

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 20, 2009.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. Steven H. Stern, Chairman
Leg. Jack Eddington, Vice Chair
Leg. Kate M. Browning
Leg. Ricardo Montano
Leg. Jay H. Schneiderman

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

William J. Lindsay, Presiding Officer
George Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature
Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel
Tom Ronayne, Director of Veterans Service Agency
Holly Rhodes-Teague, Director of Office for the Aging
Barbara LoMoriello, Deputy Clerk
Joe Caracappa, Undersheriff, Suffolk County Sheriff's Office
William Weick, Deputy Sheriff, Suffolk County Sheriff's Office
Anthony Dolan, Sheriff's Aide, Suffolk County Sheriff's Office
Lance Reinheimer, Assistant Director, Budget Review Office
Benny Pernice, Budget Review Office
Kara Hahn, Communications Director
Paul Perillie, Aide to majority leader
Linda Bay, Aide to minority leader
Deborah Harris, Aide to Leg. Stern
Bob Martinez, Aide to Leg. Montano
Catherine Stark, Aide to Leg. Schneiderman
Jack Caffey, Aide to Presiding Officer
Brendan Chamberlain, County Executive's Office
Debra Alloncius, AME Legislative Director
Damon McMullen, Northport Village Trustee
Colby Grace, Northport H.S. student
And 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 11:45 PM

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Welcome to the Committee on Veterans and Seniors. Please rise and join us in the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Schneiderman.

(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 do have a couple of presentations and some important people with us today that we would like to hear from. But we also have two items on our agenda for approval. So I'm going to take those out of order and we're going to do those first and then we'll ask our guests to join us.

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

So first on the agenda is **IR 1213, Declaring May 1 of each year "Silver Star Banner Day" in Suffolk County (Stern)**. I'll offer a motion to approve.

LEG. BROWNING:

Second.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Second by Legislator Browning. All in favor? Any opposition? Any abstention? Motion carries.

APPROVED (VOTE: 5-0)

IR 1222, Adopting Local Law no. -2009; A Local Law to improve protections to residents of planned retirement communities (Romaine).

We need to table this for a public hearing. I'll offer a motion to table, second by Legislator Browning. All in favor? Any opposition? Any abstention? Motion carries. **TABLED FOR Public Hearing (VOTE: 5-0)**

And with that we'll invite -- Undersheriff Joe Caracappa's with us today with other members of the Sheriff's Office. Joe, welcome. It's great to have you with us today.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Joe, welcome.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

Always a pleasure. For the record, Joe Caracappa, Undersheriff, Suffolk County Sheriff's Office. Joining me today is Officer Bill Weick and Officer Tony Dolan who's handing out some informational packets on Project Lifesaver and that's why we're here today to talk about this very unique and

lifesaving program.

Recently when the Chairman passed the resolution declaring the Silver Alert, we thought it would be important just to reach out to your office and your staff to explain to you that we do have Project Lifesaver in place through the Sheriff's Office and we thank you for accommodating us to come and just give us a brief explanation about the program. Even though it's pretty detailed, we'll keep it brief for the sake of the committee's time. So we thank you for that.

Project Lifesaver was born out of Virginia from former police officers who were looking for a better way to deal with those who tend to wander based on having debilitating disease such as Alzheimer's, Dementia of some sort and unfortunately an increase of Autistic children who also tend to wander.

In a nutshell to, again, for the sake of brevity, it's like a human LoJack. We have people sign up with the Sheriff's Office. We have application forms. Officer Dolan heads up that whole side of the operation. And they become clients of the Sheriff's Office. We set them up with their caregivers with instructions. A piece of equipment that Officer Weick has, which we will pass around to you basically is worn on a -- on a bracelet and it's -- it's a radio transmitter that can be used to locate these individuals relatively quickly.

A regular search on someone that goes missing can last from eight hours and above and use a tremendous amount of manpower and of course it becomes very expensive. With Project Lifesaver we've been able to cut that down, I think the approximation is 30 minutes. I was so impressed when I first came on the job in the Sheriff's Office that I went and got training myself by these two gentlemen and I'm -- I'm now certified to do it myself. It works. It's effective. And the Sheriff's Office is proud to be able to offer it to the people of Suffolk County.

So with that I'll turn it over to Officer Weick who will give you, I guess, a little rundown on how he does his, I guess, the training or any other information that he'd like to share with you that's -- that he's been doing for sometime now. Officer Weick.

OFFICER WEICK:

Good afternoon. Good afternoon. As the Sheriff's Office lead instructor for Project Lifesaver, it's basically for our Deputies that are going to be on the operation side of the house, which is basically the Deputy Sheriffs that are going -- actually conduct the searching. They participate in two days of an involved program. Part of the program is to teach them how to deal with some of the clients that they may encounter, whether it's somebody with Alzheimer's or Down Syndrome or somebody like that. We go into detail on how to deal with the different clients and the different situations. And then the other part of the training consists of basic search techniques utilizing the equipment.

And what's being passed around is the transmitter that's given out to every client. They wear it -- most often they wear it on their wrist like a watch. In certain circumstances we may put it in a shoelace or intertwine it into a specific piece of clothing based on the client. And it -- it transmits a VHF signal 24 hours a day. And should they go missing, they notify the Sheriff's Office radio room. And Deputy Sheriffs that are trained in this program are then dispatched to that location utilizing receiving equipment. And we have the receivers and the receivers are attached to different types of antennas. One antenna would be a portable antenna that we would carry and the second antenna would be an omni antenna that would be mounted to the roof of the -- our patrol unit. And then we would respond to the last known location and conduct the searches.

Without going into too much detail and spending too much time, as of this -- I think it was two days ago there's been -- nationwide there's been 1900 searches and they're 100% effective so far. And the average search time, like Undersheriff Caracappa stated, is 30 minutes give or take. There's some instances where it's been a little bit over and there's some instances where it's been as short as eight or ten minutes.

I don't know if you have any questions?

LEG. MONTANO:

I'd like to make a comment.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Montano.

LEG. MONTANO:

Yeah, I just want to say I'm actually familiar with this. My grandfather before he passed away had jumped out the window and disappeared for, you know, a substantial time. And I think he was -- I won't go -- I won't finish it, but is it a really good program. I think it's excellent.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

And just a -- one of the unfortunate attribute, not attribute, but one of the unfortunate problems when someone goes missing is they are so susceptible to the elements whether it's very hot out or very cold, due to the disease that they have they don't recognize the fact that they're out in subzero weather at times and they succumb in a very short period of time. That's why time is of the essence in these type of searches. And we've heard stories from other municipalities. And it's one of the reasons why this was a -- that Project Lifesaver came about; is some regular search and rescues have gone out there and the victim has actually -- or the person they were looking for was actually about ten yards way from where they were originally searching. And they just missed him because he was either -- he or she or a child was hiding under a pile of leaves or behind a tree or just trying to find some sort of shelter in the meantime not knowing where they were and they were basically just walked past.

With this Project Lifesaver we -- you literally hone in to the exact spot. And I can tell you during my training that quarter size piece of -- that medallion -- I was sent out into find this little quarter size transmitter in a very vast area. And I was able to find it in just minutes with the training that I received. And the Officers that do it in a more -- in a much bigger area, they're able to go miles and miles and miles. In fact, we sent Officer Dolan out as our rabbit during the training. And he'll go to either middle of the Pine Barrens or into a -- someone's home that he knows, completely undisclosed from any -- any of the Officers looking for him. And they find him within half an hour's time. And it's not just the house. They'll find him in the closet in the house. That's how effective it is.

LEG. MONTANO:

Wow.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Very good.

LEG. MONTANO:

Question. This is -- I may not have heard the first part. This is readily available to anyone who signs up, you know, how is -- what's the mechanism to get families to sign up their loved ones in this?

OFFICER DOLAN:

In the -- in the packet there's an enrollment application and a frequently asked --

LEG. MONTANO:

Questions.

OFFICER DOLAN:

-- question, what is Project Lifesaver, how it works, the criteria. You know, the program in Suffolk and nationally sells itself. It's in 45 states.

LEG. MONTANO:

Right.

OFFICER DOLAN:

Over 900 Sheriff and Police agencies nationwide. We have clients throughout Suffolk County. Developmental Disabilities in Smithtown purchased 15 bracelets themselves to be used on outings.

LEG. MONTANO:

How much are the bracelets?

OFFICER DOLAN:

\$300 plus tax.

LEG. MONTANO:

Oh, 300.

OFFICER DOLAN:

300.

LEG. MONTANO:

And that cost is borne by whom?

OFFICER DOLAN:

By the caregiver and/or family. Whether or not it's reimbursable medically?

LEG. MONTANO:

Yeah, that's what I was going to ask you. Is --

OFFICER DOLAN:

I know Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance, I know they know about it because I've talked to about 15 healthcare agencies. I faxed over reams of paperwork to them. It's only a matter of time before it's going to be borne by insurance.

LEG. MONTANO:

Is this -- is this -- so this is not provided through, let's say, the Health Centers.

OFFICER DOLAN:

No.

LEG. MONTANO:

If a poor family came in and they needed this service, they would be responsible for the cost.

OFFICER DOLAN:

The Health -- the Health -- the Suffolk County Department of Mental Health, excuse me, Aging. The Suffolk County Department of Aging knows about it because we presented the entire program to the caseworkers about almost 50 in attendance. And they're dealing specifically with individuals that have Dementia, Alzheimer's --

LEG. MONTANO:

Right.

OFFICER DOLAN:

-- that are prone to wandering. And they brought it back into the -- into their zone, whatever zone they're -- they're assigned to, specific to whatever families they wanted to present it to, to make it available to them through the Sheriff's Office. And --

LEG. MONTANO:

Has there been an assessment made of what the need is here in Suffolk County versus the usage?

OFFICER DOLAN:

The aging population in Suffolk and --

LEG. MONTANO:

And I know we're getting there.

OFFICER DOLAN:

-- and Autism in particular has grown tremendously, especially concerning the need for wandering. You know, when somebody wanders there's -- the greater need is that they will wander again. I think there's like --

OFFICER WEICK:

Can I just -- when we first introduced this, I think the anticipation was for the Alzheimer's patients. And what we're finding is a lot of interest for other disorders such as the Autism patient.

LEG. MONTANO:

Right.

OFFICER WEICK:

One other big difference between your typical missing person or your missing hiker and our clients are, if you have a hiker lost in the woods he or she wants to be located --

LEG. MONTANO:

Right.

OFFICER WEICK:

-- and they're responding to our calls for help. As opposed to a child who maybe is Autistic and they're drawn to water, for example, they don't know that they're lost; they're not looking to be found. Where this device finds -- helps us find them.

As part of Project Lifesaver International, which is a franchise copyrighted organization, not-for-profit organization, Project Lifesaver International allows each agency that gets involved on the County levels to basically subsidize their own agency. And they become a subsidiary of Project Lifesaver International as the -- we can utilize the logo and we utilize the equipment, but it's our program and we can develop it and we made specific rules and procedures within the Sheriff's Office pertaining to our organization.

