

**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 August 30, 2012 at 1:00 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

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

**NOT PRESENT:**

Legislator Ricardo Montano

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Legislator Kara Hahn, 5th Legislative District  
Legislator Wayne Horsley, 14th Legislative District  
Tom Ronayne, Director, Veterans Services  
Holly Rhodes-Teague, Director, Office for the Aging  
Lois Logan, NASW NYS Chapter, Suffolk Division  
Other Interested Parties

**MINUTES TAKEN BY:**

Donna Catalano, Court Stenographer

**MINUTES TRANSCRIBED BY:**

Kim Castiglione, Legislative Secretary

*(The meeting was called to order at 1:07 P.M.)*

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Welcome, everyone, to the Committee on Veterans and Seniors. Please rise to join us in the Pledge led by Legislator Barraga.

***Salutation***

Everybody please remain standing and join us in a moment of silence to keep the brave men and women fighting for your freedoms overseas in our thoughts and prayers.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE**

Thank you.

Okay. Welcome, everyone. We will start off with presentations. Holly?

**MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:**

I just wanted to ask for your support for the capital vehicle project that's in front of you today. The vehicles that we purchase are used for the nutrition programs, and you really can't run a nutrition program without vehicles. You have to have a way to get people to the site or to bring meals out to a home delivered meal client. So we've had -- this project's being going on for quite a number of years in the County. The County purchases the vehicles and then the contractors maintain the vehicles, insure them, and also provide the drivers for them. The -- this year the funding that I am asking for is for four vehicles that were approved in the capital project. Two of them are 14 passenger buses for those who are -- for two programs that are bringing people to and from sites, and the other two vehicles are small vehicles because they are just using it to deliver home delivered meals. So the total project is \$170,000 that we're requesting. So hopefully you'll support that.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Okay. Anything else? Anybody else for Holly? Okay, Holly. Thank you. Director Ronayne.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Good afternoon. Thank you again for your invitation to appear before you. I have a couple of items that I'd like to make you aware of today. I guess the first one would be a follow-up report on the Peer-To-Peer mentoring program for the post traumatic stress disorder that I had reported on previously. There have been several conference calls that have taken place since our last meeting. Probably the largest or the biggest development was obviously the issue of funding has been the question. There was some back and forth as to whether or not the funding was now going to go directly through our agency or whether it was going to go through the Health Department. It was explained to us through a representative from New York State Senate Finance that the most expeditious way for us to access this funding would be for it to go through Health because they have the ability to add it to an existing funding letter that is already in place. That would make the difference probably by several months. We have agreed that if it, in fact, does expedite accessing the funds by that amount of time, that we're agreeable to go ahead and follow that course, at least for this portion, and then if the funding is renewed then we would make the effort to have the funding redirected to the Veterans Service Agency.

We are told now that the funding could be as close as a couple of weeks away. They're planning on a conference call. As of Tuesday of this week, the plan was to amend the July funding letter that is already in place for Health and add the funding for this program to that funding letter, which would serve our purposes and obviously that's our greatest concern.

Beyond that, until the funding is actually available and accessible to us there is not a great deal that we can do to move forward. We are essentially in a position now where we will begin working with providers to enter into contracts or agreements for training to get the facilitators, the coaches, some of my staff, myself and others trained to a level that we can responsibly participate in this process and this program and best serve the population that we are seeking to serve.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Barraga.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Good afternoon, Tom. When you talk about the Health Department, you are talking about the New York State Health Department, accessing the money through them, because you have four counties involved in this particular program.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

OMH. New York State OMH is funding the program for all four counties and they were going to provide the funding to the individual counties. Based on what we've been discussing, the funding to the counties that we originally expected was going to go to the Veterans Services Agencies directly, will now go to the Suffolk County Health Department.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Suffolk County Health Department.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

As a pass-through, as pass-through funding and we would draw it from Health.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Do you know how much money we are talking about and how is it prorated among the four counties involved in this program.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

The initial program, the pilot program is \$200,000 per County. There is no prorate, there is no adjustment based on census or population. It's equally divided amongst the four counties. We clearly have, by a significant margin, the largest population of veterans of all of those four counties.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

But everybody gets a co-equal share.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

Everybody gets an equal share.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Regardless of the number of veterans who are participating. You're right, we would have a lot more here in Suffolk County than say Jefferson County does.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

I think Jefferson is right around 10,000; we are at about 90,000.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

But they get the same 200,000 that we do. The summary that you sent out, the one question I had was under Outlined Training Criteria for the Peer Support Persons including, and you had like 20 different categories. Are you referencing the people that will have to have expertise in these areas or trained in these areas in order to implement the program?

