

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 February 23, 2009.

Members Present:

Leg. Steven H. Stern, Chairman
Leg. Jack Eddington, Vice-Chair (not present)
Leg. Ricardo Montano
Leg. Kate M. Browning
Leg. Jay Schneiderman

Also In Attendance:

George Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature
Lance Reinheimer, Assistant Director of Budget Review Office
Benny Pernice, BRO
Barbara LoMoriello, Deputy Clerk
Deborah Harris, Aide to Legislator Stern
Tom Ronayne, Director of Veterans Service Agency/Human Services Div.
Paul Perillie, Aide to Majority Leader
Linda Bay, Aide to Minority Leader
Gene Pritz, Fairfield at St. James
Kiernan McGovern, SILO
William Blotty, Koran war veteran, Gold Star Monument
Craig Northacker, Executive Director, Vets-Help.Org
Ira Epstein, Director, Vets-Help.Org
Annie Predun, Vets-Help.Org
Rick Brand, Newsday
Bob Martinez, Aide to Leg. Montano
Catherine Stark, Aide to Leg. Schneiderman
Michael Pitcher, Aide to Presiding Officer
Kara Hahn, Communications Director
All Other Interested Parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Kraus - Court Stenographer

Minutes Transcribed By:

Denise Weaver - Legislative Aide

THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 11:41 AM

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Good morning everybody. Will everyone come to the Committee on Vets and Seniors.

Please join us in the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Browning.

SALUTATION

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

MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED

Thank you.

Welcome everybody. We're going to begin today with the public portion. I have one card. Gene.

PUBLIC PORTION

MR. PRITZ:

Good morning. My name is Gene Pritz. I'm here representing Fairfield at St. James, a condo community of about 670 units. And we have about 250 veterans in our community.

Two years ago we set a flagpole up and got a flag from the Capital, which we obviously flew and dedicated the area as a veterans circle. We now want to expand that and make it a more apt and appropriate memorial to all veterans, not only our veterans. And we're looking for both ideas and some financial help. And anything you can do would really be appreciated. We need some ideas of what we should do and we don't have a lot of money to do it and we're asking both this Committee and any others that could help us.

I met this morning with Tom Ronayne who was very, very helpful in giving us some ideas. And I'm here again asking, as I say, for your help and guidance. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Gene, thank you. It was good to see you.

Tom. Good morning, Director Ronayne.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Good morning, Chairman Stern and Committee members. Thank you again for the invitation to return.

I don't have really a great deal to cover this session. I feel like we met not that very long ago.

We have had some activity recently. Obviously in the community we've had a number of our members of the Fighting 69th return home; they are continuing to return home. They'll be getting very -- smaller numbers given that we had the large group returning last month. We did, again, experience the loss of Sergeant Keller from Wading River. We conducted services and held ceremonies for him. He was interred in Calverton with full military honors.

The one thing that I intended to bring with me today and I was only -- I've been doing research for several days. And unfortunately I'm having some difficulty coming up with the full report that I wanted to provide copies of that was done at the University of Chicago. At our last meeting Legislator Eddington had posed some questions relative to unemployment relative to veterans upon separation and what the curve was from time of separation going forward as the numbers improved.

And what I was able to find was page six of the report, which was simply the chart, showing the -- showing the curve, but I couldn't find the support to back that chart up, and I didn't want to confuse anybody by providing partial information. So we'll continue to search. And when I get the complete report, I'll submit that to the Committee members.

I know that on the agenda today we have the Gold Star Families monument. And for purposes of information I wanted to just provide copies of the fabricator's sketches. There is a small change being made to the language on the face of the monument. Initially it was engraved as *Gold Star Mothers*. The word *mothers* is being replaced with the *families*. So the monument when erected will read *Gold Star Families*.

