

VETERANS & SENIORS COMMITTEE

of the

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

A regular meeting of the Veterans and Seniors Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislative Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on May 24, 2012.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Legislator Steve Stern - Chairman
Legislator Sarah Anker - Vice Chair
Legislator Tom Barraga
Legislator DuWayne Gregory

MEMBER NOT PRESENT:

Legislator Ricardo Montano - Excused Absence

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
Renee Ortiz - Chief Deputy Clerk - Suffolk County Legislature
Ed Romaine - Legislator, 1st Legislative District
Tom Ronayne - Director of Veterans Services
Will Stoner - AARP
Bob Martinez - Aide to Legislator Montano
Bill Shilling - Aide to Legislator Anker
Deborah Harris - Aide to Legislator Stern
Ronald James Sorenson
All other interested parties

VERBATIM MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Donna Catalano - Court Stenographer

VERBATIM MINUTES TRANSCRIBED BY:

Denise Weaver - Legislative Aide

(*THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 1:05 P.M.*)

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Good afternoon. Welcome, everyone, to the Committee on Veterans and Seniors. Please rise and join in Pledge led by Legislator Anker.

SALUTATION

CHAIRMAN STERN:

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

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Thank you. Welcome everyone. We're going to begin with our public portion. It is my pleasure to welcome Ron James Sorenson who is here with us. He will make his comments. Sir, you have three minutes. Welcome. I'm going to ask that you use the podium and speak into the microphone and you need to press the button and keep it pressed.

And, just before you begin, let me note for the record that Legislator Montano will not be with us today he has an excused absence. Mr. Sorenson, welcome.

MR. SORENSON:

First, I want to thank the Committee, Suffolk County, the opportunity to be here, Assemblyman Andrew Raia, who was able to get the bill presented to one of your members. The flag, the MIA-OON, Missing and Attack on our Nation flag is the only official flag that flies over officially over a state Capital, State of Rhode Island, been voted on and passed in the Senate in 2008 by a Korean war veteran who initiated the bill with 17 members of the Senate as veterans. It went over to Jersey and passed in Bergen County as a County so that makes it a United States flag. It's a international flag, it's interchangeable, in which I've flown across the country and actually to Israel to give that country the flag.

The flag was created in Suffolk County because of the operating engineers on Gaza Strip, which I'm very proud of them, William Duffy, a Vietnam veteran said, "we're going to help this old guy". I'm 73 years old and have been working on this project for 16 years. I've seen nothing but positive opinions about the flag. Does not conflict with our American flag any way nor our POW/MIA flag in any way. All that research has been done.

When you're up here for three minutes it seems like you got four hours and sometimes you want to talk longer and you ain't got enough time two seconds.

Any of you have a question? I think that's the most important thing I'd like to ask you of you. Okay. I left some information as to my recognition with the American Legion, state, city, County, Congressional record of our nation. I'm going to pray to God that in this country that we can make history in this County and fly this flag. I want to thank you, again, for the opportunity to step up here and talk to you. God bless you.

One other thing before I go; this small flag I wanted to show you, actually the only one made like the American flag. It's the only flag made that you put on the cemetery beside the American flag. I think you'll find that interesting. I'm going to leave that here. And I forgot to bring a flag that was a little bit bigger. My honor to give you and present you this flag and will give you a bigger one if we get it flown here.

God bless you and God bless America. I'm done. Not well done, but I'm all set and I thank the veterans leadership over here also. Very important. May I give you this flag? Now, I'm going home to go to sleep. I usually take a nap at 1:15. Hope I don't fall asleep on the highway and God bless you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Right on time. Mr. Sorenson, thank you so much for being with us. To my colleagues, Mr. Sorenson has furnished us with some materials and discs as well. Everybody has those? Okay. Can we get copies to everybody. Okay, okay. Director Ronayne.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members. Thank you again for your invitation to appear before you. I'll report on a couple of items, primarily events that have taken place in recent days. Probably the most significant was an event that was conducted at Long Island National Cemetery, most people refer to it as Pinelawn. We had the honor of being a part of a program where 63 of our comrades were interred who for one reason or another have not been over the years; put to rest. This was a ceremony that included entirely cremains or the cremated remains of veterans. And they were largely homeless, indigent or veterans who had no next of kin or no known next of kin.

Over the past year or so we have worked with a group of funeral -- the Nassau-Suffolk Funeral Directors Association and the National Cemetery to visit and meet with the owners of the various funeral homes throughout Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Many people may not be aware but they actually, in many cases, have storage rooms in these funeral homes where unclaimed remains are kept. Obviously, the cremains are what we would find at the funeral homes. Last year we had a similar ceremony that was actually the casketed remains of bodies that had been unclaimed. But for the purposes of this event it was cremains.

Working in partnership with the Funeral Directors Association and the cemetery we ultimately were able to identify a total of 63 veterans or spouses of veterans who fit the descriptions of what I had said a moment ago. As a part of the program there were a great many veterans service organizations, fire departments, police departments, you know, many governmental agencies came together to ensure that this event was held and that it was appropriate, it was respectful and that these veterans were interred with dignity.

It was, at the time of its taken place on this past Saturday, the single largest interment of veterans in one place at one time in US history. That is according to the National Cemetery Administration. So it was quite a significant event. These veterans represented members of all five branches of service. Remarkably enough, 15 of the 63 remains were actually those of veterans of World War I. I know speaking for myself as a veteran, I did not expect again that in my lifetime that I would be able to attend the funeral of a World War I veteran, let alone 15 of them.

Maybe even more remarkably then that, one of the remains belonged to a veteran of the Spanish American War. He was a medical doctor, he was a Colonel. Served in 1898. He passed away in 1913. This gentlemen, this Colonel, this American Patriot was literally in a box on a shelf in the basement of the funeral home for the past 99 years. A tremendous honor that we were able to be a part of seeing that they were finally put to rest.

I think probably beyond the story of the event itself and the program, the most remarkable thing that came out of this was I got an e-mail last night from a member of the Patriot Guard Riders, you may be familiar with them, they are the motorcycle groups who typically escort our military funerals and provide flag lines and, again, escorts. One of the veterans who was participating as a member of the Patriot Guard Rider Unit, after the ceremony when the photographs from, we had a number of photographers present, some of whom have compiled lists -- groups of the photographs and

forwarded them out to some of us, this individual did not realize it at the time, but when he was able to go home and review the photographs that had been shared via e-mail with all of us, he noticed that when looking at the photographs of the containers that the cremains were in, each was engraved with the name and date of birth, date of death of the veteran, he discovered that his grandfather was among them. He was not aware going into the ceremony, he was not aware of this during the course of the ceremony taking place, only afterward viewing the photographs did he realize that his grandfather was among them, which to me is a remarkable story. The e-mail runs about two and-a-half pages. Anybody who would like to read it; I'd be happy to forward it to you. But it's just -- it's a remarkable thing to me that this family member had been somehow not aware of the existence of this -- of this -- this grandfather and his situation for all these years. So we were very happy to have been a part of that.

One of the things that I was very happy about in terms of the ceremony was very often these types of programs draw a great many people and at the same time they draw great many speakers. There was good reasoning behind it and the agreement, the understanding was made that going into the program there would be only a total of two speakers, those two speakers being the Suffolk County Executive and the Nassau County Executive. The Nassau County Executive was unable to attend, he sent a representative. So County Executive Bellone was the primary speaker at the event, which was very fitting, Long Island National Cemetery exists in Suffolk County so this was on our home ground so to speak and County Executive Bellone being an army veteran was -- was also fitting.

So I just wanted to share with you the history of the event and make, obviously mention of the individual who after all -- a number of years that I'm not sure what the number is, reengaged in some way with his deceased grandfather.

We also conducted our annual Armed Forces Day Ceremony this past Saturday. Very nice event. The weather favored us. It was a well attended event. We were fortunate to have Judge John Toomey, who is the presiding judge over Suffolk County Veterans Court serve as our speaker. He was a very good speaker and it was a privilege for us to have the presiding judge of the Veterans Court be at that event. Judge Toomey is also, for anybody who is not aware, a decorated Vietnam veteran. He is a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star recipient and just an ideal choice to be the jurist on that court as well as to be at a gathering such as our Armed Forces Day.

As we go into this coming weekend we have Memorial Day weekend coming upon us. We have a -- great many events taking place, I won't go into the entire list, but we will be doing the placing of the flags at Long Island National Cemetery, the placing of the flags on the graves at Calverton National Cemetery, we'll be doing our annual Calverton Memorial Day services, as a part of the Jones Beach Memorial Day air show, the American Air Power Museum at Farmingdale Airport on the northeast corner of the back of the airport we'll be hosting many of the aircraft participating in that air show. We will be taking part in a service or a ceremony at 6 p.m. on Saturday. So anybody who would be interested in attending, as Legislators I have no question that you'd be permitted to pass the gate, but it is an invitation only event. So anybody who would like a copy of that invitation please let me know and I'll ensure that I get one to you.

Also coming up we have visiting Calverton National Cemetery, you're all, I believe, familiar with the traveling Vietnam Wall. The travelling Vietnam Wall will be visiting Calverton National Cemetery arriving on June 19th and staying through June 24th. This is significant for two reasons; the first of which is that this will be the first time that the travelling Vietnam Wall will be on display at a National cemetery. That in and of itself is significant. But more significant I think is that this wall, it is a full three quarter scale replica of the wall in Washington D.C. This will be its final visit. This will be the final display of the wall. They'll be retiring it after the showing at Calverton National Cemetery. Unfortunately, the wall is constructed of fiberglass. It's a wonderful looking product.

It's very powerful when it visits and veterans are able to spend time there, but it is showing its age and after 20 plus years of traveling the country it is just not in a state any longer where they can continue to maintain it, repair it and display it. The costs have become quite significant. So this will be the last time this wall will be available for viewing. We would encourage everybody to, you know, bear that in mind and please; if you're able to join us.

The main programs will take place on Saturday June 23rd. These programs will take place all day beginning in the morning. The main programs that we're hoping to encourage the public to attend and be a part of will take place from 5 p.m. through 7 p.m. on Saturday. So important to note that.

There have been a number of other issues taking place. We've been very active in the community. We have, you know, as it happens every year when the weather begins to turn nice we see some changes in some of the populations, the most significant for us at this point in time are our homeless veterans, as the weather improves they tend to become more visible, they become -- the numbers tend to increase and they find themselves being more -- more active in the community. So we've been outreaching with the communities, we've been visiting with these veterans trying to provide services or at least encourage them to accept services. So that is something that we generally understand is going to take place around this time of year and this will go on throughout the summer, this trend will increase until the weather begins to cool off again and then at that time they'll start being more willing and accepting of sheltering and so forth. But in the nicer weather they -- they're outside. So, you know, that's something that we work very, very hard on.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Any questions? Director, thank you. Thank you.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Thank you. I should also share with you Mr. Sorenson who made his presentation on the MIA-OON flag. We did invite Mr. Sorenson to attend our last Veterans Advisory Board meeting. He was able to make his presentation and to share his literature and his discs with the members who were present. Unfortunately, we did not have a quorum at that meeting and therefore weren't able to take a vote on the board's recommendation as we had discussed at our last committee. We will be meeting again in June so the expectation is that we will be able to have such a vote at the June meeting and we will share with you the results of that. Obviously, it's not binding in any way to this body, but it was asked that the County's Veterans Advisory Board make a position on this. So that will take place at their June meeting and I will share immediately with you, that meeting will on a Thursday, that Friday I'll share with you the results of that vote.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Great, thank you. All right, thank you, Director Ronayne. Thank you for being with us. It's always good to see you.

Will. Pleasure to welcome Will Stoner, Associate State Director for AARP. Looking forward to your presentation. Thanks so much for being with us today.

MR. STONER:

Great, thanks for the invitation, Legislator, I appreciate it. And to the Members of the Committee and thank you for the opportunity. You had mentioned I had 90 minutes so I'll keep it to 75.

Well, good afternoon. As introduced, I'm Will Stoner. I'm the Associate State Director for Liveable Communities at AARP. I'm responsible for Long Island, Brooklyn, Queens and Westchester for community outreach and advocacy and statewide Liveable Communities and our Aids Friendly Communities Program.

I am a Suffolk County resident. I live in Mount Sinai. So, thank you for representing me, Legislator Anker. And I'm raising two children there, I am married. And I'm from western New York and I've fallen in love with Long Island and fallen in love with Suffolk County.

I'm here today, though, to talk about fostering more age friendly communities. The number in proportions of older people in cities, towns and rural communities are increasing. The first wave of baby boomers started turning 65 last year and by 2030 all 77 million of the baby boomers will have turned 65. And by 2020 one in four drivers on the road will 65 plus. The fastest growing age group, I'm sure you've heard this from our director of Ageing for Suffolk County many times, is 85 plus and 100 plus. AARP has 65,000 members over the age of 100. Our oldest member is 114. In New York State we have 8,000 members over the age of 100 and here in Suffolk County we have 685. We have 300,000 members just in Suffolk County.

The Age Friendly Initiative was created to make it easier for people of all ages, and especially older people to age actively, to live in security, enjoy good health, and continue to fully participate in society.

Local government and community collaborators that plan and take action to accommodate the changing needs of older residents can ensure that their community remain attractive; places to live with features that not only benefit seniors, but support the health, safety and participation of residents of all ages.

Supporting communities to become age-friendly is one of the ways AARP is working to ensure that more communities are healthy, thriving places for families to live, work, learn and play. And in an age-friendly community, policies, services, settings and structures enable older people to age actively by recognizing the wide range of capacities and resources among older persons; anticipating and responding flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences; respecting decisions and lifestyle choices; and protecting those who are most vulnerable; and promoting inclusion and contribution in all areas of community life.

This program makes complete sense for AARP because of all of the work that we are already doing at AARP and, if I may say, Suffolk County because of all of the great work that you've been doing for many years. But Active Living Workshop, we've worked with Dan {Burden} here locally in Smithtown for Main Street, I don't know if you've seen any of the press in regards to use bringing him in. He's a nationally renowned walkability expert. We brought in an independent engineer to create an engineering report for Main Street. I know that the DOT has restriped the lined there. We're hopeful that it'll work and it'll alleviate the fatalities and the crashes that have been occurring there. But unfortunately there are way to many deaths to be comfortable with and on 25 just last week, or no, this week, Monday, unfortunately an 85 year-old resident was hit and killed.

So there are some issues with Smithtown they're the second worst or one of the worst areas in the tri-state area, Hempstead Turnpike being the other. But AARP is concerned about this because unfortunately New York State has the designation of being the fourth worst state for older pedestrians. Number one actually is Hawaii, which is surprising, but we have the fourth worst. And our pedestrian fatality rate is twice the national average.

Transportation options; we're wading into that and fighting for transportation funding because as people give up their keys or just stop driving because of their own physical ailments or whatnot, we need to make sure they continue to get around through public transportation. We passed a State Law that requires that when they redo a roadway they have to take complete streets concepts into effect -- or into consideration. Improving pedestrian facilities. Making it easier to bicycle and actually driving, making driving safer.

Housing; I mentioned in 2008 Legislator Stern passed legislation that required that affordable housing include accessible design. One of first in the country. And, I know that more than 150 units have already been built because of that law. We replicated that recently in Westchester County and expanded on it a little bit. We have a full accessible bathroom now on the main floor so now someone can age in place and actually die in their home if they so chose, which sounds really morbid, but that's where people want to die rather than a nursing home if they can.

And you can see some others there, but Suffolk County is really already leading the way because of all the work that they've been doing and AARP is continuing to work along those lines and want to work closer with the County.

The AIDS Friendly Community Initiative started with the World Health Organization in 2006 and involved 33 cities of varying sizes throughout the world. Making communities age friendly is one of the most effective strategies to promote healthy and active aging and contributes to the creation of sustainable healthy communities, which will benefit all residents in Suffolk County.

We view our participation in this global project as a means to advance our public polity; some of the issues that you saw on the previous slide, including mobility and housing, caregiving, healthcare, community engagement, volunteering and combating isolation.

We base our criteria on the eight domains of community life of the World Health Organization. The World Health Organization's Program was age friendly cities. New York City and Portland Oregon were the first two in the United States. There are three more coming on. We realize, and I realize, as a Suffolk County resident, not everyone lives in the city so approached the World Health Organization and asked them to expand their designation and allow us to implement it in the United States as a national organization to the community level. So a community of any size and shape can say, "we would like to be part of this AARP network of age friendly communities."

These are the eight criteria of the World Health Organization. Outdoor spaces and buildings. Community centers, parks and recreational facilities, making them more accessible. Transportation. Complete streets is in that realm. Housing. I had mentioned the inclusive design bill that Legislator Stern forwarded back in 2008, which was very successful. Social participation. Keeping people of all ages, but our older adults actively engaged in their community adds to quality of life issues for that older adult. They'll live longer and healthier lives and it wards off dementia; for example. Respect and social inclusion. Keeping them engaged in their community and the decisions and dialog and combating loneliness and isolation. Civic participation and employment. Suffolk County has the One-Stop Employment Program, which is great and civic engagement; we know that our membership are always seeking out volunteer opportunities, but sometimes don't know the best places to go. I just got finished doing a six town blitz volunteer recruitment and I recruited 175 new volunteers for AARP. Yeah. It's -- people were clamoring for opportunities and I know there's a lot of organizations out there that need volunteers and we just have to find a way to get them engaged in helping out.

And then communications and information. Finding ways to communicate most effectively with our older adults in our communities. And last but not least, community support and health services.

Talking a little bit more about our role again, liveable communities, as far our definition is concerned, is a safe and secure, provides affordable appropriate housing and adequate transportation and supportive community features.

We have a foundation that works on issues like combating hunger in older adults. Half of eligible older adults actually don't apply for food assistance or food stamps, which is a shame because every dollar spent on food assistance locally adds \$5 to the local community.

Combating isolation. As these baby boomers start to age, turn 75 and 85 a lot of our communities aren't prepared infrastructure wise for them to continue to get around successfully and we have to find a way -- make sure that the services are there so they can get them in their home or in their community and help combat isolation and other ailments.

So the communities admitted to the World Health Organization's Network will benefit from inclusion for a number of reasons, but the criteria for the membership is pretty straight forward. It's not all that complicated. Our Office of International Affairs and our state and national group is administering the program right now. So what we do is we identify a community that we think would be a good candidate, they would state their interests through a letter of intent saying we want to be part of your AARP network of age friendly communities and join this global network and the County Executive would have to do the letter of intent because it's the municipal administrator that does the letter and then we would admit them into the World Health Organization's Network and they would get a certificate of membership and, of course, we would arrange for a great deal of publicity to brag about that and, of course, notify our membership in the County. And, once admitted though, the community has to establish an advisory committee, which could be completely volunteer and would be encouraged to include as many older adults as possible that have expertise in those eight criteria or an interest in making age-friendly communities potentially one from every Legislative district would even be encouraged, the size if its volunteer, it wouldn't matter, because there would be very minimal costs. They would have to pass a local municipal resolution, County resolution, which is very, very easy to do once the letter of intent is written; clearly you're interested. And then create a robust plan of action for those eight criteria on how you're going to make improvements up to that, you know, up to the communities as local as possible and then after five years commit to doing some measurements, looking at what has been accomplished and what steps have been taken to make it more age friendly. And then at the end of five years you submit a report to the World Health Organization and AARP.

The benefits -- keeping, you know, costs minimal are exponential because the cost savings can be exponential. Like, for example, the housing initiative that I already mentioned about accessible design, keeping someone in that home forever is a cost savings not only to Medicaid but that individual and to the community at large because -- and to the environment, if you want to add the environment, because now you don't have to build a separate home when they lose their mobility, they can stay in that home and won't need some other service or some other type of dwelling to suit their needs. So that's just a simple example. Complete streets is another, if you can reduce crashes and pedestrian fatalities, you're not only saving lives but you're saving a lot of cost for the community.

Just to give two quick examples as far as the bigger picture goes, but you become part of a global network of experts. AARP resources; I'm a Suffolk County resident so if I have financial resource to add to the program, of course I'm going to do that, because I have a vested interest being a community member. And latest news, best practices, right now we just, we just launched this April 4th, but there are several communities across the globe and in the United States three cities; Des Moines, Philadelphia and Washington DC are coming online, Macon Georgia, coming online. So there's a lot of best practices that we'll be sharing as AARP, we'll have toolboxes for approaching all eight of those criteria, partnerships, sharing of information, mentoring and assessment and, of course, the recognition by AARP nationally, you know, Suffolk County has gotten national news through us in the past because of the accessible design, but this would be definitely be national and international news because you would be one of the first counties to do it. I say "one of" because I actually got Westchester to sign on already, which is good news for me.

But we're hoping that this year we can get 50 communities to sign on and agree that they want to be part of the this network and we expect to spread the public awareness of the necessity and

desirability of US towns and cities to become friendlier to all ages as the country's Population continues its rapid demographic shift in aging.

And Suffolk County can play a big role in that or continue to play a role in that and become formerly designated because they're already doing great work for our older citizens. We know that. I know that as a resident. But we want them to intentionally create a strategic direction for addressing the community issues and improving the lives of all citizens.

So my hope today is that Suffolk County will take their first step to joining the global network. And this last slide just talks about some of the communities that have already signed on and the ones that are coming and I think I mentioned them all. In that, of course, there is the global network. When they launched this in Canada, I think they -- within the first five years 245 communities signed on so we're expecting a flood once the word gets out. But at this point as part of the AARP's network we have two communities that have expressed a letter of intent and we would love Suffolk County to be at least in the top five.

And then, of course, my contact information. My telephone number or the cell phone is always best or e-mail. I have a million people -- a million members in my region, my office is my car, so I'm always on the go. But I'm always available too.

So let me just end by saying thanks again to Legislator Stern and this committee for allowing me to come in for -- and talk for a few minutes. I didn't keep track. I hope it was less than 75 and hopefully we can continue this dialog and see if we can get something moving in Suffolk County.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Will, thank you. As always, thanks so much for not only being here but for all that you do with the organization. We look forward to continuing our good work together. Let me ask you a question. The -- geographically, Suffolk County is a large area and there are some areas that might be appropriate to pursue some of the goals as you lay them out and maybe perhaps in others; it is not. Does an area as large and diverse as Suffolk County qualify in your opinion because of some of the things that we've done and hope to commit to doing in the future qualify for this type of a designation? Is that designation meant for a level of government a municipality such as Suffolk County do you think?

MR. STONER:

I believe so. And that's part of the action plan that would come out of the Volunteer Advisory Committee. They would address the needs and be able to focus on certain issues and certain areas. I mean, the intention too would be -- it would be great if at some point the Town of Brookhaven said the same thing. We would like to create our own process so we could focus even more narrowly on Brookhaven, which I'm a resident of, and do same thing in that same process. But Suffolk County does make sense because there are 18 members of the Legislature and I'm sure they're finely tuned to their communities and knowing what their needs and that coming into a process of creating a strategic plan would make complete sense.

But, yeah, I mean the intention could be to do it at two different levels and even go to the even more micro level if the Village of Patchogue also said we would like to be considered an age-friendly community and do the same thing. It's up to each municipality.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

As far as your volunteerism efforts, which I congratulate you on --

MR. STONER:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

-- and extremely important to keep all members of our community engaged and active and doing some good things for others, of course. When you say that there are those within our community who would very much like to participate in a volunteer effort but don't necessarily know quite where to go, I know I've had this conversation with my office and with colleagues, what role if any could Suffolk County play in making those opportunities available and helping whether it's organizations or seniors themselves find out about and get matched up with some of those volunteer opportunities within the community. Do you see a role for the County level of government to play in that regard or do you think that perhaps it's best to partner with an organization like AARP so that if as individual Legislators or as a level of government we become aware of a need and a request; is it better for us to try and handle that or do you think that it might be best to partner with you and turn those kinds of inquiries over to an organization such as AARP.

MR. STONER:

Yeah, great question. I would say certainly partnerships. There are groups out there that do a great job of volunteer match. We actually have created our own process call Create The Good. And if you Google Create The Good and we encourage our members to go to this site, it's a volunteer match site for AARP members or anyone to go to and you put in your zip code and a plethora of opportunities come up and then you can self select yourself based on whether it's helping animals, helping at a food pantry, helping in a veterans hospital. It covers the whole spectrum.

So we're constantly approaching organizations and encouraging them to go into this site and create opportunities for volunteerism because we realize even at AARP not all of our members want to volunteer for what we're doing, whether it's driver safety, tax aid, speakers network and whatnot. So we create a process too so that people can match themselves to different opportunities. So the County could play a role in helping people find this site, Create The Good, and other -- and organizations to load this site with opportunities so that people can find them when they're looking. Cause they are; they're looking. They're eager to give back. And in this climate right now with a lot of people out of work, they have some free time, some of our older adults. I found that my average volunteer right now is around 62, which is a new phenomenon for us cause it -- it's normally in their 70's and older, which, they're great, but to see these younger volunteers is because of the current economic climate. They're been downsized or whatever and they figured they have the time and the means to do it so they're doing it. So I would -- my response would be to partner for sure.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Anker.

LEG. ANKER:

I want to thank you, Will, for all the work that you've done, the service the work, the community work and it's gone beyond AARP. I know I think the American Lung Association, is that what --

MR. STONER:

Cancer; yeah.

LEG. ANKER:

Cancer, oh, sorry, sorry.

MR. STONER:

Yeah, that's okay.

LEG. ANKER:

I know we sat together at the Cancer Awareness Task Force and it was --

MR. STONER:

Yeah.

LEG. ANKER:

-- you were very productive and very informative and I appreciate you coming here today.

I have one of the largest senior communities in Suffolk County. I have quite a few. And so you -- will you come to some of these communities and have a presentation?

MR. STONER:

Oh, sure.

LEG. ANKER:

And if you do, and when you do, what type of topics do you discuss?

MR. STONER:

I can talk about any aging issue. Yeah. I'm not an expert on all of them or any of them, but, yeah, you know if there's an issue that they're interested in we can get the information that they're looking for in a presentation. But that's certainly what I do and part of our speakers network, if it's not me, it's them. One of our -- just to throw it out there, one of our biggest focuses right now is Medicare and Social Security. And you've earned to say, we want our membership and the general public to weigh in on the options that are going to be considered going forward with those two programs. But I'm available or someone from our volunteer network is certainly available to talk to any group whether it's one person or a thousand or a million.

LEG. ANKER:

Thank you. I know we're working with Suffolk Community College they have this program, a new program, Professors on Wheels, and again, maybe we can share what we have with you and visa versa. So, again, thank you for coming here and we'll definitely be in correspondence.

MR. STONER:

Great. Thanks.

LEG. ANKER:

Thanks.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Stoner, for coming today. So much talk generally is given to our young people in retaining them here in Suffolk County but you really highlighted another important aspect is to how do we keep our seniors who have lived here all their lives, you're in retirement and would love to stay in Suffolk County. Has there been any type of assessment on just on the number of housing, I guess, the supply of housing that would have to be available just to maintain the levels of seniors that we're going to see the next 15 to 20 years. Not everyone owns their home, but we're going to have to have, you know, affordable residence for these people to stay if we want to keep them, if that's our goal.

MR. STONER:

Yeah, not off the top of my head. But one of the things that I advocate as a housing advocate for older adults is that it's a -- it's mixed housing. It's not just, you know, putting a 55 and older community in the middle of a peach field, separated from all the services and downtown areas and shopping and everything else, but actually make it as intergenerational as possible. And include transit in the concept. And include walkable communities in the concept. What will most likely happen is people will age in place in the home that can or cannot meet their needs and they'll find a way to get through it. That's why with the legislation that Legislator Stern and the County passed; we're changing that idea. And at the town level we've worked with groups to pass incentives for inclusive design so that a private homebuilder would get expedited zoning or waive some permit fees if they included some accessible features because the idea is that if you build the house right in the first place they don't need that 55 and older community, they don't need senior housing, they can stay right in their community and connected to the neighborhood that they want to for 40, 50, 60, 100 years.

But I haven't seen any numbers. They're probably hard to figure because of all the factors that are involved. I'll take a look and see if our public policy {inaudible} has anything. But we encourage, you know, like I said, intergenerational and accessible design. Yeah.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay, all right.

MR. STONER:

But as far as, you know, I hear a lot about keeping our youth here and I think it's very important because when the baby boomers, the mass of them start retiring, we're going to have a shortage of employees and it's going to be dire. I don't think too many people are thinking about that right now, but it's -- I won't say catastrophic, it's going to be pretty bad. So keeping -- getting some young people to stay here is important, but also our younger baby boomers staying employed, our seniors are a huge asset, you guys all know that, you're members of this committee and you've been hearing it for a long time, but giving back thru volunteerism, but also their dollars. They spend a significant amount of money in our communities and we don't want to lose them to southern communities. Ninety percent of people have stayed in the community that they've been in for their lives. So, you know, the mass exit is to Florida or South Carolina is not happening. It's about 10%, but the ones that stay here they're, you know, contributing to their community.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay, great. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Will, again, thanks so much for being with us. Some good stuff and ideas definitely to pursue.

MR. STONER:

Great.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

So we look forward to working with you going forward.

MR. STONER:

Great. Thanks, it was an honor. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Okay. We will go to the items on the agenda. We have resolutions before us today. Okay.

TABLED RESOLUTIONS

Before us today we have two tabled resolutions. First is **IR 1364, Authorizing the MIA-OON Flag to be flown at the Armed Services Plaza at the H. Lee Dennison Buliding, Hauppauge during the month of September (Romaine)**. We heard from Director Ronayne on the status before our Veterans Advisory Board so based on his representation I'll make a motion to table.

LEG. ANKER:

Second.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Second by Legislator Anker. All in favor? Any opposed? Abstentions? **IR 1364 is tabled.**
(VOTE: 4-0-0-1 Not Present: Leg. Montano)

IR 1378, Adopting Local Law No. -2012, A Local Law to strengthen safeguards for residents of planned retirement communities (Romaine) Legislator Romaine, do you have a moment? We are about to consider IR 1378, strengthening safeguards for residents of planned retirement communities, this is your legislation, we are fortunate to have you with us today. Would you like to comment?

LEG. ROMAINE:

Very quickly. This is a piece of legislation that mirrors and actually helped with the other pieces of legislation that we did for senior citizen communities. We have written many laws to protect seniors in communities and the one thing that this law does, this resolution does, it says when those communities don't abide by those laws, when the operators of those communities don't abide by those laws and they're fined, they can't pass those fines along to the residents in their monthly maintenance charges. That's the sum total of what this does. It's kind of protecting and I think Counsel can speak to that as well. And I'll ask Counsel if she wants to comment on that. But that's the sum total of this. It's simply a protective measure so the other laws that we have to protect senior citizen communities that are owned by management firms, when those management firms fail, and are fined for their failure, that those fines can't be passed on as part of their monthly maintenance charge.

MS. SIMPSON:

I agree completely with Legislator Romaine. This is perfectly fine.

LEG. ROMAINE:

It's a very simple concept that just when you don't abide by the law you can't escape the consequences of the law by victimizing the people that you've already victimized and you've been fined, by passing the fines along to them in their monthly maintenance charges.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Let's do this, before we go down the row, I will -- I'm going to make a motion to approve for discussion purposes so I can get it before us, second by Legislator Anker. On the motion, Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a question through the Chair to the sponsor, what mechanism, I understand the intent, but what mechanism of enforcement do you envision this legislation providing? If I'm a co-op owner or a resident of this community and I feel that there are extraneous costs from some suit being passed onto me, what's my course of relief?

LEG. ROMAINE:

Well, first of all, it's not from some suit. It specifically deals with the laws that this Legislature has adopted in the past. It would be a violation, which they've been adjudicated and found guilty of and been fined; okay. That fine can't be incorporated into the common charges or the maintenance charges that that management firm imposes on its residents.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay, so a fine from -- so it's a fine. Okay.

LEG. ROMAINE:

A court. A court of law.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. So it's not any, you know, some negligent suit.

LEG. ROMAINE:

No.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay.

LEG. ROMAINE:

It's one; we pass a series of laws that, by the way, are being litigated now by the County of Suffolk because this management firm does not want to comply with those laws. We passed these laws. Should we be successful in a court of law and then should the management firm continue to refuse to obey the County law, and a court would impose a fine on them, then that fine could not be incorporated into the common charges in the monthly maintenance charges.

LEG. GREGORY:

Yes, that I understand.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Okay.

LEG. GREGORY:

But how, yeah, how do you enforce it?

LEG. ROMAINE:

What do you mean how do you enforce it. I mean, if a court fines a management firm for their failure to comply with County law and that firm attempts to pass along those fines in the maintenance charges, our County Attorney's Office would go in and get a show cause order.

LEG. GREGORY:

Oh, I think Counsel --

MS. SIMPSON:

If I may, with respect to this law, this will become incorporated into the existing laws that we have with respect to planned retirement communities. So they would be subject to the same enforcement provisions and penalties that are already existing. So if someone were to do, you know, pass along these costs, that would be cause to bring a separate action. So, you know, the County Attorney could go bring a separate action to prevent these things from happening, any fines, all that would start --

CHAIRMAN STERN:

What department is that referral made to or that complaint made to? Our County Attorney ultimately takes over the action but what department does that complaint or that application made to? Do you know?

MS. SIMPSON:

Well, applications can be made by a resident or homeowner in one of these communities or the Suffolk County Attorney can bring an action.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

But is the application made to -- is it Consumer Affairs that has jurisdiction over it or -- so who, if I am a resident of the community and I see that this is a impermissible cost that's being passed along who do I call?

LEG. ROMAINE:

You'd probably call the County Attorney's Office or your County Legislator, who would then refer it to the County Attorney's Office. We passed a series of laws to protect senior citizens in the past, there's one particular community that is in violation of that. They sued the County and in response we've returned suit and are involved in litigation with them over this. So it would be through the court system. That's our enforcement mechanism for most things. We don't have the ability other than to have a judge in a court of law make those determinations. All we have the ability to do is put laws on the books that we feel they're fair and equitable and this is something that I certainly think, I mean, if someone's violating a law, a County law, and then they take that fine because -- and they incorporate it into their common charges, that's a problem because they're already victimizing the residents by who were given protection by this County of certain things that they should be able to enjoy as senior citizens in a -- one of these retirement communities.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

And many times, depending on the subject matter, there might be departments or particular directors or commissioners that have oversight jurisdiction where reports and applications are made, but, yes, in having the conversation with Counsel, this would be a referral, this would be a request that would be made of the County in general and go directly to the County Attorney's Office to answer your question, Legislator Gregory.

Anybody else? No? Okay. Okay, we have a motion to approve and a second before us. I'll call the vote. All in favor? Any opposed? Any Abstention? **IR 1378 is approved. (VOTE: 4-0-0-1 Not Present: Leg. Montano)**

Thank you everybody for being with us today. We are adjourned.

(*THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 2:00 P.M.*)

{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY