

**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 May 6, 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:**

Presiding Officer William Lindsay  
George Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature  
Barbara LoMoriello, Deputy Clerk  
Tom LaGuardia, Chief Deputy Commissioner of Public Works  
Ben Zwirn, Deputy County Executive  
Lance Reinheimer, Budget Review Office  
Ellis Seepersad, Budget Review Office  
Holly Rhodes-Teague, Director/Office for the Aging  
Tom Ronayne, Director of Veterans Service Agency/Human Services Div.  
Paul Perillie, Aide to Majority Leader  
Linda Bay, Aide to Minority Leader  
Debra Alloncius, AME Legislative Director  
Christine Castiglia-Rubenstein, Senior Citizens Advisory Board  
All Other Interested Parties

**Minutes Taken By:**

Diana Kraus - Court Stenographer

**Minutes Transcribed By:**

Denise Weaver - Legislative Aide

## (THE MEETING COMMENCED AT 1:16 PM)

### **CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Good afternoon everybody. I'm going to ask everybody to please rise and join us in the Pledge of Allegiance led by Vice-Chairman Eddington.

### **SALUTATION**

I 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. Okay.

### **INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS**

We have a few items on our agenda and we're looking forward to hearing from a few people today. What I'm going to do is I'm going to ask my colleagues to take out of order, IR 1341, which is an appointment, **1341-2008, Approving the appointment of Christine Castiglia-Rubenstein as a member of the Senior Citizens Advisory Board. (Co. Exec. Levy)** I need a motion for that.

### **LEG. ROMAINE:**

Motion.

### **CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Take that out of order, yeah. Motion by Legislator Romaine, second by myself. All in favor? Any opposition? Any abstentions? Motion carries. **APPROVED (VOTE: 3-0-0-2 Not Present: Legislator Cooper & Legislator Kennedy)** 1341 is now before us and I'm going to invite Ms. Castiglia-Rubenstein to join us. Welcome.

### **MS. CASTIGLIA-RUBENSTEIN:**

Thank you. You're very welcome. Thank you very much. Thank you, committee, for your time and even the opportunity to review my application. Thank you.

### **CHAIRMAN STERN:**

So while we have you today why don't you tell us little bit about yourself and your background and why you'd want to serve on this board.

### **MS. CASTIGLIA-RUBENSTEIN:**

Okay. I'm an attorney. I've been an attorney for the last five years. My start in the legal field was personal injury like most people. And I then found myself confronted with the sickness of my mother and my father had passed and my mother -- my mother wound up passing away herself. And I found myself involved with a lot of the organizations for in-home care and found that mostly affected the aging. I got more involved with senior issues. And then I found that doing estate planning and elder care planning helped to posit or posture a role for the seniors and what they were facing and how difficult in-home care issues were, financial issues were, prescriptions were for them. And I got more heavily involved in taking care of putting together proposals, meeting clients, and becoming more aware of food drives through Long Island Care for seniors and for others, but primarily for seniors.

And that's where -- my office is located in Melville, Long Island. I'm out here. We service the tri -- we go to Brooklyn, Bronx, we go to peoples' homes, we take care of them. I handle their legal issues and I handle some personal matters for them. Just off the record, and it's just been a very -- it's been a very rewarding experience for me getting to know the people and being at the nursing homes with them. And I wanted to take on a more active role in Suffolk County and help with some decision making processes that I've become aware of. I'm sorry, I'm talking a lot, right? I apologize. Thank you.

**LEG. STERN:**

No, it's all -- all sounds real good.

**MS. CASTIGLIA-RUBENSTEIN:**

Okay.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

All right. Any questions?

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Motion to approve.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Motion to approve by Legislator Romaine.

**MS. CASTIGLIA-RUBENSTEIN:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

I'll second the motion. All in favor? Any opposition? Any abstentions? Motion carries. Congratulations.

**MS. CASTIGLIA-RUBENSTEIN:**

Thank you very much. Thank you again for your time.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Thank you for yours.

**MS. CASTIGLIA-RUBENSTEIN:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Have a good day.

**MS. CASTIGLIA-RUBENSTEIN:**

Thank you. I look forward to serving. Thanks.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Okay. Some -- before we continue, I don't have any cards. Is there anybody who would like to be heard this afternoon?

## **PRESENTATIONS**

Seeing none, I will move onto presentations. It's a pleasure to welcome Tom Laguardia with us today, Chief Deputy Commissioner Department of Public Works. Tom, welcome.

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

Good afternoon. I was requested to come to answer any questions you might have regarding the VA's proposed clinic in the Riverhead County Center.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Yes, thanks so much for being here. Before we get to questions, Tom, maybe you could just give us a general overview of how things are going, where we're at.

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

Well, we recently met on April 15th with the new director of the VA and his senior staff to walk through the old methadone clinic in the Riverhead County Center. They were very pleased with the approximate 4,000 square foot that we're offering. And we've offered to do approximately a million dollars worth of renovations to the space, including adding an elevator and providing them their needed number of exam rooms.

They now are in the process of putting a letter together telling us that the amount of space that we have designated for them is acceptable, it will meet the east ends needs. That the renovations that we're proposing are acceptable and that the time frame, which is still yet to be determined, will be acceptable to them, that they understand we're in major renovations in the rest of the building right now. We expect to receive that letter any day now.

In addition, they are also recently entered into a similar agreement with Nassau County where they have entered into a lease agreement. They're going to send us copy of that lease agreement tailored to Suffolk County and we'll move the process ahead in that way.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

What was the name of the representative from the Veterans Administration?

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

I'm sorry, I don't know that. Tom, Renee?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Director {Jerry Coliter}

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

Yeah. One of holdups on this project is that the VA's changed their directors and had many interim directors over the last year and a half. Now they have a permanent director there.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Very good. Thank you. Legislator Romaine.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

I'm just going to give a brief history of this. When I was first elected to public office one of my commitments was to help the veterans of the east end, of which my father is one, be able to get better medical care without having to go to Northport except for major things. The minor things that a health clinic could do, and while there's a clinic available in Westhampton, Gabreski it has limited access, limited space, limited times.

I started off with an interest in Peconic Bay Medical Center because they're building a new wing and that was offered to us. But my understanding from Tom Ronayne's comments back at our February meeting is that they were too expensive, could be as much as \$35 a foot although I didn't get -- I didn't see that presented to us. The fact that I haven't seen anything presented in the ways of options to us. Because my understanding is, and correct me if I'm wrong Tom, Tom LaGuardia, that the estimated cost of reconstruction of this -- of the methadone clinic is \$1.2 million.

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

It's \$1 million, yes.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay. I had heard testimony from the other Tom, Tom Ronayne, that it would be \$1.2 million. Not only did I hear it at our February meeting, I heard it last year as well -- you were Chairman of this Committee -- so has that number shrunk? Have you done a cost estimate?

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

The number has shrunk. The VA has agreed that they will limit the amount of renovations necessary to stay within the \$1 million.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Could I have an opportunity to view that budget? Could you forward that to my office, please?

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

When we actually do a full budget on it, yes, we'd be glad to.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay.

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

Right now they're just square foot estimates.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay. Could you forward the square foot estimates to my office?

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

Sure.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Thank you. And having expressed this publicly in the press, I was happy to see, although not included, that the County Executive had a press conference in December of 2006 with representatives from the VA announcing that there would be a VA clinic and he was going to consider whether it was going to be at Peconic Bay Medical Center or the County Center. Almost unanimously every veterans group that I've spoken to in my district has opposed it being at the methadone clinic. But I guess their -- my concern is that this is a one option situation. I have to get used to that because in the Legislature that I came from the 80's that would be unheard of. They would want several options.

The other thing and this is why I questioned, Tom, because the County Executive did have a press conference in 2006 and other people have had press conferences or press notices where they've indicated the east end VA clinic was on its way. Well, I carefully examined the 2007 and 2008 Operating Budget and the 2007 and 2008 Capital Budget. And low and behold I didn't find any money in it for the east end clinics. Then I asked are you planning to divert any of the money in the Capital Program for the improvement of the Riverhead County Center since the methadone clinic was not included in the original plans? And I was told no by Tom; I'm looking at the transcripts now from February. Is that, in fact, the case? Where are you getting this money from?