These two sketches really are for only purposes of illustration and to let you have a sense of what the -- dimensionally what the monument will be. In essence, it starts at the base at 36 inches wide. At the top it will be 22 inches wide and at its highest will stand six feet six inches high. I've got copies.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Great.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I have copies here. If all goes well and if the Legislature continues to cooperate as they have so wonderfully on this project, we're anticipating and we're hoping that we'll be able to do a groundbreaking for the monument on May 9th; that'd be a Saturday. And going forward we would like to -- the date for the dedication is still floating, but we're looking at the third Saturday in September, which is National Gold Star Families Day. We thought that that would be an appropriate time to do a dedication. There are some other events close in that -- during that time period so rather than have conflict, by the next session we should have a dedication date that does not conflict with any other events.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Tom, I had two questions, two areas to discuss very briefly. And we had -- Lou Delli-Pizzi was here with us recently. And the question was posed to him, you know, what can we at Suffolk County level of government, really every level of government, be doing to assist our returning veterans? And we talked about, you know, a lot of different areas, but it -- I think the consensus was that, you know, the most pressing concern for our returning veterans are jobs. And the times could not be more challenging.

And we talked about, you know, various ways that we might be of assistance. I was wondering, you know, in your experience in assisting veterans find employment or training or retraining for employment, are Suffolk County businesses familiar enough with the incentives that would be available to them for hiring veterans, you know, Small Business and Work Opportunity Act, you know, other incentives and tax credits? Are these incentives sufficient enough for our local businesses to take advantage of and is it even something that they know about?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I think the incentives are fairly significant. In some areas if you enroll in the Veterans Assistance Program or the Veterans Employment Program, the government will actually -- you'll provide criteria for your ideal candidate. The government will actually conduct the screening, do the advertising,

provide the referral, send the employee or the candidate to the employer for interview. And things like Workers' Compensation, things like health benefits, medical care, those costs would be borne by the government versus the employer. Just have a workforce where the government relieve the employer of the cost of health care alone, how tremendous would that be?

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Tremendous.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Education, as with so many things, education is the key. We need to do the best job that we can in getting the word out on this. And that's a part of the education and the outreach process that we do. As you know, we had the first annual Suffolk County Veterans Employment Fair. We had 50 employers participate in that, which for a first time ever event I though was really tremendous. We had aspirations of possibly 30 employers.

So I think the interest exists. I think the willingness exists. But I think without education getting the small businesses in there and not having the small business owner believe that because he's not a Lowes, because he's not a Wal-Mart that he's not entitled to participate in some of these excellent programs. You know, it's a process.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Do we -- do you know if Suffolk County has a one-stop summary of the types of incentives that would be available to local employers so that if a business person was to call up our Economic Development Office or our Veterans Services Agency and ask the question, I'm considering, you know, bringing on a veteran, what might be the available incentives for me? Do we have something that could be packaged up and sent out?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

We have a number of resources. Department of Labor has a New York State representative for -- specifically for veterans. Unfortunately he's only at the One-Stop Center one day a week. My office also provides coverage when needed at the One-Stop Center. We participate in the Department of Labor and One-Stop job fairs. We work closely with the New York State -- New York State Department of Economic Development who has an office for veterans -- Veterans Business Enterprises at SUNY Farmingdale. And that is operated by a gentleman, very qualified, very talented man named John Narciso.

Again it's -- we do not have a completely comprehensive package in Veterans Services. It's something that is evolving. And as programs come on-line, as programs evolve and as programs become known to us because, you know, as with anybody else we don't always necessarily know everything that's out there. We, you know, we have a responsibility to be out there looking as well, which we always are. But we do have -- we do have information available through our office, Economic Development, and Labor as well. And again, we all partner. We're all happily -- we're all happy to work with one another in developing and furthering these -- these incentives in the programs.

I think maybe to expand a little bit.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Yeah.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

This Saturday -- you mentioned Lieutenant Delli-Pizzi. This Saturday from 11:00 to 1:00 at the Bay Shore Armory, there will be what they're referring to as a mini open house. And Lieutenant Delli-Pizzi reached out to my office and requested specific services. Some of services that they asked to have present at the event are Social Services, which they are on board. They've confirmed that they'll be there. We've got Department of Labor, Civil Service, obviously Veterans Services.

We invited and we're during the course of today and tomorrow, will continue to invite more employers that we have on the list that attended our job fair.

