

**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 October 5, 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:**

George Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature  
Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel  
Benny Pernice, Budget Review Office  
Steve Tricaraco, Deputy County Executive  
Tom Ronayne, Director of Veterans Service Agency  
Barbara LoMoriello, Deputy Clerk  
Paul Perillie, Aide to majority leader  
Linda Bay, Aide to minority leader  
Deborah Harris, Aide to Leg. Stern  
Josh Slaughter, Aide to Leg. Browning  
Bob Martinez, Aide to Leg. Montano  
Catherine Stark, Aide to Leg. Schneiderman  
Debra Alloncius, AME Legislative Director  
Dot Kerrigan, AME  
Jeanmarie Brand, Senior Citizens Advisory Board appointee  
Rick Brand, Newsday  
Dennis Brown, County Attorney's Office  
Jack Caffey, Aide to Presiding Officer  
Gene Pritz, Senior Citizens Advisory Board  
And all other interested parties

**VERBATIM RECORD TAKEN BY:**

Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer

**MINUTES TRANSCRIBED BY:**

Denise Weaver, Legislative Aide

## THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 11:53 AM

### CHAIRMAN STERN:

Good morning everybody. I apologize for the delay. Welcome to the Committee on Veterans and Seniors. I ask everybody to please rise and join us in the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Montano.

### SALUTATION

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

### MOMENT OF SILENCE

Thank you. Okay. Welcome everyone. We're going to -- I guess we'll go to Director Ronayne first. But before we do, Gene, did you -- Gene? I don't have any cards, but did you want to address the Committee? Gene, was there something that in particular that you were here on?

### MR. PRITZ:

(Shaking head no)

### CHAIRMAN STERN:

No. Okay. Director Ronayne.

### DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Good morning, Chairman, members, thank you again for the invitation to join you here today.

I actually have a fairly brief report to make this session. Most of it is just going over events that have either taken place recently or are upcoming. Certainly I think the highlight and several of the members were in attendance two Saturdays ago, when we dedicated the Suffolk County Gold Star Families Monument. The event was very well attended; certainly long overdue. And I thank all of those members who were -- were able to join us and be there with our Gold Star Families to commemorate and dedicate the monument.

We -- well I should say, I, was notified several days ago that most of the members of the Fighting 69th who are back, the entire -- the entire complement from the Huntington Armory and the large majority of the complement from the Bay Shore Armory will be deploying in the next -- in the very near future to Japan. I don't know how long they'll be there. I understand it is for training in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom Operation Enduring Freedom, but there will be a considerable number of the Fighting 69th deployed on this operation.

Over the weekend we had several events. One of them was sponsored by Town of Babylon. It was a Welcome Home Program for veterans. Please pardon my cough. Again, well attended, very successful. And we encourage and appreciate the fact that Babylon, and we would hope that other towns would do likewise and support their local veterans in welcoming them home and exposing them to services and benefits that may be available to them that the troops and their families potentially would not be aware of otherwise.

There was a concert held last night in Brookhaven at the Brookhaven Amphitheater in partnership with the Town of Brookhaven and the Suffolk Police Veterans Association. And this was intended to be a fundraiser and an awareness event for our returning veterans. And again largely to raise funds for some of the organizations who do so much in the community to support the needs of our veterans who need just that little bit of extra assistance.

Tonight at 6:00 PM at the Suffolk County Community College there will be a medals presentation. Congressman Israel will be presenting the Jubilee Medal to veterans who participated in the Normandy Invasion. Many of these veterans never received some of the awards that they were entitled to. The Jubilee Medal was awarded or was issued or authorized for issue many, many years after Normandy. And it's been a real challenge catching up to and identifying the veterans who are eligible that are still with us. Again, this has been done about once a year. I think they're trying to do it more than once a year unfortunately because we are losing World War II veterans at such a dramatic rate.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

When is that going to be?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

That is tonight 6 PM at Suffolk County Community College in the theater.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Brentwood?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Brentwood, yes.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Yeah, if I may? Tom, I knew about the meeting. I didn't know about the veterans thing. I thought that meeting was on the health issue, health care.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

In Babylon?

**LEG. MONTANO:**

No, with Congressman Israel tonight.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

My understanding -- my notes tell me it was a Jubilee Medal presentation.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

All right. And it's not dealing with health care then as far as you know.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

It may be.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

No, no. I'm trying to find out because I may be under a misimpression, that's why.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

In my -- my notes have it as a Jubilee Medal presentation ceremony.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Got you. Okay. I'll check that. Thank you very much.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Yeah, I'll check it as well because if there's a --

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

If I may, the medals presentation is going to be done prior to the health care town hall meeting.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Oh, so it's going to be both.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

So they're both happening, but one after the other.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Got you.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

The other thing I would like to offer is, and again we do this occasionally, any of the members who would like to whether they've done this previously or not, any member who would like a tour of the VA facility at Northport and an introduction to senior staff, to be given an opportunity to, you know, just have a cup of coffee and a chat and discuss with the director and his staff the new philosophies and the operations and so forth at the hospital. There have been a number of changes made since Director Moschitta took the facility over a number of months ago. There have been some changes in staff and personnel, some programmatic changes.