**MR. ZWIRN:**

If I might.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Yes.

**MR. ZWIRN:**

If Legislator Romaine will look at the proposed Capital Program that the County Exec has put

forward, this is Capital Project 1604.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Right.

**MR. ZWIRN:**

Half a million dollars is coming in a grant from the state. You remember that because you had a press release on that back in March of last year.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Right.

**MR. ZWIRN:**

There's a half a million dollars. We're expecting that grant momentarily. Because it's a 50% grant, no offset will be needed. We can go out and bond the \$500,000 as an alternative as soon as we get approval from the VA to go forward. There's no point in taking that money yet until we have approval. We talked about pipeline debt, there's no point going forward until we have the final approval, which we expect momentarily from the VA. So it's been done in a very prudent careful, conservative, proper way.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Are you finished, Mr. Zwirn? Because then I have a number of questions that I'd like to ask either yourself --

**MR. ZWIRN:**

Sure.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

-- or Tom LaGuardia.

**MR. ZWIRN:**

Sure.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay. Is the methadone clinic currently in its space?

**MR. ZWIRN:**

No.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

When it did move?

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

April 25th.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay. So the reason I ask that is obviously a week or two ago I was over there and they were still occupying the space. Where did they move to?

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

South wing, County Center.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay. So that space is now available to be freed up. When -- based on the fact that we're getting the state grant and the VA is going to agree to the renovations, when do you anticipate work

starting? I realize the County portion can't be spent until 2009 and only if it's approved in the Capital Budget. Because putting it in the budget and getting it in the budget are two different things, getting it approved. So right now all we have is the state grant. Is that correct, Mr. Zwirn?

**MR. ZWIRN:**

We're waiting for the state grant to come through. We expect it -- the grants are now coming through as the Legislature's still in session. A number of grants came through yesterday. We expect in the next wave of grants, this will be included.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Is this member item money? Or is this a --

**MR. ZWIRN:**

No, I think it's member item money from the group of the Assembly representatives for Suffolk County.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay.

**MR. ZWIRN:**

They pool the money to put together for this project.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

So from possibly Mr. Thiele and Mr. Alessi.

**MR. ZWIRN:**

From all of them. I think it's from Assemblywoman Fields, Assemblywoman Eddington.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay.

**MR. ZWIRN:**

They're all putting together member item monies to be at least a half a million dollars.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

So this will be member item money --

**MR. ZWIRN:**

I believe, yeah.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

From member -- I just want to get that clear. This is member item money from the State Assembly, the 500,000 and the other 500,000 is what you're proposing in the Capital Budget for 2009?

**MR. ZWIRN:**

We'll have a budget modification. It will come before the Legislature in a resolution, be approved. They don't need an offset for it because it's 50% funded. And then we'll go right from there, that money will be ready to go.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

And when do you anticipate construction will start?

**MR. ZWIRN:**

There are some questions, and I've spoken with Tom about this, it depends on how Public Works proceeds, whether they do a change order and work with a contractor that is in there currently or they go out for bid on another contract for this. And that will be determined, I guess, whichever one

is quicker and appropriate to do. But that's -- that will be the option at that point.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Is there a ballpark time frame when construction might start or might finish?

**MR. ZWIRN:**

I think it first depends on we got to get this -- we've been trying to get this approval from the VA. Once that comes in, Tom, maybe you can speak to how quickly it can move.

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

The first stage is to get the architect to do a proper design that meets the VA requirements.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay.

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

We expect that to take four to five months. After which we have to integrate this project with the existing project that's going on at the County Center and the phasing that's going on there. Part of the work, and the reason it's hard to give you an answer is, part of the work is already included in the base job that we bid; the ceilings, the sprinkler system, the lights are already part of the job that's going on. So depending on when that fits in the schedule, we may be starting some of the construction earlier and then doing the VA direct portion later. All that's yet to be determined when the architect comes on board. He'll set the final schedule.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Would it be reasonable to assume that possibly by this time next year that construction would be well on the way if not close to finished?

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

It will be underway.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay. So by this time next year it will be underway, but you're not sure how much will be underway at this time.

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

We really need to sit with the architect and layout what the VA needs and how that impacts the existing construction. And until we actually get the -- until the VA commits, we've been hesitant to layout that schedule.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

And what about -- Mr. Zwirn mentioned that there would be a separate elevator for the VA clinic; Is that correct?

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

That's correct.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay. What about parking? Because as you know, Tom, and I don't have to tell you having spent many years in the County Center, parking on certain days are absolutely atrocious, you can't park anywhere near the building. People are parking in the middle of isles, they're parking all over, they're parking on the grass, there just isn't adequate parking. Many of the veterans that use the VA clinic, like my dad who's 92, are handicapped, have difficulty walking. Do you plan to have a special parking area for the people using the VA clinic?

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

At this time no. What we're -- what we discussed with the VA and they're amendable right now is we're going to increase the number in the rear of the building where the elevator's going a significant number of handicapped spots, which will be used by VA and others as well. So that will be step one.

Step two, we're going to make a turnaround for the disabled veterans' van to be able to drop off their clients because many of them come with the van.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

By van, right.

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

So we're going to do that. That will be the first steps to see how that works. If that works, we're done. If that doesn't work, what we might have to do is look for legislation that allows us to dedicate more spots to the VA. As you know, there's resolutions out there now that don't allow us, other than judges, to dedicate parking. So right now we want to stay within the existing laws.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

As a district Legislator, I'm sure myself and Legislator Schneiderman would be happy to dedicate additional spaces for VA and for people using the VA clinic. And I'm sure they could get a sticker or something like that that they could indicate that they're parking for the VA --

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

Yeah, right now --

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

-- because it's very difficult to park in that building.

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

Yeah. We think it's going to work out fine, the VA agrees. If it doesn't, we'll proceed to the next step.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay.

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

But it has been discussed with them.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

All right. Well, I appreciate you coming in. And what I would ask the Chairman, and I appreciate his indulgence on this issue, I would ask the Chairman if we could re-visit this issue, possibly in six months. So maybe at our December meeting we could re-visit that because I think based on the testimony I've heard a lot of things are up in the air, but by December they certainly should be gelling. And by that time our Capital Budget will have been adopted and then we can go from there.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Very good.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Eddington.

**LEG. EDDINGTON:**

Yeah, I just had a question, you mentioned that in response to Legislator Romaine's question it was 1.2 million, now it's down to 1 million and that the VA had allowed some changes or -- what are -- what are you not doing that you were going to do?

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

All the original numbers are square foot numbers. Basically it's a very gross estimate of the space. We looked at it and we said it's a -- a very conservative number would be \$300 a square foot times 4,000 square feet and that's about \$1.2 million. Based on the grant we're getting and a matching, we think that we can stay within a million dollar number, that's still \$250 a square foot. It's a -- it's a good amount of money to do a renovation. Even though it's a medical renovation, we believe that we're still within the budget.

**LEG. EDDINGTON:**

So you're saying the price of square feet is less -- is going to be less and that's why you're saving money?

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

We estimated -- when we start a project like this, and we have no -- we don't know anything about the project, we start at a very high square foot number to make sure that we don't keep coming back and asking for money. As we got more information from the VA or how many they -- they want six exam rooms, we know how many offices they want, we think we can stay within the \$250 square foot number.

**MR. ZWIRN:**

I think you also spoke with the VA and they said they could -- the renovations could be done for a million dollars as well. So that was --

**LEG. EDDINGTON:**

Well, I guess what I'm just asking is that, that we're not giving up space, we're getting space cheaper. Is that correct?

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

Basically, yes.

**LEG. EDDINGTON:**

That's correct?

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

Yes.

**LEG. EDDINGTON:**

Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

All right. Very good. Tom, thanks so much.

**MR. LAGUARDIA:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

I appreciate it. Who's next? Tom.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Good afternoon, Chairman --

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Welcome.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

-- committee members, thank you for the invitation. I had a couple of things I wanted to just report on beyond the Riverhead clinic, if I may, if I may begin there.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Please.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

First and foremost I want to report sadly that in recent weeks we have experienced a loss of another young son of Suffolk County, Lance Corporal Jordan Haerter from Sag Harbor. He was killed in Iraq two weeks ago; two weeks ago yesterday. We also have one of the soldiers who recently deployed with our Fighting 69th who I've gotten conflicting reports on the extent of his injuries, but we know that he did take small arms fire, he's back home at Walter Reed after having been medevaced to Germany. And there are conflicting reports as to whether or not he has already lost his arm as a result of the wounds or that the loss of the arm is likely. So our Suffolk County residents are continuing to serve and I think it's important for us to recognize that.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Mr. {Keller} of Riverhead.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Pardon me?

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Mr. {Keller} of Riverhead.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

No, no, another one. We -- I mean we can go on and on with this. In Holbrook I do not have his name available to me yet, but we do have a recent double amputee who is a Holbrook resident. And I'm told that we have a Huntingtonian who's also been wounded. So these are unfortunate things to have to report on, but I think it's vitally important that the Legislature be constantly reminded of the fact that these young men and women are out there serving.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

If I might, Mr. Chairman, the Holbrook fellow's name is Chris Levy.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Chris Levy; that is correct.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

Yeah, he lost both legs and I'm not sure about an arm as well.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

The arm was a different soldier. But the -- also with Levy, are you saying there's an arm involved as well?

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

Maybe.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

I hadn't heard that. It is my understanding that he'll be at Walter Reed for an extended period.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

Yeah.

**MR. ZWIRN:**

If I might just, Mr. Chairman, if I might just say a word, I was in Sag Harbor the weekend that Lance Corporal Haerter came back. And Tom Ronayne from Veterans Affairs helped arrange for the motorcade. And there was a strong presence of Suffolk County Police Officers in the village that day, at least a half a dozen motorcycle officers, at least three police cars were there and the family was in one of the police cars. Tom was at the wake, at the funeral. The County was very well represented, very proud to actually be part of County government to see the kind of response. A very moving weekend, a young family, only child, it brings it home and the entire community turned out. It was very moving.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

I remind you all and I hope -- I would hope that by now you've all received your invitations to join us on May 17th at 11:00 AM for Armed Forces Day at Armed Forces Plaza. Unfortunately, I got a call this morning from the Air Force and due to operational demands our flyover has been canceled. I was looking forward to providing a nice flyover. That's not going to happen.

On the same day, and I'd like to say that we've been working with the Town of Brookhaven, the Vietnam Traveling Wall will be here on the same day. It will actually be arriving earlier in the week, but the main ceremony will be held on Saturday, May 17th. It was originally scheduled to kickoff at 11:00 AM, which is the same time as our ceremony. We were able to negotiate with the organizers and they've graciously agreed to move their program back to 1:00 PM, which would give us enough time for our program to go through and provide ample time for anybody who wanted to leave Hauppauge and go to the event at Brookhaven.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

That's going to be where in Brookhaven?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

At the amphitheater. Beyond that I just -- I would also say that we've continued to receive feedback on the success of the Stand Down. It's been overwhelmingly positive. And that being said, we are scouting locations. We've already visited one location. We have one more to consider for our next event, which will be in October. And that given that we've done two in the west, the next event will be held east, it will be either Yaphank or Riverhead. We look forward to planning and hosting that event and can only hope that it's as successful as the previous Stand Downs.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

When do you think that might be?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Right now we're projecting the first or second week of October. Again, once we select the venue, then we would have to make sure that the dates work with everybody involved. But right now I would say it would be the first or the second Friday in October. We're shooting for Fridays.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Very good. Anybody? All right. Tom, thanks so much.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Holly.

**DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

I only have two quick announcements. Thursday we're doing the senior citizen luncheon at the Villa Lombardi. We have approximately 700 people attending. And the Senior Citizen of the Year award will be given at that time. And the festivities go all day but the award will be given out around 12:00, 12:30. So I hope that, you know, I know I've heard most of the offices of who can attend, but if you could make it, it'd be great.

The second thing I'd like to bring to everybody's attention is that the Home Energy Assistance Program will be closing on Friday, May 16th. So if you have people in your district who are thinking about applying they need to have their applications in. They have to be -- they'll be accepted through the close of business 4:30, Friday, May 16th and postmarked before then. And they will be processed, but that is coming up quickly so if you have people in your district, please let them know that that time frame is coming up.

The Emergency Benefit Component is open till Friday, May 30th, 2008 and that's through DSS Offices. So I just wanted to give everybody a heads up on that because it's been a tough heating year for a lot of the people in the districts. Anybody have questions?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Very good. Anybody? Legislator Romaine.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Quick question on HEAP.

**DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

Sure.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

HEAP is a fixed amount that people can apply for and they can usually get HEAP assistance what, twice, within a heating assist?

**DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

It depends on the income of the person as to how much money they -- and how many people are in a household on how much they can receive.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Figure limited income, one or two people in a household, senior citizens for example.

**DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

I don't have the dollar amounts in front, I can't you give that.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay.

**DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

I can get it for you from the office, but there is, you know, a fixed dollar amount depending on -- it's also I think, on the source of the heating. There's a couple of things that go into it.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Right.

**DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

There's a whole -- whole thing.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

My concern was that it's -- and I just want to express for the record that it's a fixed amount.

**DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

Correct.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

And in a fixed amount in a scale where energy prices are constantly soaring, whatever HEAP assistance that we provided this year was clearly inadequate to those who needed it because it did not go as far. And different people were told that they didn't call by a certain time they could only get one shot of HEAP assistance where usually the rules would apply for two.

**DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

It's usually one full -- one regular benefit.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

All right.

**DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

And then there's an emergency benefit.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Emergency benefit, right.

**DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

And I believe this year the emergency benefit might have been two. I can't swear to that though so I wouldn't --

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

This person had difficulty getting two, let alone one.

**DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

All right, all right.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

And the problem there is that many of the people that apply are pretty desperate.

**DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

Yeah, the regular applicant -- our office does the applications for those over age 60 who are applying for regular HEAP. All the other applications go through DSS and their Emergency HEAP Office, for the -- the emergency one.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

But I believe the rules are same regardless of the age.

**DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

Correct, correct.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

But thank you again. And boy, I -- certainly could use more federal and state aid for this purpose because the dollar just did not go as far and they didn't get the same BTU benefit that they got in past years and people ran out much sooner. And we had a lot of people coming to our office asking for help.

**DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

I absolutely agree with you. It needs -- we definitely need more federal money for this program. Anything else?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Okay. No. Holly thanks. Okay.

**TABLED RESOLUTION**

We have tabled resolution **IR 1251, Adopting a Local Law Further Strengthening Protections for Residents of Planned Retirement Communities (Romaine)**

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Motion.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Motion to approve by Legislator Romaine.

**LEG. EDDINGTON:**

Second.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Second by Vice-Chairman Eddington. Anybody on the motion? All in favor? Any opposed? Any abstention? Motion carries. **APPROVED (VOTE: 3-0-0-2 Not Present: Legislator Cooper & Legislator Kennedy)** We took care of IR 1341. We'll go to IR 1426.

**INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS**

**1426, Accepting and Appropriating a Federal grant in the amount of \$7,000.00 from the U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans' Employment and Training Service in support of the Suffolk County Veterans Service Agency's Veterans Stand Down. (Co. Exec. Levy)** I'll make a motion to approve.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Second.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Second by Legislator Romaine, motion to approve and to place on the consent calendar. All in favor? Any opposition? Any abstention? Motion carries. **APPROVED (VOTE: 3-0-0-2 Not Present: Legislator Cooper & Legislator Kennedy)** Okay. Anybody else? Motion to adjourn, second. We are adjourned.

**(THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 1:47 PM)  
{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**