

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 September 2, 2010.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. Steven H. Stern, Chairman
Leg. Jack Eddington, Vice Chair
Leg. Jon Cooper (not present)
Leg. Daniel P. Losquadro
Leg. Edward P. Romaine

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel
Renee Ortiz, Chief Deputy Clerk
Ben Zwirn, County Executive's Office
Ed Hennessey, Aide to County Executive
Benny Pernice, Budget Review Office
Laura Halloran, Budget Review Office
Jack Caffey, Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Tom Ronayne, Director of Veterans Service Agency
Holly Rhodes-Teague, Director of Office for the Aging
Paul Perillie, Aide to Majority Leader
Linda Bay, Aide to Minority Leader
Deborah Harris, Aide to Leg. Stern
Rick Cashman, Advanced Funding Services
Karen Bodstein, Family Service League, CEO
Frank Belsito, American Legion Pearl Harbor Post 1941
Sidney Lynn, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Veterans Assistance Program
Lawrence Rafal, Touro Law School
Denise Doty, Touro Law School, Elder Law Program
Marianne Artusio, Touro Law School
Michael Picerno, Purple Heart Monument
Frank Bailey, Purple Heart Monument
And all other interested parties

VERBATIM MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer

MINUTES TRANSCRIBED BY:

Kim Castiglione, Legislative Secretary

(THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 11:35 P.M.)

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Okay. Welcome everyone, good morning. Welcome to the committee on Vets and Seniors and I would ask everybody to please rise and join us in the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Eddington.

SALUTATION

I would ask everyone to please remain standing and join in a moment of silence as we keep all of our brave men and women fighting for our freedom overseas in our thoughts and prayers.

MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED

Thank you. Good morning, thank you for being with us. We are scheduled to hear from a few guests this morning. But what I would like to do, if it is okay with my colleagues, we do have a couple of items on our agenda that require some votes, so let's take care of those votes first.

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

So let's go to our agenda of Introductory Resolutions, beginning with ***1866-10, Adopting Local Law -2010, A Local Law to register non-profit veterans organization in Suffolk County (Cilmi)***. This needs to be tabled for a public hearing, so I'll make the motion to table.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Second.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Second by Legislator Losquadro. All in favor? Any opposed? Any abstention? IR 1866 is tabled for a public hearing. **(VOTE: 4-0-0-1. LEG. COOPER NOT PRESENT)**

IR 1885-10, Designating the week of October 11-17 as "Aging in Place Week" in Suffolk County (Stern). I will make a motion to approve.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Second.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Second by Legislator Eddington. All in favor? Any opposed? Any Abstention? IR 1885 is approved. **(VOTE: 4-0-0-1. LEG. COOPER NOT PRESENT)**

Those are the items that require votes today. Going to our speakers today, do we want to wait a few moments? Are we expecting others? Okay. Let's start with -- let's ask Rick Cashman to -- Rick?

MR. CASHMAN:

I want to thank the committee for proposing the Aging in Place Bill. I think it's very important to have the senior community, throughout the United States that is, especially in Suffolk County, that these seniors should be aware of all of the services that's available to them. When I first approached counselor Stern -- Legislator Stern, he felt that it was a good thing to recognize a particular week, which is a national week, a national aging in place counselor set this week aside as designated for the seniors, and we in Suffolk County feel that we should have this week set aside as a bill in Suffolk County. We are very passionate about the seniors. I am a senior as well as a

veteran, and I thank the veterans for coming here today, and would like to see the seniors in Suffolk County know what all the facilities that are available to them.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Any questions? Rick, thanks so much for being with us today, and of course anything that you or your organization can do to help us, as Suffolk County level of government, but every level of government serving our seniors and our entire community throughout Suffolk County, assist with ensuring that our seniors and their families are aware of all of their options that can help ensure that they are able to remain in the homes that many of them built, in the communities that they love, to continue to enjoy their independence within their communities as much as possible, is certainly most welcome.

MR. CASHMAN:

We're available 7/24. All you have to do is pick up the phone and call or e-mail.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Thank you. How about Director Ronayne?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Good morning.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Tom, how are you?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Good morning. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. As always, thank you again for the invitation to appear before you. I have very little to report on this morning other than we are making good progress with the clinic in Riverhead. We have been in the early stages of discussing dates with VA as to when Suffolk County will complete our construction and be in the position to turn over the facility over to VA so that they can finalize the furnishings and the equipment and the staffing and so forth. And I was hopeful that at our next committee we would have a representative from VA here to share their perspective on the project.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Very good. Legislator Romaine.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Quick question, Tom. I had an opportunity to tour the facility with the Deputy Commissioner of Public Works last week. To say it was in an unfinished stage I think would be a fair assessment. It looked like a great deal of work had to be done. What is your estimate to have that work completed? What estimates have Public Works given you in terms of the completion of the work on that?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Well, firstly, I would agree with your assessment that there is a great deal of work left to be done. It's important to recognize that not all of that work is going to be done by Suffolk County. That will be an unfinished space when turned over to VA. All of the millwork, the cabinetry, the furniture, the medical equipment, anything in terms of operational and support for the space, telecommunications, computers, all of that will be done by VA. So when we turn the space over it will be an incomplete space.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Let's get back to that. When do you think the County -- essentially it's turning over finished/unfinished space. It's going to be finished in terms of occupyable, but then the final

touches have to be done by the VA. When do you think the County's part of that work will be done?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I'll share my understanding, certainly I won't speak on behalf of DPW, but I have been hearing possibly sometime in September, possibly as late as the early part of October.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Well, that would be a miracle if that work was done before October 1st. From my estimation, having toured the entire facility, it's only about 4,000 square feet, and having taken a look at that -- but let's hope you're right. How much time then will the VA need to do its work to put in its cabinets, its equipment, everything else of that nature.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

VA, without consulting with the County, has been distributing and posting flyers and posters in the Riverhead area stating that they project a December opening of the facility. They expect to be seeing patients by December.

LEG. ROMAINE:

So you think that that would take about -- approximately two months for their work to be done.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Yes, I would say that's probably reasonable. And when they complete their work, they also have the additional issue of staffing and training staff to run and operate in the facility.

On that note, I think that you would appreciate this, Mr. Romaine. The staffing for the clinic, VA is actually hiring locally. They are not necessarily transferring all of the staff from Northport to the new Riverhead clinic. They are going to be hiring locally from the Riverhead area to have people work in that clinic.

