

**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 November 8, 2010.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Leg. Steven H. Stern, Chairman  
Leg. Jack Eddington, Vice Chair (excused absence)  
Leg. Jon Cooper (excused absence)  
Leg. Daniel P. Losquadro (excused absence)  
Leg. Edward P. Romaine

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

George Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature  
Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel  
Ben Zwirn, County Executive's Office  
Laura Halloran, Budget Review Office  
Renee Ortiz, Chief Deputy Clerk  
Ed Hennessey, Aide to County Executive  
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  
Dot Kerrigan, AME Legislative Representative  
Jack Caffey, Aide to Presiding Officer  
James Perone  
Gloria Mapes  
And all other interested parties

**VERBATIM MINUTES TAKEN BY:**

Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer

**THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 11:53 PM**

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Good morning everyone. Welcome to the Committee on Veterans and Seniors. I ask everybody to rise and join us in the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Romaine.

**SALUTATION**

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

**MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED**

I'd also take this opportunity to recognize this week we celebrate Veterans Day. I'd like to ask everyone to observe a moment of silence to keep our veterans and their families in our thoughts and prayers also.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED**

Thank you.

Good morning everyone and thank you for being with us.

**PUBLIC PORTION**

We start with public portion. I have two cards. First I invite Mr. Petrone.

**MR. PETRONE:**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Mr. Petrone, you have three minutes.

**MR. CAFFEY:**

Hold your button down.

**MR. PETRONE:**

Thank you, Chairman Stern. I'd like to speak today to the Suffolk County Legislature Committee on Veterans and Seniors on elderly abuse, bullying and harassment of senior citizens in Suffolk County. I would like that this portion of the hearing be dedicated to the memory of Tyler Clemente, the Rutgers University student who took his own life because of harassment and bullying.

Gloria Mapes has authorized me to speak on her behalf. I have been her friend and companion for over twenty years.

I would like to enter as evidence Gloria's May 20th, 2010 letter to Pam Nelson, the account manager at Heatherwood. This letter describes some of the harassment that Gloria Mapes and myself have experienced at the Heatherwood Apartments. Gloria would especially like to thank at this time her Suffolk County Legislator John M. Kennedy, Junior, who spoke on the telephone with Gloria for over a half hour and gave her hope that her Heatherwood lease could be renewed.

This is Gloria's May 20th, 2010 letter to Pam Nelson, the account manager at Heatherwood Communities LLC, 1737 Veterans Memorial Highway, P.O. Box 9008, Islandia, New York 11749 regarding Heatherwood House at Ronkonkoma LLC.

"Dear Ms. Nelson, I am writing to inform you that the tenant in 81A Daniel Taccetta has been continually harassing and menacing me since he moved into apartment 81A approximately August of 2008. For example, Daniel Taccetta has used his loud barking dog, his loud motorcycle engine, his loud slamming of his apartment door and most of all his filthy, abusive and threatening language to try to force me to move from the Heatherwood complex where I have resided for 14 years. Prior to his moving here in August 2008 I had no problems and had only cordial relationships with my neighbors.

Jodi Roberts, the woman who had responsibility for this complex prior to you was aware of this very terrible situation that I have been experiencing with the tenant of apartment 81A for nearly two years.

On December 15, 2008, I left Jodi Roberts a message on her voicemail regarding this problem. I wonder if the Heatherwood Complex, Jodi Roberts, ever documented the problems I reported or sent a letter to the tenant of apartment 81A Daniel Taccetta telling him to stop harassing me. If so please let me know. Send copies of that letter to me as soon as possible. As you know, James Petrone, my long-term 20 year dear friend and companion was seriously injured, assaulted by Daniel Taccetta without any provocation on James' part. This occurred on March 19th, 2010. Mr. Petrone was hospitalized and suffered serious ongoing medical problems. This incident led to Mr. Petrone reporting to the Suffolk County Police Department and seeking an order of protection. In a retaliatory self-serving act days after the court appearance before the Judge, Daniel Taccetta raised false claims of harassment and lied to the Judge relative to Mr. Petrone so that an Order of Protection would be issued against James Petrone. Although the Judge questioned Daniel Taccetta as to why he failed to raise such claims at the initial court appearance, no plausible explanation was provided.