When we last met we had said that Lou Delli-Pizzi and I would get together and share that list with him; we have been doing that. I've been feeding him in small numbers names and contact information of the employers. It's working. People are getting jobs. These soldiers are getting jobs.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Very good.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

And also for a myriad of reasons, we've asked the Health Commissioner to assist us with health professionals, primarily in the mental health area, but both mental health and primary so that the soldiers have an opportunity if they so choose to seek out discreetly mental health services without going so called, *into the system*, within the military or the VA that they don't have to have any concerns about their privacy being compromised. And they're -- not that -- we don't believe that this is occurring anymore, but there's still a belief in some -- in some areas that military folks seeking mental health care, that it's a career ender. And for that reason some of the guys who -- men and women who could potentially benefit from them, do not seek them out within the military arena nor at the VA. So by providing private sector mental health professionals, we're hoping that if for any other reason, if there's a reluctance on that soldier's part to seek those services through the conventional means, we'll offer them through Suffolk County.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

And, Tom, along those lines, I remember that this Committee had spent some time speaking with you and others that were here about -- about the suicide rate among returning veterans. Recently that's been in the press. It's been prevalent actually in the press that suicides among returning veterans are up. Are you seeing that here locally?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I don't know that I can say that we've seen it locally that we've identified. One of the things that we do see and, you know, like so many of us I don't have a crystal ball. You see deaths -- active duty deaths that are not necessarily line of duty. And very often what we'll see is they'll be identified to us as *pending further investigation*. And we very often do not get the information coming out of the ensuing investigations.

We do believe that it is a problem. They've been more closely monitoring the numbers. And I think as tragic as it is, I think now the awareness exists. And that the people who need to be looking at this more closely and the folks that have the ability to make some changes have finally seen the need for them to step up and become involved. And I know, I can't get on the record but I do know of at least one, we'll call it an investigation that is occurring right now, that there will be some pretty substantial steps taken this week relative to this issue, mental health care and suicide prevention amongst our soldiers.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Please keep us up to date. Last question for me anyway, what if anything has been done to alleviate the tremendous backlog at the VA?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

VA's doing some really good things. Unfortunately, and it pains me to say this -- I happen to hold the VA in very regard. I've said that here many times. As with any bureaucracy of its size, there will be -- there will be bumps in road. VA last year in response to the outrage over the number of pending claims, between 600 and 800,000 pending claims, hired a whole lot of people. They hired a lot of people to work within the adjudication process and move that system along, get those claims moving.

Unfortunately, what happened at the same time is through attrition, retirements, people moving on, other things happening, it was a like number of people that left the VA around the same time. What happens now is you've got a brain drain. You've got the experienced people leaving. You've got the new people who are well intentioned but not yet trained coming into the system and no real improvement. We're hoping now that with the new secretary some changes may occur. But the problem is you can't move these things along with people who are not yet skilled in that craft. We, as much as we would like the process to speed up, if it's done at the sake of the claims not being properly processed, you know, that that's an issue. We would not want the process to increase in numbers of claims processed and result in more claims being denied in error, we'll say.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Thank you. Legislator Browning.

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah, you know, we're dealing with a lot of budget cuts. And I was with the Veterans Place and the Suffolk County United Veterans. There's some concerns about monies that they are potentially losing because of many cuts. Are you -- can you respond to any of that as far as how much -- how much they could possibly lose? I know the Veterans Place was saying that a lot of the -- a lot of the money, it's money for the homeless. And as you know the Veterans Place and Suffolk County United Veterans are assisting the homeless. In fact, they were telling me that there was a young man came back from Iraq, he was homeless and he just couldn't handle the situation that he was in, he reenlisted and he's back in Iraq again.

So, you know, I'm concerned about what are we doing here with our veterans that, you know, we're going to be possibly losing money to support them, especially in these days, you know. Do you know -- I'm kind of asking, you know, how much information you have on -- and what they're going to need?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

My understanding is that the bulk of the money that we're talking about is state and federal funding.

LEG. BROWNING:

Right.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Unfortunately, we don't control that. The Vet's Place is a resource.