LEG. ROMAINE:

That's great, because I'm sure it will be packed. I just have that sense because so many of the veterans live on the East End, but they just get exhausted trying to make the trip to the -- to Northport for basic medical. I mean, obviously for the specialists and everything else --

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Right.

LEG. ROMAINE:

And even then there may be some scheduling of specialists that may be able to come out maybe one day a week or something if there is enough of a caseload demand. But it's just a long, long trip. I mean, the bus leaves Riverhead at seven o'clock in the morning, and if you live further east you are getting up at five maybe to get there, and it's a long trip.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I don't think anybody would argue that this facility, when it opens, will be a Godsend not only to the veterans on the East End, but to their families and their caregivers. I mean, you certainly know personally firsthand as a caregiver and a family member what it means.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Right. Unfortunately my father passed, but yeah, he was -- lived in Manorville and, you know, I cannot tell you the number of times, particularly at the end, where I had to take off. Unfortunately, what I find troubling, and this is something this committee and hopefully our congressmen are working on, if you avail yourself of veterans benefits, you're not eligible for Medicare. So if you go into a hospital, unless the VA steps in, you're not eligible for Medicare. It's one or the other.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

That's goes back to the old the feds won't bill the feds.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Absolutely incredible, and something that needs to be worked on for our veterans. I believe the County Executive is out there today having a press conference saying he's opening the East End vets clinic.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

That occurred earlier this morning.

LEG. ROMAINE:

This morning, when I was in the Sitings Committee. All right, thank you.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Anything else? Tom, certainly when we get closer to that day that we're all looking forward to, yes, if a representative of the VA can come down and speak with us about their upcoming plans for the facility, that would be great.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

With your permission I'll extend an invitation for one of their representatives to join us at the next committee.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

I would appreciate that. Thank you.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Romaine.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Quick thought, Mr. Chairman. It may be novel, but the committee may want to have its December or January meeting in Riverhead at our lovely facility there, and then we can take a tour of the vets clinic. I think that would be something that would be certainly worthwhile. I can certainly line up some East End veterans to talk about some of the issues that they have.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Very good.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Thank you.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Tom, thanks. Holly. I mean Frank Belsito.

(Legislator Jack Eddington left the meeting)

MR. BELSITO:

This is a test for seniors; you have to hold the button while you're talking. Before I start my comments, I would just like to say I compliment this committee and Ed Romaine for bringing this clinic to Riverhead and you are absolutely right, it will save our vets a big trip. It will even save the government some money. But I compliment you all for that.

Good morning, Mr. Chair and Suffolk County Legislators of the Veterans and Seniors Committee. I'm Frank Belsito, Commander of the American Legion Pearl Harbor Memorial Post No. 1941, located in Port Jefferson Village, New York.

I'd just like to have one moment of some past history. In 1988 I was appointed by the Suffolk County Veterans Chairman, Rose Caracappa, to serve on the Korean War Monument Committee, and then I was elected Chairman by the committee of five. The Korean Monument was to be erected in the Armed Forces Plaza in front of the Dennison Building. We completed not one, but two monuments, the soldier and the map of Korea. I'm proud to say we did not spend all the money the committee was given. As matter of fact, we completed the project under budget and saved the County \$15,000. It's a good feeling to be alive and see a veterans project that you have been part of. I'm very proud every time I drive by the monuments, and I still thank Rose Caracappa for the opportunity to have served on that committee.

Today I'm here to seek your help and support for the Purple Heart Monument that will be erected in Calverton National Cemetery. The monument will be the first in the continental United States dedicated to the 3,224 killed and 1,125 wounded during the attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. A U.S. Army Private Carl Johnson from Sayville, Long Island, was among the first killed in the attack. The monument will be dedicated on June 18, 2011, the 70th anniversary year of the attack. Many have asked me why in June. December 7th ceremonies have been cold with rain or snow and not many people in attendance for the Remember Pearl Harbor Ceremony. The month of June will have weather almost as nice as in Hawaii.

In your packet are copies of the \$5,000 grant from New York State and the \$2,000 grant from the Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Foundation which are for the Purple Heart Monument project. The monument was ordered with a deposit of \$2,500. Now we have noticed a problem with the monuments.

In your packet you will notice pictures of the Purple Heart Monument that were decided to Lieutenant Michael Murphy and to his fellow Navy Seals that were killed in Afghanistan. Notice the monuments are on ground level. The Purple Heart Monument that was erected by the Purple Heart Museum in Windsor, New York, has an altogether different look because the monument is raised and not on ground level.

This is why we are here today, to ask for your help and support and for additional funds of \$6,153 dollars needed to purchase the two additional bases, lettering and installation that would give the monument the look that it truly deserves.

I faxed a letter to Suffolk County Executive Levy and to the Suffolk County Veterans Service Agency Director Tom Ronayne to ask to have a meeting with them about this project and to ask if he, the County Executive, would add the additional funds needed to his budget. I called each office and was told that the fax was received. I followed up with some phone calls, but never had a meeting with either one.

Enclosed is the quote and scale drawing from Fricke Memorials for the two additional bases and the installation. Enclosed also is the complete budget for the monument project.

There will be a Boy Scout who will do the Purple Heart Monument Walkway and benches for his Eagle Scout project.

I'd like you to -- when you have a chance to take notice on page three of the budget that this committee will go -- will not go unnoticed for the support of this project by having the committee etched in stone and the thank you that you will be given in the dedication program. Each of you will also receive an invitation to the dedication ceremony. That is about it. Before I have any closing statement, Mr. Chairman, would there be any questions?

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Anyone have any questions?

LEG. ROMAINE:

Legislator Romaine.

LEG. ROMAINE:

We've met in the office to discuss this. I have indicated my support for this. You're looking to do a Pearl Harbor Monument at the Calverton National Cemetery; is that correct?

MR. BELSITO:

Purple Heart Monument.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Yes, Purple Heart Monument. You have got how much from the State of New York?

MR. BELSITO:

Five thousand.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Five thousand dollars from the State of New York and \$2,500 from the Purple Heart --

MR. BELSITO:

No, two thousand.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Two-thousand from the Purple Heart Association, and you need \$6,100 for the bases so that this monument can be appropriately erected at Calverton National Cemetery. And you've asked the County Executive to include this as a line item in his 2011 Operating Budget.

