

**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 June 1, 2009.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

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

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

George Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature  
Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel  
Craig Freas, Budget Review Office  
Bennie Pernice, Budget Review Office  
Barbara LoMoriello, Deputy Clerk  
Paul Perillie, Aide to majority leader  
Linda Bay, Aide to minority leader  
Deborah Harris, Aide to Leg. Stern  
Brendan Chamberlain, County Executive Aide  
Bob Martinez, Aide to Leg. Montano  
Catherine Stark, Aide to Leg. Schneiderman  
Debra Alloncius, AME Legislative Director  
Jack Caffey, Aide to Presiding Officer  
And all other interested parties

**MINUTES TAKEN BY:**

Diana Kraus, Court Stenographer

## **THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 11:42 AM**

### **CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Welcome everybody to the Veterans and Senior Committee. I'd ask everybody to please rise and join us in the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Montano.

### **SALUTATION**

Please remain standing for a moment of silence as we keep all our brave men and women fighting for our freedom overseas in our thoughts and prayers.

### **MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED**

Thank you. Peggy?

### **PRESENTATION**

You can stand there or sit at the table.

### **MS. ORSINO:**

I'd prefer to sit.

### **CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Come on and sit.

### **MS ORSINO:**

Good morning. I'm Peggy Orsino. I'm the Executive Director of RSVP Suffolk which stands for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program. And I want to thank Steven Stern for inviting me here to talk about the program to all the Legislators. And I'd like to thank those that have continued to support RSVP presently and in the past because it's been a real economic roller coaster as I don't have to tell you for not-for-profits in Suffolk County.

RSVP was established back in 1972 and has been in operation for 37 years offering programs and services to about 110 organizations throughout Suffolk County. We have our own programs which are Telephone Reassurance and Friendly Visiting as well as the -- our newest program is only three years old come this August. And it's the Community Computer Connections Program. It takes refurbished computers and gives them to low income families in Suffolk and seniors that really could benefit from the technology but they can't afford it.

So we have corporate donations of technology that have been taken by tech savvy seniors that refurbish them under Microsoft operating license that the program has. And we give them back at no cost for the technology nor the labor to families with children and seniors that could really benefit by having this kind of technology in their house.

To date we have given out about 850 computers. And the feedback that we get from the families as well as the seniors is great because for the seniors they can order their groceries and medications on line and have them deliver to their home, which takes away some of the anxiety of being isolated in the community.

And for the formers that have children, it makes them -- the children -- enhances their academic pursuits because they're able to do their homework assignments at home. We had one mother that personally called me and thanked me because she wasn't commuting back and forth to the different public computers that are available at libraries, evenings, so that her son could finish his research and term papers at home. And for the son he said it lessened the embarrassment of having to hand write papers that his financially stabled piers were able to do by virtue of the fact that they had a PC in their house.

So it's a great program. It's kind of out of the box for RSVP in that it offers kind of a new age activity for seniors that are interested in doing something in their community. But it's much more than just stuffing envelopes. As is most of the volunteer opportunities that we offer now are not stuffing envelopes because there are volunteers that we have coming up, although we expected baby boomers to just be like a tsunami; three years ago when they all turned 62, that didn't happen. And, of course, now they're trying to fix their fractured nest eggs so we're hoping that in 2011 when they turn 65, we'll be seeing them in greater numbers. Right now they're still out there working either part-time or still remaining at their jobs full-time.

We offer a travel reimbursement for their volunteerism. We have about -- we have 1235 seniors enrolled in the program. And at any given time about 1500 are active. We offer travel reimbursement for them getting back and forth to their sites because volunteerism is supposed to cost you time and not money and as well as offer them liability insurance while they're volunteering at their site.

These seniors last year gave over 158,000 hours worth of service. And that if you go on the independent sector, it's a website that evaluates the value of a volunteer's value state by state. And we're lucky enough in New York to be worth about \$26 an hour. If you volunteer in Kansas, you're only worth \$13 an hour so I don't know what the math is but we do know that this equated to over \$3.7 million worth of man power that are given to soup kitchens, hospitals, schools, museums where the volunteers work as docents. And a whole bunch of other different organizations that have partnered with us so that we can act as a clearing house for seniors that would really like to help out in their community but just don't know where to start. So our program coordinators were able to talk them about their skills and talents and place them where they think that they would have some meaningful activity.