I know that Harriet Spiegelman and Michelle Santantonio have spoken with you about these concerns in the last couple of weeks. Ms. Santantonio did convey to me that it is appropriate that I should contact you directly with these issues and that no retaliation would be experienced because of the problems reported to you. I am therefore with her assistance writing this letter to document ongoing problems. I do hope that you will look into this problem. Unfortunately other tenants in the immediate area are too intimidated and threatened again with Taccetta's retaliation to come forward. But I am sure that they, too, are sorely affected by the loss of quiet enjoyment if not other violations. Sincerely, Gloria Mapes."

Now, Chairman Stern, I would like to speak on my behalf, if I may.

"Chairman Stern, members of the Committee on Veterans and Seniors, the elder abuse, bullying and harassment against Gloria Mapes and myself is still continuing. To wit, Gloria Mapes has still not received her lease renewal forms from Heatherwood for the time period December 31st, 2010 to December 31st, 2011. Last year by this time Gloria Mapes had received her lease.

Also, I'm asking the Chairman Steve Stern and the Committee and the Suffolk County Legislature to please, please subpoena the October 20th, 2010 e-mail sent to Marvin Smith, Aide to New York State's Senator Brian X. Foley by Michelle Santantonio, the Executive Director of Long Island Housing Services regarding Gloria Mapes.

In this e-mail Michelle Santantonio states that her organization is receiving payment from Heatherwood to conduct sensitivity training for Heatherwood staff members. Since Michelle Santantonio is supposed to be negotiating with Heatherwood on behalf of Gloria Mapes' lease renewal of Heatherwood, we believe this a conflict of interest. We ask you, Chairman Stern, to have Michelle Santantonio transfer all of her files on Gloria Mapes from December 1995 until the present to Melissa B. Greenberger, Esquire, Senior Citizens Law Program Touro Law Center, Central

Islip, New York. Chairman Stern, please ask Melissa B. Greenberger, Esquire, to start conducting lease renewal negotiations with Heatherwood as soon as possible so that Gloria's lease will be renewed from December 31st, 2010 to December 31st 2011.

Also, Chairman Stern, we ask Melissa B. Greenberger, Esquire of the Senior Citizens Law Program at the Touro Law Center if she knows of any criminal defense attorney who can provide pro bono or legal counsel for James Petrone. Mr. Petrone is now receiving ineffective legal representation by his Suffolk County 18B court appointed attorney. Mr. Petrone's next court date is Monday November 15th, 2010 in First District Court in Central Islip. Enclosed you will find the Newsday article. You have the right to an adequate attorney by Alicia Bannon, Esquire, Newsday, April 8th, 2010. In closing, Chairman Stern, Gloria Mapes and myself look forward to testifying before your Committee."

I also have some additional information that I would like to bring to your attention at this present point in time. I have been in contact with both Linda M. Guido, the Legislative Aide to Jon Cooper and Ellen Eichelbaum, your Legislative aide. The most important concern is to have Heatherwood renew the lease of Gloria Mapes. The second most important concern is to bring the whole matter of senior citizens bullying and harassment to the attention of the Suffolk County Legislature.

Again, we have asked time and time again that subpoena power must be granted to your Committee so that very important 911 police audio tapes and written transcripts can be obtained and renewed by you and your Committee. We have three very important 911 police tapes that we ask you to subpoena and to review at your Committee. The most important tape of all is the August 16th, 2008 police audiotape and written transcript. That was sent from phone number 631-981-0461. The second most important tape is of March 19, 2010. And again from area code 631-981-0461. The third most important call is from April 30th, 2010.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Mr. Petrone, I'm sorry, if you could -- we're out of time. If you can wrap up, sir.

**MR. PETRONE:**

Yes. In enclosing I would like to refer to the multiple lawyers of harassment in this case. One is by the Heatherwood management team consisting of the superintendent Jim and his two assistants Rich and Tony as well as a first account manager Jodi Roberts and the current account manager Pamela Nelson.

The second layer of harassment involves the Suffolk County Police Department falsely accusing James Petrone of assaulting Daniel Taccetta at the Heatherwood Apartments. The third layer of harassment has to do with District Court Judge Richard I. Horowitz, granting a bogus Order of Protection to Daniel Taccetta against James Petrone. And the fourth level of harassment concerns the District Attorney's Office of Suffolk County in refusing to upgrade the charges against Daniel Taccetta for harassment, second degree to assault in the first degree.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Mr. Petrone.

**MR. PETRONE:**

I thank you for your time and your efforts to investigate this matter. Thank you, Chairman Stern.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Very good. Thank you for being here today.

Salva? Salva, you guys ready?