LEG. MONTANO:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

So who gets certified? Is it everybody within the department, is it those that just express some kind of interest? How do you -- how do you determine who receives the certification and the training?

OFFICER WEICK:

Well, right now out of 200 and -- 270 Deputy Sheriffs we have 80 Deputies that are trained in the program. The intention of the Sheriff's Office is basically to have every uniformed officer trained. We've introduced it and started training the summer 2006. Is that correct?

OFFICER DOLAN:

Late -- late summer, yeah.

OFFICER WEICK:

Late, of 2006. And just because of time constraints and stuff, it's a two-day training program to certify them. So as time progresses and weather permits, we've been increasing the training a few Deputies per class.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

And if a family is interested in having the unit for a -- for a loved one and it's a cost of \$300, who do they write the check to? Who receives the money?

OFFICER DOLAN:

We take -- Project Lifesaver likes to use a credit card application right over the internet. And I'll get the credit card number, the particulars and, you know, put our e-mail, put their e-mail, the caregiver's e-mail. So anytime a transaction is done, they get a copy of everything. It takes about ten days to receive the unit.

OFFICER WEICK:

The equipment is purchased directly, though, from Project Lifesaver International.

OFFICER DOLAN:

Yeah, we don't take any money.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

We don't process any of the payment.

OFFICER DOLAN:

No, we're the intermediary.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

It goes directly to Project Lifesaver.

OFFICER WEICK:

Correct.

OFFICER DOLAN:

Correct.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

And so it's powered by a battery.

OFFICER WEICK:

Correct.

OFFICER DOLAN:

Correct.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

A unit. How often does it need to be replaced and how does someone know when the unit needs, you know, needs service?

OFFICER DOLAN:

We have a check list. When -- monthly. Ideally it's monthly because it has to work for us to find them. You know, every -- a lot of things are done by e-mail and phone. Every person that's enrolled in the program, first time we will go over to the home and make certain that they know how to do it. It's -- you just take out the -- unscrew the back, put a new battery in and screw it back again. And it's very simple.

OFFICER WEICK:

The caregiver's given specific instructions. They sign a contract stating that they will abide by the instructions. The batteries last for approximately 45 days. We tell them to change the batteries every month. And along with the kit comes a little tester, which I just passed around. And all you do is you hold it right over the transmitter and it emits a little light to indicate that it's working properly. And if there's any problems or they're not getting a light, then they are told to contact us immediately 24 hours a day. And, if changing the battery obviously doesn't correct that problem, then contact us immediately, we'll change them out with a different bracelet.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Can the batteries be recharged or are they disposable batteries?

OFFICER WEICK:

No, they're disposable batteries.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

So, but they go through a battery a month, approximately?

OFFICER WEICK:

Correct. At a cost of about \$10 a battery.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

On the safe side you try to get them to change it once a month just to make sure it's --

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Sure.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

But they'll last a little longer, but we try to keep a certain timeframe just to keep on the safe side.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

And is the battery readily available at any place that sells batteries? Is there a special type?

OFFICER DOLAN:

It's a special type. You could buy a year supply of batteries and wristbands directly through Project Lifesaver, which is pretty much what everybody does. And we have spares just in case.

OFFICER WEICK:

That's the indicator, Legislator, that you hold over the transmitter. And it'll emit a little beam of light to indicate whether it's working or not.

LEG. MONTANO:

Oh, this is a tester, I see.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

You just wave that over the battery and it'll basically tell you.

LEG. MONTANO:

If the battery is good. All right.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

Yeah.

OFFICER DOLAN:

That works off the power of the battery.

LEG. MONTANO:

Right. It has some kind of signal to one another.

OFFICER WEICK:

Correct.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

And other than the \$300 cost and the approximately \$10 approximately every month for a new battery, is there any other ongoing administrative cost or any other fee to Project Lifesaver or to anybody else?

OFFICER DOLAN:

No. That's it.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

And there are times where like Officer Dolan said, we have not-for-profit agencies like the Pilot Club in Patchogue that actually go out and purchase on behalf of --

CHAIRMAN STERN:

That's great.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

-- potential clients and hand those out. And we've discussed internally briefly, and what we're trying to expand on it, the potential of maybe getting grants to the Sheriff's Office through the State Legislature or the Federal Government to be able to do this, handout the -- the equipment in a more cost effective way to the people that really need it.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

And so really it's been an effort on the part of the Sheriff's Office to get the word out and to meet with organizations that serve those with special needs. And really that's been the effort getting to the organizations that serve them.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

Absolutely. Officer Dolan goes out almost a couple of times a week to speak to a whole host of agencies and senior clubs along with other personnel in the Sheriff's Office to make sure that they're -- they know that this is available.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

That's great, great.

LEG. BROWNING:

I think most of my questions were asked.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Browning.

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah, I think most of my questions were asked. Obviously it's \$300 and it's \$10 a month to replace the battery.

I know when this first came out and read about it, I contacted a couple of families that I know with children with Autism. And they were interested in it. I know money was an issue for them, possibly. But out of curiosity, how many families with children with Autism have you signed up so far? Do you know?

OFFICER DOLAN:

Developmental Disabilities in Smithtown is the school that has children, you know, Autism children. It's about 50/50 that we have. They use the bracelet on outings so it could be, you know, a whole host of individuals in the school. We have about ten clients presently signed up that we monitor everyday. And Developmental Disabilities and Day Haven and another organization called FRE, F-R-E in Hauppauge has bracelets. About 23 in total.

LEG. BROWNING:

And what about -- what about school districts? Have you reached out to school districts? Because I know a lot of the kids --

OFFICER DOLAN:

School districts.