You can't take anything for granted. We have teachers that never want to see a child again. And then we have others that would love to get back in the classroom. We have accountants that never want to do math again but would love to do environmental gardening so we're able to place them by having our associations with all the different not-for-profit organizations throughout Suffolk.

Our telephone reassurance program calls over 400 seniors that are homebound or isolated in the community daily. So last year about 96,000 phone calls were made by volunteers that love to talk so it was a good match. And emergency services was called on several occasions when the senior didn't answer their phone in the morning. And that gives them a certain piece of mind. We're seeing a lot more adult children of elderly call and ask if we can make that phone call to mom or dad in the morning because they're still out working and don't have the opportunity or the consistency to call and make sure that their loved ones are okay. So they know if they're hearing from us during their workday, that we have called and haven't been able to get in touch with mom or dad. So it's a very worthwhile program. It's partially funded by the Suffolk County office for the Aging.

We also have a Feeling Good Program which is again something that has come of age for seniors to make better informed wellness life-style decisions. And so we have trained exercise instructors that go into senior centers and nutrition centers and run exercise programs and wellness discussions. And as well as we have different speakers come in and speak to them on senior health topics at the centers. So that's attended to by over 900 seniors visiting the senior nutrition centers on a weekly basis.

We also have a Speakers Bureau which goes out and addresses topics of alcoholism and substance abuse in the elderly as well as how to prepare for a visit to your doctor and ask the appropriate questions as well as talking about the use of over-the-counter medications as opposed to their own prescribed medications and the dangers of that.

Friendly Visiting is another service of ours that has become very popular. And it's seniors visiting seniors in the home to, again, lessen the feelings of isolation and to give them some generational peer chats and reminisce with them and just to give them that feeling that they're certainly as they age out in their community not alone.

We're very proud to be in our 37th year and I thank you again to those Legislators, Kate Browning, thank you, for the community service initiatives that have been offered to us in the past. It's certainly enables us. We're funded for 805 seniors. And like I said we at any given time have about 1500 serving in the community. Thank you, Steven.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Good. Peggy, thank you. Questions anyone? Fine, very good. Thank you to you, to the organization, the great work that you and the volunteers do --

**MS. ORSINO:**

Thanks so much.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

-- for so many in our community. Thanks for being with us today.

**MS. ORSINO:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

I have no other cards. So we will move to the agenda.

**TABLED RESOLUTIONS**

We have tabled **resolution 1331, authorizing the filing of a grant application on behalf of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) for federal capital assistance for the purchase of vans for its transportation programs. (Browning)** I will make a motion to table, second by Legislator Browning.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Why are you tabling?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Do you want to explain, George? I'll have Counsel explain the two resolutions that are before us today.

**MR. NOLAN:**

The tabled resolution IR 13331 and the introductory resolution 1455 are very similar. But the difference is the IR 1331 makes the local share, which is 10 percent for the purchase of these vans that the DAV would pay that amount, the \$14,000.

IR 1455 states that the County will pay the local share of \$14,000. DAV has indicated to a number of Legislators the difficulty in paying that \$14,000 for the vans.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

DAV is who?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Disabled American Veterans. You're good, Rick?

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Yes.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Okay. There's a motion to table and a second by Legislator Browning. All in favor? Any opposed? Any abstention? Motion carries. **(Vote: 5-0)**

**INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS**

**Introductory Resolution 1455, authorizing the filing of a grant application on behalf of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) for federal capital assistance for the purchase of vans for its transportation programs and amending the 2009 Operating Budget and amending the 2009 Capital Budget to provide funds for the purchase of the purchase of vans for Disabled Veteran Veterans (DAV) (CP 5658) (Browning)**

**LEG. BROWNING:**

I'll make a motion to approve.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Motion to approve by Legislator Browning.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Second.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Second by Legislator Schneiderman. Any questions on the motion? Okay. All in favor? Any opposed? Any abstention? Motion is approved. **(Vote: 5-0)**

**LEG. BROWNING:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Will the Clerk please list me as a co-sponsor. Thank you. Co-sponsor for --

**LEG. MONTANO:**

All of us.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Everybody? Everybody, everybody. Very good.

All right. We don't have any other representatives here today so we are good to go. Right? Anybody else? Anybody else? All right. We are adjourned. Thank you.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 11:55 AM  
{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**