

**SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
SPECIAL MEETING
STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS
SECOND DAY
JANUARY 24, 2005**

**MEETING HELD IN THE AUDITORIUM OF WYANDANCH MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL
54 SOUTH 32ND STREET, WYANDANCH, NEW YORK**

MINUTES TAKEN BY
LUCIA BRAATEN, COURT STENOGRAPHER

[THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 5:40 P.M.]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Mr. Clerk.

MR. BARTON:

Good evening, Mr. Chairman.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Please call the roll.

(Roll Called by Mr. Barton, Clerk)

LEG. CARACCIOLO:

Here.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Here.

LEG. O'LEARY:

Here.

LEG. VILORIA • FISHER:

(Not Present)

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Present.

LEG. FOLEY:

(Not Present)

LEG. LINDSAY:

(Not Present)

LEG. MONTANO:

(Not Present)

LEG. ALDEN:

Here.

LEG. KENNEDY:

(Not Present)

LEG. NOWICK:

Here.

LEG. BISHOP:

Here.

LEG. MYSTAL:

(Not Present)

LEG. BINDER:

Here.

LEG. TONNA:

(Not Present)

LEG. COOPER:

(Not Present)

D.P.O. CARPENTER:

Here.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Here.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Henry, call my name again.

MR. BARTON:

Ten present.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Call me again.

LEG. COOPER:

Make it 11.

MR. BARTON:

Eleven.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Okay. We have a quorum. Good evening, everybody. This is a Special Meeting of the Suffolk County Legislature. We would like to start off tonight's meeting, if everyone could take •• actually, stand for a presentation of the colors by the Wyandanch High School ROTC.

[Presentation of Colors]

Salute to the Flag led by Deputy Presiding Officer Carpenter.

[Salutation]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

At this point in time, I'd like to introduce the Wyandanch Chorus, will be doing a musical number. Are they here?

[Presentation by Wyandanch Chorus]

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you very much. Everyone, please be seated. I'd like to thank the ROTC for presenting the colors, and the Chorus for the beautiful songs. Also, the Legislature would like to thank, and if you notice up front, we have some signers for hearing impaired this evening, _Toni Nuccio_ and _Kristin Fieldig_ , both from the Mill Neck Services. They're providing the signing for us this evening, so we thank them.

This is •• we're going to go right to the public portion. This is just like any other Legislative meeting. You have three •• each speaker has three minutes. This is not a question and answer period, this is your three minutes, your three minutes alone. We have quite a bit of cards, so we'll go right into it. First speaker, Richard Emmanuel Ashby, Jr.

MR. ASHBY:

Good evening, Executive, Legislators, and fellow citizens. I'm here to speak today ••

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Mr. Ashby, if I could just ••

MR. ASHBY:

Yes.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Raise that microphone up as high as you can, and those in the control booth, if you can get that microphone for the public up a little louder, we certainly would appreciate it.

MR. ASHBY:

Okay, thank you. I'm here to speak this evening for the homeless, not only the homeless in Suffolk County, but the homeless especially here in Wyandanch. Our community seems to be a •• I don't want to use the word dumping ground, but it's a placement center for the homeless throughout the community. And it's a shame the way the homeless are treated and the process they have to go through in order to achieve room and board.

I don't know if you've ever been homeless, but many of us throughout America are only one check away from being homeless. It's not something you grow up and say, "I want to be homeless," it's something that happens to you out of circumstance. And there's a horror story that should be told about some of the homeless here in Wyandanch and throughout Suffolk County. I will give you •• I only have three minutes, so I'll let you know.

There •• a gentleman went to Social Services last week to be placed. He had to get there at 11 o'clock in the morning, sign up, come back at 2:30 in the afternoon, only to be told to come back at 4:30 in the afternoon. All this time, this man wandered through our community. Not only this man, but a lot of other people wander throughout our community here in Wyandanch. Upon receiving his placement for the evening, he was placed for •• let's use the word •• let's call it what it is. He was placed in a crack house, which was an illegal sober house. We have many of those here in Wyandanch. He was placed in a room with one individual, ends up having four individuals in his room that night. The next day he went down to Social Services and he informed them that he was in a crack house. The social worker told him, "Too bad, go back for the crack" •• "to the crack house." He went back to that crack house that night, he had bronchitis, he ended up in the hospital. This all happened last week. He went •• after coming out of the hospital, he went back to Social Services, the social worker still refused to

place him in another environment. Now, the gentleman is on the street. I'm an employee of the Wyandanch Public Library and he spends his days in the Wyandanch Public Library, along with a lot of other homeless.

What we have done to these homeless in our community, we've put them in a cataclysmic •• we put them in a cataclysmic way of harm. We've put them •• their backs against the wall. They have nowhere to go and they have nowhere to turn. So, my question to the Legislators are, in the coming year of 2005, what is your plan for our homeless? What are you going to do about these illegal sober houses? What are you going to do about the way the people are treated down in Social Services? What are you going to do about the improper placement of the homeless in our community? Wyandanch is a proud community, just like Sayville and Islandia. We have people here that work and pay taxes, and we deserve better treatment for ourselves and our homeless. Thank you for your time and your consideration.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you.

[Applause]

Before we go on, I'm going to ask for some logistic changes here. Someone can take that speaker that was right in front of the public speaker and move it over towards •• Mr. Clerk, you can move that speaker, not the microphone, the speaker away from the microphone. That's why it's feeding back. Slide it over, number one, as far as you can. And that microphone up in the booth, the microphone that the public is using, you could just crank that up a little higher so they can be heard, and, hopefully, we won't get the feedback again. As long as it's not right in front of each other, that's why it's feeding back. Okay?

Okay. Let's try this. The next speaker is Peter Quinn, followed by Sondra Cochran.

MR. QUINN:

Okay, thank you. Good evening, members of the Legislature. My name is Peter Quinn, Energy Analyst with the Long Island Coalition for Democracy. I wanted to applaud Steve Levy on two counts this evening, one, for having •• his having stalled the LIPA railroad train, where they had proposed four options to sell back the company to a private entrepreneur, which might cost

billions of dollars, to buy the generating plants from KeySpan, which could range between 350 to 550 million dollars, the difference between book value and market value, if LIPA were to end up getting them, and then the rate payers would pay that cost, or to keep the status quo or municipalization, which I favor, but •• so, on the one hand, I applaud that effort. On the other, I applaud him for proposing the Office of Energy and Environment. It's sorely needed in Suffolk County.

The Oak Brush Plain, which is one of our •• the recharge basin for our water supply up in Pilgrim State Hospital area, is being encroached upon. Nobody seems to be doing anything about that. Caithness is seeking to build a generating plant out east. It's already been approved by LIPA. Nobody seems to be doing anything about that, even though we don't know the megawatt usage that is currently used on an annual basis, or even during the summer months during a hot, humid day.

And then you've got the liquid natural gas plant on Long Island Sound. It's certainly within your jurisdiction to have more than a casual glance over your shoulders at that.

But the Southwest Sewer District is another concern. The bonds are going to be paid off next year. Twenty•nine years the bonds have been paid off by residents in the Southwest Sewer District. We still haven't hooked up residents from Wyandanch, Deer Park, North Babylon, Bay Shore, and, yet, the developers are coming in there saying, "We've got to have more clarifiers", which means expanding the plant, and "We need to build another plant there." I'm saying wait a minute. The people of Babylon and the people of Islip should be questioning the right of the developers to get first whack at that when there are so many residences in the area that have still •• who are within the confines of the area that have not been hooked up to that plant. And when you get 30 million gallons of effluent per day •• is that my signal to stop or ••

P.O. CARACAPPA:

That's the time. You're usually right on the three minutes, too, Pete. You're slipping a little bit.

MR. QUINN:

Well, I was just going to tweak it for another second or two ••

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Go ahead, finish up.

MR. QUINN:

•• to point out that the Department of Public Works Chairman included in that article in Newsday two weeks ago that the 23 million gallons a day is currently what's in use. He pointed that out five years ago when Maxine Postal was a Legislator, and so many more businesses have developed there over a period of years and now we're encroaching upon the maximum capacity, and I'd like to see the residents hooked up first. Thank you very much, appreciate that.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you, Mr. Quinn. Sondra Cochran, followed by Rita Moore.

MS. COCHRAN:

Good evening. My name is Sondra Cochran and I work for the Wyandanch Community Development Corporation. I'm the Director of Housing, and Mr. James Wallace is our Executive Director. The agency has been in existence for over 34 years and I've been with the agency for 14 years, with the CHDO for the Town of Babylon, the Community Housing Development Organization. We were designated by the Town about ten years ago.

Our agency provides comprehensive housing counseling services, including alternatives to foreclosure, pre•purchase education for potential home•buyers, and reverse mortgage education for senior citizens. In addition, WC provides affordable rental housing and affordable homeownership opportunities to income eligible families. We have been the local program administrator for owner occupied rehabilitation programs, and the agency is also involved in other aspects of community revitalization. We're able to render these services and programs to the entire Township of Babylon through partnerships and grant awards from local, state and federal government agencies.

Wyandanch has both housing and economic issues that have not been properly addressed in the past. We're excited about having a Town Leader and a County Leader with plans to give Wyandanch the attention that it needs to revitalize the community.

Despite media accounts, Wyandanch is a community filled with potential. At this time, we're

attracting new businesses to the community, we have families that are rooted in this community, and we also have people that continue to move into the community. And, personally, I believe that we are growing due to the fact that people do realize that there is potential and positive possibilities in the Wyandanch area.

I would like to take this opportunity to say that we appreciate your presence here tonight. It is a positive show of character that you chose an underserved community to give your address. This is definitely history in the making. More importantly, we appreciate the partnership that the County has formed with the Town of Babylon in regards to much needed housing and economic solutions in our area. Your choosing our community to address the residents of Suffolk County is an expression of your commitment to this community and all communities of Suffolk.

We look forward to continuing with our partnership with the local government and enhancing our relationship with County government in an effort to bring a higher quality of living standards to the residents of the Wyandanch community. Thank you for your commitment to this community and for giving me the opportunity to speak. Thank you.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you.

MS. COCHRAN:

Thank you.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Rita Moore, followed by Robin White. Rita Moore.

MS. MOORE:

Right here, coming. Hi. As you know, you keep hearing it, I'm Rita Moore, and I'm here •• basically, I guess my problems and the problems I know that exist ••

D.P.O. CARPENTER:

We can't hear.

LEG. VILORIA • FISHER:

We can't hear you.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Speak closer to the microphone.

MS. MOORE:

Okay. I'm here to address an issue, and I guess it kind of parallels or adds to some of the topics that have already been addressed, and I'm here concerning child support and child support that's been directed through Suffolk County.

There are a lot of cases that are court mandated that are not being enforced, and a lot of working parents, including myself, are having the same issues. There's a duration of time when you call to speak to a child support coordinator and it's usually 15 minutes. Not many parents have 15 minutes in their work schedule in order to just hold on.

A lot of resolutions that are supposedly, quote, unquote, resolved in the courts, directed through the Judges are not being enforced. There are a lot of deadbeat dads in Suffolk County. I'm not going to just speak for the males, because there are female child support cases, but primarily there are men. A lot of children are suffering because of this. I think that the County is suffering because of this. There are a lot of children who are on reduced programs, because the parents are not paying their child support, and there's no one out there enforcing that it's being paid. There are a lot of mortgages that are in default, because it's a one-parent household, that should, whether the father or the mother is physically in the home, they still should be contributing, court-ordered, to the support of that home. So, that has a lot to do with the homelessness that's happening in New York.

There are a lot of things that child support in New York is just picking up, like the child support being directly deposited into the banks. Now, New York across the board, when you talk about the capital of America, most people say New York, they forget about Washington. When you talk about what's innovative, you talk about New York, you don't talk about the South, but New York is five years behind the South, because five years ago the South picked up the institution of directly depositing accounts into the bank for child support.

I'd like to know and I'd like to see a change, so that it can help stop some of the homelessness, help to break some of the deficit in terms of the responsibility of the State and the County to oversee breakfast programs. If we start to make •• we stop just making bills, if we stop just presenting this through the court system, taking tax dollars, taking personal dollars and not actually making it a reality and just making it a bad dream, I think it will help, you know, and especially a community like Wyandanch in a very positive way. Okay, I'm finished.

LEG. VILORIA • FISHER:

Thank you.

LEG. FOLEY:

Thank you.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you. Robin White.

[Applause]

Followed by Cesar Malaga.

MR. WHITE:

Good evening, everyone.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Good evening.

MR. WHITE:

I recently moved back to New York a little over a year. I spoke the Legislature last year in March, trying to retrieve some information about how DSS placed the homeless and other people that are in the system. And I was told that I could find different information, which I have not, even through Montana, which is the Legislator at 320 Carlton Avenue. I have not been able to find out any information on what are the guidelines for the houses, the living conditions, the room and board situations that they have us in, what is their guidelines for just taking care, because like the first gentleman stated, the slop

houses, the crack houses, what is the situation? Thank you.

[Applause]

LEG. VILORIA • FISHER:

Thank you, sir.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you. Cesar Malaga, followed by the Honorable Steve Bellone.

MR. MALAGA:

Thank you. Good evening. My name is Cesar Malaga from the Hispanic American Association. I know many of the things I'm going to say perhaps will be a repetition, but we are in the Year 2005 and I think it's time we remind you.

I would like to talk about, first, about affordable housing. Many of you read in the papers about affordable housing, but what we need is affordable housing for those people making over \$70,000 a year. We talk about •• the other affordable housing, we talked about 64,000 and less, but we need to build affordable housing for those making over \$70,000 a year.

Now, I think East Hampton, I think, has a new plan which they are giving in a contract to contractors to build affordable housing. I think that's a good idea, rather than, you know, as I mentioned many times to Suffolk County not to sell any property that Suffolk County owns to developers. Developers are not interested in building, you know, affordable housing for the residents of Suffolk County. The County should be building affordable housing ••

[Applause]

•• and also the towns should be building affordable housing, because developers, once they build, they move away from the area. They are only here to make money, that's it, they are not concerned about the people.

So, I am •• once again, I'm asking you, Suffolk County Legislators, not to sell any income property that you have to developers. Please, start thinking about people who need affordable

housing, those who make over \$70,000 a year.

The other thing is about transportation. I have come to you several times as a member of the Long Island Railroad Commuters Council, which I'm no longer there, because I was just removed by the previous County Executive. Now, I mentioned to you that we in Suffolk County, we need limited bus service on Sundays. We need for those who do not drive or those people who are senior citizens who need to get from one place to another, we need a limited Sunday bus service. I know not long ago Legislator Binder come out with \$550,000 to deputize the Police Department, so that means that you do have money available someplace in which you can put, you know, Sundays •• limited Sunday bus service. We need that in Suffolk County. I mentioned that several times but nothing has been done. We need that service.

The other thing, you know, in Suffolk County and Nassau County they collect over \$1.5 billion in extra revenues from the sale of gas during the last past years. I mean, some of that money should be utilized, you know, to subsidize mass transit. We need to keep, you know, the bus service •• public transportation low cost. I know Legislator Foley reminded me the other day at one of the meetings that I did not say anything about not increasing the fare for the bus service. Yes, it is time. We have to keep public transportation to a low cost. We need that service to provide those people who cannot afford to own a car or the high cost of insurance.

So, there are two items I would like you think, is affordable housing for those making over \$70,000 a year and mass transportation. Let's improve mass transportation for the people and let's provide Sunday bus service.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you Mr. Malaga.

MR. MALAGA:

Thank you.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

The Honorable Supervisor of the Town of Babylon, Steve Bellone.

MR. BELLONE:

Mr. Presiding Officer and members of the Suffolk County Legislature, and our home town

Legislator, Legislator Mystal •• although I was a little nervous when you were the last one on the stage tonight. I thought something might have happened, but I'm very happy that each and every member of the Legislature is here tonight and I want to just very quickly welcome you to the Town of Babylon and to the Hamlet of Wyandanch. And I can tell you that the community is very excited that you're here tonight. You've heard from a few residents, and I'm sure you'll hear from a number more about the many exciting things that are happening in this community.

You know, a lot of times the perceptions that we have about a place come exclusively from the media, and I'd be willing to bet that each of you, like me, has the experience that sometimes the media tends to focus on the negative things rather than giving equal time to the positive things that are happening.

[Applause]

And I think •• I think in that case, Wyandanch has gotten short•shrif because there are incredible things happening here.

[Applause]

This is a community with •• somebody said this before, tremendous potential. It is a community with a thriving middle class, working class, hard working people who are out there every day, not only working to feed their families, but trying to make a better community here in Wyandanch. And our job on the town level, and of course all of you in government, in the Legislature, it's our job to help them make the positive change that they want to see happen, and I'm very happy that we have been working together as a town and a County to make some great changes here in Wyandanch.

And first and foremost I want to thank the Legislature for approving the resolution that granted Wyandanch an empire zone. That took a small portion of the zone that exists ••

[Applause]

•• the County zone that exists in Riverhead and brought a small piece of that here to Wyandanch. That will make a big difference in helping to attract businesses to this community.

The County's also worked to make improvements on Straight Path. You've done some work in the medians, much needed improvements that have been done, and we partnered •• and this may seem like a small thing, but it's another positive step. We worked together to create planted medians in the Straight Path Corridor, in the heart of the downtown. Rather than just having cement blocks there the County came and did the work and the town provided the irrigation and the plantings to make that happen.