LEG. BROWNING:

-- don't go to the BOCES programs anymore, the school districts are pretty much keeping a lot of the kids.

OFFICER DOLAN:

I've been to about 20 school districts. And about two years ago, Newsday did a whole article on Autism in Suffolk County on Long -- Autism on Long Island and they had a breakdown by school district. Half Hollow Hills School District was the number one school district with children for Autism.

LEG. BROWNING:

Wow.

OFFICER DOLAN:

I did the same thing.

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah.

OFFICER DOLAN:

I said wow, it's, you know, and I've been to Half Hollow Hills, Amityville, Brentwood and 15 other school districts. Everybody loves the program. Everybody takes the literature.

LEG. BROWNING:

But they're not using it.

OFFICER WEICK:

One of the things that we want to make sure, though, is that their clients that we're enrolling to be a proactive rather than reactive situation is that we're enrolling clients that -- that actually need it and meet the criteria. Not everybody that applies will actually be enrolled as a client.

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah.

OFFICER WEICK:

We're looking to zone in on the client that either has a high propensity of wandering or has done it consistently in the past. We don't want to just blatantly enroll everybody --

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah.

OFFICER WEICK:

-- just because they might have a disorder. So we have a little bit of a selection process to try to make sure that it's the people that most need it in the County.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

Sometimes we get people asking, well, my -- I have a normal child, but they're -- they're rebelling and they -- they dash out the window on Saturday night when they're punished, obviously that doesn't fit the criteria.

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah. No, I -- you know, I know that I have a mom in my district with three children and I know she's got one that bolts. And, you know, we worked on putting signs up on the street, you know, to get the -- the drivers to get them aware and, you know, I did speak with them about it so I definitely, I think it's a fantastic program. I compliment the Sheriff for what he's done with this and I definitely want to push getting the message out, I have a lot of families in my district.

OFFICER DOLAN:

There's the number she can call right here.

LEG. BROWNING:

Yes, I'm actually going to post it on my car.

OFFICER DOLAN:

Okay.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

Officer Dolan and Officer Weick and the entire Sheriff's Office, we are available to all of you 24/7 as it relates to this program and every other program that we run. If you need us at a Civic Association or at a school district, we're more than willing to be there to spread the word.

LEG. BROWNING:

We'd love to.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

And give out all the information that's readily available.

LEG. BROWNING:

Thank you.

P.O. LINDSAY:

Steve.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Mr. Presiding Officer.

P.O. LINDSAY:

How are we doing this, Joe? Do we have someone assigned to this full-time, 24/7 or do activate this when someone's lost?

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

I'll turn that over to Officer Weick.

OFFICER WEICK:

Sir, we have -- the Sheriff's Office is broken down into two entities. We have an operations and administrative side of the house. And the operation side is the actual side of the house that's actually going to respond if there's a callout. And then Officer Dolan's the one that's kind of handling the admin side of things.

And I work directly for the supervisor that's in charge of the operation side where we're responding, we're maintaining and we're continuing the training. Because after people are certified, we're still doing an annual training, just kind of getting out and using the equipment and making sure we're familiar.

And we have -- we have -- on a rotating basis, we have three people that have the equipment consistently with them 24 hours a days, seven days a week. And then we have the equipment strategically placed around the County. We have some equipment on east end locations and west end locations. And our protocol basically is if there's a person that goes wandering, one of our clients that goes wandering, it's put out over our radio and people that are trained that are currently on staff and that are working are then -- they then call into the dispatch and state that they're responding as well as the three people that have that equipment. And our objective is to have three people -- minimum of three deputy sheriff's respond to the missing person when it happens.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

In other words, Bill, we don't have a unit, a Project Lifesaver unit that's standing by all the time. It's our regular officers on duty at the time and those who may be at home on standby with the equipment in their cars that will be dispatched when a call comes in. So it's not a set unit for them specifically.

P.O. LINDSAY:

I think it's a great program. And, I mean, we all have a newsletter going out soon. We really should be put a little advertisement in that advertising the program so the citizens should know about it, you know.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

You can access the Sheriff's website as well. We have a link to our Project Lifesaver Program. And all the information that you -- we're providing to you today and then some that Officer Dolan put together is all there for them to -- to look through. And, again, any questions that they may have can either call your offices or, of course, the Sheriff's Office.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Eddington.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Yes, thank you. Again, I say this is a great complement, a good program and I compliment you on your work. And certainly as America ages we want to keep people home and not in care facilities. I think this just really goes a long way to help.

And based on what the Presiding Officer asked, you have three officers that work on this. I'm wondering, have you -- have you tried to connect with Suffolk County PD or the Park's Department or the east end villages to -- for them to get some training? Because if you have three people and there's something out in Montauk, that's a long way and you want -- like you said, a half hour is the target time. So, are they looking to get some training also or can you make it available or what's the deal with that?

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

Well, just when the Sheriff -- when this was offered by Project Lifesaver to -- to, well, actually they offer to every public safety entity throughout the nation, when it was offered to the Sheriff's Office, Sheriff Demarco saw the benefits in it and jumped on it. In that eventually he became -- the Sheriff's Office of Suffolk County has now become the downstate coordinator as it relates to training.

So when another municipality or public safety agency wants to opt in, they call the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office and Officer Weick and Officer Dolan they go to either Westchester or someplace else, we have a whole list, Amityville Police, anyone who wants to opt into it, which we -- we wish they would, we'll go out and actually train them.