MR. BELSITO:

Yes, I did.

LEG. ROMAINE:

I think that that would be an excellent support considering you've got outside support, considering it's going to be at Calverton, which I believe is the largest national cemetery, isn't it?

MR. BELSITO:

It is right now the largest in property and it will be the largest in --

LEG. ROMAINE:

Largest national cemetery in the United States and we're blessed to have that. We actually have two national cemeteries in Suffolk County and you're looking to have this monument erected. You got most of your support, outside support, you're looking for County contribution.

Mr. Chairman, I think it would be appropriate if this committee drafted a letter, that you could send as our Chairman, to our County Executive urging his inclusion of this \$6,100 dollars in his 2011 Operating Budget.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

If we are going to have correspondence come from the committee, of course we have a member of the committee, and now Legislator Eddington, who is not with us, but that's something that we can discuss with other committee members, but I'll certainly reach out to our colleagues.

LEG. ROMAINE:

If Legislator Losquadro returns we'll have a quorum and I'll put that in the form of a motion.

MR. BELSITO:

I was hoping that being that Director Ronayne is here, that he would sit down with the County Executive and really inform him of just everything that I've said and all the information in the packet.

LEG. ROMAINE:

I'm sure Tom Ronayne as his representative and Veterans Service Agency Director will also carry this message back to the Executive, but I am prepared either at this meeting, or our next meeting when there is a full quorum here, to make a motion to have our County Executive know of this committee's support to include that number, \$6,100, in the budget for this monument at the Calverton National Cemetery.

MR. BELSITO:

Don't leave out the \$53.

LEG. ROMAINE:

I won't leave out the \$53, because I think it's important that we support this. I think the County Executive, who has always been friendly to our veterans organizations, would be looking to include this type of funding, which is a nominal amount in a very large budget, but would -- as a symbol for this monument to stand for all those who have served, particular in the largest national cemetery which we happen to have within our County. So, Mr. Belsito, thank you for making this presentation. Thank you for spearheading this effort, and I'll turn this back to our Chairman.

MR. BELSITO:

If I can make my closing statement, Mr. Stern?

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Sure, go ahead.

MR. BELSITO:

In closing, I would like to say that when I called Ed Romaine's office to present this monument project to him, because Calverton National Cemetery is in his district, that within one week I was sitting in his office asking for the direction of having Suffolk County help with the additional funds needed. I also want to say that when I called Legislator Stern's office to ask if I could be on the agenda for the Veterans and Seniors meeting and also have a meeting with him prior to the scheduled meeting, within a few days I received a phone call and I was told that I would be on the agenda and I was asked if I could meet with Legislator Stern here a half hour before the Veterans and Senior meeting began.

I truly appreciate Legislator Romaine and Legislator Stern's response about this project and I hope to say the same for each Legislator who's a part of this important Veterans and Seniors Committee.

I thank each of you for your attention, and with me today are Mike Picerno, the Director of Calverton National Cemetery, and Frank Bailey, who is the Calverton U.S. Gravesite Flag Chairman for the placing of the 217,000 flags on each grave for Memorial Day. Each has filled a card out for their time to address you. And I thank you very, very much.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Thanks so much. Before you go I wanted to confirm you had said that there was a \$5,000 grant from the State of New York and \$2,000 from the Purple Heart Foundation for a total of \$7,000 in grants towards this project. Have those funds been received?

MR. BELSITO:

Oh, yes. Well, actually, as you know, you got to send in the voucher to get your money back, and we did send in the \$2,500 to the State, which we did get a check back that was for the deposit of the Purple Heart Monument.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Thank you.

MR. BELSITO:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Mike Picerno.

MR. PICERNO:

Good morning, everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Sure, and good morning. Thanks for coming. It's good to see you.

MR. PICERNO:

Thank you. My name is Mike Picerno. I'm the Director of the Calverton National Cemetery. Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the proposal which Mr. Belsito has brought forward to you.

As the Director of the Calverton Cemetery I am authorized to accept donations and memorials that will beautify and enhance the cemetery, and I have notified Frank of our intention to place this memorial in a prominent location in the cemetery. As Legislator Romaine mentioned, Calverton is the largest cemetery in the entire VA system, encompassing over 1,000 acres and among the busiest with over 6,500 burials taking place on an annual basis. This monument will be placed in a prominent area near the entrance where the over 1,000 visitors a week will be able to view this. I view this as a part of an ongoing process whereby the cemetery will be used for educational purposes for schools, children in the future as a way to make American history come alive.

My acceptance of this monument is predicated upon Frank or other individuals providing the majority of the funding for the monument. I'm limited in what I can do only by providing some of the base substrate footing for the monument, and that's why I understand that he's coming forward here looking for additional funding to make this happen, but I'm fully in support of it. Are there any questions?

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Mike, is there ongoing maintenance that would be required, and is that maintenance provided by the cemetery or is that done by outside sources?

MR. PICERNO:

This would be minimal maintenance, some grass cutting, power washing, maintaining that we'd -- that we would handle without a problem at all.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Romaine?

LEG. ROMAINE:

Thank you. I'm extremely supportive of this effort and I'm thankful for your support. I appreciate Frank and his organization working on this monument and we are hopeful that the County Executive will include this in his budget for 2011. If he does not, I'm sure the committee will take a look at it as a committee vote to do an addition to either the omnibus or as a standalone, as a committee standalone, on this issue to try to obtain the 6,153 -- I don't want to leave the 53 out -- that is needed to complete this project so that it can move forward. It would be nice to know in 2011, which would be what, the 70th, is that the 70th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, that that June we would have a monument up that we can have an appropriate celebration to remember all those who died in our first involvement in World War II as a nation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Thank you. Yes, anybody else that would like to be heard on this issue?

MR. BAILEY:

Good morning, Mr. Stern and the members of the committee. My name is Frank Bailey. I am a volunteer with the Suffolk County Council of Boy Scouts of America. I have known Frank Belsito for at least 16 years because the Suffolk County Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts have decorated Calverton National Cemetery for Memorial Day. I know how hard he works, I know how much he cares. And as far as volunteers coming in and doing thing for the cemetery, Mr. Picerno and his administration and the administrations before him have been very supportive with Boy Scouts that wanted to do Eagle projects at the cemetery. One of our Scouts where I am, in Troop 433 in Middle Island, has done a project which was a walkway from the auxiliary parking lot to the flag assembly area.