**MR. RONAYNE:**

No, not at all. We will have probably two actual clinicians who would be credentialed in the field. They would be professionals. They would be versed in most of those areas. The intent is not to train the layfolks person, such as myself, to operate at that level. We're more concerned with being able to operate in the group setting.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Because the terminology used, "Outline Training Criteria for the peer support person or persons including" and you have like 20 major different areas. So what you are saying is that they are not going to be trained in those areas. These people are clinicians, they have the expertise already to come in and to treat these veterans.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

The clinicians that will be brought in will be expert in the field. They should have experience and background in those areas. I just want to share with you that the outline that I had forwarded to each of you was not our outline, that was the outline that was provided to us by Senator McDonald's office.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

When does this program really get going?

**MR. RONAYNE:**

If we can access the funding, let's assume worst case October. We'd like to be up and running by November. We'd like to be seeing veterans by November.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

When does the pilot period end and when do you start to analyze the effectiveness and when do you have to put together an assessment to determine whether or not we get funding going forward? Do you know when that time is up?

**MR. RONAYNE:**

That seems to be a moving target. We were initially told that it would be December 31. Then we were told it was March 31. Now we are told that we have the full calendar year of 2013. When we receive some sort of a document definitively outlining for us what that timetable will be I will share that with you. It's been somewhat frustrating trying to get an answer because different entities will give me different responses. Quite honestly, because of the amount of preparation to get this thing implemented, if we had the calendar year 2013 I think that would serve all of our interests best.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

But that also shows how important it is to take the funding the way you are going to get the funding, much earlier than later, and to make sure, yeah, that it is up and running right away so that come the beginning of 2013 you are moving.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

Yes. And we had originally, when we had been told initially that it would be December 31 or March 31, we had built into our outline, a draft outline if you will, a period of assessment where we would do a self-evaluation and we would submit that as a part of our reporting for review. We still intend to do that. We'll call it a progress report at this time. I may have shared with you already that as a part of the funding that we were given for this pilot, each County is also now being -- will have \$20,000 each extracted from that funding that is going to be -- that is going to fund an assessment

or an evaluation through the School of Social Work at SUNY Albany. That is beyond our control. So it's probably a positive that they are going to do their own independent assessment of all four programs, but we still intend to do our own evaluation.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Any idea, when the program is up and running, how many -- is there a target number of how many volunteers you'd like to see participating in the program?

**MR. RONAYNE:**

We're targeting -- the number that's we're looking to initially is going to be 20, and that would allow us to have ten groups per week with two trained individuals at each session, and then we would have the ability to have the clinicians and the other core personnel such as myself and the core team attend sessions at our choosing or based on need. But ideally we would have five locations in various locations throughout the County meeting twice per week, with two providers.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

How challenging or not do you think it's going to be to hit that number of 20?

**MR. RONAYNE:**

We've already had inquiries in the office. I've already had half a dozen calls directly on this, and we haven't advertised. Right now everything is in the -- until it's implemented, it's all discussion. So we've already had people make inquiry, we've had anecdotal reports from people involved in the process that through other providers, through other services, that there are veterans who they believe would engage this particular program. There is some value, there are some merits to it that appeal to us that deviate from the conventional -- the mainstream process. We're hoping -- again, we won't know, this is all projection, but we believe that we'll be able to satisfy the ten groups, five locations, two times per week. We think we'll be able to easily satisfy that.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Anker.

**LEG. ANKER:**

And again, we need to keep in mind this is a pilot program, so -- and I'm looking forward -- I'm hoping the results will be overwhelming that we do need more Peer-To-Peer counseling. And when that happens, I don't say if, but when that happens, maybe we can help redirect more funds to our County since we have a larger proportion.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

Well, we're hoping, and we've had this discussion, and quite frankly, I've had this with my counterparts in the other three counties, that based on the programs that are developed, based on the progress that is made in the individual counties and based on the response by the population. I mean, it's not inconceivable that we would have a very small response and Jefferson County would have a large one. We don't expect that to be the case, but we all seem to be in agreement that funding should go where the need is greatest. If we give somebody X number of dollars and they don't have the ability to spend those dollars on the intended purpose, then what's the point of giving them that money. So we all seem to be in agreement with that. But we need to get through the pilot stage to evaluate that.

One other thing that I just want -- would like to bring to your attention, and Mr. Chairman, I'm going to ask for your permission to invite guests to our next committee. There's a program, many of you have attended our programs, public services, public ceremonies over the years. Many of you have also been to our national cemeteries and even private cemeteries when we've had funeral services for veterans, active duty, military. And we, whenever possible, attempt to have a live

bugler play Taps. It may not seem on its surface to be a significant issue, but it's very meaningful to veterans and certainly to the families and the loved ones of those who we have lost.

The Federal government, through DOD, has had a program in place for a number of years, we refer to it as Bugles Across America, where we have access to a live bugler. In our case for this area it's a gentleman named Chief Warrant Officer Lou DiLeo. Lou informed us last Sunday at a ceremony that their funding has been cut and that September 30th will be his last day. Over the years in Suffolk and Nassau Counties, Lou has played live Taps at more than 7,000 funerals. He's brought great comfort to a great many families, veterans, community members and he's contributed greatly when he's participated in our public events.

We're asking for support. We've asked the veterans community to rally and communicate to their Federal officials, their elected officials, our desire as a community to keep this program in place. Obviously I don't know at this moment what the dollars and cents of it are, I don't know what the exact cost is, but to have one gentleman on call to play a bugle can't be excessively expensive in the grand scheme of things. If we had to, as a community, come up with alternate ways to help fund this, we've been discussing that, we're willing to explore that as well, but I was hoping that as a body -- I know we don't do this sort of thing anymore, but if I can invite Mr. DiLeo to our next committee to have him explain in more detail what the nature of the program is, the services that he provides, and the importance of maintaining and continuing this program. And if we can enlist, whether it is as a body or as individual Legislators, to assist us in communicating to our Federal officials the importance of maintaining this program. Again, over 7,000 funerals. He's a -- it's just -- it's an extremely important thing, certainly to myself, and I can tell you that over the years, having been at probably 150 of the programs that Lou has played at, it's very meaningful to the survivors.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Tom, that's funding from DOD?

**MR. RONAYNE:**

That's coming from DOD. The final one that I'd like to just make you aware of, is on September 11th we're going to be working with, I think you're all familiar with an organization known as 911 Veterans. 911 Vets is going to be, pardon me, is going to be having a walk on September 11th. It's a little bit different from the ceremonies that we're accustomed to seeing on September 11th. We'll be beginning at the Montauk Lighthouse. At 8:46 AM a group will step off from the Montauk Lighthouse and we're going to start a walk from the Montauk Lighthouse to Ground Zero. The walk will be taking place in order to raise awareness of a couple of issues, specifically in this instance the name that we're putting on this one is Petty Officer Greg Pupo. Greg was also a New York City Police Lieutenant in the Emergency Services Unit. Greg passed away about a month ago. He was a first responder at the World Trade Center. He is an Iraqi veteran, came home from Iraq, got sick from World Trade Center related cancers, and passed away, leaving behind a couple of daughters, a wife and a community that is just really -- we're losing about one a day it seems at this point.

So the intent of the walk is to primarily raise awareness of the issue of the illnesses that are afflicting the 9/11 responders and the challenges that they face. We're expecting the walk to take about three days, between two-and-a-half and three days. There will be very few breaks. It's intended to be a nonstop walk to the extent possible. We're hoping that we'll be able to enlist as much support from elected officials and from the community to join us along the route as we pass through the various communities. To the extent possible we're going to stay on 27A or 27 as far in as we can so that any disruptions to traffic or anything else will be minimal. When we arrive in New York City -- we have already began the coordination with the 9/11 Memorial and World Trade Center, but we have a route. The route is supposed to be published today. When I have that I will forward copies to you. And if you can just help us get the word out to your communities that

anybody who would like to line the route and just wave a flag and show some support as we pass through, it would be greatly appreciated.

**LEG. ANKER:**

Have you reached out to the fire departments to see if they can create the, you know, the bridges with the flags to create awareness in the communities?

**MR. RONAYNE:**

We have, and quite honestly there will be some of that. For the reasons that I stated a moment ago we're hoping to not impact vehicular traffic, pedestrian traffic. Is a weekday, or they are weekdays that we'll be traveling on. We don't want to cause too much of a disruption, and we understand that most of these firefighters also have day jobs. The intent is not to be a pain in the neck as we pass through communities, but simply to raise awareness.

**LEG. ANKER:**

With that, too, though it's kind of sad to realize at this point for other people how important our environment affects our health. I have been advocating for decades, and we're seeing this now, that carcinogens are found within our environment, especially during disasters. And, you know, it's a hard lesson to learn, but at least, you know, we're learning it or we have accepted it, the fact that our environment has a direct impact on our health.

As far as the insurance company and the individuals that have been directly affected, because I have quite a few in my district that have become severely ill or have passed away, is there -- what is the status of that, the insurance paying for some of these illnesses?

**MR. RONAYNE:**

Private insurance -- private insurance has, you know, it's been a mixed bag. Some have been better than others. Workers Compensation was very challenging. The number of denials for World Trade Center workers who ultimately applied for Workers Compensation benefits, the denial rate was astronomical. I think initially it was in the 80 percentile. It's gotten a little bit better as time has gone on, but sort of the horse is out of the barn at this point. Most of the people who are going to be sick are already sick. We have already lost a lot of people. So a lot of those compensation battles have been lost. The Victims Compensation Fund has reopened for responders. There is an application process that must be undertaken. It's a little bit complicated. Nobody has been paid out of that yet. There's some discussion now as to who, in fact, will be paid out of that.

My experience, and I happen to be a responder, one of my -- well, I should say my experience has been the vast, vast majority of this population are not looking for a payday. Nobody is looking to walk away with a big check and think that they somehow have come out ahead of anything. We're just looking to insure that our expenses, our bills are paid related to our medical problems and our health care and that our families are not left suffering financially when our time comes. The level of compensation being sought through the program open for responders now is extremely low relative to what was paid out to the family members and the survivors and the surviving victims after 9/11. That's not the purpose of the fund that is in place now. This is more making sure that the bills are paid and that the families are minimally provided for. There's not -- there's not a rush for a payday here at all.

**LEG. ANKER:**

Now, will this walk provide a fund -- is it a fundraising effort in order to do this? That's it.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

Yes, it is. Part of it will be a fundraiser. Obviously there's no shortage of need for funds. There's another organization known as Ski's Open Heart Foundation that is participating in this. They're a

very large part of it. But, yes, awareness and funds are equally important.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**  
Legislator Barraga.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**  
Tom, I want to make sure I understand you. You said the walk begins on the eleventh in Montauk.

**MR. RONAYNE:**  
The walk begins on September 11th in Montauk.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**  
Okay. I don't know how much you're involved in it, whether you are one of the key components or just part of different groups, but, you know, frankly, maybe they might want to reconsider that date, because it seems to me that you would be much better off starting around the seventh or eighth. You'd have the weekend, more people would be available to come out and see you walk, and then arriving at Ground Zero on the eleventh. You start on the eleventh in Montauk, by the time you arrive at Ground Zero it's after the fact. You are going to arrive like the fourteenth or fifteenth and it's kind of over. I would think you'd want to leave on the seventh or eighth, have Saturday and Sunday where residents could actually come out to Montauk Highway or Sunrise knowing you are going through the community, and then arriving at Ground Zero on the very date, on the eighth.

**MR. RONAYNE:**  
There was a lot of discussion about that. One of the problems, unfortunately, is logistics. Having something of this type arriving at World Trade Center on the eleventh is a virtual impossibility. There's a lot of coordination, there's a lot of security, there's access. The 9/11 Memorial Commission has to be involved, the World Trade Center owners have to be involved, Port Authority Police, NYPD. And because of the events and the programs that take place on September eleventh it was a virtual impossibility that we would be granted access to the site. Since we couldn't be there on the eleventh thought that symbolically stepping off on the eleventh --

**LEG. BARRAGA:**  
But even if symbolically you say you're at Ground Zero, even though you can't get close to it, maybe within three or four blocks. I guess the point I'm really making is that there are very, very few people during the week on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday that are going to come out on Long Island to see this group go by because they're all working, they're all busy. On a Saturday or Sunday that's different. They're available, they're home. The outpouring would be much greater in Nassau and Suffolk County for your group to support this kind of project. Even if you wind up in Manhattan, you go to an armory on 29th Street if you can't get down to Ground Zero, but the symbolism is there. Everybody knows why you are doing this. It's just a suggestion, Tom.

**MR. RONAYNE:**  
I will certainly have the conversation again. I mean, we've had this conversation. I appreciate your points and they are good ones. There are challenges with a lot of components of this thing. Maybe if we could, maybe we'll have an offline conversation about this and we'll get some more thoughts as to what you're thinking. But, you know, the other thing is we're also not walking nine to five. I appreciate that during the day people are working. We'll be walking around the clock, so people on their way home from work, people in the evening, before or after supper, there will be an opportunity to get out there. I understand the workweek element of your argument, but there are just a lot of pitfalls to trying to organize this thing. Apparently it's a popular sort of undertaking. A lot of people are doing not necessarily similar things, but people are doing projects on or around that date and to be accommodated we have to sort of fall within, you know, certain lines.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Gregory.

**LEG. GREGORY:**

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a question on another issue that was actually brought to my attention by Legislator Kennedy. I don't know if he had the opportunity to speak to the Chair, but I spoke to him a little while earlier. He had mentioned the veterans program at Touro Law School is being shut down and I just wanted to see if you had any information on this, any thoughts, suggestions.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

There is the Veterans Pro Bono Services Program at Touro. It's a very good program. We're big fans of it. There's a gentleman, Professor John Gresham is his name, John does a very good job. They provide a service to a population that absolutely does need this service. I did have a brief conversation with the Chairman before we began, but we are completely supportive of the program. We think that should the program not be able to be continued that there would be a loss felt in the community. They absolutely provide a service. Unfortunately, you know, everything these days is coming down to dollars and cents and we, you know, if there's anything that we can do to become creative, again as with what I had mentioned earlier, within our community as veterans through our organizations, if there's some way that we can assist, we're happy to entertain that. We would absolutely like to see the program continue. I did get a call from Professor Gresham. I am aware of their challenges. If there's anything that can be done I'm hoping that it will be done.

**LEG. GREGORY:**

Do we fund the program?

**MR. RONAYNE:**

No.

**LEG. GREGORY:**

No, strictly through the college? Okay.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

I'm not entirely sure where they get the bulk of their funding, but I know at least through my office they receive nothing. They're not a contract agency for us.

**LEG. GREGORY:**

Now is it just strictly the decision on the school as far as you know for lack of funds or just --

**MR. RONAYNE:**

My understanding is that the whole issue right now is funding. If they had funding, that they would be able to continue.

**LEG. GREGORY:**

All right. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

It is -- technically the program has not been eliminated. I'm told it's been suspended. So at this point I'm sure that because it's merely been suspended and not eliminated that there'll be a continued effort to try and locate other sources of funding I would hope, but in an effort to continue the program. But that's what I am told, that at this point it's a suspension of the program.  
Legislator Hahn.

**LEG. HAHN:**

I want to go back to the walk. Is this going to be an annual event?

**MR. RONAYNE:**

The 9/11 walk?

**LEG. HAHN:**

Yes.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

We don't know. At this time it's a one time thing. It may turn into an annual event, but we have no idea at this point if it will or not.

**LEG. HAHN:**

When you release the route, will you have guesstimations on when you'll arrive through different villages?

**MR. RONAYNE:**

Absolutely.

**LEG. HAHN:**

Will you have a GPS app that we can track the walk?

**MR. RONAYNE:**

That's being worked on now. We're hoping that we'll have -- I think they call it a track spot.

**LEG. HAHN:**

Yes.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

There's a program out there that you wear a little transponder and it pins you and says where you are. But the schedule, I saw the draft, and it's pretty precise. I mean, unless something unexpected happens it's within a few moments through each community. It's ambitious, but if we can keep to the schedule I think you will pretty well know where we are when we say we are going to be there.

**LEG. HAHN:**

I definitely will try to be -- it won't walk through my district, but I'd like to be somewhere. Please let us know about that app and how log on and track. I would like to be somewhere.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

Will do.

**LEG. HAHN:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Horsley.

**D.P.O. HORSLEY:**

I'm right next to Barraga, so we'll meet up on the town line. I think it's a great idea. I love it. Tom, you are going to walk from the lighthouse to -- I'm not -- nothing facetious.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

I do what I need to do. I mean, it's not easy to carry around this physique.

*(\*Laughter\*)*

**D.P.O. HORSLEY:**

That's a long walk.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

You are probably pretty safe to assume I'll be in a support vehicle.

*(\*Laughter\*)*

**D.P.O. HORSLEY:**

Fair enough. Is the organization a 501(c)3 now? What's the status?

**MR. RONAYNE:**

Absolutely. It's a 501(c)3. It's 911 Vets and the Ski's Open Heart Foundation are both 501(c)3's and the guy who is really spearheading this is Chris Delaney.

**D.P.O. HORSLEY:**

Okay. Yeah, I know Chris. And so when someone wants to walk in the walk you have to contribute money? How do you make money on this?

**MR. RONAYNE:**

Sponsorships. They're going to be -- there will be some sponsorships offered or are presently being offered. I think it's very minimal. It's a \$250, I think, threshold where your name or your logo will be on the shirts of the walkers. There will be some other sponsorships available. There'll be the ability to write a check as with any fundraiser.

**D.P.O. HORSLEY:**

And the money goes to the Private -- the Private was it, that passed or the family of or does it go to --

**MR. RONAYNE:**

A portion of the funds will go to the family of the veteran who passed away, and the remainder of the money will go to research for 9/11 or World Trade Center related cancers.

**D.P.O. HORSLEY:**

Okay. Thanks. And you'll send over all the information and we'll make sure that it gets out to all the Legislative offices.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

Absolutely. As I said, I think the published schedule, route and timetable, we should have that out today. If it's available to me in its final form today I will issue it today.

**D.P.O. HORSLEY:**

Excellent. Make sure that Bill's office has it here so we can generate it to everybody.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

Absolutely.

**D.P.O. HORSLEY:**

Good. Thanks.

**MR. RONAYNE:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

It's a pleasure to welcome Lois Logan to the committee today. Lois is with the NASW New York State Chapter, Suffolk's Division, she is the Chair of the Veteran's Committee. She is a clinical instructor at Stony Brook University, to discuss an important program there. Welcome. Thank you for being with us.

**MS. LOGAN:**

I'm here to talk about my program, our program I should say, Boots To Suits. We've been looking at the experiences of our young veterans that are coming back, and we realized that they didn't know a lot of the things that they had learned. So when they go for jobs, they don't translate their military experience into civilian experiences. After all, when we -- when they go in they're usually from 19 to their early 20's, which is a very developmental period. We know that the brain doesn't continue -- continues developing until they're 22. So this is a time when they don't recognize the character issues that they are developing. So our Boots To Suits Program is to help them recognize the experiences that they did -- had in the service and what they -- how those can translate into civilian life as well as the jobs that they held.

I have two speakers. One is a Vietnam Veteran, and I have -- later you can look at these brochures, who will talk to veterans. Veterans like to speak to veterans about, you know, rather than civilians because, after all, we don't understand completely the military experience. So I'm -- he will speak about that and then we have a woman who is going to teach them how to write their experiences on their resume. So I'm very excited about this program.

One of the problems that most programs have is that we don't get a great number of the returning veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq. So even with this program as we are reaching out, and we have done many e-mail blasts to every agency that we possibly can think of, we're still not getting as many people as we'd like. So that's the Boots to Suits Program. We're hoping to expand that kind of teaching or training.

Last year we had a program for the professionals who were working with veterans and we had 70 professionals, therapists and others, who came to a two day training and that was very helpful. In fact, it was helpful to the therapist and it was also -- we want to expand that, we are going to do that again. That was last year. So this year we're very fortunate that Touro gave us free space to do this, so we're not charging for this. There is no charge. We hope to have this again perhaps maybe in the fall. So that if this isn't successful that the word will get out and we will get our veterans to come.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

I would like to just make a suggestion as I'm listening to the elements of the program and looking over the materials, and this is information that all of our veterans who have returned and who are preparing to go into the workplace, back into the workplace. We have some outstanding substantive training programs that are offered at the Suffolk County Community College.

**MS. LOGAN:**

Absolutely.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

The Chairperson of our Higher Education Committee, Legislator Anker, is here with us today. I mean, I can think of some great synergies there if our community college is offering the underlying substantive training, that this would be a great complement to those veterans who have returned and who are going through that training program. I would think that is this is an important element that they could utilize as well. Perhaps the two of you could speak at some point and see if there might be some synergy there.

**MS. LOGAN:**

We're very familiar with the Suffolk Community College program because I happen to be in another program called The Soldier's Project, which I'm sure you are aware of, who is in Suffolk Community College and Farmingdale College with a program called Adopt-a-College. And that program is to train professors and adjuncts how to teach veterans in their class, how to manage veterans in their classroom. And they're also, we have someone who is volunteering their time at the Veterans Activity Center. So that we help veterans be able to come into those programs easily and into the classroom easily. There are a lot of issues with veterans in classrooms because they're older, not necessarily in age, but in experience with the other students that are there. So we have to -- we all try to help them, as you know, integrate into those classrooms and help the professors understand that sometimes they can't sit through the three hours or sometimes their papers may be late or sometimes they may be deployed or have to go in and we're working with a way to help them get their degree without being challenged by those issues.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Anker.

**LEG. ANKER:**

Yeah, I went to school -- I went to college with kids that were in ROTC. And again, I don't know how that plays, I think it's army based. But it would be nice if we had -- let me ask a question. Do we have a specific program for returning veterans in colleges or universities?

**MS. LOGAN:**

Absolutely. Myself and my committee just developed a PowerPoint to train the professors, and it covers all of the issues and it gives a how to work with veterans and help them easily go through college.

**LEG. ANKER:**

I'm just curious as far as getting the word out to the kids, the people coming back. Do you -- do you have access to that information where you can send them --

**MS. LOGAN:**

Well, I happen to have brochures on stop -- on The Soldier's Project. I don't have, but I can get you information on Adopt-a-College and I will certainly send it to you if I can have your e-mail address or wherever you would like me to get it to you. I would be very pleased to get that to you. We're also in Farmingdale College.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Gregory.

**LEG. GREGORY:**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you --

**MS. LOGAN:**

Lois Logan.

**LEG. GREGORY:**

Ms. Logan, for coming here today. I think your -- the program that you are presenting is right on. I experienced it myself as a junior military officer. I was recruited by a firm and I made a decision to leave the military and was conflicted with how do I translate my military service into the civilian world, and as an Artillery Officer I just couldn't tell people I blew stuff up for a living.

*(\*Laughter\*)*

So, you know, when you transfer it into, you know, I was a Senior Advisor to a Task Force Commander of 600 troops, people tend to listen.

**MS. LOGAN:**

Yes.

**LEG. GREGORY:**

And all the experiences, directly supervised 40 personnel, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, people tend to listen. And I think that's a common struggle that military personnel struggle with, how they transfer or translate their experiences into the civilian world. So I think it's an excellent program. I'll make every effort to be there to support it and continue your efforts. Thank you.

**MS. LOGAN:**

That would be good, yes. Just what you said about what you did in the service, we talk about taking skills like that. For instance, while you were learning to go blow up things you also learned problem-solving, construction, all kinds of other things that fit in with whatever you're trying to -- whatever the veteran is trying to do. That's the big thing that we're trying to teach them. How to do that translation, but also translate skills such as how to work under stress, how to get along with other people. How to -- because -- how to be a team, because all of those things are the kinds of things that employers are looking for; tenacity, loyalty, dedication, staying on the -- staying with the job, learning how to solve the problems of the job. So all of those things are things we're trying to help our veterans.

**LEG. GREGORY:**

Right. And that's excellent. I mean, you know, in the military we go on training exercise. I mean, there are many times, you know, I would get three hours sleep, you know, in 36 hours, literally. Pretty much three days straight, the planning -- - and the General, he know it better than I. We would have meetings with Generals and Battalion Commanders. There's a lot of planning that go into preparation for --

**MS. LOGAN:**

Absolutely.

**LEG. GREGORY:**

-- even simulated combat. There's a lot of, you know, things that have to be done, teamwork.

**MS. LOGAN:**

Leadership skills.

**LEG. GREGORY:**

Absolutely, a key part of it. So I think that applies to most soldiers, you know, working in a team environment, being tenacious, planning certainly, I mean that's just the culture. Everything is a plan, you know, there's standard operating procedures and all that stuff. So, I mean, there are so many assets that military personnel have to offer civilian employers, but if it's just expressed in the right way it will make that much more of a difference in the interviewing process.

**MS. LOGAN:**

One of the things that we try to do is to tell the veteran they have a responsibility to sort of teach the employer how to -- how to use those skills. So we're asked -- we're doing that, we're looking at -- we're telling the veteran that employers don't always get it. They may need someone in that job, but the veteran has to help the employer figure out how he can be used. So that's part of our training also. So, thank you, because that's really good.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Barraga.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Ms. Logan, thank you very much for attending this morning. Let me ask you a question. You know, your seminar, which is scheduled, I think, for the fourteenth of September, as well as like the Peer-To-Peer support program and all these other programs that are being put in by not-for-profits and different levels of government for veterans, for soldiers coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan. They're all worthwhile programs, but you mentioned something which, you know, I've been very frustrated with, the lack of participation. You know, I don't know how many -- for example, rolling into September, how many people have actually signed up for your program?

**MS. LOGAN:**

Right now we have ten.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

See, that's --

**MS. LOGAN:**

And most of those, by the way, are not veterans. They are the, because this is also open to those working with veterans, social workers and case managers.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

See, that's the real problem here.

**MS. LOGAN:**

That's right.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

The programs are there, the people that designed the programs want to do good things, but the participation on the part of the veteran is not there. For example, yesterday in my office for about an hour I had a non-for-profit group, many of my colleagues are aware of the group I am talking about, I won't specifically mention their names. But they actually put together a program about a year ago where they actually have a van that's specifically designed for veterans and they go out and try to help the veterans in terms of food needs and social needs, that type of thing. And I saw the numbers yesterday, and this is a van that's available 365 days, they have to have a driver and the gasoline, and the insurance and everything else, and the numbers just do not warrant its existence. This program, you know, they're actually losing money. They could actually take this van and this driver and put it into something else that's a lot more productive because the veterans that they're trying to reach just don't seem to be there, just don't seem to want to participate.

Even if you go, for example, to a Naval and Army Reserve Unit and you walk in and say, "Look, can I have a list of" -- "No, no, we can't give you that." You cannot get a list of the veterans who have returned from those units that are back in the communities. It's very difficult to even reach them, much less convince them to come out for this program or any other program. All the work you've done, so far you've got ten people. I would think that with, you know, the thousands that might be

eligible, you would have several hundred. But it's not your fault. It seems to be an endemic problem associated with all of these programs. That programs are in place, but the participation doesn't seem to be there.

**MS. LOGAN:**

There are many reasons for that. There are just a lot of reasons. First of all, we don't have a base here on Long Island, so families, veterans are scattered about. But there are groups doing things about it, trying to do that, trying to figure out what we can do. There was a big meeting in Yaphank that Mike Stoltz from the Clubhouse of Suffolk brought a lot of people together to work on this problem. I don't have the answer to that, but I'm very hopeful that as more veterans come back and we can get the younger veterans to come out and do the training and the -- we have the Vietnam Veterans, they're very willing to help these young guys.

But so far you're right, we haven't gotten them, but we can't give up because there are too many coming back, there are too many problems, there are too many that need jobs, there are too many that need treatment, so we can't give up. We really do have to find a way to reach them. There are people all over Long Island trying to do that. I don't know if it's going to happen this year, but I think that there will be a growing number as we get the workers that come out to get the word out. Those case managers, those therapists, those volunteers, those other -- as we get one or two of them they will take their word out to their buddies and we'll -- in another year or so I think we're going to find that we will get more. Maybe I'm just being hopeful, but I am hopeful.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Anker.

**LEG. ANKER:**

And again, this is the first time that this is being done, is that correct, as far as this particular event?

**MS. LOGAN:**

This is the first time that the National Association of Social Workers is doing it, but in Nassau County there have been, not this program specifically, but as you're saying, a lot of programs have been offered to our veterans, and who you get are the workers that come. And we don't discount that because if you have one worker working with ten veterans, the word is out to ten veterans. So we try to -- we welcome them and we try to do the training for them also. So we do -- we are getting more and more workers coming but not the veterans. So I'm hoping it will go that way.

**LEG. ANKER:**

I'm wondering, again, I'm from a military family. And, you know, my Dad was taught to be very self-sufficient. It makes me wonder maybe if there's something in their psyche that's, well, preventing them or making them think twice about, you know, asking for help, because they're the ones that are supposed to be providing the help. So again, I can't wait to see this Peer-To-Peer Program start that Tom had spoken about earlier. And I can see all these programs working hand in hand together. I know your program will be very successful even if there are only ten people. Like you said, we have to start somewhere. Whether it's the ten people or the pilot program, I think they're great programs.

**MS. LOGAN:**

Right, and the peer program, The Soldier's Project also is developing a peer program. We have done some of the curriculum to train the peers what to do, you know, the ethics, how they work, so that is going to be a good program.

**LEG. ANKER:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Ms. Logan, thank you so much for being with us.

**MS. LOGAN:**

Thank you for having me.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

We look forward to sharing successes with you in the future, and please along the way if you think that we could be of assistance always feel free to let us know.

**MS. LOGAN:**

Thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Okay. To the agenda.

**Introductory Resolutions**

We have before us ***IR 1880, Appropriating Funds in Connection with the Purchase and Replacement of Nutrition Vehicles for the Office for the Aging (CP 1749)(County Executive)***.

This is Capital Project 1749. We heard from the Director, Holly spoke about the need for the nutrition vehicles. It will increase accessibility in nutrition programs for our seniors, those who are at most risk within our community. I'll make a motion approve.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Second.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Second by Legislator Barraga. Any discussion? All in favor? Any Opposed? Any Abstention? IR 1749 (sic) is approved. ***(Vote: 4-0-0-1 Not Present: Legislator Montano)***. Okay. Anybody else? Very good. We are adjourned. Thank you.

***(The meeting was adjourned at 11:37 P.M.)***