

VS 7/21/14

**VETERANS AND SENIORS COMMITTEE  
OF THE  
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE  
MINUTES**

A meeting of the Veterans and Seniors Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on July 21, 2014.

**Members Present:**

Legislator Stern - Chairman  
Legislator Anker - Vice-Chair  
Legislator Barraga  
Legislator Krupski

**Also In Attendance:**

Legislator Gregory - Presiding Officer  
Lora Gellerstein - Chief Deputy Clerk  
George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature  
Tom Ronayne - Director of Veterans Services  
Wilkens Young - Veterans Services  
Mike Stoltz - Suffolk County United Veterans  
Holly Rhodes-Teague - Director of Office for the Aging  
Rick Brand - Newsday  
All Other Interested Parties

**Minutes Taken and Transcribed By:**

Gabrielle Severs - Court Stenographer

*(\*The meeting was called to order at 12:35 p.m. \*)*

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

All right. Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the committee on Veterans and Seniors. I'm going to ask everybody to please rise and join us in the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Barraga.

(\*Salutation\*)

I'm going to ask everybody to please remain standing and join us in a moment of silence as we keep all of our brave men and women in our thoughts and prayers.

(\*Moment of Silence Observed\*)

Okay. Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for joining us. I don't have any cards before me, Madam Clerk. So, Holly, I'll have you come on up.

**MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:**

Hello, everyone. Hope everybody is having a good summer. It's gone like that. I just wanted to mention a couple things. I know I have been talking about money coming in soon, and I did just receive information on funding for some of our programs. The Health Insurance Counseling Program is going to receive funding. I hope to get the resolutions to you soon. It would be through the grants system that's in place now, and we are anticipating that we will be, through an RFP that we did last year, that we would be giving that money out to a volunteer organization that would be training volunteers to work in the health insurance counseling program, so that would assist with the types of calls that come in everyday asking about Medicare and what do I do about this insurance, am I covered, things like that. We're very happy that the money is coming in to do that. It's 100 percent, but when you do see resolutions, if you would just support that, I would appreciate it.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Holly, how many workers would that cover?

**MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:**

It's a volunteer program, actually. The Health Insurance Counseling Program is set up to be done by volunteers; however, it's impossible to do the program with volunteers. Our staff has always assisted with those calls, anyway, but I'm hoping to pump up the volunteer end by going through a contractor. Because we don't do volunteers well in terms of recruiting and making people feel good about what they do.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

So the grant funding is for -- comes to us to provide training for the volunteers?

**MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:**

It would go to -- it comes to us. We've done it inhouse for the last several years. I'm looking to contract it out so that they would pay a coordinator to coordinate volunteers for this program. They have to do a lot of training with it, you know, because it's not an easy subject. Health insurance is pretty ugly for people to have to understand and then explain to other people; you know, you need very high quality volunteers for it, and we've have high quality volunteers in the past. We just need more of them, and honestly, my office, we don't do volunteers well. I just don't have the time to get a coordinator to do that. We have other things we do. My staff will continue to do those calls, you know, some of the calls, but then we would have a volunteer component that we should have in

place.

The other thing in terms of health insurance, we will be having a training in Suffolk County October 1. That will be for volunteers. It will be for our contractors. We always open that up to staff of the legislators as well, so we will send out letters when the time comes, and if you have staff that you want to know more about the health insurance issues that are out there for this, certainly feel free to send people. We'd love to have them there because the more information that's out there, the better off it is for all the people we serve. Anybody have questions for me at all? Anything going on that -- no?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Anker.

**LEG. ANKER:**

Hi, Holly. Coming up in about a couple hours, we're going to have PSEG speak at the Public Works Committee Meeting. I'm just curious, do you know of any grants or any programs where our seniors can get some type of support with energy efficiency or renewable energy programs?

**MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:**

There have been programs out there. Off the top of my head, I do not have that information. I mean, you have the HEAP program in the winter that helps out. They had the air conditioner component for a few months this year. It's not a very big program, and it's already closed. When information comes out, we put it out there, but no, I don't have anything specific off the top of my head.

**LEG. ANKER:**

All right. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Holly, thank you.

Director Ronayne, and we have guests with us today. Maybe we'll have them join you up at the table, Director, if that's good with you. While we're welcoming our guests, please note for the record Legislator Muratore is not with us today. He has an excused absence.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Good afternoon. I hope all of you are having a summer half as nice as mine. If so, you're having a wonderful summer. Thank you, as always, for the invitation to appear before you. I, quite honestly, have been on vacation for the past few weeks, so I've got very little of substance to offer you with regard to a presentation, but clearly with Mr. Young and Mr. Stoltz here to speak on a Joseph Dwyer Program and I'm certain one or two other things, we'll have a full plate here today. I would, just for the record, like to clarify and maybe announce a couple things.

Firstly, I would like to just make each of you aware so that you are able to share with your constituents that the Suffolk County Veteran Resident ID card program that we have had online for a number of years at this point -- it's been quite successful -- I had a conversation with a member of the legislature. I won't disclose who. It's entirely up to that individual if he would like to acknowledge that or not. But very wisely suggesting that one of the criteria, the qualifying criteria for the card was fairly limiting, and it didn't necessarily have to be as limiting as it actually is, and that specifically is the requirement that you present at the time of application for the card a copy of your DD-214 or your discharge document. I've agreed it made perfect sense, so effective today, we will also be accepting the veterans actual discharge certificate, which is a document that is also only

issued to honorably-discharged veterans. And in the cases where veterans don't actually have in their possession a copy of the DD-214, which can at sometimes take many months to obtain copies of, we will be, going forward, accepting the discharge certificate to maybe make it just a little bit easier for some of our veterans to secure these cards and enjoy some of the benefits that the cards allow them.

Secondly, without making an in-depth report, I would just like to report to you that that Veterans Residents' Program in Amityville at Albany Avenue, the old Navy Marine Corps Reserve Center, about three weeks ago, four weeks ago, I was able to tour the facility, both the administrative and the community service portion of the program as well as the actual residential units themselves, and I have to tell you I was very, very impressed: the quality of the work, the quality of the construction, the layout of the units. This is just really a blessing for the folks who are going to be able to be housed there, and I think far beyond the benefit that it's going to provide for the veterans who reside there, and for those folks, in many cases, it's going to be life-altering. I can't see how this is not going to be an absolute asset to the surrounding community. The net positives are just everywhere when I look at this program, and we're very, very close at this point. There was some punch list work occurring. There was some technical work. They were completing an elevator installation in the administrative building. Once this work is completed, they'll be ready for occupancy, which I would say is probably in a matter of days or weeks at this point. We're very, very close. That's very exciting. That will provide 50 veterans and/or their families a new place to live.

As a part of my time off, I found myself spending some time in Dallas, and as I try to do whenever I travel, if there's a V.A. facility within a reasonable proximity to where I'm traveling, I always make an effort to visit that facility and at least make contact with somebody on their executive staff, and I was able to provide a rather impromptu but, I think, very successful presentation to some of the members of the staff at the Dallas V.A. They had not heard specifically of the program. They did know that there was some peer work going in different places, but we have all shook hands and agreed that we're going to continue to follow up with our discussions on the program and share any information that we're able with the folks in Dallas. Again, this isn't proprietary; we didn't reinvent the wheel with peer services. We just -- we found a niche and we, fortunately, turned out to be very good at administering this. If we can assist other areas in helping their veterans in the way that we've been able to help our veterans, then I think that's really what our mission is all about.

I know Mr. Stoltz is going to speak on Dwyer in more depth, but what I would like to offer, and I know that we had shared not too far in the past, a copy of the document that we had submitted to the State of New York. SUNY Albany School of Social Welfare has been conducting an evaluative research study of the program as we've gone forward. Now that the program in Suffolk County has matured enough and we have some identifiable results and we're able to quantify certain things, I just want to be clear that anybody who's used that report, which I will state here I'm very, very proud of, the report does not tell the whole story. There's more to the program than the report itself would suggest, and probably two years ago, two and a half years ago when we discussed this program, I had indicated at that time that there were going to be certain non-quantifiable elements within the program. We knew that going in, and one of them, I think importantly, is the number of contacts with veterans and now family members that we make.

We have recently enhanced our reporting recording of the contacts that we make with individuals, but not all of our contacts occur in the rooms with our rooms. The number of one-on-one contact and I would go so far at this point as to call it "casework," the numbers of one-on-one individual facilitator to veteran continuing work has increased, and I think those numbers going forward will be more clearly reflected in the reports. But I just want to be clear that when you view this report, understand that the numbers, while, again, I'm very proud of them, it needs to be understood that there are many, many more veterans being touched and assisted by this program than the

document might suggest, and going forward we'll work SUNY Albany to develop reporting mechanisms that allow us to do a better job of identifying that while still preserving the confidentiality and the privacy of those participating in the program, but those numbers are very significant at this point.

At this point, I would be happy to take any questions or move onto our guests.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Just before we go to our guests, Director, the report -- first of all, I'm sure everybody would be interested to see a copy of the report and have the opportunity to take a look because we all share the pride, Director, that you do in the program and how meaningful it's been to our veterans and their families. As you point out, it was always the intention that not only to provide outstanding service here in Suffolk County but to use what we've learned as a model for others to follow, and it's great to see that that's happening and it's happening, and you're making that happen firsthand as well, so that's also very encouraging and great to see. The report, does the report reflect only what's been going on in Suffolk County? Is it a Suffolk County-centric report, or does the report group the other counties along with Suffolk and quantify their progress in the same way.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

SUNY Albany is in the process of interviewing each of the 12 participating counties. Suffolk County, I think, will have a more extensive evaluation at this point only because, again, the maturity of our program. We've been around for a couple of years now, whereas a number of the counties, primarily the seven who were added last year, some of them are only now coming out of their development and organizational phase and entering the actual peer work, and then in April of this year, the governor added a 12th county. They have not an opportunity yet to hit the ground, so to speak. So our report is Suffolk-specific, but SUNY is compiling data from all of the 12 counties.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Anybody else for the director at this point? Okay. Gentlemen.

**MR. STOLTZ:**

Good afternoon. I'm Mike Stoltz, the executive director of Clubhouse of Suffolk, Suffolk County United Veterans, and the Mental Health Association in Suffolk, three agencies that as of Wednesday, hopefully, will be merged. And I want to just start by kind of going 30,000-foot level around our mergers and down into a particular program that Mr. Stern asked us to speak about, which is a crisis diversion and respite program that is currently happening at our Yaphank facility.

So our three agencies started to merge about two, two and a half years ago with respect to Suffolk County United States Veterans. The founder of Suffolk County United Veterans, John Lynch, recognized that more and more of the veterans that touched our shelter, our emergency shelter at that time had mental -- behavioral health issues, including post service transition issues, and he was the one who facilitated, basically, a bridge to a predominantly mental health agency to be able to move forward with the future development of Suffolk County United Veterans. I'm happy to tell you that in this transition -- I think you are all invited, by the way, to a media event press launch Wednesday between 11 and 12. I know that it conflicts with some committee meetings, but if you are able to come by, it's in a garden in Ronkonkoma by our clubhouse facility to basically announce our new organizational name.

In there, Suffolk County United Veterans will be a project of our new organization, and in that, I'm happy to announce that at the head of Suffolk County United Veterans will no longer be a token civilian. It will be Mr. Young, a service -- a veteran himself. Also, Wilkens was a former client of the organization; in his own recovery, became a credentialed alcoholism and substance abuse counselor and has led the emergency shelter and now in his new role in the evolution of the agency,

he will gradually be overseeing all our veterans' initiatives. Wilkens has been with the organization a number of years and provides a vast amount of personal and professional experience that will lead us extremely well. I will not completely be out of the scene, but Will will lend more of a veteran's touch and a veteran's perspective to all of our programs.

To give you a little bit kind of kind of a catch-up on some of our programs, it's important to understand this is a really dynamic time in the world of services for veterans, and in Suffolk, as you well know, Tom's leadership, voice, and omnipresence, and I will say "omnipresence," because he just made you believe he was on vacation for a couple of weeks, but that would preclude all the e-mails, phone calls, and text messages that me and I know about 30 other people were getting while he was allegedly on vacation. It is his presence that really pushes agencies like ours and Beacon House and others to be able to get the resources we need to make sure that we are -- have a painful approach to helping veterans, veterans' families at risk and such. So understand Suffolk County United Veterans, in addition to our emergency shelter that is almost always full, is a range of housing. Behind me is a gentleman named John Rago who oversees our Supportive Services to Veterans Families Outreach Project that we do in collaboration with Economic Opportunity Council of Suffolk to be able to find veterans, and throughout the year is kind of a rhythm of different finding veterans and veteran families at risk. During the winters and the cold months, you go through your food pantries and into the woods and into the railroad stations and you kind of canvas and find people, and whatever you could do.

In the late spring, all of the summer, and the early fall is veterans events all over the place, whether they're motorcycle runs or benefits or charities or whatever VFW pig roasts, whatever they are to have a presence at those kinds of events is to have conversations with all sorts of people who will come up to John and Will and our Dwyer staff and say, You know, I'm really concerned about a friend, a relative, a brother in arms, a sister in arms; and we will track them down. So, as Tom said, the ability to have outreach you'd see, for example, in the Dwyer Project is the ability to have really meaningful conversations. And in just our June report, which, Tom, if you would like to share at some point with the whole committee, I think we had over 400 conversations with veterans about concerns just related to -- that was just out of our Dwyer Project, at different events and these are meaningful and poignant conversations that help link people into groups and into other kinds of services.

One additional piece on our Dwyer Project: In the month of June, we had a wellness day that was our first, and I would say a success and will springboard us to having a broader event next year. We had about 55 to 60 veterans who had been going through post-service transition issues as at a wellness day out at Camp Pa-Qua-Tuck out in Center Moriches. Alternative treatments. Obviously, a lot of veterans don't want to pursue traditional kinds of mental health treatment, traditional kinds of medication approach, medical approaches; so things like acupuncture, meditation, yoga, reiki, a number of different -- there were about 10 or 12 different kinds of approaches using the use of service dogs and guide dogs and such to be able to help ease transition for veterans into roles and desired roles to manage stress and distress, so it was extremely successful. Next year, hopefully, we will double that. There were two or three veterans I know who came up to me and to Tom and others afterward and just said, You know, boy, you know, I was hopeless before this and, like, just conceded that my life is going to be about taking painkillers and, you know, kind of one day to the next and now I found some new ideas for hope and for healing. It was a pretty powerful day.

But you asked me to talk about the diversion project. This came out of, basically, our experiences with the Dwyer Project and how things are moving, and again, I think Tom is moving -- this piece is, where previously, even three or four years ago, most providers, like Suffolk County United Vets and Beacon House, we've mostly been in the business of receiving people in distress. We are now kind of, you know, attacking this and trying to have early intervention and even prevention for homelessness, for disability, for further impairment, whether related to -- whether it was concurrent

with service injury or post-service kinds of complications to be able to intervene with veterans at risk and families at risk earlier.

So out of that, for example, in our Dwyer meetings is we review kind of what happens in their support meetings, what happens in our individual outreach. Among the things that have really stood out for us, particularly since 9/11 -- and you can amplify this, Tom -- I haven't seen it documented, but veterans talking to each other say about an 80 percent divorce rate for veterans since 9/11, about an 80 percent divorce rate, and if you think of the spillover of that into all sorts of -- you know, part of our SSVF project, we have a collaboration with Touro, and Touro has a veterans law clinic and if you -- it's with Ken Rosenblum last week. What's the number one issue veterans pursue Touro Law for? It's child custody payments. It's things that have been backed up and continue to clog up our courts.

So the complications that happen because of families breaking up over issues that if we intervene earlier, we could prevent a whole sequence of high cost, human costs, and financial costs, and bureaucratic costs. So recognizing that and the information from the Dwyer Project, we reached out to the Long Island Community Foundation, provided us a small-seed grant that gets us basically one bed through the rest of this year and hopefully, you know, into early next year where when, if we find through Dwyer, through SSVF, through any of our outreach efforts, if we find a veteran at risk, we don't have to worry about going to the Department of Social Services homeless money support. We can just use this private money to provide an intervention.

So I'm going to give the microphone over to Wilkens. He's going to give you a profile of one veteran recently who we've helped through that process.

**MR. YOUNG:**

Good afternoon. Thank you for allowing me to speak and share about how this program is definitely helping our veterans out there that is in need of the program and also goes to show how we work together with the peer-to-peer group and it also is being able to identify these individuals that are in crisis and be able to help them get the supportive services they need. This one individual was attending our peer-to-peer group, and at that particular point in time, he was expressing during the meeting some of his concerns about his relationship at home, how it was getting stressful and things wasn't working out right, and he was at the edge of not knowing where he was going to go. And I got a phone call from the director over at peer-to-peer, which is John Schultz, and he said, Well, I got this veteran and he's having some family issues and it seems like he's got some mental health issues and some other issues that's going on, and he said, Can you sit down and you talk to him. I was able to meet with him, and I was able to talk with him, and ask him, So listen, let's see if we can get you out of the environment that's creating this problem and let's get a better look from the outside. So he came and stayed with us at our shelter, which we provided the bed under the respass (sic) program, and while he was there, we were able to look at and assess a few things that he basically knew what was going on but wasn't willing to look at. One of those things was his medical, his mental behavior. His behavior was, like, he wasn't taking his medication, so we was able to get him on his medication. He didn't have the money, so we was able to buy him support to be able to go get the money. He couldn't keep his copayment up because he's still active in the reserve, and he didn't have an income, so we had to make sure -- we helped him pay his premium so he could continue to get his medication and get his treatment. He had some legal issues upstate that he was fearful of, so we was able to get him upstate for his court date; and he had some legal issues down here that we was able to provide support for him -- down here, to go to court with him to provide support with him down here; and throughout the whole ordeal, he was really appreciative of the support that he had that he didn't know he had.

He now is currently back with his girlfriend. His girlfriend came to pick him back up. We keep in contact with him. We try to make sure that everything goes accordingly. But also what happened

is that in the process of him going through the program and him going through the V.A., I'm now getting phone calls from social workers at the V.A., Hey, can you tell me about this respass program that you guys got going out there. So it's getting out and it's getting active and it's doing what it was supposed to do, which is to prevent the veteran from losing everything; because I talk to a lot of veterans, and they only come to you at the end and not realizing that if you come before the end, then you don't have to get to that particular point in desperation. I mean, you're always at a point of need, but there's a difference in a need and a desperation, and we try to make the respass get to the point of fulfilling their need before they become desperate. Hopefully in the upcoming future, we can get another couple of beds, and, as I said before, the need is definitely becoming known because I'm starting to get referrals from other agencies outside of our peer-to-peer group, which initially started it, so it definitely has its positive effect on us. Any questions?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Director Ronayne.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

If I could, Mike, firstly had made a point when he touched on the divorce rate, and we've heard numbers that range anywhere from around 80 percent to as high as 90 percent. One of the reasons, and I may be repeating myself, and I'm certain that I am. One of the reasons that we have some of the -- you know, some of the numbers that we see on Long Island, Suffolk County in particular, can appear almost anomalous to what is happening in other parts of the country, certainly in areas where we have large military installations, military support structure, given that we lack an infrastructure here on Long Island, we don't have a presence. A lot of these folks who are serving don't have access to what folks traditionally presume they would have access to, and that's been a concern of ours for a number of years if you couple that concern with the fact that the majority of the people who live in Suffolk County and serve presently are National Guard or Reserve. They are not traditional active duty full-time military people, and there is, very simply put, there is a different psychology that is at work when you have a full-time, 24/7 active duty person, regardless of branch of service, who lives and breathes that job. That is their commitment. They understand that for a period of time, that is where they will be and what they will be doing.

Our National Guard folks now or reservists, in contrast to that population, are far more likely to be older chronologically, be better educated, to have children, to have financial responsibilities that your traditional, and I'll certainly agree that there are exceptions, but traditionally, our active duty personnel do not have or at least do not have upon entering service things like mortgages and car payments, other financial responsibilities. These things place a real burden on our service members, and one of my great concerns is always that when we send a soldier anywhere to do his job, whether that service member be a soldier, a marine, regardless, my hope is that we always -- and we do: We train them, we equip our people well, but if you are not mentally prepared and you are not psychologically 110 percent mission-ready, you're just that: You're not mission-ready, and that is a risk not only to you but to your mission and I think more importantly to your battle buddies, to the guys that you're serving with.

These issues, while not unique to Long Island, are predominant in our population, and I think that over the past several years where we have really been able to enhance our partnership and our cooperation, our mutual cooperation between our community partners and the governmental entities that are delivering services to this population has made an astounding difference in my view. We're doing things that we weren't doing, and I sit back and I often wonder to myself, how is it that we're not doing these things? They are so -- at this point in time, they are so clear to me that they are necessary and that they are -- the level of support and service that they're providing, I can't imagine that we would have not been doing these.

I will say that I've had, I think, unusually strong support from our county executive, who, as a

veteran himself, and from our presiding officer who, as a veteran himself, I think uniquely understand some of these concerns and some of these issues. When we approach these populations, very often we're dealing with people who are not serving full time and, not to make an example out of but only because I think everybody is familiar with the story and understands the complexities that were involved in it, I'm going to use Supervisor Croci as an example. This is a public official who had served previously, came home, pursued a career in public service, was elected to high office, and in the middle of that, with all of the responsibilities associated with the job that he was in, was called back to active service and everything had to be put on hold regardless of what it was, and an intelligent, articulate, well-educated man with a lot of experience, those responsibilities weighed on him while he was deployed, I'm certain.

That is no different than the anonymous service member who was called to duty, whether he be a small business owner, whether he had a small practice up on Main Street in the village or if he has, you know, whatever it might be. One of the things that I think has been extraordinary in the collaborations -- and I'm going to use Suffolk County United Veterans and Clubhouse until Wednesday and then we'll refer to them differently -- has allowed us to educate one another on what the uniquenesses of what these populations are, and what has happened is we are now better able, we're better equipped to approach these communities, these populations and their families which is key. But we're able to do so in such a way that we can more responsibly balance the civilian mindset mentality with the military cultural sensitivities that we need to maintain to be able to effectively communicate with our military and veteran folks.

This stuff is saving lives is probably the sum of what I'm working to express to you, and without these collaborations, and I hope that going forward, not only do they continue but they are enhanced. My staff, our Suffolk County employees, without one dime of county money being spent, has become educated and been exposed to training and experiences that we would not have otherwise been exposed to. And I think it's fair to say that Mike's team similarly with the military and veteran cultural aspects of what we do, their folks have an awareness that they did not possess two years ago, and this only helps our community. It only strengthens our missions, and it enhances our ability to better serve this population and make a difference in their lives.

You know, one other partner, and to digress a little bit, I think there's one other partner I just need mention because they are critically important to our success. They are tremendous supporters of our mission, but they're largely behind the scenes, and I think they like being behind the scenes, but the folks at the United Behavioral Health Center LIJ, Doctor Dr. Maya Bellson (ph), Andy Roberts. The folks at LIJ have been extraordinarily supportive and helpful. They have provided us access to their resources, to their facilities, to their staff, to their experience, their knowledge, and I just wanted to make sure that on the record that I thank them for all that they've done to contribute to allowing us to get to the place where we are now. I've said it before: I'm blessed to be one of the those people who comes to work every day and I'm surrounded by talented, committed people who just do a spectacular job.

I guess the one other point that I would like to make, and I think going again back the point that Mike had made earlier, when we can intervene, when we can communicate with these individuals, whether it be the veteran himself, the transitioning service member transition into civilian life becoming a veteran himself or herself or their family members, we have become better able and we've become more aware and have a better understanding of how to identify and recognize where we can interrupt the cycle before it has begun. I've told the story before about the young man. He was a marine, combat marine, decorated, had come home, persevered, worked hard and got through a lot of his personal struggles, was working and attending school. He was doing everything right. His car broke down. His transmission died. He was living paycheck to paycheck. This young man didn't have the means to repair that car. Now, he worked on the South Shore, and he was going to school at Stony Brook. He lived on the South Shore, he worked on the North Shore,

and he was going to school at Stony Brook. When we became aware of the fact that his car had died on him, knowing that the north-south transportation is a challenge, we didn't sit him down and say, Well, we've got to get you a job on a bus route, or, We've got to get you a job within walking distance of your home. We got him a car. We got the guy a car, and what that did was it interrupted the cycle where, had he not replaced that vehicle, how long before you -- not showing up at that job before the job goes away? If he's not able to get to work, he's not able to get to school. How long before the education opportunity is taken away from him? And when you're a student using the GI bill, when you don't complete your studies, you become financially responsible to repay to the government all of the money that they have paid into your education, and without the job, without the school, how long before he stops paying rent on that apartment that he and his girlfriend were sharing and they wind up on the street?

So we prevented unemployment, we prevented homelessness, and we prevented a financial hardship at a fraction of what the public cost would have before had that cycle fulfilled and gone the way that it probably would have had programs and organizations like this not been in place, and we see that on a more and more regular basis. I could go on and on and I won't, but these programs are just -- each of you should be justly proud of your support and all that you've done to allow us to get to the point in time where we are now, so thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Thank you, Director.

**P.O. GREGORY:**

Good job.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Anybody for the director? To you, Mike, to you and your team, I know that you did, but I also wanted to point out that John Rago is here with us as well. Always good to see you, sir, and thank you for all that you do as well. Thank you for being with us today, and to everybody else, thank you. With no other business before the committee, we are adjourned.

*(\*The meeting was adjourned at 1:17 p.m. \*)*