And Mr. Belsito, when he proposed this idea, we have a boy in our troop that has come forward and wants to do the project that Frank is, you know, perceiving, which is a walkway, benches and maybe like a patio plaza area in front. Because it's going to have a prominent area we want to make sure that people that do want to stop and see it can park in the auxiliary parking area and walk to the monument and see it up close and personal. And we have a boy that is going to meet with Mr. Belsito over this weekend hopefully and start lining it up and doing it.

For those that know Eagle Scouts projects, and I'm sure you've all been to Eagle Scout ceremonies and you know what's involved, the boys are directed to get a crew, do fundraising, do whatever it needs to make the project possible. And we're hoping -- what we're excited at the Flag Committee is it probably will be mostly in place for Memorial Day next year. Even though the official dedication won't be until June, it may be in place and the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts and all the other voluntary organizations that come out and decorate for Memorial Day will see it in place and know that there's a dedication ceremony coming up and will probably take part in that.

So we are supporting Frank in this effort. We hope to do whatever fundraising that is necessary to make the surrounding area in front of the monument beautiful and worthwhile for people, visitors, family members, to come when they come into the cemetery to see loved ones to stop and see it, because it will be an impressive area. And we are very happy to be involved with Frank in this project.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Very good. Thank you.

MR. BAILEY:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Is there anybody else with us today who would like to be heard on this issue? All right. Thank you, thank you everybody for being with us today and sharing your thoughts. Holly?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

Good afternoon I think. I was just looking to see what time it was. I don't have a lot to report. We had a successful picnic in August, about 1,500 seniors came to it. It was warm, but it worked out fine.

Right now we are in the middle of hurricane prep. We are making phone calls to the sites to make sure that they're ready for tomorrow and if they are sending out extra meals for the seniors if they need to if they are not going to be open tomorrow. We're checking on our frail seniors to make sure that, you know, they are all set in case the storm hits tomorrow. So we've been working on that today, it's been pretty busy with that.

We'll be doing public hearings in the fall, one east, one west. That will be -- I don't have dates yet, but those will be coming up as well.

I don't know if you have questions for me on anything in particular? No? HEAP applications went out from the State a week ago, so the seniors are starting to send them back in, even though it officially doesn't open until November 1st. The State does a mail out to all the people who have had HEAP in the past, so those applications come in fast and furious. Now we process, you know, up until we can, and then they get their checks as soon as the program opens in November. So we are working on those as well.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Any idea, Holly, offhand, how many applications you received?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

Last year we put out 6,600 -- we processed 6,600 applications for the seniors. I think the mail out -- the mail out should be as many as received. I know last year's mail out they did over 4,000 applications that came in right away. I'm not sure what our number is this week because they only went out the last week, so they are coming in, but you know, a couple hundred a day are coming in. It's a lot. But they get -- you know, they are ready and then they go to DSS quicker, you know, they go over and then they process their end. So, hopefully we'll get their checks relatively soon after November 1st.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Romaine.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Yes, could you do me a favor and just either e-mail or fax my office some information on the HEAP applications so that we can notify our constituents?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

The HEAP information isn't out yet because the program officially doesn't open until November 1st. So as soon as we get it we'll send out the letter.

LEG. ROMAINE:

As soon as you get it so that I have an opportunity to encourage all my constituents who are eligible to apply.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

If they have not -- if they haven't received it in the past they have to wait until the program opens November 1st, and we do send that information out as an interested parties memo to all the Legislators.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Well, right now is there a County component of HEAP?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

That would be through DSS. I don't know what they're doing with that. As soon as we have information we'll send it out.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Okay. Do you have a limitation to the amount of funding available?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

HEAP always has limitations. It's not --

LEG. ROMAINE:

So it's first come, first served.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

It's first come, first served, but the program has stayed open until they close it in the middle of May the last couple of years. They haven't closed it early.

LEG. ROMAINE:

I suspect this year may be a little bit different.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

I'm not sure.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Simply because of the economy and more people may be eligible and more people who may not have sought assistance in the past may seek it this year. Thank you.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Thank you. Okay. As a part of our public portion is there anybody else who would like to address the committee? Seeing none, it is really my pleasure to invite our friends from Touro Law School. Dean Raful is with us today, Denise and Maryanne are with us here today as well. Let's have everybody come on up.

MR. RAFUL:

Good afternoon, Legislator Stern. Legislator Romaine, nice to see you. And to the members of the committee, we are here today to give you an update on the senior citizens project at the law school and ask you to consider us for renewal when that time comes up.

As you know, briefly, the Clinical Program at Touro Law School is run by Professor Marianne Artusio, who is an expert in Long Island and the State in elder law. Her clinic is in elder law. We also have clinics in mental health law and domestic violence. This year we've added a new series of clinics, a mortgage foreclosure clinic, which was started with money from Albany and from local banks and also from the Suffolk County Legislature gave us a grant for that. We started a veterans clinic, the only veterans clinic in the State of New York, and that came from money from the Federal Government and also from private donors. We started a landlord, tenant and consumer fraud clinic with money from the State court system and private donors. And so this was all in place when we were notified of the opportunity to start a senior citizens project.

We have had a very good relationship, I think, with Holly Rhodes-Teague, with Maureen Porta, Regina Deturo at the senior citizens office. We were able to quickly start by three outstanding hires, two outstanding lawyers and a paralegal who had worked at the office previously. And we have also included faculty and student assistance in that clinic and they have been busy from day one. And Denise Doty, an attorney who is the Director of the senior citizens project is here to discuss that.

So I just want to -- I'm here to thank you for your trust in us. We appreciate -- we appreciate that and we believe that -- we don't take lightly the fact that we are using the money of the citizens of Suffolk. We believe that we have served the 200,000 senior citizens of Suffolk County and we hope that we will continue on with the grant.

I just want to mention one other thing about this particular project. I think you both know that Touro is a secular law school, even though our parent institution is a Jewish sponsored school, and so we are particularly aware of the fact that we are concerned about meeting the goal of tikkun olam, the repair of the world. And the interesting part about this nature of repairing the world is that it's not considered to be a holistic, it's considered to be done one person at a time. And I think that's what is so special about the senior citizens project is that we can help our seniors one person at a time, and not only can we help them, but our students can understand the duty and responsibility that they have once they graduate to be acutely aware of the needs of the citizens, of senior citizens. So we take this seriously. We take the public trust seriously and we thank you for allowing us to perform acts of tikkun olam and for helping the citizens of Suffolk County.

It's my pleasure to introduce my new colleague, the Director of the project, Denise Doty.

MS. DOTY:

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today about the Senior Citizens Law Program at Touro. The program did begin January under the direction of Professor Marianne Artusio, who does have many years of experience with the senior population in Suffolk County, together with the work of Judith {Lesbenas}, our paralegal who came from Suffolk County Legal Aid Senior Division and has over 13 years of experience with the senior community and many areas that are helpful to them.

I was hired in March of this year. I'm a 1994 graduate of Touro Law Center and very happy to be there running this program. For several years I worked in private firms, I had a solo practice and I was also very involved, prior to coming to Touro, in the mortgage foreclosure settlement conferences and the growing mortgage foreclosure problem on Long Island.

In March we also hired Amy Natsoulis, our junior associate, who is an '09 graduate of Cardozo Law School with an excellent background. Prior to coming to Touro she volunteered at the New York Lawyers Assistance Guild in their senior division and spent a lot of time working with seniors on their problems.

Because we're dealing with a particular community we get up to 20 or 25 phone calls each day and the questions are many and varied. To date we have served at least 700 seniors in Suffolk County by way of providing legal services to them or information and assistance or referral to other services that they may need.

Just to give you couple of quick stories, we had a couple who they were -- they had a grandson who they spent much time with. He would come to their home every day after school, and then their son and his wife filed for divorce and it was a very contentious proceeding. The child's mother decided she no longer wanted the grandson to spend time with the grandparents. They went to court on their own, filed a petition for visitation, and then walked across the street into our offices seeking legal help.

We took on their case. We made numerous court appearances with them, the first one in Family Court and then three appearances in Supreme Court when it was moved into the integrated Domestic Violence Unit. We were able to initially get them supervised visitation through EAC. At the next court date we were able to get them unsupervised visitation in their home on a biweekly basis. And finally in the last court appearance we were able to get them back to the schedule they had previously had where they could have their grandson coming to their home two or three days each week after school and staying with the grandparents, doing homework and fully partaking in his life. They were, as you can imagine, extremely happy to have their grandson back in their life and to have had our assistance in facilitating this agreement for them.

Another case that we worked on involved a woman who was denied unemployment benefits. It was -- she had been a home health care aid for over 30 years. She had an unblemished record and it was alleged that she had fallen asleep at the bedside of a patient and in addition at some point uttered a racial epithet at work. We took on the case. The client's primary language was Spanish, so the entire two day hearing was conducted with the help of a translator, and although we had limited information, we were able to win a favorable result from the Administrative Law Judge and that client is now receiving her unemployment benefits.

So these are just two examples of the kinds of cases that we have been working on. This morning my associate, Amy Natsoulis, was in Landlord Tenant Court and worked out a very favorable result for a tenant and agreement. We've made many appearances in those courts. We're also working on lots of health care proxies, powers of attorneys, living wills and Medicaid applications, public benefit applications for seniors.

One thing that we feel is very unique about our program is that we are making tremendous attempts to go to the seniors where they need us. We go to their homes anywhere in Suffolk County. We go to nursing homes, hospitals, assisted livings. We make every effort to reach the seniors if they cannot reach us.

We have also been involved in a lot of community education, going to speak to different groups, caregivers groups, private seniors groups. We are invited to speak in October out in Stony Brook and actually speak to their medical personnel, nurses, LPNs, physical therapists and social workers about identifying issues that are relevant to seniors and trying to find ways to help them and perhaps better serve them. And keep them from being the victims of fraud, which is often perpetrated upon our seniors.

Because we are located within the law school we have the benefit of the student population. This summer we had one full-time student and two part-time students that worked with us and they were very instrumental in helping us serve the seniors and also in learning the skills necessary to deal with this population, patience and compassion and good listening skills being very high among the skills that are important in dealing with the seniors. And they added very much to our program and we are continuing to have students come to us and work with us, which we feel is very beneficial on both ends.

There are other clinical programs as Dean Rafal had referred to that we can often refer seniors back and forth to, and it's wonderful to have those programs at our disposal, the mortgage foreclosure clinic, the mental health clinic, the family law clinic.

We are also working on forming a relationship with the private Bar, especially in Suffolk County, the Elder Law Committee. We're reaching out to the committee chair people to try to form a relationship with them and make sure that they know that we exist and that we can serve the population. We've also formed relationships with APS and we get numerous referrals from them on a weekly basis and some of the other agencies.

There is still a huge, large unmet need in Suffolk County. There are three of us running the program

on a full-time basis and we could use double that many people and we would still be busy, but we are very happy to be serving the population in Suffolk County and we hope that the program can continue to grow in strength and in our involvement with the community. Thank you very much.

MS. ARTUSIO:

I don't have anything to add except to say that we are very grateful for the trust that the County has placed in us and in our ability to provide services to the seniors. Touro has -- I've run an elder law clinic at Touro for a number of years and we've always had a special responsibility we have felt to provide service to the people who are frail, who are homebound, who are isolated, and it's especially important to us that our seniors citizens project is able to continue that work and expand it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Thank you. And I guess along those lines, that was the hope that there would be this great synergy between a new program being established at Touro along with the long, proud history of the other law clinic having already had a proven track record of providing those types of services to our senior citizen population. So I would be interested to know how many students get to participate, what is the synergy like, Marianne, when students work with you and your clinic? How does the relationship work with what you're doing at the school with students, you know, with the legal aid program. How many students get to participate, how often do they participate, how is that working?

MS. ARTUSIO:

Our clinical program enrolls up to ten students each semester in the clinical program. They all take a course in elder law, so before they participate in the clinic, they learn basic information about the legal rights of senior citizens. My students then, after they participate in the clinical program, may then work with the senior citizens program after they have had appropriate training and introduction to both the substantive law as well as legal skills and legal knowledge to work with Denise in the senior citizens law program which is funded by the County. So generally the students that work with me consult, may seek assistance or advise or information from the senior citizens program, but they work with me during one period of time and then later they're able, after they have additional training, to work as interns with the senior citizens program. So it's an opportunity for students first to learn substantive law, then some legal skills and involvement with senior citizens, and then continue that work to provide extended services, really, to the population that's served by the County funded program.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

So then you would say that there is a prerequisite of some type that before they work with the program that they've gone through at least some type of training with you through the clinical program.

