been brought up, and I would like to thank Legislator Stern for giving us the opportunity.

This is something that I started a couple of months ago myself, but we already built two homes for heroes, veteran gentlemen that came back from the war that were paraplegics. We built a home in Tennessee and in Florida. And how I got involved was I was a member of the New York Board of Trade down on Wall Street and they came to us. We had to raise money for them, \$30,000 each time, and we just put it towards the kitty, and fortunately they came in and built these homes for these two gentlemen.

I live here in Northport. I have been here for 35 years, this is my home. We want to establish something here in the Long Island area and that's why I figured if we come to administration, the people here in the Island that care about -- we're going to build our next homes for them. We're in the process right now of finding a recipient of the award of the house. And that's why we came here also, to let them know -- or let you know that if you know somebody in your district to notify us. We also -- we have add-ons also. You know, the cost of land here in Long Island and the metropolitan area is so expensive we also decided that if they need an add-on, an extra room, if they need anything that, you know, along those lines, we would be glad to work it out with them and give it that assistance for them.

We have raised over \$300,000 at the present time in our kitty, so we have the money to go out there and do it. We have fundraisers. We just had a race and raised \$25,000 which was terrific. That was our first major event. What was so great about it is that we had great coverage from Channel 12, Channel 55, Telecare, to sponsor us, just to let the people know who we are and what can be done here in the Long Island area.

We come here today just making everybody available who we are, what assistance we can do. And by any chance if there is any discretionary funds, we'll be glad to take them from you to put them towards our Building Homes for Heroes. So we want to stay in the New York area, we want to build on, and we want to help the veterans here that come back to the local area on that. If there is any questions, I'd be glad to help you out.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Fred, is there a formal application procedure that you might be able to share with us?

**MR. CAMBRIA:**

Steve, you just have to notify me and I'll take care of everything. We will get the information, we will interview the participants and have them in and stuff like that. We're also working with women,

the wives, and also with the children, so we are also going to be helping out considerably for more than one aspect of Building Homes for Heroes. It's very important that because there is so many TBI, traumatic brain injury, situations out there that we would like to work also and give counseling to the women, the wives, and the children in that family.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

I'm sure my colleagues would agree that important information that we can all play a role in getting out to our constituents within our legislative districts, if there is information that you can get maybe to the committee we'd be happy to distribute it to all Legislators and their staffs.

**MR. CAMBRIA:**

Right. Thank you, Steve.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

We'll get your contact information and we'll make sure that we get it out to everybody.

**MR. CAMBRIA:**

Okay. That would be terrific. Any questions, gentlemen, or anything like that? You know, the cost of land is so expensive here on Long Island, that we do feel that adding on is very important. If they need a walkway up there -- I know the VA does that, but if they need an additional den or something like that to satisfy them, just notify us and we'll be glad to help them out. Gentlemen, thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Thanks so much for being here today. I really appreciate it.

**MR. CAMBRIA:**

Thank you. I have a friend here, and I know everybody knows who Mr. Shamsky is, but he has been a dear friend personally and also when I told him about our project he was the first one to say I'd be glad to help you out. And I tell you, you couldn't ask for a nicer man and he is all heart and he understands where we're coming from.

**MR. SHAMSKY:**

I just want to say it's a pleasure for me to be here and meet everybody and get a chance to say hello and sign some baseballs, but I'm really here because of my friendship with Fred and this wonderful, wonderful cause, Building Homes for Heroes. We take a lot of things for granted in our lives and obviously there are so many charities that are worthy of our time and our efforts and our money, but this such a cause that goes right to our hearts and what's happening now in the world. For Fred to take the time and do what he does, for me it's just a pleasure to be able to come out here and just offer my support and just make as many people aware of his efforts and this wonderful cause, and so thank you for taking the time. I appreciate it. And, of course, if there is anything I can do on a personal level for anybody out here I'd be more than glad to do it.

So, again, thank you for the time that you have given us, and whatever you can do to help support this wonderful Building Homes for Hero cause I really appreciate it. Thank you.

**MR. CAMBRIA:**

Gentlemen, thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Thank you both for taking the time to come share information about the organization and your important efforts with us, and then most importantly, thank you for your passion on this very important issue. So, thank you.

*(Applause)*

**MR. CAMBRIA:**

Thank you.

**MR. SHAMSKY:**

Thanks.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Very good. Anything else? Motion to adjourn.

**LEG. EDDINGTON:**

Second.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

We are adjourned. Thank you.

**(THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 2:25 PM)**