And I think largely the members would be pleased to see what is happening up there. Again, in any bureaucracy the size of VA, there are always going to be bumps in the road and we understand that. My feeling is that if there's a bump in the road, VA acknowledges it and addresses it, then that would be a success. We seem to be on that path in Northport.

When we do occasionally have the problems, they are addressed very quickly. We are reported to on the circumstances of what the problems were and how they were addressed, what would be put in place to prevent those things from occurring again in the future. And again, largely we -- we're very happy with the operations out there.

So, please, any of you or all of you if you as a group would like to visit the facility, please just let me know when you would like to do that.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Okay. Anybody else? Legislator Browning.

**LEG. BROWNING:**

The Honor Flight, do you know when there's another one scheduled?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

There's been some movement in the dates. I think the October flight, you'll have to forgive me, I don't have it with me, would be -- I want to say it's the 24th or the 25th, whichever of those might be a Saturday. I can e-mail the schedule to each of your offices when I get back to my office. But, again, we have three more flights scheduled for this year. They are always in need of escorts or guardians, as they're called. I know Legislator Browning has participated in one and, I think, got an appreciation that what was probably not entirely expected.

So anybody who would like to participate and serve as a guardian and make the trip to Washington, I can tell you it's very fulfilling. It's something you'll walk away from being you happy that you had -- that you had done it.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Okay. Tom, thank you.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Okay. Do we have representative from Aging in the administration today? Okay, no.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Mr. Chairman?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Montano.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Yeah, I had some questions with respect to the Senior Citizens Advisory Board. I believe that is -- is that run by the Aging Department or it works with the Aging Department?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

It is not formally with the Office for the Aging. It is a County Executive's advisory board. And so I believe that these are County Executive appointments. It's an administrative executive advisory board.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Does the Legislature have appointments to this committee?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

I don't believe that we do.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Do they have anyone from the County Exec's Office here?

**MR. BROWN:**

There's no one here from the County Exec's Office at the moment, Legislator. But I'm checking the code right now to see if there are any Legislative appointments.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Okay. Would you -- yeah, I'd just like to know. And would you also while you're checking, I'd like to know how many appointments this board consists of.

**MR. BROWN:**

Yeah. I'll see what I can find out for you, sure.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Thanks. I appreciate that.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Okay. We do have a list of introductory resolutions and reappointments.

**TABLED RESOLUTIONS**

But we have an initial appointment and that is **IR 1732, Approving the appointment of Jeanmarie Brand as a member of the Senior Citizens Advisory Board (Co. Exec. Levy)** Ms. Brand, why don't you come on forward. You can stand there. You can sit at the table if you'd like, whatever you'd prefer.

Thank you for being with us this afternoon. And maybe you can tell us about yourself.

**MS. BRAND:**

Thank you. Good morning. My name is Jeanmarie Brand and I work at the Long Island State Veterans Home. That's a 350 bed skilled nursing facility for veterans and spouses of veterans. I

actually run the Adult Day Health Care Program, which is an outpatient medical day program for veterans and spouses who have chronic medical illnesses who live in the community, who come in during the daytime to receive health and social services.

I've been, I guess, working in the field of long-term care, I would say, for about 17 years now. I've worked in the private nursing home industry. I've worked in community mental health. And I would say for the last 17 years I've really dedicated my professional career to working with aging veterans in Suffolk County.

But I do work with many other community agencies including the Suffolk County Office for Aging, the Suffolk County Department of Social Services, the Department of Veterans Affairs. I'm very -- also involved with Stony Brook University with School of Social Welfare and the School of Health Technology and Management.

I also belong to a few professional organizations, which include Geriatric Professionals of Long Island, which is a networking organization of aging professionals, geriatric professionals in Nassau and Suffolk County. And I also belong to the Adult Day Health Care Council, which is part of NYAHS, which is the New York Association of Health and Services for the Aging. And I've been a very active member of both of those organizations for several years.

In terms of my education I have a Master's degree from Stony Brook from the School of Health Technology and Management. I also am an adjunct faculty member at the school. I hold a second Master's degree from Stony Brook in social welfare. And I also have a geriatric certification as well.