And finally, I wanted to just briefly, if I could, mention the sewers. We are working right now on a development proposal ••

[Applause]

•• with an engineering firm to really come up with the realistic cost estimates of what it would take to sewer the Straight Path Corridor, because for Wyandanch, this is an economic development issue. It is an important issue for any community, but here in Wyandanch there is an extremely high water table that makes it difficult to redevelop, and that's different than in any other community and it's because of that issue that sewers are so critical in Wyandanch.

So I look forward, Mr. Presiding Officer, members of the Legislature, with continuing to work with you and the County Executive as we move forward here. And once again, I thank the County Executive and the members of the Legislature for coming to Wyandanch and being here tonight. I looking forward to working together. Thank you.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you, Supervisor. Richard Epps followed by Sara Lansdale.

MR. EPPS:

Legislature, community, good evening. My name is Richard Epps. I've been married 16 years to Adrienne, my wife. We have two children. In April 1994 I received an honorable discharge from United States Army and returned to New York. The next year I spent looking for a house to purchase for my family. I looked nine months. I checked Copiague, Lindenhurst, Amityville, North Babylon, Brentwood, Bay Shore. I checked all these places and I won't lie, I never thought to check Wyandanch.

Finally, the real estate agent told me the house I was looking for with the perfect price was in Wyandanch. I said no way. No way. But I went with my wife to see this house and she fell in love with it immediately. So I did what anyone buying a house would do, I passed by the house three, four times a day, I introduced myself to the neighbors, I even sat down the block to get a feel for the community. That was ten years ago and now my wife and I can't imagine making a different decision.

[Applause]

I guess what I'm trying to get at is Wyandanch has two faces, those who live here and know the potential and those who hear the negative and choose to believe it.

[Applause]

I made a choice ten years ago to ignore the negative and I don't regret it. I believe in this community so much and I have several properties, a salon, Styles by Adrienne, and I just opened a clothing store, Wyandanch Fashion at 1308 Straight Path.

[Applause]

When I started investing in my community I thought I was alone, but the more I get involved, the more people I see like myself who want better for their children in their community. I would like to take this time to thank the community for supporting me and I will be there to support you and I look forward to serving you guys. Thank you.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Sara Lansdale.

MS. LANSDALE:

Good evening. I'd like to thank the County Executive Steve Levy, the Presiding Officer, Legislator Mystal, and the entire Legislature for holding tonight's meeting in Wyandanch. I'm excited about this.

[Applause]

I'd like briefly follow•up on the comments of Supervisor Steve Bellone and underscore the importance of what's happening here in Wyandanch. It's an exciting process that Sustainable Long Island is proud to be a part of. Under the leadership of Steve Bellone, the town has partnered with the community and federal agencies and other entities to realized •• realize a shared vision for future community development in Wyandanch along the Straight Path Corridor. So I want to thank you for holding tonight's meeting here, and it makes all the difference.

Sustainable is •• Long Island is proud to be a part of the process. We've facilitated the shared visioning process in 2003, helped right the vision plan in 2004, and it was formally adopted by the Town of Babylon in 2004. And this is a •• this is a plan that reflects the community's vision for future development along Straight Path, the community's downtown.

Now the town is working with a committee made up of Legislator Mystal and the community, a cross•section of stakeholders to implement the shared vision. What's central to Wyandanch's continued success and which will fuel the economic development for Wyandanch is sewers, the

installation of sewers. So I urge the Legislature to consider working with the Town of Babylon, continuing to work with the Town of Babylon toward this end. Thanks.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you. Vanessa Pugh followed by Edna Newton.

MS. PUGH:

Good evening to the Presiding Officer and the Deputy Presiding Officer, members of the Legislature. Do you need to hear that again? Good evening to the Presiding Officer, Deputy Presiding Officer and members of the Legislature. I welcome you to Wyandanch. I know that you've already received that welcome, but welcome to the Town of Babylon. It's nice of you to decide to come up Island for a change. I take your presence here this evening like many of the other folks that are here this evening, as a sign of commitment and partnership to the Town of Babylon and its ongoing efforts to revitalize Wyandanch.

The visioning process that Sara Lansdale just spoke about happened about a year•and•a•half ago when I was still part of the staff of Sustainable Long Island. We went through a series of community meetings where the then Legislator Maxine Postal was present for those meetings, participating to come up with a shared vision. That vision plan that came out of the community's input was adopted by the Town of Babylon this past fall. And while that may not sound like a big thing, it is a tremendous step for this community to realize its goal and visions for economic development and revitalization. That plan calls for a number of things, the majority of which will require partnership, as you know, from the County, and I only want to encourage you to continue that partnership, to expand upon it and again we take this, your presence here, as a sign and a commitment to that ongoing partnership. Welcome again and thank you.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you. Edna Newton followed by Theresa Sanders.

MS. NEWTON:

Good evening. My name is Edna Newton and as a resident of 40 years plus I would just like to say to the Legislators I live here and I'm a neighbor of the Epps. So, my sentiments are with him exactly. I have worked in this community over 40 something years and it's a pleasure to see all of you coming to our community. I would personally like to thank you for your time and your votes to consider coming to our town. Legislator Mystal, thank you.

And I'd also like to let you know, there are positive things that happen here in our community. For instance, the scholarship committee of Wyandanch, we just had our sixteenth annual scholarship dinner honoring 25 years plus teachers in our school district and that says a lot.

[Applause]

I brought along a book so that my Legislator can share with you, he was there •• thank you, Legislator Mystal, for coming out, presenting those proclamations. It meant a lot to our teachers and our community having your presence there. And again, for those of you that it's your first time, again, welcome, and please know that if there is anything has to be said or done in this community, I have tried to do it. And if there's anything to be done and to let you know, I will do that also. So thanks again for coming, and please, when my Legislator gets up and tell you things about what's happening in our town, please, open your heart and do the right thing, not in my backyard, but please, just do the right thing for our community. Thank you so very much.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you. And I can say, when Legislator Mystal steps up and speaks at the Legislature, we hear him loud and clear. Theresa Sanders.

MS. SANDERS:

Good evening and welcome again to the Town of Babylon and to Wyandanch. I'm Theresa Sanders, President and CEO of the Urban League of Long Island. And this evening, just really briefly, I did bring copies of a business proposal overview for you, and we've been in discussions with our Town of Babylon Supervisor, Steve Bellone, about the business aspects of Wyandanch rising. And I should have called it Wyandanch rising again because many people don't remember ••

[Applause]

I've lived in the Town of Babylon since 1968 and we had a very thriving downtown community in Wyandanch. We had a supermarket, I don't know if you remember with the cow on the roof, _Eleanor and Pite_ . We had laundromats, bakeries, shoemakers. You could go to downtown Wyandanch and take care of your business in a day. You did not have to go on Deer Park Avenue. And I'm hoping that Wyandanch will rise again to serve the basic business needs of the community.

Part of the proposal that we've put together from the Urban League in terms of Wyandanch rising is to implement a model that we currently have implemented with the Town of Islip, and it hinges on a community empowerment center which includes job training, business development, business incubators, medical centers and medical training centers, but the basis is to train the residents, be a job training center because it's nice to be able to •• be able to afford a house and to be able to have a living wage while you live on Long Island and that takes some investment in the human capital called the people in any town in any community.

So the business plan, just the executive summary tells you that we're basing this development plan on a partnership, and the partnership includes government, it includes individuals, it includes the corporate community, and includes community groups. The model is financeable and I've put on back page, there is a copy of just an overview of what we've done in the Town of Islip, but we have received \$5.8 million dollars from a private banking source to develop that model. My hope is not to have to draw down on all that 5.8 million, but to help fundraise and then bring that financing package here to Wyandanch to develop the next model. And the idea is to continue to work in disadvantaged communities throughout Suffolk County to make sure that we're making a proper investment in the human capital side as we start to look at the development and growth in our communities.

And I do want to thank our own town Supervisor, Steve Bellone, for really entertaining our overview of a proposal ••

[Applause]

•• and for making sure that he puts Wyandanch on the map in a very positive way, and I thank you all for coming out and we really look forward to developing a solid business plan. Thank you.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you. Dr. Belinda Marquis. Dr. Marquis?

DR. MARQUIS:

Good evening. I'm Dr. Belinda Marquis. I'm a pediatrician. I came to Wyandanch in 1987. I've been here since then. When I first got here I came here from New York City. I was quite surprised, because in the city there's a doctor on every corner. And I asked my mentor, where is everybody? And he just told me wait and see. And it's 18 years later, we have a private clinic, Martin Luther King Clinic on the corner, and the only other private pediatrician on the other corner.

I'm very happy to be here. It's a wonderful town. As you have known, I have heard today there are plenty of potential in Wyandanch. I'm very excited that the County came here today to see what we have here, and my family and I, we are very interested and we are interested in partnering with the community and the town to develop Wyandanch. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you. Hilary Marquis followed by Delano Stewart.

MR. MARQUIS:

Good evening, Presiding Officer and members of the Legislature. My name is Hilary Marquis and I'm a business owner.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Just speak into the microphone, if you could, sir. Thanks.

MR. MARQUIS:

Sorry. I'm a business owner in Wyandanch. And when I came to Wyandanch, I came to Wyandanch about seven years as a businessperson, although I know Wyandanch for the last 18 years. I have been thrilled with the development in Wyandanch. And thanks to the leadership of our County •• Town Supervisor Steve Bellone. He has initiated a number of objectives and goals. And part of it has been the partnership with the Sustainable Long Island.

As it has been mentioned to you, last year we had a whole week of activities and we stakeholders in Wyandanch were able to have input as the development of Wyandanch. And so many things have happened since then. As you know, there has been the •• traffic in Wyandanch has been slowed because of the media divide and there has been lives that have been saved. There has been departments of economic empire zone in Wyandanch and we all realize that if we have a sewer system, a viable sewer system, then there will be development in Wyandanch. I believe that Straight Path could be another Route 110 in some years to come. Straight Path is a very good thoroughfare. We just don't want people •• as a businessperson I don't want people to just drive through Straight Path. I want them to drive on Straight Path, stop, shop, relax, and these are the things that we need to have happen in Straight Path.

[Applause]

We need it for Straight Path that when you come in to Straight Path you realize that this is a community that is up and coming, it's developing and it has the interest of its residents at heart. And I hope that members of the Legislature, when you do pass the resolutions with the help of our Legislator, will look at Wyandanch in a favorable manner because we have youths here, we have families here that are hard working. We have the Wyandanch Youth Service and most of the activities here are to make sure that after school children are able to be tutored and cared for. We have a housing complex that we hope will be developed in Wyandanch, and I hope that in a couple of year's time we will really see Wyandanch in its full potential. Thank you very much for coming to Wyandanch.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you, sir. Delano Stewart followed by Mr. Bobby Blassingame.

LEG. MYSTAL:

Blassingame.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you, Legislator Mystal.

MR. STEWART:

Good evening.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Good evening.

MR. STEWART:

My name is Delano Stewart and first I'd like to thank you for the honor you pay us by visiting us and allowing us the opportunity to speak to you. It has been some 30 years that some of us have been laboring at trying to put Wyandanch on the radar. Somehow or the other the activities of government seem to bypass that community. And we're pleased to see that after this time •• although this time we're beginning to have an impact and there are things that are beginning to be responded to by government.

One of the things that we found interesting was a statement in that Newsday article a couple of weeks ago about sewers. The Planning Director for the town made the statement that we cannot develop a community economically, I'm paraphrasing, unless that community has sewers. We have been fighting for sewers for a long time. In 1988, I believe it was, when Estee Lauder and others in the 110 corridor wanted to bring the sewers from the Southwest Sewer District up into their area, we suggested at bay, hey, at least give us an opportunity by running the sewers down Straight Path so that it will serve them and will serve us at the same time. That didn't go anywhere, it didn't fail. We tried other things in the meantime. But the sewer lines went down Wellwood and down 110, and that benefit went to that area and there were other areas that were hooked in. Now we understand that there is an effort to hook in the _Wolkoff_ project that will, I believe, have some 9,000 apartments involved. In any event, I

understand that whatever the number, they will use up all of the capacity that is left in the sewer district.

I am suggesting that having been bypassed and overlooked a few times in this process, that perhaps the County Legislature could prevail upon the Department of Public Works or whoever has the authority to allow enough capacity to remain in the sewer district to accommodate the economic development dreams and hopes of the Wyandanch community.

The other point that I would like to bring to you on •• I will send you a letter on it. Thank you.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you, sir. Bobby Blassingame followed by Cheryl Felice.

MR. BLASSINGAME:

How are you doing to the Legislators. I am Mr. Blassingame, President of the PTA of the MLK and the LaFrancis Hardiman School. It is nice to see you out in Wyandanch, but that's how we know that's how the future rests upon our children. You may be sitting there, but the future of Wyandanch rests upon the younger Wyandanch. We want to make sure that every child in Wyandanch receive a proper education, that they go on to college, they go on to succeed.

[Applause]

I do believe out of Wyandanch we will soon I hope one day graduate a president of the United States.

LEG. VILORIA • FISHER:

We can't hear year.

MR. BLASSINGAME:

That we will graduate a president of the United States. Wyandanch is up and coming. We know we need to increase the size of our school so we want to actually work with our Board of Education to their dream to increase the size of the schools of Wyandanch. Wyandanch schools

are small. You could see right here in this auditorium, it is tight. So we want you to help our board. When they come to you and they say we to increase the size of Wyandanch school, and press upon the Legislator, the State Legislator, because they're going to impress upon you. They're going to press upon Elie Mystal. So we want them to know that Wyandanch is growing but you can only grow in a house that you add upon. If you've got ten children in a two bedroom house you've got to add more rooms. So we see here in the school more rooms need to be added. Stretch it out. We would like •• that's how •• to see Wyandanch grow. It must grow as a community.

The PTA is here and we're looking at our young people, because I'd like to see the Legislator, that's how, in the morning at our Kings School.

I'd like to see you come through Wyandanch like Maxine used to do. Just don't come at night, become visible to our young people for they to know that they can become part of government, not just how one night •• I don't want this to be one night you show. I want this to be that you make it a permanent visit for coming back to Wyandanch. Don't let this be one night you show here. Come back next year, see what follows up, because the PTA needs you.

We need to see Wyandanch grow. I'd like to see my young people, that's how, one day, like I said again, that we graduate a president out of this •• out of Wyandanch, that goes on to run the nation, that truly where could graduate them. We've got a young man right now in Washington, so I hope that that young man be our light and our future to what we need. I know we got one there, but if we got one we could send •• we could send a thousand more, and I am looking to send more to Washington right along with him. Thank you.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you. Cheryl Felice followed by James Wallace.

MS. FELICE:

Good evening, Presiding Officer Caracappa, Deputy Presiding Officer Carpenter. My name is Cheryl Felice. I'm the representative, President of the largest municipal union in Suffolk County, the Association of Municipal Employees. We represent all the workers in Suffolk County, including the nurses at the Martin Luther King Center right here in Wyandanch, to the DPW workers that were plowing our roads this past weekend with nearly two feet of snow.

What brings us here tonight is, naturally, to commend the County for its fine work that it does year after year, and to remind the Legislature and the County Executive that staffing issue remains a priority for AME, with nearly 10% vacant positions, positions in Suffolk County remaining vacant. We must keep staffing issues as a priority in Suffolk County for the residents in the County. And I'll bring just a small example to mind.

Considering the weekend that we all endured with the two feet of snow, our DPW workers that fix the vehicles in this County also plow every County road that we travel. They not only fix the vehicles that are responsible for the DPW workers, the various Legislators, as well as all the police vehicles, but they also fix those •• that equipment and vehicles as they break down. Those same workers, those same DPW workers plow these roads, so you can imagine the burden that's put on them when they are asked to perform 30 straight hours without a break to get our roadways clear, and I think they did a magnificent job this weekend.

[Applause]

It is those reasons that we make sure that priorities are addressed and that you know just how important it is to keep staffing levels at an adequate measure, so that we can keep the vital services deliverable to the County.

Although we were disappointed that the Blue Ribbon Commission on staffing issues didn't prevail, we were encouraged that the County Executive's Office felt it necessary to roll over the SCIN forms necessary to hire employees for next year, and those SCIN forms that were signed for 2004 have been extended into 2005, so that we can expedite in hiring those people that are needed for these services.

We thank you for your time, and we thank you for your continued cooperation.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you, Cheryl. James Wallace.

MR. WALLACE:

I would like to ••

P.O. CARACAPPA:

You're good, Mr. Wallace?

MR. WALLACE:

Cochran spoke for me.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Okay. Very good. Peter Barnett.

MR. BARNETT:

Peter Barnett from Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation. I'd like to talk to you this evening about the working homeless. It's something that's going to create more of a problem on Long Island, and specifically in Suffolk County. What's happening now is we help families come out of the shelters, get educated, find housing, and be able to move on in their lives. What's happening now is the people are coming out of the shelters, they're finding jobs and they're being immediately cut•off from any assistance in their rent.

I want to tell you a story about a mother and three children. She was in the shelter, she found a house, DSS was •• under SHARP was paying \$1,200 a month to the landlord for her housing. She got educated, she found a job making ten dollars an hour for 37 and a half hours a week. The way DSS figures income, they take four weeks plus a half, that's your monthly income. For them, she was making a gross income of \$1,687. The federal poverty rate is \$1,533. As soon as she handed in her four pay stubs making that \$1,687 in a month, DSS stopped them from getting any help in their rent. She lost her housing. The woman was only making \$1,600, she promised to pay the landlord 1,200, you can't just cut her off straight as soon as she stops working. There's got to be another way to look at how to wean people who are homeless, who get a house, who get a job, how can you help them hold onto that house. There has got to be a weaning, you can't just stop them four weeks after their first paycheck.

So I'd like the Legislature to try to look into that with the Department of Social Services and hopefully find a way where this person who is educated, who wants to work, can continue to work and continue to afford her housing. Thank you.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you. Brenda Woods followed by Mark Serotoff.

MS. WOODS:

Good evening. I'd to thank you for coming into our community. My name is Brenda Woods. I Chair Citizens for Quality Education. We would like for our youth to be helped before incarceration. We would like for them to have something to ••

[Applause]

•• do other than the streets. I'd like to see something come into the community for the youth, especially our young adults. They need us to give them something besides the street. And I'd like very much for you all to kind of help us when we come to you about getting •• we don't have a movie theater and I don't expect one in here tomorrow, but they do need someplace to go, something to do that's positive with mentors who can help them go in a positive direction. I have nine children. My youngest is 20. I have 28 grands. They've been here all of their lives. I have a new great grand. I intend to be here for the duration of my life, and I'd like to see Wyandanch not only like it used to be, but how it can be better. And I thank you forgiving me the opportunity to make this statement to you. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you. Mark Serotoff followed by Anne Stewart.

MR. SEROTTOFF:

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen, Suffolk County Legislature. My name is Mark Serotoff. I'm the coordinator of the Sustainable Energy Alliance of Long Island. We're a grass roots organization of over 30 environmental public and faith based organizations with over 100,000 local members. We promote the three R's, renewables, repowering and reduction of load and conservation. We have several concerns and would like to share them with you for the record.

An epidemic of cancer and respiratory diseases exists on Long Island. It is DEC certified as a severe non-attainment zone for ozone. Some of the items I'll mention can cost more, but what is the health of us and our families worth.

The Long Island Power Authority is at a crossroads that will drastically effect Long Island's energy future for decades. It must decide whether to privatize, acquire some of KeySpan's assets or remain status quo with possible modifications. The direction LIPA takes must include continued high reliability of its transmission and distribution system, rates for consumers as low as possible, more emphasis on renewable energy, conservation and load reduction, and more representation on its board and increased competition.

And finally, repowering the 50 plus year old KeySpan generators. Repowering with current technology can double on Island generation at the same site, cut pollution over 90%, increase tax benefits for host communities, and reduce foreign fuel usage.

Suffolk County must use all available means to tighten and enforce pollution regulations. Novel methods may be considered to achieve these goals. We applaud Suffolk County's record of environmental achievement but more must be done to reduce air pollution and increase incentives and utilization of renewable energy. Thank you.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you. Anne Stewart.

MS. STEWART:

Good evening. I'm hoping you're feeling very welcomed here by now. Everybody has gotten up and said welcome, and I, too, would like to welcome you here. It really is a pleasure to have you in our community. Okay.

I am the coordinator of the local Weed and Seed Initiative. If you're not aware of that, it is an initiative that is approved by Suffolk County. You cannot be a Weed and Seed site unless you are approved by Suffolk County. It is a Federal Justice Department program. And what it deals with is the quality of life in a community. There are certain things that has to be in place in order to be a Weed and Seed site, and Wyandanch certainly qualified for that because of crime

stats and other kinds of things that were happening in this community.

But we're very pleased to say that we've been working a long time. Our County Legislator Mystal has been very helpful in trying to help us address some of the problems here. We want to address quality of life issues like have having nice homes, safe neighborhoods, homelessness, economic development, gangs, youth initiatives and policing. The basis of the Weed and Seed project is community policing. And although I won't have enough time now to sit here and tell you all the things that we want to try to make this community better, we certainly will be back in touch. So I want you to be aware of the Weed and Seed initiative and know that we will be contacting you for other initiatives to help us improving the quality of life in Wyandanch. Thank you.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you very much. That's it for the cards. We're going to take an approximately ten minute recess and when we come back, we will have an invocation and of course the State of the County Address. So we're going to recess for just the ten minutes. Thank you.

[The meeting was recessed at 6:45 p.m. and reconvened at 6:55 p.m.]

Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats. Welcome back. Ladies and Gentlemen, please. We have three minutes until this airs. Would you •• please, thank you. I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize some of the elected officials that have joined us here tonight. District Attorney Thomas Spota is with us.

[Applause]

Again, the honorable Supervisor of the Town of Babylon, Steve Bellone.

[Applause]

••the honorable Supervisor from the Town of Brookhaven, John J. LaValle ••

[Applause]

•• and former County Executives Pat Halpin is with us this evening ••

[Applause]

•• as well as former County Executive Robert Gaffney. We welcome you.

[Applause]

Thank you for coming. At this point in time, I'd like to introduce for tonight's invocation the Elder Charles _Bond_ of the Wyandanch House of Prayer. Would you all please rise.

MR. BOND:

Bow your heads, please. Lord, we thank you for this day, we thank you for this hour, your blessings that come tonight. We want to thank you for those that are here from the community. We thank you for those that have come, our officials, the Legislators. Thank you for our leader tonight. You're so good. We thank you for where you've brought us from up until now. You're blessing us tonight, Lord, and we thank you.

Behold the eyes of the Lord, He is in everywhere. Behold that the good and the evil. And so we thank you for this day that you have allowed us to come, and we are glad that you are here, oh God. We are not by ourselves, but we are grateful that you're here tonight. We thank you for what we've heard on this night and we •• our mind went back to the word. We thought about the word. Can any good thing come out of, praise God, Nazareth? And tonight we are saying that some good things can come out of Wyandanch. We have heard about the bad, but we are glad that community is here tonight. And not only that, but you are here and you're able to make us one. We pray tonight together in love and we give you praise, Lord, in all that's got to be done. And we claim victory now in your name. Amen.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you. I recognize Legislator Mystal for the purposes of an announcement.

LEG. MYSTAL:

Good evening, Wyandanch. This is for the Wyandanch community. One of our good friend, one of our own, died last night. _Odie Spencer_ died, yes. So I want you guys to remember him and we'll get all the information on the wake and the funeral soon. Thank you.

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Can we have a brief moment of silence.

[Moment of Silence]

Thank you. Just to let the crowd know, again, this is a live broadcast, the State of the County Address, so there'll be a little bit of a pause right now while we wait for the cue to go ahead, so we're just going to wait for that, so there'll be a little bit of a pause here. Just relax, enjoy yourselves.

Also, while we're waiting, if everyone could please turn off their cell phones and pagers, two ways, and any other electronic device that you may have. Thank you.

Good evening. Welcome to the Wyandanch High School. My name is Joseph Caracappa. I'm the Presiding Officer of the Suffolk County Legislature. On behalf of Deputy Presiding Officer Angie Carpenter and all of my colleagues here from the Legislature, we'd like to thank you for inviting us to the wonderful community of Wyandanch.

[Applause]

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank you all for being here and for watching at home for what is the Special Meeting of the Suffolk County Legislature which, of course, will feature the State of the County Address by County Executive Steve Levy.

But before I introduce the County Executive, the Legislature would like to take this opportunity to echo the words that were spoken earlier by AME President Cheryl Felice when she praised and thanked the men and women of the Suffolk County Department of Public Works, the townships and the State, for performing so well over the last few days during the blizzard.

[Applause]

Your efforts are all recognized and appreciated by all the residents of Suffolk County. Also, the Legislature would like to thank everyone here at the Wyandanch High School for their wonderful hospitality this evening, the staff and the students. Also, we'd like to thank the school district for hosting this event tonight. So with all being said and without further ado, I'd take this opportunity to introduce for his second State of the County Address, County Executive Steve Levy.

[Applause]

Thank you. Hello, Wyandanch. Oh, thank you, thank you. Thank you Presiding Officer Caracappa, members of the Legislature and everyone who has joined us today as we reflect upon the past year and the challenges that await us in 2005. Special thanks go out to the hundreds of government employees and first responder volunteers who helped us safely weather the severe storm we experienced this past weekend.

I want to thank Joe and the Legislature for accommodating my request to meet here at Wyandanch school. This forum was chosen to let the people of Wyandanch and the people of all our diverse communities throughout Suffolk know that your concerns and issues are as important as those of any other community.

[Applause]

One year ago we were informed by both the prior administration and our budget transition team that the County faced a very serious potential budget shortfall due to a confluence of negative economic factors. We had an open space program that was stagnant, thereby threatening our ability to win the race against overdevelopment. Our affordable housing shortage was denying opportunity to thousands and the public wanted us to professionalize our government to the greatest extent possible. In short, the state of our County's finances, environment and public confidence were all in doubt.

But one year later, thanks to aggressive proactive and innovative measures taken by this County government, we can proudly say that the state of Suffolk County is strong.

[Applause]

We are more fiscally sound; we are more environmentally sound, and we have taken measures to make this County more affordable. We have followed sound management initiatives that have professionalized our government and have bolstered the public's faith in the government that serves them.

How do we know that we've been successful? The facts speak for themselves. Things that should be going up, such as environmental preservation, affordable housing and our bond outlook are indeed going up. And things that should be going down, such as our crime rate and our General Fund taxes, are indeed going down. By acting decisively we took a potential shortfall of more than 200 million dollars and converted it into a balanced budget that actually lowered our General Fund property taxes by 2%.

[Applause]

We even kept the police district fund within our tax cap parameters for the first time in five years.

The number of acres of open space and farmland that we have closed on or reached agreement upon last year was three times the acreage that was closed upon the year before. The innovations we have implemented in the Police Department helped cut major crime by more than 9% and we have identified numerous parcels for potential affordable housing, smart growth developments.

The good things that we're talking about did it not happen by chance. They happened because we adopted smart government principles that emphasize common sense over partisan ideology. Smart government innovation allows us to do more with less and, in some cases, actually increases services while decreasing costs.

[Applause]

For example, we budgeted more nurses to help lower the County's infant mortality rate, especially among minorities. This enhances a woman's access to care while simultaneously lowering the costs associated with high risk pregnancies. Smart government is about our

initiative to help troubled youth rather than having them institutionalized, which can cost up to \$200,000 per year per child. Smart government incorporates my idea to give property tax cuts to our volunteer and ambulance workers in order to preserve our volunteer forces and avoid the massive tax increases that would be associated with paid departments.

Smart government maximizes the benefits of technology. We saved money by ending the practice of printing hundreds of our lengthy budgets and instead put them online so that they are easily reproduced and readily accessible to the public. Smart government initiatives have led to the auction of surplus computers, furniture and other property that have been sitting in the basements of County buildings collecting dust. Smart government takes County vehicles from those who use them just for commuting and reassigns them as pool vehicles for rank and file employees who need them to conduct County business. And this is especially significant this past weekend when we had 14 four-wheel-drive vehicles available for our snow response team. Previously, these SUV's were in the driveways of the political connected.

[Applause]

Smart government is the notion that a County Executive can drive himself to work, saving the taxpayers nearly \$500,000 a year for chauffeurs.

[Applause]

We thank the hard working employees of Suffolk County without whom we would not have been able to implement these smart government principles. These smart government initiatives were created in part thanks to the new management team we established in the budget office. Our talented staff is no longer merely crunching numbers. Now they carefully analyze every line item in the budget for maximum efficiency. Our management team is comprised of nonpartisan professionals.

This expertise was especially valuable in helping me craft what became the largest budget reduction bill in the County's history. Together, in bipartisan fashion, we cut more than \$128 million from the budget without cutting services.

[Applause]

This was the cushion we needed to bring in a budget that actually cut General Fund taxes in 2005.

Last year it was not looking as though such a tax cut was possible. Mandated Medicaid and pension costs continued to skyrocket. Mandatory police arbitration awards and health care costs were rising astronomically, and the \$60 million in one shots used in the previous budget would not be recurring. This was not some exaggerated or manufactured "Chicken Little" story. Our nonpartisan Finance Director, Fred Pollert, conceded it was the worst looking financial scenario he had seen in 30 years, and the Legislature's Budget Office worst case scenario mirrored his analysis.

We can be very proud that we balanced our budget without tapping our reserve funds, without raising fees, without utilizing one•shot or non•recurring revenues and without resorting to fiscal gimmicks.

[Applause]

We even created a new pension reserve fund to deal with the State mandated pension costs.

But we're not out of the woods yet. We must do everything we can to ensure stability of tax rates in Suffolk County. It is simply too expensive to live here on this Island. While our County tax rate is stable this year, some school districts levied double•digit increases. We cannot control other levels of government, so we must lead by example and keep County taxes as low as possible.

[Applause]

This is why we introduced a Capital Budget in 2004 that was smaller than the year before. We introduced a college budget with no increase to the County share and we introduced an Operating Budget that cut general fund taxes. The message I sent in those budgets will be the message that I will present in future years. We can't have it all. This County must exercise fiscal discipline. Too many politicians find it too easy to tax and spend, and unfortunately, too many find it even easier to borrow and spend. The bottom line is this, you shouldn't spend what you don't have.

[Applause]

I asked the Legislature to join me in the spirit of cooperation to place the interest of taxpayers over that of ideology, parochialism or partisan politics. If we want to add spending in one part of the budget, we should find areas of lesser priority to remove in other parts of the budget. Government has to stop thinking it can always go back to the taxpayer as a bottomless pit.

While over the last several years the police district fund has grown exponentially, we brought in a police district budget within the tax cap parameters. But the ability to do this in the future will not be easy. The mandatory salary arbitration awards that we inherited will contribute to a \$35 million increase in expenses in the police district in each of the next two years. This is money that must be found each year just to keep services at current levels. There are only two ways to cover these rising costs •• raising taxes or implementing more efficiencies.

Thanks to our innovative Police Commissioner, Richard Dormer, whom we affectionately call "Dormer, the Reformer", we have implemented many efficiencies that have actually increased coverage while controlling costs. As great as our Police Department was, we made it even better, thanks to the help of our highly effective and highly motivated officers. We introduced innovations last year including the creation of new anti-gang and undercover narcotics units in coordination with District Attorney Tom Spota's office, which helped reduce major crimes by an astonishing 9.2% in 2004.

[Applause]

Scheduling changes enacted by Commissioner Dormer last year have already produced results. To paraphrase the Commissioner, when you own a deli, you don't assign all your people evenly throughout the day. You assign more to the lunch hour than at three o'clock in the afternoon. We must continue to place as many of our officers as possible on street patrol where they're needed most.

We must continue implementing even more reforms next year. This means taking on sacred cows. This means implementing our plan to civilianize up to 100 positions within the Police Department. This means using retired officers to lower the cost of school-based programs and asking police administrators to chip in with patrol.

We also will explore the possibility of implementing a new 311 non-emergency hotline to avoid waste and delays in response time that can cost lives. This is a proposal I first introduced as a Legislator in 1996. This line can handle quality of life complaints, such as loud barking dogs, or rowdy youngsters, and free up 911 for true life and death emergencies. A five member panel that I will be creating will report to me by June on to how this concept can be suitably implemented.

The time and money we save from these initiatives will help us confront a growing concern in suburbs throughout the nation, the growth in gangs. Gang activity is no longer confined to urban areas. As with organized crime, we are employing elaborate surveillance techniques and infiltration, combined with harsh sentencing to fight gang activity. We simply will not allow gangs to take control of our neighborhoods and schools.

[Applause]

I am happy to report that since our new anti-gang unit was deployed to Huntington Station, crime in that hamlet is down dramatically. We've done the same on Straight Path here in Wyandanch and will do the same in any other community in need.

By combating gangs, we've looked to harsher sentences, but it can't be done solely through stricter law enforce. We, therefore, are creating a new gang-aversion program called Suffolk Neighborhoods Against Gangs, which is modeled after a successful program in Boston that offers vulnerable young people constructive alternatives to gang life.

[Applause]

Our Police Department will host informational seminars with school officials, community groups, and religious leaders to talk about how we can together give our kids positive recreational outlets and leverage our ability to obtain grants for these important programs.

Now, while crime is down, environmental protection is up, way up, and we must ensure that this trend continues. Together, we revitalized a dormant Open Space Program, created a master list of 5,000 acres that we are seeking to preserve, increased both the number of

attorneys and appraisers in the program and approved a \$75 million bond for open space and farmland preservation that was overwhelmingly supported by the people of this County.

[Applause]

All of these triumphs were true bipartisan efforts, and I thank the Legislators for all their hard work in seeing them through.

But our environmental triumphs were not limited to open space preservation. We embarked on landmark efforts to revitalize our shellfishing industry, once a bedrock of our local economy. We have partnered with the Cornell Cooperative Extension and Southampton College to help bring back scallops in the Peconic Estuary, and we are working in tandem with the Nature Conservancy to do the same with clams in the Great South Bay.

And we have also initiated an innovative program to provide incentives for residents to remove underground oil tanks that are leaking fuel into our aquifer.

Additionally, we have begun to evaluate the effects of our environment on our health. The question remains whether the environment is a factor in the high cancer rates that we have on Long Island. The State began years ago to investigate this matter, but the research was never properly evaluated. The Cancer Awareness Task Force that I created last year has been meeting to evaluate whether any links may exist between the environment and these cancer clusters. By the end of the year, thanks to the hard work of this Task Force and our new Division of Cancer Awareness, we will be coordinating with local hospitals to create a standardized method of collecting data and recording information about cancer diagnoses, so we'll be better able to pinpoint the location of cancer clusters.

[Applause]

In order to make sure that our environment is as safe as possible, we will continue our efforts to mitigate the use of pesticides in Suffolk County.

[Applause]

We are already implementing a policy that has significantly reduced pesticide use and ensures

that only the safest mosquito control methods are used. Machine ditching was once considered the preferred method of controlling mosquitoes. But new data shows that in many areas it actually made the mosquito problem worse and helped to destroy many of our wetlands. I am therefore announcing today that in 2005 there will be no machine ditching in any wetlands in Suffolk County.

[Applause]

Also in 2005 we will launch an initiative to identify and restore our marsh wetlands that should actually greatly reduce or eliminate the need to use pesticides in these areas to control mosquitoes. It's time to recapture and restore these environmentally important and productive ecosystems, and, by introducing more natural predators of mosquitoes in these marshes, we will improve the fight against health risks associated with mosquitoes.

[Applause]

Now, one of the reasons we've been so successful on the environmental front is the partnership we have forged between the environmental and business communities. It is no longer a common belief that protecting the environment and providing for economic growth and affordable housing are mutually exclusive issues. The baby boom generation had ample opportunity to experience the American dream in Suffolk County, unfortunately, the upcoming generation does not have that same level of opportunity. The Long Island Index notes that 47 percent of our population on Long Island does not have adequate means to buy a house today in this area. So many of our young people are just giving up and leaving for cheaper pastures elsewhere. Grandparents are robbed of the opportunity to see their grandchildren grow up. Companies lack skilled employees. And we created an outstanding school system only to see students go away to college and never come back.

[Applause]

We need to create more workforce housing, not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it is the smart thing to do for the long-term economic health of Suffolk County.

[Applause]

And speaking of people we'd like to see settle down here, this year Suffolk again was the envy of counties all across the nation by having 26 of our students qualify as semi-finalists for the coveted Intel Science awards. And we have today here one of those students, John Michael of Kings Park. John, would you stand up and be recognized?

[Applause]

Congratulations. Let's do our best to entice these young, talented men and women to live, work and raise families here in this great County.

[Applause]

Now, I promised last year that this administration would take a very aggressive approach to the creation of workforce housing, and we have. Our Workforce Housing Commission, led by Jim Morgo, worked with local municipalities, builders, environmentalists and civic leaders to identify numerous locations where workforce housing can be built. We have worked with the towns to expedite permits and have allocated 15 million dollars for infrastructure improvements to entice developers to build more workforce housing as opposed to more strip malls.

[Applause]

One of the commission's key suggestions was to incorporate the transfer of development rights into the next Environmental Bond Act. The result was landmark legislation which this Legislature passed unanimously.

[Applause]

The legislation will actually decrease pressure to develop our environmentally sensitive land because development rights can be transferred to the abandoned warehouses, strip malls, and other eyesores within our communities. It truly is the best of both worlds.

The first parcel we have committed to is 75 units of workforce housing on seven acres in the Village of Patchogue. It is the sight of the old Rialto Theater where I used to watch matinees as a kid. The theater burned down more than 25 years ago and has been an abandoned eyesore

ever since. But now this and other contiguous parcels will breathe new life and new revenue into the area. The Village zoned the site with the appropriate density and the County will expedite permits and contribute to the sewer and water line hookups.

We recognize that the way to attract and retain business is through incentives, thus we will aggressively market a five County enterprise zones that we have in Suffolk. One is located at the County's Gabreski Airport in Westhampton, which we believe has incredible untapped potential for economic growth consistent with the local environment. Within the next month, I will be issuing a request for proposals to the business community to determine the most appropriate development for this economic zone. I have committed several million dollars in infrastructure improvements as incentives to those businesses that want to locate there.

But before we could even market the airport, we first had to clean up the mess that was left behind due to a lack of proper management. So, we hired a professional airport manager, collected more than \$100,000 in back rent, and through a far more aggressive fee collection effort, generated more than \$200,000 in landing fees last year compared to the less than \$2,000 collected the year before, all without increasing airport operations over 2002 levels.

[Applause]

And you can't discuss Gabreski Airport without mentioning the 106th Air National Guard Rescue Wing, which performs invaluable rescue services and contributes more than 1,200 jobs to the local economy.

[Applause]

Now as •• as you probably know, this base is threatened with closure. To show the federal government how serious we are about keeping this squad, we have waived the fee the guard traditionally pays us and offered to dedicate more than 73 acres of additional buffer to the National Guard. We sent a contingent to Washington to speak before the Pentagon and Governor Pataki has just accepted my invitation to tour the facility in March.

[Applause]

And, by the way, while he's here, we'll pitch the idea of having him site the State's new Homeland Security Training Center right here at Gabreski. Let's give it a shot.

[Applause]

To further a more business•friendly County, I am developing a new program called EZ Business in Suffolk County based on legislation I introduced in 2000. This program will bring our business processes into the 21st century by incorporating state•of•the•art, high tech concepts into our daily interactions with the public. Next week I will sign an executive order requiring every department head to report to me within 30 days all of the forms, applications and payment methods that can be placed on the internet. Residents should be able to file applications and pay fees with the click of a mouse, and the status of one's application should be easily tracked by assessing the proper data base.

[Applause]

We have copious amounts of data collected in this County. Unfortunately, it's not centralized. One department doesn't necessarily know what the next has. It's a little like the FBI and the CIA having all this information and not talking to each other. There is unlimited potential in sharing this information, consolidating it and possibly marketing it. In keeping with our smart government approach, we need an information czar, a chief information officer, whom we will seek to designate shortly.

We recognize that time is money to our business community. Inordinate delays in permit processing means lower revenues for our businesses. As of last fall, we have sped up the permit process significantly and today I am announcing a new program called Red Tape Reduction Program that will require Public Works and Health Department officials to meet twice monthly to coordinate an individual's application. We will also invite town officials to meet quarterly with County employees to ensure that one jurisdiction is not delaying the other. We will even conduct pre•application conferences to inform applicants what they need for approval. Our chief information officer will explore the possibility of creating a uniform permit application system to potentially eliminate the need for an applicant to travel to multiple offices or to have to fill out stacks of redundant forms.

To further economic development, we will create economic incubators to promote the growth of businesses in diverse economically depressed areas here in Suffolk County.

[Applause]

Many upcoming businesses in diverse areas lack the capital to hire secretarial staff or rent large office spaces. We will be able to assist them by providing space to share equipment for copying machines, fax machines, conference rooms and various computer hardware.

An incubator is on the way right here in Babylon in nearby North Amityville through a County •town partnership engineered by Supervisor Steve Bellone and the Babylon Town Board.

[Applause]

It will serve as a model as the County will donate tax default parcels to not •for •profit organizations in other minority communities as well, and help them obtain low interest financing to keep rents low for start up businesses. I will be recommending funding assistance of 1.5 million dollars for sewer and water hookups in these zones.

We can also help with personnel through an innovative new program being developed through our Department of Labor called In •Source America. We have developed a public •private partnership whereby unemployed individuals will be trained to learn computer skills to assist local businesses. Rather than have these private firms out source these problem solving jobs to countries halfway around the world, we can supply a pool of labor from our unemployment rolls right here in Suffolk to help our local businesses, especially start up minority firms.

[Applause]

We will also provide seed money to the towns for the planning they are employing to upgrade many of our downtowns and diverse communities, including right here in Wyandanch.

[Applause]

The County's successful Downtown Revitalization Program will dovetail with that of the town to

plant trees, erect light posts, improve traffic flow and enhance community pride and identity. We'll do the same in Bay Shore, Huntington Station and Riverhead for starters.

[Applause]

We must continue to look for more visionary ways in which to grow our economy. One vision I hold involves 400 acres of vacant County owned land in Yaphank. I envision this parcel being divided into three distinct components. The first piece would be reserved for future County needs. On the second, we will explore the possibility of creating a sports recreation or entertainment facility that is accessible to both highways and the rail system. I know Presiding Officer Caracappa has an affinity to that. Within the next few months, I will be seeking a request for proposals from sports and entertainment entrepreneurs who would like to do business in Suffolk County at the Yaphank site. Everything will be on the table, including a sports arena. Will the business community find our Yaphank site attractive? Let's find out. Let's find out if there are entrepreneurs who would be interested in building an outdoor skating rink or an indoor pool complex open to the general public. The possibilities for the property are endless. We have already seen that the building of a minor league ballpark bolstered our economy and our local pride when our Long Island Ducks won the Atlantic League championship last year.

[Applause]

Tonight we're delighted to have with us team owner Frank Boulton and co• owner Bud Harrelson. Frank and Bud, stand up.

[Applause]

We always know the baseballs stars would get the biggest hand of the night, along with the Intel winners of course.

For the final piece of this property, we should again think boldly. We know that companies are finding it harder and harder to attract and retain employees. So I propose that we reserve this land for a unique workforce housing community of more than 1,000 units, some of which can be sold or leased to companies that are looking to move to or expand here in Suffolk County. This employer assisted workforce housing community would be of mixed use, including a large day

•care center for residents and County employees in the Yaphank corridor, and perhaps an office incubator to foster the development of cleaner, alternative energy sources to run the complex. I will be reaching out to the community, the town, to my fellow Legislators and the private sector to further shape the scope of this proposal with our County Planning Department. This and other economic development proposals have the potential to create thousands of construction jobs for our Suffolk residents.

We have sought to ensure that our County government reflects the diverse population it serves. We are proud of our appointment of doctor Brian Harper, the County's first ever African •American Commissioner of Health.

[Applause]

Now, at Dr. Harpers request, I will be establishing a Bureau of Minority Health to help provide an unprecedented level of attention to enhancing health care access for our underserved minority population here in Suffolk County.

[Applause]

We have also appointed Reverend Beresford Adams of the First Baptist Church in Gordon Heights as the very first minority liaison to the Commissioner of Police to foster better police minority relations.

[Applause]

And tonight •• and tonight I'm happy to report that we're advancing minorities even further within our Police Department by promoting Deputy Inspector Ty Mojica to Inspector, making him the highest ranking Latino in the history of the department.

[Applause]

Moreover •• moreover, we'll be elevating Inspector Donna Engle to Deputy Chief, the first woman to achieve that position in the history of Suffolk.

[Applause]

Brian Foley's mad because he's losing his inspector now, but she's still going to be there for you, Brian. I take equal pride in the very first judicial appointment I made •• Toni Bean, of Amityville, who is the only African•American female judge residing in Suffolk.

[Applause]

You know, we needed to watch our pennies last year, which is why we stressed innovation and efficiency. Our smart government approach enabled us to balance the budget while still maintaining our commitment to providing important human services. While in previous years not•for•profit contract agencies that care for the underprivileged were the first to be cut, we provided a cost of living increase for these groups last year, and health care advocates will be happy to know that our efforts to reopen a health care center in Bay Shore area will move forward. Very soon we will announce our recommendation of a specific site for this facility. And I know Legislator Alden will be very happy to hear about that.

[Applause]

Additionally, we freed up money to actually increase services on some of our bus routes, including the S•92 bus on the east end. This year, I'm calling on our transportation division to begin redrawing bus routes for the first time in years to adapt to our changing demographics and make our system more efficient. Our buses should go where people want to go.

[Applause]

We're also maintaining our commitment to seniors. Today I'm happy to announce that we are issuing an RFP for private pharmaceutical managers to provide discounted drugs to private citizens who will now be able to pool their purchases with purchases the County makes for its thousands of employees and retirees. The bigger the pool, the bigger the discount, so why not combine the purchasing power of our employees with our Medicaid recipients with participating citizens as well. The cost for drugs should be lower not only for our seniors, but for our County taxpayers.

[Applause]

This past year we revived a Family Violence Task Force and raised its profile by moving it from the Department of Social Services to the County Executive's Office and carried out its suggestion of hiring the County's first family violence coordinator. I also propose that we explore the creation of a new unit within the Child Support Enforcement Bureau that will aggressively pursue delinquent spouses that are working off the books.

[Applause]

Our smart government approach pushes us to think more regionally and less parochially. Our grand vision will be better implemented through an expanded Long Island Regional Planning Board. A bill that is currently before the Legislature calls for the expansion of the board to incorporate a more diverse perspective and more input from County officials.

The concept of regionalization was taken to new heights with the unprecedented bi-county initiative that we are discussing with our neighbors to the west in Nassau County. We are working on a wide variety of shared ventures, including buying our computers, paper, gasoline and other products in bulk, and we're even discussing large scale plans such as jointly building a juvenile detention center and entering into an agreement for the use of emergency helicopter service. When it comes to generating good ideas, two heads are certainly better than one.

[Applause]

You know, it's easy to forget that just a few short months ago there was concern that we would face major blackouts during the summer, but we joined forces with the State and LIPA to keep pressure on Connecticut to reactivate the Cross-Sound Cable.

The lawsuit we filed against Connecticut certainly got their attention, as did our threat to initiate litigation if the EPA ever again allows Connecticut's dredged spoils to be dumped in the middle of the Long Island sound.

[Applause]

But perhaps our most noteworthy lobbying effort centered on insuring that funding for the Army Corps of Engineers beach restoration study be continued. This study is already 90 percent complete, but was lacking the last several million dollars to allow us to move on to the next stage. When the federal government cut this funding, we sprung into action, lobbied before the United States Senate committees, and along with our Senators and Congressional delegation, helped secure these needed funds.

[Applause]

We should all be proud to have finally funded a Director of Ethics here in Suffolk County.

[Applause]

The position was created 17 years ago but has remained vacant ever since. We're the first administration and the first Legislature to fill it, and we thank the Ethics Commission for their good judgment in appointing former Judge Alfred Lama to that position.

[Applause]

I will •• I will be asking Judge Lama to prepare a comprehensive set of ethical guidelines for all in County government to follow, complete with seminars for our workforce to commence by June of this year. These ethical guidelines are important because the money we guard is the people's money, and we should treat it with the reverence it deserves.

The public's confidence in our system will be enhanced even further if we can remove the partisanship and political self•interest that currently exists with Legislative district lines being redrawn by incumbent politicians. It is any wonder that 95% of incumbents get reelected when we have those same incumbents drawing the lines to exclude competition? Let's start fresh and give the people a system they can believe in. I propose we create a commission of retired judges and good government groups to draw these lines so that impartiality, not politics, will prevail.

[Applause]

Before we go forward we need to look back and honor our residents who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of their country. Seven of Suffolk's finest citizens lost their lives fighting for us in Iraq and Afghanistan. We honor the service and memory of Raheen Tyson Heigher.

[Applause]

Jacob Fletcher.

[Applause]

Michael J. Esposito.

[Applause]

Scott N. Germosen.

[Applause]

Roman Mateo.

[Applause]

Peter Hein.

[Applause]

And James Pettaway.

[Applause]

Tonight I'm unveiling a new Suffolk County Medal of Distinguished Service, which will be reserved only for those who exhibit the utmost in heroism. Next week, it will be my honor to present the first of these medals to the families of the fallen, some of whom are here with us

today.

[Applause]

Ms. Heighter, Ms. Gonzelaz, would you please stand to be recognized?

[Applause]

And the Esposito family.

[Applause]

Together we accomplished a great deal last year, and we have a great deal to look forward to in the upcoming year. We'll be pursuing a full agenda of exciting new smart government ideas. They include a bold vision for the County's largest parcel in Yaphank, where we will look to build new sports and entertainment complexes and needed employer assisted workforce housing; a new EZ business program, where we will introduce a red tape reduction program; an executive order calling for our forms and applications to be processed online; new economic development incubators to promote minority businesses and alternative sources of energy; the appointment of an information czar to coordinate data throughout the County for us to share and to market; new plans for future development at Suffolk County's airport; a good government proposal that will remove partisan politics from the redrawing of district lines; creating a comprehensive set of ethical guidelines for County government; a new anti•gang initiative; exploring the implementation of a 311 hotline; stricter policies on the use of pesticides spraying; the drawing of new bus routes to reflect changing demographics; a new Bureau of Minority Health; a new private and public sector day•care center; an affordable prescription drug plan, and expanding civilianization efforts in our Police Department.

We have laid out an ambitious agenda tonight and laid the groundwork for an extraordinarily productive year. I ask my esteemed colleagues in the Legislature to join me in our aspirations for a greater Suffolk County and a greater Suffolk County government into reality.

Thank you, Presiding Officer Caracappa, members of the Legislature, Ladies and Gentlemen. Good night and God bless Suffolk County. God Bless you. Thank you all very, very much.

[Applause]

P.O. CARACAPPA:

Thank you, County Executive Levy. Thank you all again for being here today. I just want to recognize Sheriff Al Tisch has joined us this evening as well. If there is no other business to come before this Special Meeting of the Suffolk County Legislature, we stand adjourned.

[THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 7:58 P.M.]

_ _ Indicates Spelled Phonetically