LEG. BROWNING:

It is.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

They do a good job. They help a great many veterans. And, yeah, they are struggling. Unfortunately, at the County level, you know, we're --

LEG. BROWNING:

There's little we can do.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

-- you know, we rely on the state and the federal funding --

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

-- to, you know, assist in allowing programs like that to continue.

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah, you know, it's more just to see, you know, if you're keeping an eye on it to see exactly how much money they're going to lose. Because the last thing we need is -- the Veterans Place has done a phenomenal job and --

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Yeah.

LEG. BROWNING:

-- we certainly don't want -- their concern is it could shut them down completely.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Well, I know Mr. Lynch and I -- John Lynch and I have been playing phone tag.

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

And I am -- I'm reasonably sure that this is a part of --

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

-- why he's calling me. We've been back and forth twice trying to communicate. And --

LEG. BROWNING:

If you could just keep us up to speed on it, I'd certainly appreciate it.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Certainly.

LEG. BROWNING:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Anybody else for Director Ronayne? All right. Tom, thanks. Good to see you.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Thank you. And if I could just on the record, Godspeed to Legislator Browning's son who deployed this morning. He has gone over and wearing our uniform going into harm's way. And God bless and we hope him home soon.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Thanks.

Mr. McGovern. Welcome.

MR. McGOVERN:

How you doing? My name's Kieran. I'm here from Suffolk Independent Living Organization, SILO. And we're -- we're -- we've been Suffolk County's Cross Disabilities Rights agency for over 25 years. And Cross Cross Disability, I say, because, you know, different -- different physical and mental, emotionally disabilities. And that's kind of pertinent to what I'm talking about because we want to do more intervention with the veteran community. I mean, we've served a lot of veterans coming back recently. And we want to really do more. We -- we provide services such as advocacy,

benefits and housing advisement, education, employment training, transportation training, things like that.

So we really, we earnestly want to make an attempt to get to as many veterans as we can because there's -- not only there's influx of veterans coming back, you know, amputees, spinal cord, traumatic brain injuries, but, you know, like Mr. Ronayne was saying, and it's been in the papers and everything, January was the record -- the record month of veteran suicide and seven confirmed suicides and 17 other suspected or something like that. But there's -- I mean, it's not only physical disabilities. It's also post-traumatic stress, acute on-site depression or whatever it is, I'm not a psychologist, psychiatrist, but things like that.

So, I have information here. I'd like to leave it with the panel, the committee, whoever would like to pick one up.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Very good.

MR. McGOVERN:

Thanks.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Thanks so much. Thank you for being here today.

MR. McGOVERN:

Thank you.

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

CHAIRMAN STERN:

We have one introductory resolution on our agenda today and I'd like to take that now before we go to our presentation.

It is **IR 1062, Accepting the Donation of a Gold Star Families Monument and authorizing the placement and siting of the Gold Star Families monument in Armed Forces Plaza (Beedenbender)**. I'm going to make a motion to table as I'm told this is a bill that needs to go before the Sitings and Memorials Committee. Second by Legislator Browning. All in favor? Any opposed? Any abstentions? Motion carries. Thank you.
(VOTE: 4-0-0-1 Not Present: Legislator Eddington)

Okay. It is now my pleasure to welcome Craig Northacker and Ann Predun of the -- a local organization that provides tremendous services to our veterans here in our local community. The organization is Vets-Help.org. And so it is a pleasure to welcome them here to the committee today. Thank you so much for being.

MR. NORTHACKER:

Thank you. Do you want over here or over here?

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Yeah, why don't you have a seat up in the front.

MR. NORTHACKER:

First of all I'd like to thank all of you for inviting us to come here. Vets-Help is a -- we started out as a small organization. And what we're trying to do are fill the holes that exist right now for returning veterans and disabled veterans and their families. And the hole started out because I'm a disabled veteran. I come from the Vietnam timeframe so I understand firsthand some of the issues that go

on.

The -- the point at which we are at right now is we are taking on real estate and we're about to build Levittown type communities for our veterans and disabled veterans using affordable modular homes that are built specifically for their needs. The homes are extremely well built. We're speaking to the factories right now about -- about their production capacities. And we're also looking to create businesses as part of our economic hubs that are designed to support the veterans. Giving a veteran a house or letting him buy a house or her buy a house for a very reasonable fee is great, but they have to pay for it.

So what we're doing is we're giving them jobs and we're partnering up with firms in different ways to be able to provide partnerships where we can bring a lot of federal funding into the districts and as well as private dollars and private businesses.

So the upshot essentially from an economic standpoint as we prepared for the governor is that building 6000 homes in New York State, which is a very modest number, will result using Tom DiNapoli's multiplier of six in just around \$18 billion worth of impact over the next couple of years, using all the dollars that are associated with disabled vets and the ability to use disabled vets programs to bring in these 3% minimum mandated funds from the federal government on various contracts.

We're also engaged in tremendous cutting edge medical research. And we just met with Yacov Shamash over at Stony Brook. And we're planning a program right now where we're going to be using the accelerator at Brookhaven in conjunction with the Stony Brook University as well as the genetic group up in Albany, the Center for Excellence up there.

So we have a massive program underway. We've been accumulating a lot of people who are getting very interested in this. We're about to put out a tremendous program when it comes to television, to concerts. NASCAR is interested in this. The PGA has expressed an interest in this. Sears is supporting us. CA's supporting us. And we're just now reaching out to go ahead and really make it work. We've taken about two years to very quietly fund this program ourselves, to build the infrastructure to make sure it can work. Now we're making it work.

Next week we will be meeting with General Shinseki, who's the new Secretary of the VA. Shaun Donovan has expressed an interest to meet with us, who's the new Secretary of HUD. We're also going to be meeting with Department of Energy, Department of Transportation, probably Department of Defense and a few other people. And we have people getting ready to bring us up to the White House also.

So this program is designed to build and build now. We are building now. We have people that are coming to us. We have developers that have come to a stop because of lack of funding. And the only way for them to get going is to come to people like us. And there aren't too many people like us to go ahead and make it work. So we're very excited about taking different levels of government, combining them with private funding to be able to make all of us be in this together to make it happen.

So our soldiers went out, they fought, they won the wars for us. Now our veterans are going to lead us back into economic prosperity. And we're very excited to be doing this.

Annie has some numbers talking specifically about how many people are coming back into Long Island through the Northport VA and will tell you what the -- what the needs are of these people.

MS. PREDUN:

And as Craig said, we had gotten these figures from the Northport VA. Between now and October through the Northport VA they expect between 1600 and 2000 vets to come through. That's returning vets. Currently, they have 3600 vets enrolled, 1300 of those vets are receiving ongoing

treatment. From here there's over 3000 that's deployed. And we're just talking about Long Island. We're not talking about Manhattan at all.

They see three to six new vets per day at the VA. Between April and May, Marines are coming back and they haven't even given me the figures on the Army or the Aviation. What we're seeing with the young men that have come back our way is that it's so difficult here for them to find jobs and to find housing. And we've been told that if they knew how difficult it was to come home, that they would have stayed in Iraq. And quite frankly, I can't imagine staying in a war zone because home would be so much worse.

So we're working very hard as Craig said. We don't want to see what happened with a lot of the families after the Vietnam era, that the vets did not have proper care and, therefore, their families were torn apart. We'd like to keep the families together and work in any way that we can to assist and help.

A big major thing that I think a lot of citizens don't realize is that when you hear about a disabled vet, you imagine a vet missing an arm or a leg. But with a lot of the traumatic brain injuries and the post-traumatic stress disorder, that can be just as devastating as losing a limb or losing an arm or a leg or their eyes.

So there's a lot of work that needs to be done. The government did not prepare for this or did they -- excuse me, they did not know that the war would last this long; therefore they did not expect nor did anyone expect the amount of young people coming home. So at Vets-Help we're trying to fill the holes. We're not pointing any fingers at anybody we're just realizing that we all need to be in this together as a nation to make everybody whole again.

MR. NORT HACKER:

Just to -- just to amplify a little bit, as part of our developments we're planning on a minimum of 50 homes up to two or three hundred homes per development. Now upstate it's a lot easier to put in a couple of hundred homes than it is on Long Island in one development. But it's important for us to be able to maintain the communities and the families. So we're providing social services for these families to stay together. The families often don't get counseling. The veteran may or not go for counseling.

So our goal is if they're coming into our communities that they are going to get that support because we want the families to stay together; that's critical. We have to stop the cycles of disfunction that occur because people come back from war. Male or female, you know, they both have a lot of different issues that they have to take care of.

One other thought is that we're talking about the PTSD and the traumatic brain injury, some of the researchers that are working with us and they're preparing experiment requests for, include using progesterone by Dr. Don Stein who's out of Emory University. He has more than doubled the rate of recovery of TBI patients by introducing this and the VA's been -- has contracted him to continue to work in this area. And such areas as various types of estrogen are being used at University of Illinois in Chicago to help with great success PTSD.

So we're not just looking at saying, okay, you're coming back and put bandages on it. We're really trying to go to the root of the problems and help those, you know, help those families recover, help those people recover. It's not simple coming back from war. There's all kinds of things that you may have done or may have experienced. Even from a simple situation in Iraq, whereas an American soldier is holding up his hand like this (indicating) to a family of four coming at him in a car, not knowing that this over (indicating) there means approach. So when you open fire and eliminate a family, you know, what's the guilt that you feel and who can you talk to about that when you come home, you know. That -- those are -- those are real issues. And as we talk about suicides, well, that's -- how do you reconcile yourself with a two-year old that you just shot?

So these are -- these are real issues that are out there. And what we're trying to do is to be sensitive to that and try and bring to the public attention the issues that are attendant to that. And again, without pointing fingers, because that's useless, how do we fill the holes and we, you know, help create positive jobs, create manufacturing in the United States, which is we can say made in the USA proudly, whereas President Obama can't because there are GATT rules against it. But that's what we're looking to do. We're creating manufacturing, creating jobs, creating happy families and a functional economy within a dysfunctional economy. So thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Sure. Couple of questions, describe what these homes would look like? How they would be constructed and where would they go?

MR. NORTHACKER:

The modular homes look like any other home out there. And I'd be happy to give you pictures of the different models that exist. We're a facilitating organization so we're not selling them. They're built to code. They're built, generally speaking, better than the stick homes that developers tend to build in communities. They can be put virtually anywhere. And they only take about 90 days to build.

So inside the -- inside the programs here we do have pictures and -- and giving examples of what they would look like.

MS. PREDUN:

This brochure that you have the booklet, the middle photo is actually a modular home. It's not the FEMA trailers that you might think of as a home. They're more -- stronger than the stick homes because they have to be transported so they're very strongly reinforced.

MR. NORTHACKER:

They meet all code so they're well built. There's a community that we're just taking over that's up in -- up in Walton, New York right now. They actually have modular homes with cathedral ceilings and when you walk in there you'd never know that this is a modular home. They're just built well and they're to spec basically.

MS. PREDUN:

And the homes would be ADA approved, too.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Montano.

LEG. MONTANO:

Are you -- I'm somewhat familiar with the modulars. Are you using a particular manufacturer or your -- do you price those out to different companies that construct the modulars?

MR. NORTHACKER:

Well, right now we're speaking to the manufacturer who's been recommended to us by several different sources. And the one is in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania.

LEG. MONTANO:

I think most of them are in Pennsylvania. Right?

MR. NORTHACKER:

Well, a lot of them are. They're all actually regional. The impact of what we're doing is, as I told them, I said look, you have planned capacity of 300 homes. We're going to need several thousand a year. Okay. So one of the things that we're negotiating right now and I believe we're going to negotiate quite well, and Signature Homes is one of their communities there as well as Design Homes, the -- we're looking at negotiating with them where our veterans can learn the crafts to

build these homes and we'll be creating are own factories in different parts of the country to be able to take care of the supply and the demand that we have.

Because in a sense, our government is creating its own demand with the -- with the veterans coming back. As -- and you just heard from Annie what some of the people are coming back now, the numbers. So we're able to meet that supply. And each community that is going to be -- where they will be manufactured will own that plant as an ESOP company, Employee Stock Owned Program. So we're giving them the incentive to be able to go out and make money and do the right thing. We're going to have the expertise of the management, of the existing plants. So it's a partnership like that where we could own 51% of the plant, we can let the other side own 40% -- 49%. So we have the ability to bring them in as partners. They're making money. We're making money. We're making our own homes. And when I say we, I'm talking about the veteran communities. So it's a -- it's a win-win-win scenario. So that's -- hopefully a little answer there on that.

Oh, incidentally for jobs, as you, you know, we saw each other this morning at the LIE -- LIA meeting. We're starting to collect different names of various people and companies here on Long Island. And I'll consult with Director Ronayne on that, too, so we can also supply that information where we can also provide as a one-stop shop from a 501(c)(3) standpoint that information. And again, as facilitators we're happy to provide that with whoever wants that or needs that. We're also working with Joe Sledge over at the VA Northport Center and he's quite helpful. And they became even more helpful after they found out that General Shinseki had adopted our program in Washington. So it's nice to have friends.

LEG. MONTANO:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Anything else? Well, it would appear and I have not had the opportunity to take a look at the specific numbers here in what you've passed out, although the numbers look pretty impressive.

MR. NORTHACKER:

That's an old CPA background.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Good. So I'm wondering where this type of an effort fits into whether it's at the state level or at the federal level, I mean, when you're talking about construction, when you're talking about putting people to work, when you're talking about the multiplier benefit that's going to have on a local or even a regional community, I mean, this is the type of thing that screams part of an economic stimulus plan.

So I'm wondering where you see this fitting in and how see those conversations going because this would be exactly the kind of thing that should be a part any meaningful plan.

MR. NORTHACKER:

Well, ironically we've been working on this long before anybody heard the term stimulus in the current -- the current economic problem. And it does fit exactly into that. And that's one of the reasons that we've been up to Albany. The Governor's been less than receptive, shall we say, to our enterprise here. But that doesn't stop us because, you know, I'm the guy that used to jump out of the airplane carrying the M16's. So, I'm going to go around, you know, if you're not going to work with me, just get out of the way because I'm going around you.

And from the standpoint of Washington, when this came up, we originally were not planning on much support from the government. You know, the state we know doesn't have any money. We do know, however, that the government does have the money, they have the ability to, you know, keep printing cash whenever they want to. So by going down to Washington and meeting with the

various cabinet members and having direct access into the White House, we're planning on having that full support come from there.

The 2009 fiscal discretionary budget for the U.S. Government is at this point \$988 billion. There's a 3% minimum set aside that has to be paid to service connected disabled owned businesses. So in round numbers that \$30 billion, okay. That's not even anywhere close to being met. So by going to Washington and getting the various leaders of the cabinet -- or the cabinet members to support us, we're going after that 3%. We're going after the Department of Energy, we're going after Department of Transportation, Department of Defense, you name it. HUD. Shaun Donovan had wanted to talk to us before he went down to DC; now we're catching up to him.

And, again, you know, so we want the -- we want the support of the people that are in the executive branch because they're the ones that have really run this through. We're also meeting with various congressional members to get their support. And, you know, because there's a 501(c)(3) we don't lobby, we simply educate. So what we're doing is saying this is what we're doing and we're acting as facilitators.

So we will be in Washington next week. Part of the American Legion, in fact, invited us down because they're having a big program about the stimulus and creating jobs in the United States. We feel we have the answers for that and that's -- that's why we're going full speed.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Very good. Well, it sounds great. We wish you every success. And, please, if there's anything that we can we can do here at the Suffolk County level, please feel free to reach out to any one of us. We'd be happy to help anyway we can.

MR. NORTHACKER:

Okay, thanks. When do you want to get together?

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Very good.

MR. NORTHACKER:

Okay. Thank you so much everyone.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Good to see you today. Thank you. Anybody? Anybody else, anybody else? Anything else? All right, very good. All right. We are adjourned. Thank you.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 1:22 PM

{ } DENOTES BEING SPELLED PHONETICALLY