**MS. VERO:**

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Senior Net of Family Service League Computer Learning Program. Senior Net is a national and internal volunteer organization with under 14

learning centers in the US and all around the world. Senior Net was founded in 1986 with a mission to bring education to senior adults basically over 50. Over the years we have changed our mission to include protection of the environment by recycling computers and community outreach to serve the underserved community right here on Long Island and all over the world. To reach out to a large senior community, we operate two computer learning centers, one in the Township of Huntington and one in the Township of Brookhaven. The Brookhaven location is a new location in East Yaphank.

We are here today to present a very exciting project, the Homebound Remote Learning Project and we need your help. We need your help to spread the word to our veterans and our seniors. I would like to introduce the developer of this project, Otto Niebler. And before I turn over the presentation to Otto, I'd like to say a few words, a few comments.

The project was designed for seniors and veterans who are homebound as well as for their caregiver. We are aware that the Veterans Administration has many services for the returning veterans. However, this project is designed especially to give veterans returning from war special skills so they can reenter the workforce and especially for the disabled veterans who are homebound and cannot leave their home. We at Senior Net have a very special place for our veterans. Many of our own peers are veterans from World War II, Korea and Vietnam. And I myself would not be here if it wouldn't be for the sacrifices of the GI bill in World War II.

Thank you for your time. And I would like to introduce Otto who will present the project. Thank you.

**MR. NIEBLER:**

Thank you, Slava. As Slava may have mentioned here, we're not here soliciting money. We're soliciting students. The program -- first of all, much thanks to Chairman Stern and the Committee for allowing us to present this worthy project. The project basically has been in development for about three years. As of the start of this year, we started classes. We run roughly four iterations of the classes. The Homebound Program really is designed to address a body of underserved people that we felt would greatly benefit by their using a computer. These are the homebound seniors, of which there are many, many people.

This iteration of classes that we'd like to propose we'd like to dedicate to the disabled veterans who are homebound as well. And I think they deserve a program like this. And we would like to just give you a brief idea what the program looks like.

I've got a power point presentation. Also I got in the handouts that we gave to the Committee, we have the actual handouts. It's on the left side in the back. Okay.

We call the Homebound Program a virtual classroom. The program basically is conducted from the Senior Net Center here in Huntington. Myself as the instructor and a group of coaches administer the class from our learning center. And we actually broadcast the actual class itself in an interactive fashion over the internet into the homes and computers of the homebound personnel. The objective here really is to take this body of people whom we feel are underserved in today's society and give them an opportunity of reconnecting with the world through the computers. Many of us understand and appreciate the computers in our lives today. We're active, able bodied people. And it enhances our lives tremendously. But I can't overemphasize the amount of impact this computer has to a homebound individual who sees four walls a day seven days a week and has limited connection with the rest of the world.

The program as I mentioned is administered from the center in -- it's the Family Service League facility in Huntington, Long Island. We have a learning center there with a number of stations that are manned by coaches and myself. And we then connect with the various students over the internet on their own computers.

The program is -- what I've been told by the developers of the software is fairly unique. We administer an interactive program over the internet where the class basically starts by the student turning his machine on. That's the extent of his involvement getting started. The center itself picks up the fact that the student has signed on, or accurately turned the machine on. And then the class proceeds where the student sees my terminal, the instructor's terminal; whatever's on my screen appears on their screen. And they hear my voice as well. So it's as if they're in the classroom itself.

I go through a series of exercises that illustrate a particular exercise. For example, if we want to show them how to do cut and paste, we'll go through an exercise usually multiple times where I explain how to use it and they see my cursor, they see my screen. And then at some point we then give control to the student. The student then attempts to repeat the exercise. At this point the coaches are the ones that monitor the student's activity. They see the student's screen on their machine at the lab. And they can override their key board. They can override their cursor if they're performing the exercise improperly. And they through voice can instruct the student as to what they have to do. This is all following a manual that both sides has as a road map. They receive the manual prior to the class itself.

And at some point once the students have satisfactorily executed the exercise, control is returned back to the instructor and the next exercise is repeated. It's as simple as that. It's not rocket science but it's very, very effective.

The software that we use is called Net Support. It's an international product that's developed in the UK and it's won many, many educational awards. And it's the best as far as this type of education is concerned.

When we attempted the program three years ago, which was when we started developing the program, there were no virtual classrooms operating over the internet. The software was primarily used by corporate America to instruct their personnel on various topics of interest for that particular corporation. But they use what they call a WAN, wide area network, which is a network owned by the corporation. And I was formerly at IBM. We use the same software in instructing the consultants that I was responsible for.

What was unique about our approach is that we were the first ones to try it over the internet. Now why is that significant? The WAN is a very, very expensive component for a corporation to install and actually administer to. The internet is free, major difference in the cost of delivering a services or a product to the end user. With the internet we are able to deliver to various people the education that we need at a price that they can afford. It's very reasonable.

As Slava mentioned, Senior Net is a non-profit organization. This class is offered with no profit, etcetera, whatsoever. I am a volunteer as is most of the -- all of the coaches. The cost of the program is nominal. There's a headset involved that cost \$20. That's refundable. The class itself is a nominal fee just to cover the expenses involved. But basically it uses the internet so it's very, very inexpensive.

Prerequisites: The student has to be truly homebound. This is not a program of convenience. If a person does not want to come to our learning center because of inclement weather or because they feel that they can't afford the price of a bus or some other transportation, this is not for them. We have devoted too much energy, invested too much time and energy to provide that type of program. This is for the truly homebound and their caretakers. The caretakers are as homebound as the disabled.

They need a computer that runs Windows, Linux, Unix OS/2, Mac, any operating system that's currently used today or that can be used in this program. They need a broadband connection. They have to know how to connect to the internet primarily because of a boot strap program that we use. We send it to them via e-mail. And that boot strap allows us to take control of their machine

initially to do the initial install of the software that's required.

They have to have a serious commitment to the program. This is not a casual program we're talking about. If they enroll in a class, one of the things I ask them is that they have to attend every class. If they see a sporadic attendance, we don't want them.

And lastly there's an interview required. I have to sit down with each one by phone and review not only their commitment to the program but their level of expertise going into the class itself. For those of you that have done any kind of teaching, trying to have a homogenous level of education going into the class is important because one slow learner brings the whole class down to the lowest common denominator. So an interview is required just to get a feel for how articulate or computer literate the person is or not is as long as it's uniformly met.

Class particulars: The course that we offer is Intro to Computers Two and Three. These are two specific curriculums that we offer locally at the lab in Huntington. It addresses basic computer orientation. This is basically how to turn the machine on, how to turn it off, etcetera, word processing, spread sheet, e-mail, internet usage, graphics, file management and operating systems interface and utilities. This is an introductory review of these products. And as we tell our students, what we're doing with these classes, Intro to Computer Two and Three, we introduce them to these particular functions. They walk away with a nominal expertise in these areas. But they obviously drill down on each one of these on their own.

There are four week sections involved. One session a week for two hours. Usually we conduct the class on a Friday afternoon 1:30 to 3:30. We do a remote install of the software. We never have to go to the individual's house. We deliver the manual and the headset via mail. And we do all of the software installation and orientation remotely.

The three products that we install are the Support Manager, Open Office, which is a product comparable to Microsoft Office Product and Skype. There is a brief pre-class orientation on class participation. This is how they are to attend the class and what is expected of them and some of the basic commands that they should be aware of; how to mute the headset when an exercise is being reviewed and so forth.

The fee is \$35 for a four week section. \$20 deposit for the headset. That's refundable. Now in talking with Slava, she said that we would probably waive the \$35 in regards to the disabled veterans. But the \$35 is what we charge our students. We've done four classes for the past year; four iterations of this class. And we've had what I have been told, it sounds self-serving but it was a tremendous success. The students that we taught were very much appreciative. Each one of them it opened up a whole new world for these people.

We'd like to do the same for the disabled veterans. They want it and they need it. There are many disabled veterans who could actually eventually go back into the workforce with a nominal amount of computer training. And that's basically what we offer here. All the products, the functions and the services that we teach are marketable in our workforce. And I think it's a worthwhile investment.

The next class that we intend to give would be somewhere mid to late January. We're targeting for a 12 to 18 student enrollment. And we would like to dedicate it to the disabled veterans. There are many interested parties who have expressed an interest and is forming their particular group. But disabled veterans is on the top of our list. And we'd like to have the full class of disabled veterans if possible.

If there are any questions about the program, what is involved, you can e-mail me at the following address. In the handouts that you've received, we have a tri-fold that explains the program. We have a flier that not only has the program description, but has a testimonial from one of my students. The student was a former Yale professor who was struck by a -- he had a stroke. He was a stroke victim. Very active professor. He was an accomplished musician that appeared at

Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall. And when he had his stroke, by his own terminology, he said he turned into a piece of wood. And all of his creative abilities -- he still had his mind intact but no way to express it. And he attributes the class to opening him up to another world that he could pursue. But the flier is here. We have an article from Newsday.

That describes the program briefly. And we'd like to promote it among disabled veterans. Thank you for your time.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Thank you for yours and for being with us today. Just a couple of things.

First of all, we're going to make sure that we get all of the information out to all of our colleagues who couldn't be with us today and to all of the Legislators and their staffs. As you point out, although you have a location in Huntington with Family Service League, you have a location that you're working on out east. And this was really a program that is applicable to all residents throughout Suffolk County. In fact that's the whole point, really, is to make sure that regardless of geography, regardless of where you are, that you can participate in this program because it really does open up all of the world of opportunity.

I also wanted to state here that it's always good listening to you and to Slava and to continuously learn from you. In fact, Senior Net, your location here on Long Island was recognized by Senior Net National as one of the top centers for learning in the entire nation. So through your innovation through your program, you continue really to set the standard for some of the other programs to follow throughout the country.

I also wanted to note while we're having conversation that this was just a wonderful example of what this type of a program can mean. And I was walking -- throughout -- I walking in my neighborhood and knocking on doors and seeing how area residents were doing and how things were going and what we might be able to do to be of assistance, and there was a gentleman who answered the door. And he was having trouble with his computer. And felt that there might be good synergy there that you can provide assistance to him. You were able to send someone and help him out; and not only help him out with his commuter needs, but to identify other services that he was in need of. I was able to make the appropriate referral. It's really just one of those important stories, I think; not just having that kind of communication with area residents who need it, but being able to identify a need and help others who are in need of help.

And that's really what this program is designed for. I'm sure you hear these stories all the time as I do that for many of our elderly, for many of those with special needs, certainly for so many of our disabled veterans, that they might not come into face to face contact with someone on a particular day. And perhaps their only contact with the outside world is through their computer screen. It makes that type of a program particularly assisting our homebound elderly and disabled all the more important.

I'm sure you hear those stories all the time. So it's an important program and we want to do everything we can to make sure that the word continues to get out about all the good work that you're doing and how all of us who work with those in our various districts know of your program and can assist those who need that type of assistance with that which you provide.

I will say also that this past weekend I was up at the Salvation Army location at the VA facility in Northport assisting homeless vets with dinner that night. And one of the issues that we got to talk about was, you know, how they're able to apply for and receive their benefits that they need whether it's because of their current situation as a homeless veteran or other Department of Social Services related benefits. And what they need to go through in order to get those benefits, whether it's a three hour public transportation trip one way or then having to wait to meet with someone face to face a couple of hours, just to be told that they have to come back two or three times to complete that process.

I think it would be important for all of us at every level of government to make sure that as we go forward in assisting returning veterans or those with special needs in our community, that more and more we can make use of technology to be more productive in that way, to help with the process, help facilitate the process and allow more and more who are not able to make the trip or who do so with great expense and great time and effort, that perhaps they have the ability to do that in a more productive and convenient way. And so the education that you provide hopefully will be an important part of that as time goes on.

I'm wondering before we let you go if that's the kind of thing that you've heard about when you're dealing with seniors in your classes and perhaps some ideas on how they can best take the knowledge that they use and use it not maybe just for, you know, what we consider basic uses of the internet and the computer but have you heard along the way, you know, any ideas from your students how they might best be able to implement the education and technology that they utilize in their daily lives?

**MR. NIEBLER:**

The application of the subjects that we teach vary from trivial to very, very significant. In my last class, (inaudible) I had a 92-year-old woman, lived out in Riverhead by the way, and her interest was genealogy. And she was looking for ways where the computer would facilitate her ability to improve the quality and the extent of her research capability. That I relegate as a trivial, a hobby type of thing.

The other one, and this was written up in the New York Times, a young lady was in one of our classes who was a, I believe, a registered nurse, lost her job. She was 50-years-old. And she was trying to reenter the job market. And she basically needed another set of skills because her past interviews always seemed to stress computer skills that she did not have or had but were obsolete. This body of people is growing exponentially, I believe, in today's society. These are middle age -- I would call middle age, because anybody younger than 70 is middle age for me, but this is a body of people who have to reenter the job market because they cannot afford to live on Long Island anymore on a fixed income. So it's that type of skill that they come back to Senior Net for to enhance their computer skills to make them more marketable on the job market.

So the application of the subject matter that the students that pass through our portals have range quite dramatically. But I would say they tend more towards the latter than they do towards the other -- towards the former. People need computer skills. If it's not for enhanced revenue, it's for connectivity with their family, which is a very important consideration, especially with our senior population. Families and mine included are spread all over the landscape. As you get older, we disconnect. And that's a serious problem today. So that type of skill we try to enforce.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Thank you. And, Salva, thanks so much for being with us today. We're going to make sure that the information that you left with us gets to all of our colleagues because it's important for all of us to be aware of the program, the good work that you do and how it might apply within our own neighborhoods. So thank you so much for being with us.

Holly?

Let me just note -- I'll take this opportunity to note that Legislator Eddington and Legislator Losquadro are not with us today. They have excused absences.

**DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

I don't have a lot to report on. We had our public hearing on the east end and west end. Most of the seniors are very appreciative of the services they get from Suffolk County in terms of programs we run. Also the contractors have been appreciative but, of course, they're always looking for other funding because I think times are tight all other the place for non-profits. But they were very

successful. We also have been running Medicare meetings around the County. And they've been very well attended; in some spots, not as well attended in others. But it's amazing how many questions seniors are able to come up with on Medicare even though they've been on the program for ten years or so. It's a very difficult program. And they trump us on some of those questions sometimes. We have to get back to them with the answers. But it's been good. It's been a very good experience for us going around the County. There's been, I think, a total of 14 we had scheduled. I think we've done about ten or eleven of them at this point.

So that's what's been going on in our office. I just wanted to reiterated again. HEAP program is open as of this past November 1st. We sent out approximately a thousand applications on November 1st for people who had been calling our office, you know, once the applications became available. We could send them out. And we've processed approximately 5,000 already of the applications that came in prior to that.

I would encourage anybody in your district who is eligible for HEAP to apply for it and apply as quickly as possible because funding is always questionable as to when that program will shut down. We've gone as late as May and we've closed up earlier than that depending on funding in other years. So if you have a senior who is interested, please tell them to call our office, we'll get the application out to them right away. Okay.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

All right. Holly, thanks. Tom.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Haven't got a great deal to report on today other than a few of the housekeeping maintenance items that we routinely discuss. I can share with you that a week ago this last Friday we held our annual Veterans Job and Employment fair. It was extremely successful. We had 215 veterans attend seeking employment. We were able to conduct resume writing workshops, interview skills workshops. We had 64 employers. We had four governmental agencies. And, again, it was very successful. We did some follow-up from last year's event and spoke with employers who had been at the previous events. And we're seeing numbers of veterans who had been hired that we had not been made aware of. We had one aerospace contractor in particular who said that he had hired eight veterans from last year's program. So we're very, very pleased with that. We're enthusiastic and we're hoping that we can continue. We're actually in the process now of discussing possibly doing this more than once annually because of unfortunately the great need that exists.

That's really it on the job fair. Again, tremendous success. We had some help from different parts of the County. Public Works was very helpful. For the first time ever we used those lighted highway signs that you see on the side of the road giving instructions and information. We got some number of calls based on the fact that those signs had been out there were able to make the event more visible so we were happy with that. And I thank Commission Anderson and Lou Calderone for their assistance on that.

I'll move on now to the clinic in Riverhead. As I had reported the last time we were here, they are two to three weeks behind which essentially says that as of now we intend to turn the keys to the space over to VA toward the end of this month. VA is now talking about the possibility of an opening going as far out as February or March. We believe that we can better on that. So we'll continue to work with VA and see what we can do to help expedite the opening of the facility.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

What is the issue?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Construction, material delays, un-anticipated, you know, problems in the field, what's behind a wall that hadn't been opened yet, what's inside of a ceiling that hadn't been removed previously. So in the grand scope of things, with everything that's been down out there two to three weeks, in my

opinion, is not a bad thing at all.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**  
Legislator Romaine.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Just a quick comment. I would hope that when the turnover is or the ceremony or the ribbon cutting or whatever, that members of the Veterans and Seniors Committee, myself in particular because I've advocated very strongly for the east end clinic, there would be the courtesy from the administration to extend an invitation instead of doing another solo trip.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

When I refer to turning the keys over, that's not going to be the opening of the center. That will be the point where VA takes possession of the raw space and brings in their mill work, their furniture, their telephone system, their computer system, their medical equipment, their exam room, supplies. So the November turnover of the space will not represent an opening of the facility. That'll be down the road. And I'll certainly keep you informed of the schedule on that.

November is always a very busy month for us. We say that this is our season, tis the season. Around Veterans Day we have a great many events, programs, fundraisers, different things for veterans and service members throughout the month. This coming week we have any number of events. We'll be participating in as many of them as we are able; but anybody who would like specific information or a calendar of what is coming up, the dates and the locations, if you contact my office, we'd be happy to provide you with a copy of that calendar.

**LEG. STERN:**  
Legislator Romaine.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

I'm sure you have a list of all the veterans' ceremonies that are taking place including those out east --

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**  
Yes.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

-- on November 11th. And you also have listed on November 11th at 12 noon the fact that the Greenwood Village Association is having their Veterans dinner at the Vineyards in Aquebogue.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**  
That I was not aware of.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay. If you call my office, we'll try to keep you posted about the East End events.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

One of the problems unfortunately with Veterans Day is so many organizations hold their events on that day.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**  
Right.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Everybody is in competition with one another for that 11th day of the 11th month. Again, we do the best that we can to attend as many events as we can and participate and support whoever we are able.

I'm happy to answer questions. I think that's really all I have.

**LEG. STERN:**

I ask you to stay there for just a moment as we go to the agenda to get your comment. Legislator Romaine?

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

No.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

We are holding our meeting today but we do not have a quorum so that we cannot act on legislation that is before us today.

### **TABLED RESOLUTIONS**

We do have three items before us today on our legislative agenda so I'd like to go through them individually and then we'll determine how best to proceed. Beginning with tabled resolution **IR 1866 - 10, adopting a Local Law -2010, A Local Law to register a non-profit Veterans organizations in Suffolk County (Cilmi)** This was legislation. We had that public hearing at our last general session. That public hearing was closed. It is eligible to be voted on today in our community; however, we do not have a quorum present. But before we talk about any type of a disposition, Director Ronayne, I'd be interested to get your thoughts on this legislation.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

We do support this legislation. Unfortunately there is an ongoing problem not only in Suffolk County but pretty much anywhere you care to look where we got individuals and organizations who are actively soliciting or fundraising in the name of veterans and veterans' organizations and veterans' causes. The problem with these are that many of them while they are 501 (C) 3's, there is no accountability. There's no accounting for where the funding goes. There are several organizations currently operating in Suffolk County that we are aware of, who continue to raise funds almost exclusively collecting cash. And there's no accounting as to how much, if any, of the money is actually going to benefit veterans.

We have encountered them on numerous occasions. This past -- between last Thursday and this morning, we have received two additional telephone calls that they over the weekend had been operating at the Waldbaums in Greenlawn and the Stop and Shop in Northport. And it is a problem because people -- and, you know, we're grateful that people when they're asked to donate in the name of serving a veteran's cause that they give and they give generously. My concern is that when somebody contributes or donates to a particular cause, they should have -- they should be able to have a comfort level as to where that money is going. Right now that doesn't exist.

One of the things that -- it's really not a very difficult thing to monitor because in New York State any registered not-for-profit charity is required to file an annual form with New York Attorney General's Office. A number of these organizations simply do not file these documents. What we're hoping to do is that -- is to be able to have them provide to us copies of that document, if I'm not mistaken it's the {Char} 990, and let us examine that document. We have no interest in impeding their ability to go out and raise funds. We just want to make sure that they're doing what they're saying that they're doing.

We have a number of outstanding exceptional organizations who do raise funds actively on behalf of veterans. And we know they're doing a good job. Primarily these are all our congressionally chartered veteran service organizations, the American Legions, the AmVets, the Veterans of Foreign

Wars and so on. These are not the folks that we're concerned with. Because we know who they are, we know what they're doing and we see everyday in the communities the impact of the work that they're doing. And it is very, very positive work.

It's the folks who kind of operate in the shadows. They don't come forward. There's one guy who has a binder. He's got a binder and he claims that the binder contains his letters of support from various entities. And if you examine the binder, if you go through them, what they are are, they are form letters. They are form letters acknowledging donations and *thank you for your recent donation of \$50 here or \$50 there*. They don't add up to very much yet they're collecting untold numbers of dollars in cash. And we just want to make sure that, first of all, the citizenry are not being defrauded and convinced that money they're donating is being used for the purpose for which it is not; and secondly equally important that the veterans receive the benefit of these donations.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

We have so many great relatively smaller local organizations that are not congressionally chartered that would be affected by this legislation. And as you point out even those organizations may need to file their 990's, maybe they are, maybe they aren't. So my question to you, first of all is, do you envision in enforcing this legislation that there might be any type of additional information or documentation that these organizations would need to file with your agency that's not already required by either New York State or the federal government?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

I don't think so. I think that if we're able to examine copies of the currently required documentation, I think that that would satisfy our intended requirement.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

The other question is whether you believe your agency, even though this is a matter dealing with veterans organizations, there's certainly a consumer protection aspect to it. And so the question here is do you believe that your agency is the appropriate agency to administer this requirement?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Well, I had a conversation as recently as this morning with Legislator Cilmi. And we had discussed that very issue. I have no concern that my office has the resources to provide the record examinations and the issuance of the permits. But realistically this is going to require some sort of a collaboration probably with Consumer Affairs, possibly with Health, I'm not sure. But we can certainly do the permitting portion. The policing or the enforcing of it we can't do.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Romaine.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

My question was going to go to the enforcement. We see so many laws on the books that there is not clarity about how they are to be enforced. And you take a look at all the County laws, and I guaranty you more than half are not being enforced at all.

So I was concerned about the enforcement. Who would do the enforcement, who would do the checking, who would go out into the field? But I have to say one thing, Tom. You're the first person that has come forward and said this is something -- *that part we can do, but this part we can't do*. I've never heard *we can't do* before which surprised me as a Legislator that we had so many able administrators in this administration as we were cutting staff and having vacancies that everyone felt they could still do the work. And I found as I checked on them, that a lot of times that doesn't always happen. So if this law passes, I would hope that you would speak with the sponsor of the law about giving you the resources so that you would have the ability to do the enforcement.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

The only concern that I would have regarding our office administering the enforcement component of this is that is not really -- it's not what we do.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

What does the resolution provide? I don't have it in front of me.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Essentially there is a registration requirement.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

That you can handle.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

That we can handle.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

And that's with you. What about the rest? Who goes in the field to check on agencies such as the one in Greenlawn and Northport?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Well, that was what I had discussed with Legislator Cilmi this morning.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Right. And what was his response to that?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

That he agreed that we would probably have to have some sort of a collaboration likely with consumer affairs.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Mr. Chairman, we don't have a quorum. And we have two options. One is we could ask the sponsor if he wants to do a meeting on the 16th, you know, at 9:25 or at the lunch break to see if we can report it out. The other option is to go back to the sponsor and say *obviously because we don't have a quorum, we won't have a special meeting but you have an opportunity to improve on the legislation, to spell out who's going to handle the enforcement part.* So I'll leave that in your capable hands to take that up with the sponsor.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

We'll have that conversation with the sponsor. The sponsor understands that we do not have a quorum today; suggested that we put this initiative over to our next regularly scheduled Veterans and Seniors Committee so, I think, Legislator Romaine, you're right on, that there will be time to have that conversation with the sponsor.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Good.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

But, Director, I certainly appreciate your comments. And thank you for letting us know your thoughts on this matter. We'll have an opportunity to discuss it with the sponsor.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Thank you very much. And, again, in regard to the overall conversation that we just had, one thing that I think our office would be able to contribute significantly to this legislation is, I would assume and it seems to have been the case because I haven't heard any other offices report back to us that they're getting these calls, we seem to be the office that received the telephone calls and the notifications of where and when these folks are operating. So to some extent we would play a role

in transfer or relaying that information to whoever the enforcement end of it would ultimately be.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Very good. Thank you. Okay so we will take **no action today on IR 1866.**

**INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS**

**IR 1976-10, Adopting a Local Law -2010, A Local Law to Broaden Eligibility For Senior Citizens Tax Exemption (Stern)** This is legislation that would require a tabling for a public hearing at our upcoming general session. Do you want to comment? I'm going to turn this over to Counsel.

**MS. SAMPSON:**

This legislation already requires the public hearing. And even though we cannot take action on it, a public hearing may still be held on the 16th. And then it will be eligible for voting if it's closed at that time.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

So essentially we don't need to take action today. It will pass through to come before the general session for public hearing. And then we can take it from there.

**MS. SAMPSON:**

Correct.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

All right. Thank you. So we will take **no action on IR 1976.**

**IR 1982-10, accepting and appropriating 100% reimbursable Federal ARRA grant Funds for a draft from the New York State Office of Aging for a Chronic Disease self-Management Program (Co. Exec)** This is 100% reimbursable federal grant. Again, we do not have a quorum to take action on it today; however, I will be circulating a discharge petition to my colleagues. This a 100% federally reimbursable grant. I have to believe that -- a CN as well. So one of the two will hopefully allow us to take action on it at our upcoming General Meeting. So today the Committee will **not take action on IR 1982.**

Anybody else? Anybody else? Okay, thank you. Have a good day everyone.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 12:53 PM  
{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**