So I was really pleased to be -- and honored actually to be asked to be a member of the Senior -- of the Senior Citizen Advisory Board. It's really an honor to have the opportunity to be considered to serve with this distinguished board.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Thank you. Thank you so much for being here and for agreeing to serve our County and our seniors. We really appreciate your dedication. I can tell you, having served myself on the Senior Citizens Advisory Board prior -- years ago prior to my election, I can tell you that that it is an organization that does a good job. But at the same time can certainly welcome your background and professional experience. I know you'll be a great asset to the board.

**MS. BRAND:**

Thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Anybody? Okay. Thank you, thank you.

**MS. BRAND:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

So that being the case, we have **IR 1732, approving the appointment of Jeanmarie Brand as a member of the Senior Citizens Advisory Board (Co. Exec. Levy)** I will make a motion to approve.

**LEG. EDDINGTON:**

Second.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Second by Vice Chairman Eddington. All in favor? Any opposed? Any abstention? Motion carries.  
**APPROVED (VOTE: 5-0)** Congratulations and thank you.

**MS. BRAND:**

Thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Oh, yes. Let me just say that we have approved your appointment in Committee. That will now go before the full Legislature for a vote, but you don't need to appear, you having appeared before us today. Thank you.

**MR. BROWN:**

Sure. In connection with Legislator Montano's question, it's ten members. It's at -- not less than ten members and they are County Executive appointments.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Also, if I may, as I'm looking at this it says, so it's not less than ten, but there is no maximum number?

**MR. BROWN:**

That's correct.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Okay. And it says what, one half of the members shall be residents of the County. So I'm assuming we can have nonresidents serving on this board?

**MR. BROWN:**

I'd make the same assumption, sure.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

And 60 years of age or over so -- and at least one such member shall be a member of an ethnic minority group.

**MR. BROWN:**

Correct.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Do you know who that is?

**MR. BROWN:**

I do not know.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Do you know if we have one on the board right now?

**MR. BROWN:**

I do not. But -- I do not, but, you know, I can check if for you.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Okay. Well, I have the list here. Is she, Coverdale, is Reverend Coverdale's wife, is that -- well, that's what I'm -- yeah, I thought she lived in Riverhead, that's why. All right. But, you know, you're not from the County Exec's Office so I wouldn't expect you to know the appointments. But thanks, Dennis, I appreciate it. And I got what I was looking for.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Okay. That brings us to introductory resolutions and these -- this is a list of reappointments to the Senior Citizen Advisory Board.

## **INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS**

**IR 1807, Approving the reappointment of Arlene Stevens as a member of the Senior Citizens Advisory Board (Co. Exec. Levy)** I will make a motion to approve, second by Vice Chairman Eddington. All in favor? Any opposed? Any abstention? **IR 1807 is approved. (VOTE: 5-0)**

**IR 1808, Approving the reappointment of Carolyn Gallogly as a member and Chairperson of the Senior Citizens Advisory Board (Co. Exec. Levy)** I'll make a motion to approve.

**LEG. EDDINGTON:**

Second.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Second by Vice Chairman Eddington.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Do same motion, same second.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Same motion. Is that okay with everybody? Same motion, same second, same vote. **IR 1808 is approved. (VOTE: 5-0)**

**IR 1809, Approving the reappointment of Elizabeth Eggleston as a member of the Senior Citizens Advisory Board. (Co. Exec. Levy)** Same motion, same second, same vote. **IR 1809 is approved. (VOTE: 5-0)**

**IR 1810, Approving the reappointment of Christine Castiglia-Rubenstein as a member of the Senior Citizens Advisory Board. (Co. Exec. Levy)** Same motion, same second, same vote. **IR 1810 is approved. (VOTE: 5-0)**

**IR 1811, Approving the reappointment of Gene Pritz as a member of the Senior Citizens Advisory Board. (Co. Exec. Levy)** Same motion, same second, same vote. And for the record I'll just indicate that Mr. Pritz was here earlier to monitor what was going on with our committee. We're always pleased to have him here with us. **IR 1811 is approved. (VOTE: 5-0)**

**IR 1812, Approving the reappointment of Christine Shiebler as a member of the Senior Citizens Advisory Board. (Co. Exec. Levy)** Same motion, same second, same vote. **IR 1812 is approved. (VOTE: 5-0)**

**IR 1813, Approving the reappointment of Chestene Coverdale as a member of the Senior Citizens Advisory Board. (Co. Exec. Levy)** Same motion, same second, same vote. **IR 1813 is approved. (VOTE: 5-0).**

Anybody else, anybody else? All right. Very good. Anybody else? Any other business? Very good. We are adjourned. Thank you.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 12:13 PM**

**{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**