MS. ARTUSIO:

They generally either through a course or through the clinical program or through special training that we provide to students. So it's not in the sense an absolute prerequisite that they have to complete the course, but they have to have some introduction first.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

So if the course or the clinical program is -- right now did you say it's limited to ten students? Is that per semester?

MS. ARTUSIO:

The maximum is ten students per semester, right. So we have ten students maximum in the fall semester and ten students maximum --

CHAIRMAN STERN:

And so how many of those ten might go on to work in the assistance program?

MS. ARTUSIO:

Well, we don't know yet because we've just started. We don't have a track record yet.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Is there a vision though? Is there some idea?

MS. ARTUSIO:

But I think the idea is that at least half of them would be able and have the time to be able to participate with the senior citizens program. If they are not -- you know, of course we only have two attorneys, so you can't have many, many law students. They need to have supervision and assistance. So I don't think we figured on an absolute number, but we have to be very careful that we don't have students out there doing things without appropriate supervision and assistance. That's very important. We want to provide a professional, high quality legal representation to our clients.

So we don't have an absolute number, but we need to make sure that we have appropriate supervision and assistance for students. So I would say -- and of course some of our students graduate. You know, they take the clinic and then they graduate so they're not able for assistance to the senior citizens program the following semester. But I would say, you know, on the average we might have four or five students every semester who could be able to assist the senior citizens project.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

And what's also intriguing about the synergy is that of course it's not just the elder law clinic, but the other clinics that Dean Rafal had mentioned. So it's really not just an opportunity to work with you, Marianne or the students that participate in your clinic, but it's really an exponential number because there are so many clinics with so many supervising professors and attorneys who are participating as well.

I would be interested, Denise, to know have there been inquiries from those who have veterans issues? Do you receive those kinds of phone calls and what, if any, you know, synergy has there been with the veterans clinic.

MS. DOTY:

We do occasionally receive phone calls and I have been speaking with John Gresham, who heads that clinic, about certain cases. And we have started to develop a synergy and referral of clients from our clinic to his program. A lot of issues coming up, just in terms of widows benefits or benefits that might be available for burial or other -- those kinds of issues are the ones that we have most run across in my program to date.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Just make sure you know Director Ronayne's number by heart because he is always available to do a great job in assisting our veterans and their families.

MS. DOTY:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

You had mentioned a particular case, the grandparent's right case, that went to the courts. Was that a matter that was just handled by attorneys or were there students that were involved in that matter?

MS. DOTY:

Actually our summer student did have the opportunity to come to two of the court appearances with

us and to see -- to actually sit in the judge's chambers when we met with the judge and all the parties were there. There were several attorneys involved, the Court Clerk, someone from Child Protective Services, there was someone from the County Attorney's Office, so he got an excellent eagle eye view of what it's like to sit down and try to negotiate out an agreement really in the best interest of the child. That was the judge's primary concern. And we were very impressed that the judge focussed on the child's relationship with the grandparents and felt that that was a very important and valuable relationship and that was something that he really was striving to get back so the child could continue to have some normalcy in his life. But, yes, the student, he observed and he spent a lot of time, you know, with us on that case, as well as many other cases, many other court appearances, home visits, tremendous amount of telephone intake. And at the end of the summer he told us that he felt that it was a very valuable experience, a real world experience, in learning how to deal with clients.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Well, we all know that that is not anywhere close to the kind of thing they have in any kind of law school book and so many courses that are part of a core curriculum in any law school throughout our nation so that really is an invaluable experience. I was particularly interested in the subject matter of that case because given the nature of our modern families, not just here in Suffolk County but anywhere a new attorney would choose to practice, that that is an ever emerging type of an issue in the rights of grandparents to continue to play an important role that I'm sure we would all agree is an important role in the lives of children.

You had mentioned that Judith is with you providing administrative assistance and she comes from the existing, the preexisting legal aid program. She was with that program for 13 years; is that correct?

MS. DOTY:

Yes, it is correct.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

So there is great continuity there of course. Is she currently able to handle the entirety of the administrative support role?

MS. DOTY:

She handles a large portion of it and then the two attorneys do some of the administrative work as well. We try to balance Judith's time between administrative and also working with clients. She does have relationships with some of the clients that are coming to see us now from her many years at Suffolk Legal Aid and people who sometimes actually call to speak to her directly because they're familiar with her. So she does some portion of the administrative and Amy and I do some portion of it as well. And we, you know, we have a synergy. There's the three of us and we go back and forth and we talk about cases and if anyone has a question and if Judith has any concerns about anything she is very good about coming to the attorneys to ask questions and making sure that we are all on the same page when giving advice to clients. She is very important to us.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

I'd be interested to know what the synergy is and how that works between your efforts and the ongoing efforts of the school to provide mortgage assistance, foreclosure assistance, particularly to seniors. What kind of numbers have you seen? Is that an ever growing issue, you know, here within our community?

MS. DOTY:

It's a huge issue for the senior population. I speak to Professor Leif Rubinstein probably twice a week about this issue. His clinic is brimming with students and with phone calls. We refer people to him several times a week and he takes on as many cases as he can manage. It's very sad that there are still many -- that there are people in our community that are in their eighties and have huge mortgages on their home and many of them are underwater and can't -- cannot afford them. I

would say we get anywhere from three to five phone calls each week where there is a senior with a mortgage issue. It's very common.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Offhand, do you have any idea how many students get to participate in that clinical program?

MS. DOTY:

I believe he has ten this semester, yes.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Which is fortunate or unfortunate depending. All right. Legislator Romaine.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Just a quick question. You said there is a great deal of unmet need because of the limited funding. I assume, you didn't say because of the limited funding. I'm adding that because all functions of government tend to be functions of money. How much of an unmet need is out there that the County is not addressing?

MS. DOTY:

I don't know if I can quantify it in a number, but there are -- if we had more money and more people, we could provide more services. I mean --

LEG. ROMAINE:

To people who would be eligible for these services.

MS. DOTY:

Yes, yes.

LEG. ROMAINE:

And we are talking by eligibility people that by a rough definition might be considered poor, low to moderate income.

MS. DOTY:

Yes. Our goal is to serve the needy and the low income population.

LEG. ROMAINE:

And right know what you're saying is that you just -- you're doing the best you can with the resources you have, but you're not -- there's an unmet need out there, and frankly if your services were more widely publicized, that unmet need might be significant.

MS. DOTY:

Yes, that's correct. And we are working very hard to have our services become well known on East End of Long Island, because of course we're in Central Islip, but there's a great need out in Riverhead and East Hampton and towns like that.

LEG. ROMAINE:

There is a tremendous need and many of these people don't have automobile transportation and therefore the bus service being what it is, try to go from one location to another location in Suffolk of any distance and you're talking hours of travel. Has any thought been given to providing and East End service for people say east of William Floyd Parkway?

MS. DOTY:

We've actually been in touch or we were contacted by one of -- by San Simeon the other day, one of the new care facilities, and one of the questions was could we set something up perhaps on a monthly basis where we could come out for a day --

LEG. ROMAINE:

San Simeon is, for those who don't know, on Sound Avenue in Greenport. And they have been around for a long time, but now they have an adult day-care that they just added a few months ago to their service. Of course we have Peconic Landing, but those people are usually not poor in Peconic Landing. And we have a number of other -- in Riverhead we have many mobile home parks and where many seniors live on limited and fixed incomes.

MS. DOTY:

Yes. So one thing that we had, in speaking with the Director of the new adult day-care program, was perhaps setting up a day, either on a monthly schedule or some other schedule that we could come out where one of the attorneys would go out and, you know, be in the office for the day and seniors could come there and we could address their legal issues.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Have you made a presentation to the County Exec's Budget Office? Usually they have people come in from various departments and make presentations before he puts forward his recommended budget. Have you met with --

MS. DOTY:

We have not to date, but that sounds like a very interesting possibility.

LEG. ROMAINE:

I know there is a representative of the County Executive's Office here. I believe Mr. Hennessey is representing his office; is that's correct, are you --

MR. HENNESSEY:

Mr. Zwirn is here.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Is he? Oh, he is in the back. I don't see him in the audience. If Mr. Zwirn also is here perhaps we can take a message back that the County Executive will be releasing his budget I believe three weeks from tomorrow, on the third Friday, usually at 5:05 so his comments go out earlier and people who haven't read it can't respond to what his comments are. But he will be releasing his budget on the third Friday by law, his recommended budget to us, and I would strongly suggest that your needs for the 2011 budget be sent not only to the County Executive if you can't arrange a meeting, but perhaps an outline, a page or two page outline so it doesn't take up a lot of time, is sent to him with a budget that you would like to see for 2011. And a copy of that should be sent to Legislator Stern so he can make the members of this committee aware of what your needs are, because the one thing that we don't want to do is we don't want to see seniors on limited and fixed incomes who are poor without access to legal services. Particularly in this time of recession when they face a great number of challenging legal issues. So we want to make sure that there be sufficient funding here for this purpose.

And if I may, Mr. Chairman, just a technical question. In foreclosure actions, you understand that MERS, mortgage electronic recording systems, does not have capacity to bring a foreclosure. Any foreclosure action that MERS is involved in you should challenge immediately. They don't have capacity in my view as former County Clerk, someone that was very concerned about MERS. I don't believe MERS has capacity to act because they haven't recorded themselves as the agents with the County Clerk's Office. MERS does not have, in my view, legal capacity. I would ask you to look into that issue because with many mortgages winding up in the MERS system as opposed to the chain of title being filed, you know, with the County Clerk's Office, I don't know if they have capacity, and I don't believe any court would find that they had capacity to bring a foreclosure action.

MS. DOTY:

Thank you. We will definitely keep that in mind.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Absolutely. I would be happy to talk to you in greater detail about that.

MS. DOTY:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Anything else?

MS. DOTY:

Thank you again for allowing us to speak.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Thank you so much for being with us today and for accepting the invitation of the committee to come and bring everybody up to speed on how things are going.

You know, as an aside, I had the opportunity to come and visit with you and your team on-site at Touro Law School, and this was some time ago now, and to see how quickly you were able to get everything up and running and to make a real impact in assisting our seniors was really quite remarkable. And let me say to you, Dean Rafal, and to your team, a thank you, because you were asked to participate, to help lead the way in providing, you know, these services for our seniors. You were able to bring everybody together and really step in and come up to speed very quickly and to provide as much of a seamless transition as was possible. And so it's great to see a program that is going to be of great service to students, to our legal community, but most importantly, to Suffolk's seniors and their families, continue to see quality legal services provided. That really is going to be a great benefit all the way around and so it's really great to see and I thank you. All right. Thank you. Sidney Lynn.

MR. LYNN:

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. Thank you so much for allowing me to be here today. My name is Sidney Lynn. I am the Commander of the Suffolk County Council of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I'm pleased to be here this afternoon, and on behalf of the men and women of the County Council and the men and women that we, that you, actually have helped during the past two years thank you for your support of this program.

As you can see by the reports that I have assembled, the program is very active and widespread. In March I had anticipated that we would run into a program that we now face, so back then I sent a letter to all the Legislators giving you a heads up. We have a little more than \$1,500 left in the program for this year, which will serve about two more veterans at the average of \$700 plus a month.

I'm very aware of the financial hardships that we face in the County and that many of us are in. However, for the most part, these veterans are in a struggle on a day to day basis. The conditions that many of them live is sad to state it mildly. As we approach the heating system I believe that we will have a record number of veterans, widows and Gold Star families reaching out to us for assistance. Therefore, I'm requesting an additional emergency addition to our contract in the amount of \$20,000. I feel from past requests and the increase in the awareness of our program that this will be an amount that will sustain us until January. Once again, I thank you for your time and consideration.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Thank you so much. Question, what are the efforts that you're making to make military families, veterans, aware of this assistance?

MR. LYNN:

The program is -- when a veteran goes to the Veterans Service Agency in Hauppauge seeking some type of assistance, they are referred to our program if they are eligible. The eligibility is that you have to be out of oil and owe your oil company money, have a disconnect notice from LIPA, or have a disconnect notice from the gas company, have an eviction notice from your landlord, or a mortgage problem, serious problem with the mortgage. That's the only thing that we can deal with.

The VA in Northport has been sending us a lot of veterans because they are involved in the HUD VASH program. And through the HUD VASH program we can assist them when they run into difficulties, which several of them have. As far as advertising the program, we don't advertise the program. It advertises itself. And the program has been in effect for a little over two years. The first year we were just there from October to December, so I didn't include those figures. We only assisted, I think, seven veterans. However, as you see last year we had 34 veterans, widows or Gold Star families, and that was for the entire year. Right now we sit at 40 veterans for the year to date. So I anticipate -- I've not gotten the call today. I anticipate calls every single day. Some days I get none, some days I get five. We try to help these veterans. They are not looking for help next week, and that's the beauty of this program. I sit with a veteran, and I can sit with them today, and he can have his guaranteed oil delivery -- he can get it today if it's early enough, or tomorrow.

We've set up with several oil companies just on a phone call. They've been most helpful. I call them, I explain the situation, they know that their client is out of oil, they know they don't have any means. I tell them well, we can do this, we can fill up this veteran's tank or widow's tank or Gold Star family's tank and we will guarantee you payment. You just send me the bill and I'll pay it. And for two years we've both been happy. It's various oil companies, and I deal with about ten different oil companies.

The landlords are the same way and we deal with several apartment complexes. What I tell the apartment complex is if you have any other veterans that meet these requirements and are having difficulty, if they are in jeopardy of being evicted, please have them give me a call and then I will qualify them over the phone. If they qualify, I go visit them.

Same thing with LIPA. I called LIPA about two weeks ago for a veteran who was in threat of having his electricity turned off on Monday morning. This was Friday afternoon. So Friday afternoon I spoke to LIPA, I said I'm with the client right now, this is his numbers. The client gave me everything, and I said what I'm asking is for a stay of execution until the end of the week and on Monday morning you'll have a check mailed out to you by our quartermaster. I don't mail the checks out. The checks are mailed directly to the server, to the oil company, to the landlord or to LIPA or LILCO. The veteran, widow, or Gold Star family does not get the check, and I don't touch checks either. I just -- I'm just a guy that goes out there.

And each one of our applications is approved by two of the men on the committee. And after we have our applications, we have all the necessary information, it must be an honorably discharged veteran, he must have his DD214 that states that he is honorably discharged or that he has received services. You can only receive services if you have been honorably discharged. In the event of a Gold Star family we would require the death certificate of the military person while on active duty, and the widow must provide us with a DD214 that says they were honorably discharged.

We provide that, plus the original bill to Suffolk County agency. We put out the money and the Suffolk County agency reviews our bills. Susan up there in Tom's office reviews everything that I write up, makes a couple of comments and then sends them up to the attorneys. They approve them and we get a check back. It's -- the usual turnaround is about a month and a half from the day we pay the bill until we get our money back, except in the case where the contract is new. This year we laid out close to \$20,000 from the Suffolk County Council, the VFW, before we saw our first

check back because the contract has to go before -- we start in January, we start assisting people in January prior to us even having a contract. We know we have the money coming, we just have to have the legalese done, and that takes a month and a half to two months. And in the first two, three, months of this year you can see we gave out close to \$20,000.

LEG. ROMAINE:

If I may, Mr. Chairman. I think you'll be happy to know, and certainly you can work with my office, but this Legislature adopted legislation for not only prompt payment, but prompt contracting. So you should not have the delays in the future with the contract. And if you do, please let me know because then someone is violating Suffolk County law and we don't want to see that. And you should get a turnaround payment pretty promptly, within 30 days. We would like to see that because if that's not happening, then someone is violating Suffolk County law.

If I could, Mr. Chairman, just to wrap this up very quickly. I'm going to also talk about unmet needs. You're looking for \$20,000, and if the Chairman has a moment after this committee meeting, I have an idea to get you through to the end of the year. And I'm sure what you're saying is that there is a lot of people out there, a lot of veterans and veterans families that are in need, and although you haven't advertised this program, you're already out of money for the remainder of the year, and if this program was in any way advertised, you'd be so oversubscribed even double the money the County gave you probably won't even meet the need. Is that what I'm understanding from you?

MR. LYNN:

That's correct.

LEG. ROMAINE:

I will talk to you after the meeting.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Okay.

LEG. ROMAINE:

I do have a source that may be helpful, if this Legislature is prepared to act, that would come from my district, by the way, but would be available for the County.

MR. LYNN:

I'd like to mention also that these veterans that are requesting oil have, for the most part, exhausted their HEAP allowance. That's one of the first things I ask. Or they have applied for it and HEAP takes forever and a day to get. Also, the veterans that we service are very proud people and they don't want to come for the help. They've always done things themselves. They're really down to their last straw and they are referred by an outside agency. So anything that you can do would be, in the area of \$20,000, would be greatly appreciated.

LEG. ROMAINE:

We'll see what we can do.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Thank you for all that you're doing.

MR. LYNN:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

We really, really appreciate it. Thanks for being with us today. Director Ronayne.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Mr. Chairman, because there is a request for additional funding relative to this contract, I just want to make a clarification. In the presentation it states that the VFW Suffolk County Council is the administrator of this program. The contract, it's actually administered through the Suffolk County Veterans Service Agency and the County Council for the Veterans of Foreign Wars is the contract agency that works with our office. So if there is going to be discussion or any action taken on additional funding, that we don't confuse issues and new contracts drawn where they don't necessarily have to be drawn.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Just tell us where to send the money, Tom.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

So that was my only -- I just wanted to make that clarification.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

I just wanted to be clear on the amount. The -- it was an amount of \$25,000 that was provided last year. This year the amount was 30,000. So, again, I just wanted to be clear the \$20,000 figure is not a request for 20,000, it's additional 20 -- in addition to the \$30,000 that was the grant this year.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Supplemental to the 30 that was originally -- and I think originally the 30 came as \$25,000 from the Legislature. And when Legislator Beedenbender was leaving office he had some funds that he had not expended that he had asked be applied to this program. And that was where the additional five came from if I'm not mistaken.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Okay, thank you. Anybody else? Anybody else? Very good. Thank you for being with us today and we are adjourned.

(THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 12:57 P.M.)

{ } Denotes Spelled Phonetically