

VS 12/4/2015

**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 December 4, 2015.

Members Present:

Legislator Steven Stern - Chairman
Legislator Tom Barraga - Vice-Chair
Legislator Sarah Anker
Legislator Al Krupski
Legislator Tom Muratore

Also In Attendance:

Jason Richberg - Chief Deputy Clerk
George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
Tom Ronayne - Director of Veteran's Services
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

CHAIRMAN STERN:

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. We have special guests with us today. I'm going to ask if Michele McNaughton could lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Salutation)

I'm going to asking everybody to please remain standing as we keep in our thoughts and prayers the victims and their families of the tragedy in California as well as all of our brave men and women fighting for our freedoms overseas.

(Moment of Silence Observed)

Again, welcome, everyone, and thank you for joining us today, which is the last Veterans and Seniors committee of this year before we start a new term. Mr. Clerk, do I have any cards?

MR. RICHBERG:

No cards, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Again, we have a special guest with us today. First procedurally what we have is a structure that has been approved by this legislature which will serve to make advisory recommendations on the distribution of the funds that were raised as a result to have Suffolk County Marathon and the half marathon the purpose of which is to go to funds that will benefit our veteran and their families throughout Suffolk County. It is then up to this legislature to appoint those special individuals who will serve in those various roles on that committee. Before we get to the individuals who are with us today maybe Director Ronayne maybe you can come up and join us and let us know where we're at in the process and what the consideration for today before this committee's going forward.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Members. As always, thank you for the invitation to be here today. As you had stated, the legislation to establish the committee to allocate the proceeds from the Suffolk County marathon and half marathon to support our veterans was approved by this legislature, and today we are seeking to introduce to this body two of three representatives of the Gold Star Families community, specifically the three members that we are seeking to include as a part of this advisory body representing that community. We have with us today, as you had mentioned, Mr. Tim Scherer, the father of Corporal Christopher Scherer; and Mrs. Michele McNaughton the stepmother of James McNaughton. Both of their sons were killed in action, and they both served, I would say, admirably in our community not only preserving the legacy and the memory of the service that their sons provided but continuing in many ways to serve our community, both veteran and the larger community in general in so very many ways. They've become inspirational parts of our community, and I'm delighted that they have consented to be considered for this opportunity.

Our hope is that we would be able to, while efficiently and responsibly, also as expediently as possible, assemble and determine appropriate recipients and allocations of the proceeds from the Suffolk County marathon and half marathon to support our veterans, I don't think anybody would be in disagreement that the event was a fantastic success given the first year, the first time that we had ventured into something like this, the numbers of participants was, in my view, extraordinarily -- it was just a commendable effort on the part of everybody involved in developing it. The event itself was successful, and we have continued since the event -- in fact, only as late as this morning, it was commented to many that this one individual had yet to hear anything negative about this marathon. All of the reviews, all of the post-race discussions in the community have

been nothing but positive and strong endorsements. People are already anticipating and looking forward to the next event, so with that, we're looking forward to responsibly administering the proceeds and moving forward on this process.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Very good. Does anybody have any questions for the director at this point? Okay. So, Director, then, we do not have legislation before us today to approve. My understanding is that that is going to come over to the general session by way of CN, but in an effort to go through the process, usually it is the custom that appointees come before the various committees that have jurisdictional oversight of the subject matter to make themselves available, to say hello and answer any questions, et cetera, and so that is going to be satisfied today, then, and hopefully that will be enough for my colleagues when we come back for general session to have the necessary comfort level to approve those CNs before us. Obviously, the faster they are approved, the faster oaths can be filed, if necessary, and then the work of the board can commence.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Thank you. And, again, the purpose of our introduction today is simply that: to provide an introduction, to seek your approval of these recommendations, and I believe that Ms. Santeramo has some specific information related to the CN that you referred to going forward to the regular session.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Okay. Ms. Santeramo.

MS. SANTERAMO:

Hi. Yes, we hope to have drafts of the CN to you by the end of the day today. It's a standard appointment letter appointing these three people to be part of the committee that you formed at the last general meeting, so we will have the CNs with the resumes and the backup to you hopefully by the end of the day.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

And the third recommendation to you today was we had hoped to have Mr. Dan Murphy with us. I have spoken with Mr. Murphy on this topic. He is grateful for the invitation to be included and he has accepted our invitation to be considered. He, unfortunately, was not able to be with us personally today. His daughter is having surgery, so he was otherwise committed, but I do expect that he will be able to attend at the regular session for any questions or discussion that may follow.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Krupski.

LEG. KRUPSKI:

Thank you. The question is not related to what you just spoke about, but it is related to the event itself. Someone brought it up to me yesterday or the day before about the date of the event for next year and going forward. Is there a proposed change of the date for that event? It's supposed to be an annual event now. Is there going to be a date change?

MS. SANTERAMO:

Yes. One of the feedback that we had gotten from the marathon was that the heat was a concern for having a day in early September. We did check with the runners' club to make sure it didn't conflict with other races. We were made aware yesterday, I'm pretty sure, we were both made aware by the same person that there is a conflict with a local race, so we are already looking to adjust the date. We're thinking it will be in late October, though, to account for the heat concerns that people had last year.

LEG. KRUPSKI:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Muratore.

LEG. MURATORE:

Yes. Is there more than one board here, or are two boards? Are we having two committees to decide where the money goes or one? How's it going to work?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

The legislature had approved the establishment of the body. Included in the legislation was a requirement that certain organizations or entities be represented as a part of this body. Specifically within the legislation was the requirement that three representatives of the Gold Star Family community be included. That group, those three individuals were specifically identified as requiring legislative approval. That would be the reason for today's introductions and consideration.

LEG. MURATORE:

So they're part of the the committee? There's not another committee being formed?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

No, this is one in the same.

LEG. MURATORE:

Another question is the various organizations out there, are they going to be coming forward on their own, or are they going to be invited to come forward and request money or apply for money, or is this committee just going to pick who -- they are going to decide who they're going to give the money to?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

There will be an application process. The application will be developed. Once the application is fully developed and approved by the committee, then it would be disseminated to the veteran's community and invite applicants to seek consideration.

LEG. MURATORE:

Okay. Great. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

So there are, then, as I see it, there are a total of 15 committee members.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Three of which are Gold Star Family members.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

And under number two, item 10 under "second resolved" is the provision that I was citing requiring the legislative approval for the three Gold Star Family members.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Right. Okay. So again, although there is no vote to be taken here today, that's going to come over by CN presumably applying to the three nominees being put forth by the county executive to be

approved by the legislature pursuant to the original legislation. So is everybody good on the process and what we're doing today and what we're not doing today? Everybody's good with that? Okay.

Having said that, then, we are joined today by Tim Scherer and Michele McNaughton. I suppose that we can utilize today's time to give members of the committee an opportunity to ask questions, although we're joined today by two members of our community who are no strangers to this legislature, to our servicemen and -women, to our veterans, to our entire Suffolk County community. We're thank full that you're here with us today and that you've made yourselves available and that you are willing to serve in this effort? Does anybody have any questions for our guests today? Legislator Anker.

LEG. ANKER:

I just want to thank you for the work that you have been doing, and it was an absolute honor to be present at your ceremony -- was it this past year? You know, it took a lot of work, and to see all of the beautiful people, beautiful women in their white dresses, and the beautiful voices of the children that came to sing; what a lovely presentation. I just wanted to thank you.

MS. MCNAUGHTON:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Anybody have any questions? Maybe let's do this. Maybe we could just, for the record, have you say a quick hello and that you've received the nomination of the county executive that ultimately requires the approval of the legislature and maybe very briefly what you're hoping to accomplish being part of the committee.

MS. MCNAUGHTON:

Good morning. My name is Michele McNaughton. I have accepted the invitation from the Director of Veterans Services Thomas Ronayne to sit on the committee in regards to the Suffolk County marathon funds. It is an honor that I was one of the people to be asked. The reason why is I believe that a lot of these organizations here within Suffolk County, if my son had made it home and he needed some help, these organizations would be here for him. So it's important because my personal motto is to never forget a past, present, or future veteran, as I'm the voice for those that can't be heard and the voice for those that cannot -- haven't found their voice yet, so it's important that we do have these organizations here in Suffolk County. Thank you.

MR. SCHERER:

My name is Tim Scherer. I also accepted the nomination to be on the committee. I guess it's just really simple, pretty much what Michele said I think goes for us also. We're a pretty tight Gold Star community. We do a lot of things together. We try to support each other, especially on the tough days. I guess it's simple for us. We formed a fund in honor of my son, the Corporal Christopher G. Scherer Semper Fi Fund, and basically honor the fallen, support the troops. This is the support-the-troops part, and we are active in what we do, and I commend you on the race. I thought it was fantastic. Same here, we heard so many positive things about it. It's only going to get bigger. It's not going to get smaller. Working with the committee, I think you had a lot of good people, and they really -- they were just easy to work with, and I just see big things for this thing and big things for the veterans that will benefit from it.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

If I could maybe if I could offer an accolade to Mr. Scherer, one of the key elements of the marathon, one of the things that helped it to be such a large success was beyond the initial concept of hosting the Suffolk County marathon and half marathon to support our veterans. We're all very

aware that we also conducted a more broad, very community-inclusive veterans' race series that encompassed five additional races that were in many ways in concert with and in support of the larger marathon. The idea, I would like very much to say it was the county executive's brainchild, but the county executive is very clear when asked to make clear that the ideas to establish and have a veterans' racing series was actually Mr. Scherer. It was his suggestion to the county executive, and I commend them both for thinking of it and agreeing to implement it. That was critically important to the overall success. I just wanted Tim to have due recognition for that.

MR. SCHERER:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Okay. Everybody good? Of course thank you to you both for being with us today, of course thank you for your continued service, and thank you for your willingness to serve in this important effort going forward. I'm sure my colleagues would agree that there is no need for you guys to appear before the full legislature coming up, and so it will be my pleasure, a privilege, really, to support the nomination, and I'm sure my colleagues feel the very same way, so thank you.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Mr. Chairman, as a part of my larger report, if I could invite Ms. McNaughton to stay up here, I was about to report to you about another very exciting event that will be taking place in Suffolk County in 2016, and, Mr. Chairman, I know that you were very prominently present at this year's American Gold Stars Mothers Convention. The 2015 convention was held here in Suffolk County, and that is significant, really, for a number of reasons not the least of which being that this was the first time that convention was held in Suffolk County since the early 1960s so for us to have had it here was really quite an achievement. I'm delighted to report to you that as significant as that milestone was again, the convention will be returning to Suffolk County again in 2016. I was going to report on the specifics of that, and I know Legislator Anker attended as well as did Legislator Muratore. I think you all did, actually. But rather than my reporting on the specifics and the details related to the upcoming convention, perhaps I could ask Mrs. McNaughton to share the information because anything I would share with you, I have been given through her.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Yes, please.

MS. MCNAUGHTON:

April 8 and 9 of 2016 will be the convention. Of course we're going to have all the different Gold Stars Families come down from all over New York. We have upstate, Albany, Buffalo. I'm hoping to possibly bring a mom, a Vietnam-era mom from Binghamton down. She's never attended a convention, and her son was actually awarded a congressional medal of honor, and this medal of honor actually went into space with an astronaut, so it's an interesting story that I would love for her to get and speak to all the moms.

Last year, I put a lot of work into traveling and showing the moms what Suffolk County was and New York was, and this year, it's the 80 anniversary of the department, and I decided that because we all go in all different directions that we should celebrate us. We're all about service and mission and helping veterans because that helps us heal, but I thought the moms could take that time out this weekend to get to know one another and hear our sons and daughters stories because it's important to share to keep their legacy going.

So we actually will be in Riverhead this year at the Hilton Garden Inn, and Suffolk Theater is Friday night's memorial at 7:00; and then Saturday the dinner also will be in the Suffolk County Theater. It's a beautiful theater from the 1930's era. It's amazing to see what they have done if you haven't

been in that theater, and I thought it would -- you know, to go back through the history with the moms to go into something like that. The dinner will start at 6:00 because the older Vietnam moms, it's a little late for them, so if I did it at 6:00, at least they could make it through the end, so that's the important part. And of course opening would be that Friday morning where the moms come in and I planned no trips. I told them on Saturday -- actually, Friday, excuse me. I don't have it in front of me. One of the days, they have all day to experience Long Island whether it's the aquarium, Tanger Outlets, the vineyards. They can go out and travel and the hotel has shuttle busses, which is great that they don't have to get lost; and one day, I'm having a tea for the moms; and the dads, I'm hoping to secure the American Armor Museum to take the dads out on a ride along with the tanks and into the village there. So I'm trying to keep it small and close with the moms and dads this year, so April 8 and 9 is convention, and until another mom steps us from Long Island, this year, that's it from me.

LEG. KRUPSKI:

Thank you. That's a wonderful venue that you've chosen and you'll have a lot of success there.

MS. MCNAUGHTON:

Thank you.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

If I'm not mistaken, we have a friend on the east end who may be able to suggest, from time to time, some potential activities or events of interests for the moms as we venture out there.

LEG. KRUPSKI:

Definitely.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

And the reenactment, I think if we can pull the reenactment together at the Museum of American Armor for the dads, I think that would be just an awful lot of fun and something very unique that as it develops, as it comes together, we'll keep you informed, and we'd love to have any of you who are able to to join us at that program as well.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

It was special last year having it in Suffolk County after so long, but I also recall that many of the activities, many of the excursions were westward into the city and rightfully so especially for those gold star parents who had never been, so it is only fitting that we welcome everybody back to Suffolk County and that there be a focus on not just everything else that we have to offer towards the east end, but, yes, provide a great venue for gold star mothers, gold star parents to spend time among themselves and with each other as well. So we wish you every success with the upcoming and, of course, anything that any of us can do to be of assistance, never hesitate to let us know.

Director, anything else?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Holly. And we'll have Carolyn come on up and join you as well.

While we're making the transition, let me note for the record that Legislator Barraga is not with us today. He has an excused absence.

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

Do you want to hear from Carolyn first or me? I just have one piece of business that I'm trying to put in front of the full legislature on December 15. I would like to have the leg. accept \$45,000 of 100 percent federal funding. I just received the notification of grant award this week, so that's why it's so late, and it's for funding -- it's a three-year funding stream, but the first year expires December 21. We do have some claims we could put against it, so it's important I try to get that through. It's \$45,000 for the fully-integrated dual advantage program. It's a demonstration grant that the counties downstate have received, and it's to assist those people who are eligible for Medicare and Medicaid who are going to be required to go into Medicare/Medicaid managed care plan. They can opt out. They're going to automatically be put in, but they can opt out, so it's to provide assistance and counseling so that they can really look at it and see if it's going to be helpful to them.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

So it's for counseling and information.

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

The health insurance counseling program will receive two-thirds of the funding, which is the retired senior volunteer program, and then the other third would go to our office for the New York Connects program to assist people with it. So it's going to be a three-year grant program. It's a demonstration. It's only for a few counties. The program itself has not rolled out in Suffolk yet though the training has, so people have not been notified yet. It started in Nassau, I believe, and I'm not sure about Westchester, but it's supposed to be coming here. It's been delayed.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

And that dollar amount, that's a dollar amount for each year for three years?

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

\$45,000 each year so 135,000 total. Anyway, that will be coming up on December 15 under the local law.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Very good. Everybody good?

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

That's it.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Welcome.

MS. GALLOGLY:

It's a pleasure to be able to be here because I think I've been invited before and I was unable to attend, so this is very nice. It's also nice to see your director here, Steven Stern, because on the Suffolk County Advisory Board to the Office For the Aging, that is where I first met him, and he and I were considerably darker in hair at that particular moment, and as Holly reminded me today, I've actually aged in place because my first years, I was pregnant, and now I'm on social security. It's a full life experience, and it's one you age into, working with the aging.

I actually work for Saint Joseph's College. I'm in a semi-retirement phase right now, so what I bring to the board is more that background that I received from my students, the information that I get from my students who are working in the fields, but it's also tempered by my training and my scholastic background, so I like that role that I'm able to play. There is another member of our advisory board who also represents a university and who brings her expertise in the field of

gerontology in, but we also were able to find, since Steve left us, a wonderful lawyer who comes really -- she hardly ever misses a meeting, and she really helps us to stay informed about things that we don't really have access to. It's information that you used to give us, so that's really helpful.

Not everyone really whose experienced in this field can be on this committee because there's a lot of conflict of interest. A lot of people are already working in the field, and they get funding through this office, so there are people who would be great on our board but we really can't be experiencing those people. So the ones that we have are generally people who have expertise in aging, and I think that makes our board, perhaps, a little unique -- Holly would know better -- for some advisory boards around the country in this area, and I think we bring something to the county that is not always easy to get all that sort of background information about what's happening federally. I mean, we get it too -- it goes both ways -- but perceptions that people might have based on the expertise that they have.

I didn't really have a lot to say. I would like to thank you because Suffolk County supports their aging population. We know that. We hear the budget report that Holly gives us, and we know in so many ways, this legislature and the county executive have been very generous to this office and to the seniors of Suffolk County. It is a growing population, and it is a constant, I think, challenge to be able to maintain the level of services that we all want to see in Suffolk County and at the same time face the fiscal realities that that demand is growing, and so I think I don't envy you when you have to make those kinds of decision, but I do want to thank you for the support that we have seen to this point. Do you have any questions?

CHAIRMAN STERN:

First of all, thank you for being here today, and, of course, thank you for all that you do. We had -- it was actually with Holly when we had the opportunity to sit in on discussion that was gearing up to make a presentation to the White House conference on ageing some time ago. We were part of a group, part of a discussion about what a lot of professionals within the gerontology and senior advocacy community see as some of the big issues that are facing our seniors, their families today and coming up in the near future.

But I'm wondering, given the makeup of our local advisory board, and as you point out not all of which are professionals within the aging community where they receive grants and this is what they do on a daily basis, but the seniors themselves. I'm just wondering what are some of the main topics of conversation? What do board members see as being some of the big issues that affect them and their friends and family now, and what are they talking about as being the biggest concerns going forward?

MS. GALLOGLY:

I think probably almost every age group sees healthcare and how we are financing healthcare and understanding that whole system as being very challenging to a lot of people. There are, of course, wonderful people out there that Holly was actually referring that are going to be able to help families confront healthcare funding for their seniors. I think it's foster grandparents. RSVP, who is providing that service, they're fantastic. They do a great job. Does everybody know about that? No, but that's, then, the job of New York Connects back in the office to be able to steer people in that direction, so that's a big one.

Everybody in this room knows that the two big issues that often confront the aging is transportation and housing. Those are a continuing burden. I'm sure we're not the only county in the state that faces these challenges. We have the additional aspect of being a very big county with a lot of space and a lot of transportation needs. When you're in the city, you hop on the subway, you get on a bus; it's a lot easier. Out here, it's major. Any program that has to deliver a service has to think

about transportation, so I think that that just continues to be something that stymies a lot of people and a lot of programs, so these are the two big things.

I'm somewhat active with the DISRIP people. Hearing about DISRIP and how this new form of making sure that local community-based services are funded better so that they can help keep people out of hospitals and nursing homes that's using that Medicaid money. I think that that area, I hope it gets to the right people. I think there are some fantastic services very much at a the grassroots level that often can get overlooked because they're not big enough, so I think that's kind of going to be an ongoing issue, making sure that we do keep those good daycares, for example, elder daycares, keep those going. What does a family caregiver do who is dealing with 24/7 caregiving if they don't have those services in place to utilize? I raised that with them and I said do you have somebody in your committees who is talking about the caregiver, because it's the caregiver who's the gatekeeper. You know, if the caregiver gives up, the person goes into the system.

So we have to educate people who are thinking about this to understand those little pieces. They're often hidden, so I think those are probably the main things that I'm seeing and that I hear from the other groups. It's those issues. I think there's some new legal challenges coming in too.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Krupski.

LEG. KRUPSKI :

Yeah, thank you for that. Especially in my district, and I do represent the oldest town in the county agewise, and to be able to have people stay in their homes is really, really important to the community and the to the families so thank you for that, and I know Holly's been a big advocate there and a big help on the east end to try to accomplish that.

MS. GALLOGLY:

Are you in Southhold?

LEG. KRUPSKI :

Yes.

MS. GALLOGLY:

That's where the hearing was this fall. It was an amazing. It's always amazing because it's such a wonderful center but I actually -- a former student of mine runs the daycare right there, and that's just such -- you know, not every community is able to offer that or has thought that they should offer that, but Southhold did, and that is, again, it's a hidden issue. People don't understand how vital that is that caregivers get that kind of respite, and when a town is able to provide that, that is pretty amazing.

LEG. KRUPSKI :

That used to be The Garage there. It was converted years ago, and it's been a real success. Holly's been part of that.

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

Yeah, it's been fun.

LEG. KRUPSKI :

I was at that hearing, and it was very heartwarming to hear the stories.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Anker.

LEG. ANKER:

Hi. A couple of questions for you. Reverse mortgages: What's your thoughts on that? I've had a number of seniors coming up to me saying, Is this good, is this not good. What's your analysis?

MS. GALLOGLY:

That's not my expertise. I would hate to say -- it seems like it went through a period of challenge, problems, but you do seem to hear about them more now and perhaps it's more under control.

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

Anybody who goes for a reverse mortgage has to have counseling. I mean, that's mandated for it. The concern I see is that they have all the TV commercials about reverse mortgages, and they talk about the 62-year-old. Quite honestly, 62, you could live 30 years; you're going to run out of that money. So people have to really watch, if they're going to go for a reverse mortgage, when they get one and how they take care of that money because it might not be the best idea to go for one at 62. You know, at 75, a little bit older, that money will keep going, that's one thing, but it is an industry that I think has a lot of advantages for people who need access to their funds but they really need to watch it when they do and go for that counseling.

LEG. ANKER:

So the county has counseling available?

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

No, we do not. There are counselors that are through HUD, so we have a list of counselors so people can call our office and ask for that list and we will tell them that, but I don't advocate that the whole world goes for a reverse mortgage like the TV commercial suggests.

LEG. ANKER:

Yeah. Again, I hear that quite a bit in my district. I have all the Leisures, and thousands of people live there, of course. But another issue that I'm concerned -- mainly it seems to be getting more attention with our kids and our young adults is the drug addiction. What's your thought on the drug addiction issue with our seniors?

MS. GALLOGLY:

You saw that article that the age range of addicted adults has gone up. I think that can be expected when you consider the baby boom population. It's probably not just their personal habits but it's also just their numbers. There's so many more of them so you're going to see greater numbers, but we, I mean -- - the issue with the babies, it's -- just we face some very difficult areas. I will tell you there's a tremendous amount of education going on out there of trying to train people who can intervene, who can be counselors and all of that, and the people that get committed to that are totally committed, so there is an army out there just like there's an army of veterans working on veterans' issues. There's an army of people trying to fight it. It doesn't go away.

LEG. ANKER:

And as far as what the county has, we have counselors available for those folks?

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

We do not. We would refer people to the health department for any type of resources for that.

LEG. ANKER:

All right. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Interesting. One of the big challenges, then, is education, education for our older neighbors, education for their families and caregivers. It sounds like there's a need for information, really, across the board regardless of the particular subject matter, but it really sounds like all of the issues that they face, the challenges that they need to work out, there's always going to be a need for education and perhaps counseling along the way. And I guess that's one of the things that's important about the grant that's coming before us where we need to have a continued and aggressive focus because education and information is key.

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

You know, our office, the biggest -- where a lot of impact is seen is with the New York Connects and the information and assistance that's done by our office every day. We have four people on the phone every day just to answer questions, so I always encourage people to have people call our main number because whatever their issue is, we probably have a referral to give them or a program that we could send information out to them on, and our website's pretty decent in terms of links and things like that, so we tell people about our website as well tell. If you come across people that need assistance, tell them to call.

MS. GALLOGLY:

Could I just add an invitation? It's actually just making you aware of it. If you notice in your district you have people that want to know about reverse mortgages, every college on Long Island, college and university, has a speakers' bureau so you could work through our committee, if you want, but you can also contact the advancement offices of these colleges and universities and say, Do you have somebody who is in the business department who's an expert on the reverse mortgage issues, and you probably would find one.

LEG. ANKER:

Suffolk Community College has professors on wheels, an excellent program; but that's a very good idea. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

All right. Very good. Carolyn, thank you. Thank you for being with us today. Holly, as always, thank you. Have an enjoyable holiday and a happy healthy new year.

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

See everybody next year.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Okay. Everybody else good? There being no other business before the committee today, we are adjourned.

(The meeting was adjourned at 1:21 p.m.)