And the more -- the more public safety entities that are involved, the better it's going to work. Like you said, having deputies respond from let's say, your district to Montauk, obviously there's the time factor and that's why Officer Weick made it clear we try to put strategically placed equipment in those -- in those three cars that will respond on certain areas of the County so that the response time is even that much shorter.

So we encourage every -- every public safety entity to get involved. I know it was offered to Suffolk PD at one time, I think maybe first before the Sheriff's Office and they haven't entered into it yet. But when they do, it'll just make this program even more effective.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Well, maybe as the Chair of Public Safety I can speak to them about trying to opt in. So, you may be hearing from the other unions.

OFFICER DOLAN:

I just have one other question concerning someone that would go on vacation. Since this is a national program from Alaska to Hawaii to New Jersey to Suffolk County, the training, the equipment is identical. We've received calls from families from North Carolina and Virginia that wanted -- that have vacationed on Long Island and they wanted to know if we had Project Lifesaver. And we told them yes, we do. We would contact their local law enforcement office. They faxed their client's profile to us directly. We contacted the client prior to their departure from North Carolina or Virginia. We gave them our 911 dispatch number should they have a problem. The same way North Carolina would search is the same way we would search. So it makes their vacation trouble free.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

And some good peace of mind for sure. Has there ever been an issue raised or a potential problem with someone who has a pacemaker or a defibrillator because of the signal?

OFFICER DOLAN:

It doesn't -- it sends out less.

OFFICER WEICK:

It's just a regular VHF transmitter just like any very high frequency. And each client is given their own frequency, a unique frequency. But no, there is none, no issues at all.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

Yeah, keep in mind this is a radio frequency we're using. Quite a bit -- why not just GPS? Actually GPS is not as reliable. Weather plays a role in it, buildings, densely populated areas. As I mentioned earlier, with the frequency that we use, the radio frequency and each client has a frequency that's basically their, like a fingerprint for them, we're able to find them in a much more pinpointed area right to the point where if they were in a closet or hiding under leaves or something. It's much more effective than GPS so and it hasn't posed that problem yet, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Yeah, very good. Questions? Outstanding program. Thanks so much being here. And I agree with the Presiding Officer, those of us who are about to communicate with our districts need to do what we can to help promote the program as it helped so many, as you point out, not just the elderly, but those who are much younger and also some of the most vulnerable within our community. Officer Dolan and Officer Weick, thank you so much for being here.

OFFICER DOLAN:

Thank you very much.

OFFICER WEICK:

Thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

And, Joe, it's always good to see you.

UNDERSHERIFF CARACAPPA:

It's always a pleasure, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

All right. Thanks so much for coming.

We have with us today, Damon McMullen and Colby Grace. Step up, welcome.

MR. McMULLEN:

Good afternoon, at this point. My name is Damon McMullen, I'm a Northport Village Trustee. And also on the -- on this committee that we formed last fall, and it's for the statue that we would like to put up in Northport. We're trying to get some financial backing for this project. We think it's very important. We have a lot of different statutes to commemorate those who have not been able to make it home from different wars.

This one is to commemorate the families because we believe that when a soldier goes to war, the family goes. And Colby Grace came to a bunch of us in Northport Village on the committee. And you'll see in the pamphlet is Chief Bruckenthal, is Kevin O'Neill from the John Engeman Theater, is James Mahoney and {inaudible} Tom Kehoe.

And Colby came to us with this idea, this concept. And we saw it in clay originally and we really fell in love with it. We think Colby's a very accomplished artist. He's a senior at Northport High School. He'll be attending Pratt in the fall. And we are having a fundraiser on May 7th at the Northport John Engeman theater to raise funds.

We broke the project up into three different phases. The first phase and we'll bring this around to you is we had the original statue made in the {metet}. And the second phase is that we are having another larger statue made, which will be about three feet long and about two feet wide and over a couple of feet tall. And that will be placed in Northport Village Hall on May 25th on Memorial Day in Northport Village, in Northport American Legion we hold our annual Memorial Day parade. And the parade goes down into Northport Village Park and it ends at the bandstand in the park and that's -- at that point we'll be unveiling the larger statue. And because we hope to have a very good crowd there and raise a good bit of enthusiasm. We've all -- already been in several newspapers, local papers. And we're hoping we're going to be in the Newsday come May 3rd to have a feature there as well.

But the eventual goal is to put a life size of the statue up in Northport Village Park. And that takes a considerable amount of funds to do that. And the committee feels that this is something that honors all the men and women who've served, but especially honors the families because I know from having my sons over in Iraq that you go just as much as they -- they went over to war because you spend your nights worrying and thinking about them. And it's to honor -- honor what the families go through.

I'll turn it over to Colby and let him describe how he came around with the concept.

MR. GRACE:

My name is Colby Grace. I'm a senior at Northport High School. As Mr. McMullen says to reiterate a

few points here. The sculpture itself --

P.O. LINDSAY:

Colby, I don't think your mike is on or you've got to pull it all the way in.

MR. GRACE:

That's better, yes?

P.O. LINDSAY:

Okay.

MR. GRACE:

Okay. Thank you. Okay. So I guess, Colby Grace, a senior at Northport High School. The sculpture that's going around right now we have a soldier who is writing a letter home, a rather timeless scene. And he's reclining against the clear wall; creates something of a split screen effect. On the opposite side you have his wife and child reading that same letter. And like Mr. McMullen had said, it is very important that we included the family in this. Most war memorials, they are nice, but there's just a soldier and behind every soldier is a family. And it's extremely important that we include that and make that a part of the community.

Also, the fundraiser on May 7th is a big deal for us. We are looking to raise the funds.

At this -- there are different stages that are included in making a sculpture. My end of it is making the clay piece. I start out with just blocks of clay, put it all altogether and then from there what's done is we go through a foundry, we're using the Joel Meisner foundry out in Farmingdale off Route 110. And what they do from there is they make a mold and they pour in a bronze. In this case we're using a bronze powder. It's a form of cold casting. So hopefully when we go life size we'll actually be using a full bronze cast. And like Mr. McMullen said, that would be a large amount of money, but we're taking it one step at a time and it's moving along quite nicely.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Colby, it's a -- I mean, obviously a beautiful and moving piece.

MR. GRACE:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

As I'm wondering how you came up with the vision? Is there something in particular that sparked this effort?

MR. GRACE:

Well, there are a few things, one of the which I have a few or distant relatives in the military. But my father who recently retired from the NYPD worked in the Terrorism Task Force and spent a good number of months overseas in Africa. So I do know somewhat what it feels like to have a family member, you know, overseas and worrying about them. But it was important to me that the family is included in this because I wanted to do something that was -- was different. You do normally have the soldier whether he's standing or fighting, whatever it is, but you don't normally see the family there too. And I wanted to have that softer, you know, more tangible side of it. Because not everyone like myself knows what it's like to be over fighting, but we know what it's like to be waiting.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

And so about -- I see on your brochure here that there are dimensions. But how large a piece do you envision?

MR. GRACE:

The piece actually I just sculpting; I'll be taking to the foundry today. This is the piece that'll be going in the lobby that we're unveiling on Memorial Day. That piece is -- if you wanted to go by the dimensions of the base, it's about 36 inches the length and about 20 of the width. And the wall that comes up is going to be about 24 inches, about two feet tall. The figure seated to the top of the soldier's head is about 17 inches. So the soldier's about here, the wife's about there, so if that --
{ INDICATING }

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Good. And I see you already have -- it's the Northport Veterans Sculpture Committee.

MR. GRACE:

Yes, a not-for-profit.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Which has already been a not-for-profit created.

MR. McMULLEN:

Non-for-profit, as we said. As in the committee we set up a non-for-profit. And we also are very concerned in protecting Colby's artistic rights. So we have -- I don't want to say patent, that's not the right word, but, you know, a lawyer looking into making sure that his rights, artistic rights are protected.

I also wanted to mention that -- do you want to talk about the naming of it?

MR. GRACE:

You named it.

MR. McMULLEN:

Colby asked us when we had met, we were all sitting around a table and he -- we asked him what he had named it and he hadn't given it a name and wanted to know did anybody have any ideas. And I had suggested this, *For Love of*, and that meant so much to me because it was something that when you look at this statue as it's being passed around, you notice that from every different angle you give it a different feel and perspective of what the statue means to you. And that for different reasons when I looked at it, it looked to me that having been in the service I was thinking of, you know, for love of my country, for love of my comrades, for love of my children, my spouse. It just -- so that name to me is important, *For Love of* and just let the viewer decide how they want to finish that sentence.

And should we be able to raise the funds to do a full sculpture, we'll be doing landscaping around this so that it'll be higher up, it'll slope down, some lighting in the village park so that a person -- you'll be able to walk around it. Because it is a unique piece in a way -- way it is set up. It is a piece that you have to be able to walk around. And we have a placement in an area within the Northport Village Park system right at the end of Main Street that we're hopefully going to be able to -- if we succeed in raising the funds. And that's why we're here today, we're looking for some help from all of you with trying to fund this. And if you have any ideas or suggestions we'd appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Very good. Anyone? Well, thanks so much for being here today.

MR. GRACE:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

And, yes, we'll -- let's continue to talk along the way. And there is a dedication that is going to be held on Memorial Day, May 25th.

MR. McMULLEN:

Yes, our parade is starting at 9:30 in the morning. Normally we would start it at 10:00. But we're starting at 9:30 so that we can have this unveiling before the -- our normal memorial services in the park.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Very good, very good. I wish you every success.

MR. GRACE:

Thank you.

MR. McMULLEN:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Holly.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

I just wanted to ask everybody to let us know if you're coming to the luncheon on May 14th? Just let my office know. We have about 550 seniors, so that's a good number. And we're working on the exhibitors. It's over at Villa Lombardi's so we expect a full day. We have two honorees. So we're looking forward to having you all there. Luncheon starts around -- we'll they're there early, but, I mean, the luncheon portion starts around 11:30, 12 o'clock.

The other thing is the HEAP Program is scheduled to close May 15th unless funds are depleted before then. So if you have anybody who hasn't applied, let them know they need to get their apps in sooner than later.

The other thing is, yeah, we've been monitoring the money coming down from Washington, the stimulus money. We will be receiving some more funding for congregate meals and home delivered meals. More for congregate than home delivered. So we're looking at how that's going to shake out for us, you know, in the end. But there is money coming down.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Do we have any idea as to, you know, how many more meals could be provided with the additional monies?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

Well, the issue I have right now is if you provide the meals for the money -- the time the money is available, what happens at the end of that time period? So we're looking to see how we're going to best spend that funding, you know, because it's, you know, it is a finite amount of money for a certain period of time. So we have to really -- I would hate to put people on meals then have -- find out later that, you know, we have no way to continue those meals. So I'm looking to see if, you know, maybe one-shot meals, emergency meals, that kind of thing we're looking at right now. I have to see how that plays out. We're just getting the information, you know, the last couple of weeks. So we don't have a final -- a final plan yet. But it is, you know, it's nice to know that's something coming down the pike.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Mr. Presiding Officer.

P.O. LINDSAY:

Holly, if I know that all of our food banks and food pantries around the County are kind of strapped and I know certain seniors depend on them on a weekly basis. I'm wondering if anything could be done to set up a separate food bank for just seniors, you know, because of the economic crunch, more and more people using. Hopefully we come out of this funk where, you know, the food banks

won't be as strapped as much. Maybe that's something you could think about.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

My understanding is that they still -- we have to do all the same criteria that we have for the regular meals, but, you know, it is something that I can look at. That's why I was thinking about, you know, either doing packaging shelf stable meals that we can give out, you know, but they'd have to somehow still be part of our program. So we're looking into different -- different options at this point. You know, we will try to do something with possibly the wait list that we have for home delivered meals as well.

Anybody have anything else for me?

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Holly, one more time, what was the date of the luncheon?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

The luncheon is May 14th.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

All right. Very good.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

So it's a Thursday. So if you could make it, we'd love to have you there.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Right, yep. We'll see you then.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

Thanks.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

All right. Thank you.

Tom.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Good afternoon, Chairman, Mr. Presiding Officer, members. Thank you again for the invitation to return.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

I just want to make sure that your mike is on.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Better? I've got just a few items to cover. I think most of it is actually not bad news. I'd like to begin with certainly we had no shortage of sad occasions at the airport at MacArthur with the return of our service members coming home. This weekend we actually had the opportunity to participate in a homecoming. We had a female Marine Sergeant from Holbrook who returned from Iraq. It was very well attended. We had in excess of 100 motorcycles from the Patriot Guard Riders who provided an escort from the airport to her home. But it was nice to have a celebratory type of event at the airport. And we certainly were well represented there. I presented a certificate to the Marine on behalf of the Veterans Service Agency and the County Executive. And we look forward to many more of those types of events.

Saturday also we had a busy day at MacArthur. 6:00 AM we began gathering for an 8:00 AM departure of yet another Honor Flight. This trip they were able to accommodate a total of 53 combined World War II veterans and escorts on the trip. I can tell you that the number of veterans

was about 38. Of the 38 they had to screen more than 95 from the list that they have been working with, which says that they had to call 95 people to get 38 able to make the trip at this point. All the more demonstrates the need for this program to be supported.

There is another Honor Flight scheduled very shortly. May 2nd, Saturday, May 2nd, 6:00 AM, we begin setting up. The hospitality will take place until about 7:30 and then they'll board for an 8:00 AM flight down to Washington. And the trip is, you know, as they all are.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

That's also from MacArthur?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Also from MacArthur. There is a third trip schedule for June, I believe it's June 20th, but I'll confirm that date. And we're hoping to do as many trips as we can in rapid succession so that we can get these World War II veterans while they're still healthy and ambulatory enough to make this trip. It's -- you know, there's no argument, it's always a wonderful experience for them. But, you know, it's just -- it's tragic that so many had expressed a desire to go and now because of the wait from the fall to the spring, their circumstances have changed and they're not any longer able to make the trip, so. We're pushing, we're hoping that we can get as much support as we can for the program to allow it to continue and to get as many World War II veterans down to Washington as we're able.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

And it's unfortunate that there is that challenge in trying to make spots available but it's also great to see that what started out as a program where we actually had to take an affirmative step to reach out to people --

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Yeah.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

-- to let them know about it now that there is this waiting list.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Yeah, the waiting list right now stands at about 100 World War II veterans so we're hopeful to get at least two, ideally three trips out. And as the list grows, we'll do whatever is possible to accommodate it.

On Saturday, at Northport VA, they held a Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day, which was again very successful. There were approximately 200 Vietnam Veterans from the community who attended the event who had not been previously enrolled in the VA system. Of the 200, we from our office actually screened and interviewed about 35 of them and we look forward to having them come to the office and serve them as new clients. So any day you can bring 200 new veterans into a building and get them enrolled in VA health care, that's a winner. Very successful.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

That's great.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Speaking of success, in partnership with the New York State Small Business Association, we work very closely with a gentleman named John Narciso who coordinates the Downstate efforts for veterans' small business opportunity. And for whatever the reason, and John could certainly quantify better than I, there is just -- there seems to be a real rash of opportunities being made available to veterans in the franchise area. Many, many franchises for some reason -- not for some reason, but I think to me and you the reasons are clear, but the timing is interesting that they're coming forward and they're offering really wonderful opportunities for veterans. They're -- they're making -- distinguishing between veterans and disabled veterans. But, I mean, these opportunities

range anywhere from providing discounts in the upfront franchise fee to forgiving the franchise fee altogether, reducing the percentage of royalties that are paid versus a nonveteran franchise owner, interest free loans for the securing of the buildings and the equipment and so forth. There's in most instances a great deal of money to be saved if the veterans seek these -- seek these opportunities out.

So we've taken the step of increasing the amount of literature and information that we are making available through our office as these opportunities expand. And we would -- we would hope that through your offices if we could provide some of this, what they call *vetpreneur* literature that we help some of these folks coming home especially in this job market where if you have -- if you have a good work ethic, if you have a novel idea, you know, the job market is tough out there right now. There might be an opportunity for somebody to enter into an entrepreneur -- an entrepreneurial venture and do something, you know, in a market where a lot of people are having challenges and difficulties.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Yeah. So glad you mention that. And, yes, anything that you could do to educate all of us and get us the information and those materials that we can distribute through our district offices. I mean, you were here, we were all here when Lou Delli-Pizzi was here and we reached out to him and asked what we can do to help; was it access to housing, was it medical care or other social services. And he said, of course, all of that's important, but by far most important it's all about jobs.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Yeah.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

So this is critically important information that we all need to get out there.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

And this is nice because, you know, we're all -- we're all cut from slightly different cloths, not everybody is meant to work for somebody else, not everybody is meant to make a military career. Private business ownership and opportunities like this certainly provide a window for a segment of the folks out there who really would be most benefitted by this type of an opportunity.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

That's great.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I just -- sadly I'd like to report to you that we had yet another member of the 69th come home. We buried him last Monday. He was cut from the 69th due to an injury and had been recovering at the Army Medical Center at Fort Bragg North Carolina. He had been down there about 12 months. The initial cause of death was a heart attack. The question is we're waiting to find out what the -- what was the cause of the heart attack. But Corporal Jerome Johnson, 42 years old, we interred him at Calverton on Monday of last week.

Another very interestingly, and this one is sort of sad story that ends on a happy note is about ten months ago last year, a New York City Police Officer happened upon a deceased homeless person. The person had a VA enrollment ID card on his person and at the time they thought that was enough. For whatever the reason the various agencies that were involved were never able to verify his veteran status in terms of eligibility for interment. And honestly it got passed from one agency to another and there were a lot of acronyms out there.

Ultimately the navel -- the Military Record Personnel Center in St. Louis confirmed his veteran status and his eligibility for interment at which time one of the staff members at the New York City ME's Office -- the person had been a Marine. He contacted somebody from the New York State Marine Corps League who rallied some Marine veterans together and his nickname -- they coined him the

iceman because he had been on ice for so long. He had no known next of kin. Obviously he was homeless when he was discovered. And the sendoff that he was able to be given, and I want to thank Joe Caracappa who is not here anymore, was really remarkable. In about two-and-a-half days we were able to put together a procession. We had a funeral parlor donate a beautiful wooden casket. Had in excess of 100 people in the procession, took him out and interred in at Calverton on Wednesday. But this person who was homeless and had no known next of kin, when his military status had been established, the veterans got behind him, gave him a dignified and respectable sendoff and I think it's important to know that those cases exist as well.

The Veteran's Assistance Fund that the Leg was so generous in funding is doing good things. The funds are being expended. We're doing a lot of primarily oil drops. Thank God we had a mild winter and it looks like we're waning -- waning now on the need for the oil drops, but that was the majority of what we saw over the winter. That was much needed and thank goodness it was there for us. We hope that that continues to be the case.

Moving forward. Armed Forces Day is fast approaching. Saturday, May 16th at 11:00 AM, Armed Forces Plaza as is every year. We again this year will have the Marine Corps {UH-64D} helicopter, the restoration project from Greenport. We'll be flying her in earlier in the morning. And she is now designated as a not-for-profit flying museum. So she'll be on the ground for the entire day. Hopefully children, veterans, family members will come over and take advantage of it, get a little bit of an education, tour the aircraft, speak to the crew members.

And we have a couple of other things that we're still hoping to put together, but I won't -- I won't say anything about in the event that they don't happen.

Before we have Armed Forces Day we will be doing the groundbreaking for the Suffolk County Gold Star Families Monument, again at Armed Forces Plaza. That will be Saturday, May 9th at 12 noon. We would invite any member of the Leg, any member of your staff, any members of the community to attend and join us that day. Obviously we'll have representation from the veterans' community, elected officials, most importantly Gold Star Families, will put shovel in ground.

The monument is well underway in terms of its construction and inscription. We hope to have it in place on time. The date of the actual dedication, the unveiling and the dedication of the monument itself is mid September. It had tentatively been set as September 20th. Apparently there were several conflicts on that date. The likelihood is that it will move to Saturday, September 27th. Again that would be at noon at Armed Forces Plaza and the date of the 27th is tentative. I should certainly know by our next session.

And I think that is all that I have for you today. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

LEG. BROWNING:

The time for the Armed Forces Day again on the --

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Armed Forces ceremony will being at 11:00 AM.

LEG. BROWNING:

11:00 AM.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

11:00 AM.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I should note, as a part of that ceremony, many of you will remember that last year when the Fighting 69th deployed to Iraq -- I'm sorry, to Afghanistan, we presented to Lieutenant Delli-Pizzi a large Suffolk County flag that had been flown over the County. Lieutenant Delli-Pizzi took that flag with the unit to Afghanistan and they had flown -- they flew the flag over their forward operating base or their FOB. The flag has now been folded and retired and the Fighting 69th will be present at the event to return the flag to the County Executive. So there's a nice story. I think there will be a little bit of a chronology in terms of where the flag went and what the flag saw while it was deployed with the 69th. But they are returning it; they're bringing it home. So that should be a nice part of this -- of the overall ceremony.

Again we hope that you'll all be able to join us there. We'll have plenty of seating for you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Very good. Yeah, Legislator Browning.

LEG. BROWNING:

Did you get something about the 106th on May 2nd? Something to do with the return for soldiers or something on May 2nd.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Not that I'm aware of right now. I may have something in the office that I haven't been brought up to speed yet on.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I'll certainly check.

LEG. BROWNING:

Well, I'm just wondering. I know my son's coming home in May, but I don't know the exact day. And a local Girl Scout group are going out there with cookies and stuff, so I was just --

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Is it their annual Family Appreciation Day?

LEG. BROWNING:

They called it something to do about a welcome home for soldiers that were coming home that day. And I don't know.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I'm not aware of it.

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I'll check into it as soon as I return to the office.

LEG. BROWNING:

Because it's not the day that my son gave me so I'm hoping it's May 2nd. Okay, thanks.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Tom, thanks.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Okay. Anybody else, anybody else? No other business so we are adjourned. Thank you.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 12:43 PM

{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY