

**SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE  
PUBLIC HEARING  
ON  
2005 OPERATING BUDGET  
October 4, 2004**

**MEETING HELD AT THE WILLIAM H. ROGERS LEGISLATIVE BUILDING IN THE ROSE  
Y. CARACAPPA AUDITORIUM, 725 VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY,  
SMITHTOWN, NEW YORK.**

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

ALISON MAHONEY, Court Stenographer

MINUTES TRANSCRIBED BY:

DIANA KRAUS, Court Stenographer

**(THE HEARING CONVENED AT 10:29 AM)**

**P.O. CARACAPPA:**

This is the Public Hearing on the Operating Budget. Good morning, Mr. Clerk, members of the public.

**MR. BARTON:**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman.

**P.O. CARACAPPA:**

We'll start today's public hearing with a salute to the flag led by Legislator Schneiderman.

**(SALUTATION)**

**P.O. CARACAPPA:**

Mr. Clerk, please read the Public Hearing Notice.

**MR. BARTON:**

Yes, Mr. Chairman. Notice of a Public Hearing on the 2005 tentative County Operating Budget. Notice is hereby given that the County Legislature of the County of Suffolk will meet on September 28, 2004 at 2:30 PM in the Maxine Postal Auditorium, County Center, 300 Center Drive, Riverhead and on October 4, 2004, 10:30 AM in the Rose Caracappa Auditorium of the Rogers Building, 725 Veterans Highway, Smithtown, New York for the purpose of holding a Public Hearing on the 2005 tentative County Budget. Further notice is hereby given that copies of said tentative budget will be available at the Office of the County Legislature, Smithtown and also the Offices of the County Legislature in Riverhead where they may be inspected or procured during the business hours by any interested person. Signed and dated.

And the affidavits of publication are in order for the Operating Budget and for the tentative •• I'm sorry •• also the roll on the Third District Three Sewer District roll •• the assessment rolls of the Southwest Sewer District is also in order, Mr. Chairman.

**P.O. CARACAPPA:**

Thank you, Mr. Barton. We'll go straight to the cards. I'll remind the public you have five minutes to speak. The first speaker is Sabra Boughton.

**MS. BOUGHTON:**

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Sabra Boughton. I'm a nurse practitioner and an educator at Stony Brook University Hospital. And I'm here to talk about the budget for 2005, the emphasis on maintaining the tobacco settlement money for treating the addiction to nicotine. A little background education. We know that 12 kids a day in Suffolk County begin smoking. And that the Suffolk County Department of Health has done a stellar job in addressing smoking in schools and helping the behavior modification piece to smoking, which means a six•week ongoing session supplying nicotine products to the addicted smoker to allow them time to work on behavior modification. I was a smoker. I haven't smoked for 20 years. When I smoked, they were not spraying tobacco plants with ammonia. When I smoked, the cigarette wasn't engineered with butane to light in any windy condition and filters that would punctate and help you absorb nicotine faster. Nicotine goes to the brain faster than cocaine.

At Stony Brook and at any hospital we know if you have heart disease, heart failure, pneumonia, smoking is a must to get •• we have to tell everyone it's in the interest of your

health to stop smoking. We need all the assistance we can get to continue the smoking cessation process. Every time we "sting" in Suffolk County, selling cigarettes to minors, the cigarette industry starts in the movies, having the movie stars smoke. It's just a constant ongoing requirement that the smoking settlement money be retained within the Department of Health to give smoking cessation classes, to go into the schools and educate kids so they will not begin to smoke. And to help us with pregnant women. Babies are born smaller from smokers because they have carbon monoxide in their blood. There should be no carbon monoxide in your blood. So, it seems that it's more of an education process.

And there is a representation here from the Legislature. And I would like to know one step further what we could do as a consumer of health and to save the health care dollar, which you will do; your own employees are encouraged not to smoke, you would save twice the tobacco settlement money. So, I appreciate your time. I just want to leave you with one thought; that anyone here who has a child in school, you don't want your kids to start smoking. Anyone here who's with a smoker and you smell smoke, you are smoking the secondhand smoke. And it's a monster of an education problem. It's a problem that the County has worked on over the past five years. And they need at least the next five years to really put a dent in the statistics for smokers of Suffolk County. Thank you for your time. And I'm glad you don't get to ask me how I manage my budget. Thanks. Bye.

**P.O. CARACAPPA:**

Thank you. Will Stoner.

**MR. STONER:**

Good morning. Good morning, Legislator Caracappa, Legislator Carpenter. Thanks for the opportunity today to speak •• I'm sorry?

**LEG. CARPENTER:**

And Legislator Schneiderman.

**MR. STONER:**

Oh, I'm sorry. Legislator Schneiderman. Sorry about that. The American Cancer Society is adamantly opposed to the County Executive's proposed Operating Budget in regard to the Suffolk County Tobacco Control Program. Tobacco remains the number one avoidable cause of death killing about 435,000 people every year in our nation. A lot of these stats you've already

heard; you already know them by heart. But I'm going to reiterate them today for a fact. In 2000 Suffolk County created the Learn To Be Tobacco Free Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program using funds from the Master Settlement Agreement. While other counties across New York and the country took the millions of dollars and used it to fill budget gaps and other non-tobacco related programs, Suffolk County was cited by tobacco watchdog groups for taking important dollars and creating the successful public health program.

In 2004 Suffolk County received \$21 million from the Master Settlement Agreement and 2.7 million was budgeted to run the program. For 2005 the County will take in another 21 million or so from the Master Settlement Agreement. And the County Executive Steve Levy's budget has proposed a budget that would actually decimate the program. And that's unacceptable.

The Learn To Be Tobacco Free Program assists residents in their attempts to quit smoking; thus reducing their risk of getting lung cancer. It also funds a Health Smart Program for our schools. And it pays for counter-advertising campaigns. I'll admit that with every program there are ways to make improvement to ensure that the program is maximizing its effect; a dollar per impact ratio, if you will. This attempt by the administration is not a slight tinkering with the program, though. It's actually a complete annihilation. We need to ensure that the program is funded adequately to make certain that it remains comprehensive and improves the lives of Suffolk County residents by reducing the cancer burden and other health ailments associated with tobacco use. Comprehensive meaning funding Health Smart, funding counter-advertising to use CDC ads in creating ad campaigns to target specific populations of need in our county, community cessation and also last but not least the valuation.

We need to •• I'm sorry •• to quickly elaborate, let me say, that some 8200 residents of Suffolk County have gone through your cessation program. And because of that program, thousands have been able to quit permanently; therefore, saving their lives from certain doom.

Next the comprehensive K through 12 Health Smart Program, it not only educates our youth about tobacco, but also about physical activity and nutrition. And that's important because obesity, as you know, is the number two preventable cause of death. Counter-advertising is important to Suffolk County residents because we are all being inundated with an 11.6 billion dollar ad campaign by big tobacco. No, you know, we can't compete as a County with that type of budget. But the voice of reason must be heard. Only 20% of the adult population smokes in Suffolk County. Not the 80% that tobacco companies would like you to believe.

Also, it's very important to know what is working well and what needs a little improvement. So,

to that end it is deplorable that this administration has refused to sign a contract to do the evaluation and now just seem to be making cuts based on anecdotal information in regard to efficacy of the program. So, please, Legislators in this auditorium, the Legislators •• the other 15, please hear our request to fund this program at an adequate level of at least 12% of the MSA dollars. It comes to about, I think about, \$2.5 million, which is probably near to what the Health Department has asked to be budgeted. And this money's not only meant to be spent on tobacco control, but it's also well spent and ultimately saves the County money in the end. So, please restore the funding and continue to be the leaders you are in the fight against big tobacco.

And for the information, I'll leave the •• my comments. But I have attached a graph of all the money that has been taken in over the last five years for the Master Settlement Agreement and how much money has been allotted to the Tobacco Control Program. Thanks again for your time.

**P.O. CARACAPPA:**

Thank you, Mr. Stoner. George Rosales.

**MR. ROSALES:**

Good morning. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address the Legislature once again. My name is George Rosales, Director of Advocacy for the American Heart Association. And I, too, am in opposition to the proposed funding cuts. And I do have copies of my testimony; but I will read what I have. The American Heart Association is in opposition to any effort to further slash funding for Suffolk County's tobacco control programs. For years the Suffolk County Legislature has worked tirelessly to support policies and promote a tobacco free lifestyle. The legislature must continue to build on past legislative victories and support Suffolk County residents for allowing the essential cessation and education programs that are offered by the County Health Department.

Comprehensive tobacco control programs cost a fraction of the millions spent every year on medical care related to smoking. In Suffolk County cessation and education programs have been proven to be successful. As you may know, tobacco use claims the lives of more than 400,000 Americans each year. 170,000 of those are directly linked to cardiovascular diseases like heart disease and stroke.

Suffolk County, like my other counties cross our nation, is facing steep budgetary shortfalls. The money that was awarded to states from the Master Settlement Agreement is being used for other expenditures, many of them legitimate and necessary. However, the importance of fully funding a tobacco control program must not be diminished. Remember, the intent of the awards were to reduce the number of smokers and reduce health care costs and most importantly save lives.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has suggested a dollar amount that each state should invest in tobacco control efforts and prevention programs. The suggested levels are generally well below the amount actually spent to treat smoking related illnesses. The Suffolk County Health Department has only allotted a fraction of the total amount and with these limited resources they have coordinated an effective, lifesaving program.

The choice is spend now on a comprehensive tobacco control program or pay excessively more later. The American Heart Association strongly urges the County Executive and the County Legislature to invest a small amount of money now for the health of your constituency. Honor the intent of the tobacco settlement and fund these vital programs. Save lives and money down the road. Thank you.

**P.O. CARACAPPA:**

Thank you. Eric Price.

**MR. PRICE:**

Good morning everyone. My name is Eric Price. I'm a resident of Suffolk County. I'm also a public health educator here in the County. I'm very proud to be a resident of Suffolk County especially being that this County happens to be one of the most progressive anti-smoking counties around. We've been a leader in the State of New York; other counties looking to us as being their guiding light. Our County for years has been devoting funds, resources as well as leadership to other counties that we could look up that •• so they can look up to us. Excuse me. For many years I've been very proud to have worked alongside with the County Department of Health working on some of their youth prevention programs as well as some of their cessation programs. I've seen tremendous strides. I've seen tremendous successes from these programs. You may not see the individual people attending these programs. You may not see the effect that it has on their life. Getting one person to quit, getting a hundred people

to quit is

a tremendous success each in their own. Those of you that may have smoked can understand how hard it is to quit and just how difficult it is. I know for a fact that this program is doing well and dollar•for•dollar it's probably one of the most successful programs in the County. I certainly hope that in 2005 I can continue to be proud to be a member of, you know, the Suffolk County area and being a leader in our state. Thank you.

**P.O. CARACAPPA:**

Thank you. Matt Arundale.

**MR. ARUNDALE:**

Good morning everybody. I'm a resident of Suffolk County. I'm just going to keep this nice and short. You know, you're going to be blasted with numbers and everything. You have successful programs. The tobacco program is successful. Why are we going to cut it? You have the youth programs that are serving thousands of youth each year; keeping them off •• stop using tobacco. You know, it's just a no•brainer. Thank you.

**P.O. CARACAPPA:**

Thank you very much. My kind of Public Hearing. Next speaker •• well, there's two on this card. They're both from William Floyd School District. So, gentlemen, Mark and Jim, if you want to come up and take your turns.

**MR. MENSCH:**

Thank you very much for the opportunity to express our opinions and our thoughts on the program that we have at William Floyd. My name is Mark Mensch. I'm the Director of Athletics and Coordinator of Health Physical Education, Family and Consumer Science of the William Floyd School District. I would like to thank the Legislature for funding the Suffolk County tobacco initiative and encourage you to continue to fund this tobacco program into the future. William Floyd School District is one of many school districts in the County that benefitted from the program established by the tobacco control initiative. Many of our teachers in grades one through eight have had Health Smart Training and have implemented their training into the classroom. At the high school level, we have established a smoking cessation group for students who do smoke, which is known as TAP; and the alternative to suspension program known as TEG, the students who are caught smoking on campus. The Suffolk County tobacco initiative will also provide training for our high school students to teach our younger students

about smoking prevention. We realize that each day approximately 4400 young people ages 12 to 17 start smoking in the United States. With the continuation of the funding from Suffolk County tobacco initiative, we will be able to help our students who want to quit and most of all reduce the students who may be encouraged to start smoking. That's the letter that we wanted to submit on our behalf.

I just wanted to have Jim with me also, who is my Chairperson in health and is also the teacher. He's on the front lines with the students and can really talk to you about what happens with students and the interactions with him. As a former board member, I was on the Board of Education for 15 years. I can tell you that when the settlement came through and we read about the money that was going to pass through the county and then eventually hit our education system, we were both happy about that and at the same time cautious. We're always fearful on a school district level of having money available to start programs, get a lot of success going and then fear of losing that money. And then we're in the front lines where we hear parents or students come to us and say why can't we keep the program going? It's working. But we just don't have the money. William Floyd is usually in that situation when it comes to funding, especially from the state level. We hope that the County will continue to stand by us and be able to offer this program to our students. Mr. Griffing will tell you how well we're doing. I think the thing I would like him to address to you is the fact that what we found most effective with students, I mean you would know this if most of you are parents, that kids don't tend to listen to adults. But if we can get kids to teach other kids, it's much more effective. And that's the program that we've been effective with at the William Floyd Schools; and that's students being teachers and learning how to be teachers and work with other kids and getting them to stop or not start smoking. So, Jim if you could address that.

**MR. GRIFFIN:**

Again, I want to thank you for the time that you've given us. I'm on the front lines with the children. All right? I'm teaching. I've also been teaching for 26 years now. And I do have to tell you that this is probably one of the strongest programs for smoking cessation that I've seen in those years. Many years ago there was a Fresh Start Program that was done by the American Cancer Society. It was powerful. When you get in a room with seven or eight of these kids who are smoking shockingly up to two packs of cigarettes a day even at that age, and you are able to get some of them to quit •• well, I'll tell you what. Most of them, if not all, will quit short term. And then we will have the long•term ones who do quit. We are offering them something now that hasn't been around for many first years. First of all, we are keeping

them from starting which is a key point. Secondly, those who do smoke, if I'm walking out or Mark's walking out, in the past you'd catch someone smoking, you would suspend them. How are we helping them? It's just another negative adding on to the fact that they smoke. Now we are able to offer them alternatives. Join the TEG program. Learn how to quit. All right? And hopefully they will do that.

The TAP program has been successful. It's a lot of work to do, but we're very happy with the direction that we're going. As Mark had stated, we have Teens As Teachers Program. They will now start to be trained. We're trying to get the connectivity and education so that these older kids who they look up to will now go into the elementaries and tell them, hey, you don't want to smoke. Smoking is not the cool thing. Smoking is the thing that causes the cancer, the heart disease. All of the programs that BOCES have put out, I think, have been done in the right way. They just intake money and materials and say go do it. And these things ended up stored on a shelf. Their training is ideal for teachers. If you give the teachers the materials and you train them, then, it will be used. If you're missing one of those things, it's not going to be used. So, again, I would like to ask the Legislature to think about maintaining this funding. I'm kind of an optimist. I'd like to see you increase it because it's such a good cause. But, again, I'm here for the kids. It's not about money. It is about the children. And the children of William Floyd and other school districts have directly benefitted from your decision in the past to allocate this money. Thank you.

**MR. MENSCH:**

Thank you very much.

**P.O. CARACAPPA:**

Thank you, gentlemen. There are some questions. Just hold on.

**LEG. CARPENTER:**

Not a question, but I do want to thank you for coming down and wanted to put on the record that pretty much what was said here by these two gentlemen, I had heard from representatives from the districts in the Eleventh Legislative District sort of echoing the same thing and imploring us to restore that funding, that it was very important. And I just also wanted to state that this past Saturday at the mall in Bay Shore there was a youth odyssey and a youth fair. And they had all kinds of different programs. But one of them that was received so very well was the Butt Out Program. And it was a powerful message. And you could see that everyone

there listening •• was listening and hopefully making a difference. Thank you.

**MR. MENSCH:**

Thank you.

**P.O. CARACAPPA:**

David Martin.

**MR. MARTIN:**

Good morning. I'm David Martin. I'm the Regional Vice President with the American Lung Association of New York State. And I'm very happy to be here and grateful for the opportunity to make some comments. I may be a new face to this legislative body, but I've been with the American Lung Association nearly 25 years now. And I've most recently been working in the Hudson Valley area up in Westchester County. So, my remarks this morning are going to be along the lines of what you've heard from the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association because the American Lung Association of New York State took a look at what you're about to do here. And we urged Suffolk County or the Legislature to reject County Executive Steve Levy's plan which really would completely gut the treatment and prevention programs that you've been doing so well here in Suffolk County, which were funded by the proceeds from the landmark tobacco settlement agreement of 1998. It's a shame really when you think about it that six years after the landmark settlement with the tobacco industry, we still find ourselves fighting to get tobacco settlement dollars into these programs that really do save lives. Since 1998, too many states and too many of New York State's counties have broken promises to America's children by taking proceeds from the national settlement agreement away from these prevention programs. And now Suffolk County, one of the shining examples of how the tobacco settlement revenue could be used is breaking that promise to Suffolk County's children if they go through with this; if you go through with this by gutting the anti-tobacco programs here. The American Lung Association of New York State, by the way, has issued county settlement report cards grading counties on how much revenue each county devoted to anti-tobacco programs. Only two of New York 62 counties have gotten an A. And guess which county is one of those? Suffolk County. Westchester County was the other county. Grades based on per capita tobacco spending control programs. So, it's based on not only how many dollars were spent, but also on the per capita dollars. And Suffolk County really has been the gold standard in terms of these kinds of programs. We always looked up to Suffolk County. Looking from Westchester, we said look what they're doing over there. And we

went to our other counties in the Hudson Valley and said Suffolk County's got the right idea. Imagine if this proposal were to go through, imagine taking the insurance money from a car accident and spending it to go on a cruise, for example. That's kind of what the County Executive's plan would do if that goes through. If he •• he's taking money that really was extracted from big tobacco for over fifty years of lies and deceit and using it for other purposes unrelated to tobacco use, does that make a lot of sense?

The only winners here then would be big tobacco companies that are seeing another politician, another county that was supposed to use money to fight tobacco to help kids stay away from tobacco and using that money for everything but tobacco control. Evidence shows, and you know this to be true, that tobacco control programs work to reduce and prevent tobacco use. Effective tobacco control programs will save lives and costs to our health care system. And there is ample evidence that demonstrates how effective tobacco •• anti•tobacco control programs are. So •• in fact, according to a study by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last April, teen smoking increased in Minnesota following cuts to their tobacco prevention programs. So all of the evidence shows that programs to help reduce and prevent tobacco use especially among youth really worked. And what few dollars may be saved by cutting those programs will cost more in lives and higher health care costs tomorrow. Smoking is the biggest threat to lungs. Smoking is the biggest cause of lung disease. So, we urge the Legislature to put back the funding for tobacco prevention programs now. Thank you.

**P.O. CARACAPPA:**

Thank you very much. I have no other cards. Anyone else wishing to be heard? I don't see any.

Motion to close by myself, second by Legislator Carpenter. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? The Public Hearing on 2005 Operating Budget is closed.

Is there anyone here wishing to speak on the Southwest Sewer District Assessment Roll? Hearing none, motion to close by myself, second by Legislator Schneiderman. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? This Public Hearing has concluded.

We will be going into the Public Hearings in our joint committees starting later this month October 21st, 22nd and 25th. That schedule's available at the Clerk's Office. Anyone wishing to seek out that schedule can talk to the Clerk. Okay. Have a nice day.

**(THE HEARING CONCLUDED AT 10:57 AM)**