

**SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**ON THE**

**2010 OPERATING BUDGET**

A Public Hearing on the 2010 Operating Budget was held at the Culinary Arts and Hospitality Center of Suffolk County Community College, 20 East Main Street, Riverhead, New York, on October 9, 2009, at 10:00 a.m.

**LEGISLATORS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Legislator Edward Romaine, First Legislative District  
Legislator Jay Schneiderman, Second Legislative District  
Legislator Kate Browning, Third Legislative District

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Tim Laube, Clerk of the Legislature  
Mike Pitcher, Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay  
Debra Alloncius, AME, Legislative Director  
Dale Moyer, Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Darlene S. Widirstky, Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Kevin Cantwell, Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Catherine Gerardi, East End Arts Council  
Chris Smith  
Judy Veeck  
Vicki Fleming  
Nancy Olsen-Harbich  
Kerri Reda  
Dina Castro  
Zahrine Bajwa  
Matthew Sclafani

**MEETING TAKEN BY:**

Lucia Braaten, Court Stenographer

**MEETING TRANSCRIBED:**

Kim Castiglione, Legislative Secretary

***[THE HEARING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 10:08 A.M.]***

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Budget Hearing for the Suffolk County Legislature. We have a stenographer, as well as the Clerk of the Legislature, Tim Laube, who will be taking your notes and minutes. Joining me today -- my name is Legislator Romaine. I represent the First Legislative District, which we are in now, and joining me is Legislator Kate Browning, who represents the Third Legislative District. We will certainly share with our colleagues all the information that we receive today.

We would hope that everyone here will not be shy, but will come forward. You don't have to give expert testimony, you just have to tell us some of your concerns, some of your issues, so that we can carry them back.

I see there is a large contingent from my favorite place, Cornell Cooperative Extension, where I have my office, and, certainly, we want to hear from the people from Cornell Cooperative Extension. Legislator Browning, would you like to say anything before we start?

**LEG. BROWNING:**

No. And, like I say, I know I've spoken to you all already and many of you have come to see me. I know that Cornell does many great things in our communities. I have the Farm in my District, which is definitely a treasure in Suffolk County, so I look forward to hearing your testimonies and continuing to work with you.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

And we keep in mind as Legislators that all issues of government are issues of money, and how a budget is put together and how it is funded reflects the priority of this County. And I am constantly aware of that.

So with that, we're here to listen more than to speak, and we'll start off -- we only have one card, but if anyone else would like to speak, don't be shy. Tell us your thoughts, your concerns, what you would like to see in this budget, etcetera. We are, and I think Legislator Browning will note this as well, facing a very, very difficult budget year. The County Executive has given us a budget, and there are some debate about revenues and the expenses, and I'm sure my colleagues and I will review all of those in the next coming weeks. So your thoughts is what we'd like to hear and we'll start off, we only have one signed card, but if others wish to speak, simply raise their hand, come up, and give their name. We'll start with Dale Moyer from Cornell Cooperative Extension. Dale?

**MR. MOYER:**

Here? There?

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Right there. I think the microphone is set up for that.

**MR. LAUBE:**

It is. There might be a switch there, Dale.

**MR. MOYER:**

Okay. Good morning. As you can see, we have a few of our staff members here, and we've come to talk to you about our concerns and our program in Cornell Cooperative Extension. My name is Dale Moyer. I'm currently serving as the Interim Executive Director for Cornell Cooperative Extension in Suffolk County. I'd like to thank you for your support throughout the years. Cornell Cooperative Extension feels privileged to have been a partner with Suffolk County for 92 years.

The mission of Cornell Cooperative Extension is unique as we bring unbiased research-based information to County residents and businesses. Individuals and families turn to CCE to help with chronic disease prevention and management, nutrition education as well as human development and parent education. Through the basic principles of 4-H we help young people develop life skills and reach their full potential. We work alongside the County's nearly 400 million dollar agriculture and marine industries. These heritage industries support the \$4 billion tourist industry.

In addition to those programs, we operate the County Farm in Yaphank and the Peconic Dunes camp along with conducting the SOAR project, which is the juvenile day reporting program.

We all faced challenges this past year in the County and in the nation as we adjusted to economic uncertainties.

In the 2009 County budget, our organization was nearly -- cut nearly a million dollars in funding. These cuts mainly were directed at two program areas, 4-H Youth Development and the Family Health and Wellness Program. These two program areas were totally eliminated from the budget. With the help of determined staff and volunteers and supportive friends, we pulled together and have been able to continue a modified program for our family and youth services. However, we are not confident we can continue these programs if faced with another year with no funding.

In the release -- recently released County Executive 2010 proposed Operating Budget, no further cuts were suggested, except the previously agreed upon 10% reduction in some of our water quality funding programs. The proposed -- excuse me. The proposed funding is consistent with our 2009 levels; therefore, there's no County funding for the Family Health and Wellness Program or for 4-H Youth Development Programs.

Our Administrators and Board of Directors have met and discussed our financial issues extensively. We have studied our budgets closely and determined the minimum funding that would enable us to keep our family and youth programs intact for 2010.

I'm here today to respectfully request that the Legislature helps our family and youth get information they need to be healthy and vibrant County residents and restore \$270,000 to our 2010 Operating Budget.

This funding, which represents a portion of our core County funding for these programs, would enable us to bring more than \$1.2 million in other funding for next year. This funding would make it possible to offer many services to the residents of Suffolk County, many of whom are limited resource families and youth.

Thank you for your time and your support throughout the year, and I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.

**LEG. BROWNING:**

Yeah. The water quality funding you talk about, okay, what is your current budget on the water quality funding?

**MR. MOYER:**

The total budget is a little under a million dollars, I believe.

**LEG. BROWNING:**

And there's a 10% reduction or you've been asked to make a 10% reduction?

**MR. MOYER:**

What happened was back in May or June Commissioner Gallagher came to us and said the tax revenues were down and they projected that because of that, that there would be a possible

shortage -- would be a shortage in the water quality funds. So we sat down with them, met with them, presented some documentation to them and agreed that we would cut the five water quality funds 10% from the 2009 to the 2010. So it was a total savings to the water quality of about a little over \$100,000, if I'm correct, somewhere in that range, that we have because we adjusted our budgets and agreed that we would -- because we understand the economic times, that we would reduce 10% those water quality programs.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Yes. Let me just -- I have several questions and let me follow-up with the -- with Legislator Browning's question on the Water Quality Program. What is it that you do in the Water Quality Program?

**MR. MOYER:**

What do we do?

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

What do you spend that million dollars on?

**MR. MOYER:**

We have five different programs, basic programs, and there's actually a couple of more that are small grants that are -- was one-year grant that we got. These other ones have been for several years extended programs. They include the Pest Management Program for County properties, where we're working with the County and the County employees on reducing or eliminating pesticides on County properties. That is where the -- ten years ago a law was passed to phase out all pesticide use on County properties, and we have worked with them on looking at alternatives and actually reducing a tremendous amount of pesticides, not completely eliminating, but reduce tremendous amounts of pesticide use on County properties -- parks, lands, buildings, etcetera.

The second one is an alternative to pest management in agriculture and landscapes, where entomologists are working on, again, alternatives to those pesticides that have a tendency to get into groundwater, looking at alternative safer, reduced risk pesticides, organic pesticides, and we've been very successful in doing that. A third one is an agricultural stewardship program where we're looking at, again, reducing the inputs into -- that could potentially get into the groundwater, mostly pesticides and nitrogen, which can get in the groundwater and also into our bays and estuaries.

The third -- the fourth one is our stormwater project where we're working with the County on stormwater projects. The County's required to do a lot of this work and we're doing a lot of the education, identifying where the outfalls are and where potential hazards could be within all the County roads in Suffolk County.

The fifth one is our bay scallops program where we're trying to assist in restoring the bay scallops, which have long been a tradition in the shellfishing, and we've been successful in reestablishing some of those beds of shellfish. Hopefully that project is moving in the right direction of helping restore that industry, that economic engine, that we used to have in Suffolk County.

We also have a small water quality fund, which is separate from our general appropriations, and that is one that's regarding the Nitrogen Reduction Program that the Legislature passed. We are working very closely with the Department of Environment and Energy in providing the education and the information needed to the landscapers, the garden centers, that are selling fertilizers so that they are in compliance with those rules and regulations regarding use of nitrogen on lawns and landscapes in Suffolk County.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Thank you. I'd like to follow up with that for a second. Commissioner Gallagher asked you to take a 10% cut in the 2009 budget in May?

**MR. MOYER:**

No, no, no. She asked us -- we started discussions for 2010.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Oh, okay.

**MR. MOYER:**

2009 stayed the same.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Oh, okay.

**MR. MOYER:**

And so it was just for the 2010 --

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

For 2010 because sales tax is down.

**MR. MOYER:**

Right.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay. We have a representative from the Presiding Officer's Office here. Michael, that's you. What I'd like you to do, do you have pen and paper?

**MR. PITCHER:**

Yes, sir.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

What I'd like you to do is I'd like you to get an estimate of sales tax revenues for Fund 477 that have been presented in the past, I don't have them in front of me, because I'd like to see what those estimates are for 2010.

**MR. PITCHER:**

Estimates and do you want the current --

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

The current amount in 477 Funds and the current amount that is projected, at least by Budget Review, our Budget Review Office.

**MR. PITCHER:**

For 2009.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

For 2010.

**MR. PITCHER:**

Okay.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

What's in it now, what's projected to go into it in 2010. Okay?

**MR. PITCHER:**

Yup.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Because I understand Commissioner Gallagher's concerns, but -- and while she's asked Cornell to

make that cut, I want to make sure that it's based on actual facts, because while sales tax revenues are down, that is a fund in which monies have not been fully expended in the past or have been diverted for other purposes. And I just want to make sure that, in fact, that 10% is absolutely necessary in light of the County Executive's over-optimistic 5% estimate of growth in sales tax. So if sales taxes are going to grow by 5%, obviously the fund, the 477 Fund, might grow by the same amount instead of being decreased by 10%. You can't have both. You can't call for a decrease at the same time you're estimating an increase; a little difficult to do. And I do believe the County Executive has called for a 5% increase over this year in sales tax growth in 2010 in his presented budget.

Let me go into some other issues that you've raised. Last year in 2009, in that budget, much to my chagrin, it was -- Cornell Cooperative Extension took a substantial hit on those two programs, they were totally eliminated. And as I had indicated -- but I was prepared to put an amendment in to do that, but I did not know of the success of getting five of my colleagues to sign on or to get ten of my colleagues to agree, or, if the County Executive vetoed it, to get 12 of my colleagues to override the veto, and we had discussions and we decided not to do that. But I am certainly prepared to fight to restore this funding in this budget because, and I want you to elaborate on this, the funding that we would restore, and it was only a minimal amount of what was originally there, my understanding, number one. And number two, that funding acts as an incentive to get other grants, and my understanding is specifically the Department of Health Services uses your programs to apply for grants that they now will not be eligible to apply for. Could you address those issues and the grant money that either you and/or the County and/or the Department of Health Services would lose if this funding was not restored, or at least partially restored?

**MR. MOYER:**

Yeah, I can address our matching funds or funds that we'd lose or potentially could lose depending on the funding source for our program. I'm not sure if I can address the -- what the Health Department would or would not lose at this point in time, but it's probably something that should be investigated a little bit.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Before you continue. Michael?

**MR. PITCHER:**

Sir.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Could you ask Budget Review to request from the Health Department, Matt Miner, et al., to give us an estimate of grants that would be lost if this funding wasn't available that they have applied for in the past?

**MR. PITCHER:**

(Nodded yes)

*[Legislator Jay Schneiderman Entered the Auditorium]*

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Thank you. By the way, before Dale starts again, we're joined by my other colleague, Jay Schneiderman, who represents the Second District. So now we have a First, Second and Third.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

One, Two, Three.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

So, Dale, if you would address that, that would be very helpful.

**MR. MOYER:**

So going back to 2008, our Family Consumer Science, which is now called the Family Health and Wellness Program, was funded for approximately \$300,000. We are asking for that to be reinstated for \$188,500. Those funds primarily would support what we consider is a core foundation to our programs. If we don't have our core funding, it's very difficult for us to go to State, Federal and even other County sources to get grants to add on to that program. And so with the Family Health and Wellness Program, the \$188,500, with that we have matching funds which come from State, Federal and other dollars of approximately one million dollars. And without that support, you know, again, without that core funding, to have somebody that goes out and gets those grants, brings in the grants, supports those, we could lose as much as one million dollars, which we get from the other sources.

Our other program, which is the 4-H Youth Development Program, we are asking for \$82,000, primarily as a 4-H youth specialist and some support on the administrative side. That funding in 2008 was \$218,578. And so that was completely eliminated in 2009. That would jeopardize about \$200,000 if we did not obtain that. We have the potential of losing \$200,000. So that's where, with the loss of those two programs, the potential matching funds from other sources, besides the general appropriation of the County, would be about \$1.2 million.

**LEG. BROWNING:**

Okay. Go back -- sorry. Youth and Development you said.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

4-H.

**MR. MOYER:**

4-H Youth and Development.

**LEG. BROWNING:**

4-H. How much was that again?

**MR. MOYER:**

82,000 that we're requesting.

**LEG. BROWNING:**

Okay.

**MR. MOYER:**

And that was 218,578 in 2008.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

That's a substantial reduction.

**LEG. BROWNING:**

Yeah. And do you get -- you get that all in State money and that. How much do you get on the Youth and Development?

**MR. MOYER:**

What's that again?

**LEG. BROWNING:**

The 4-H Program, the Youth and Development? How much do you get in Federal and State funding?

**MR. MOYER:**

There's about \$200,000 that was in matching funds with the 4-H Youth Program. It includes State and Federal, some grants and outside grants and private contracts. Because we've worked over

years and years, since I came in the early '80's, we have moved into trying to, you know, support our programs through fees, through grants and contracts. And when I first began, I'm not sure what the number was, but in '81 I would assume we were primarily getting our funding from the County, some State and Federal support, which is primarily Cooperative Extension dollars, but in the last 30 years we have moved and made an effort to go after dollars that are private dollars, foundation dollars, grants, other grants that would be within the State, whether it's Ag and Markets, DEC grants, things like that.

So we've made an effort to try to go out and work, and we feel that we have -- in many cases one -- every dollar we get from the County we can bring in three, sometimes four dollars, depending on the year. So we are matching and bringing in a tremendous amount of dollars from outside sources. But, again, it's very important to understand that we need the core funding. Without that core funding, which we can count on year after year, we cannot get grants, you know, one year, two year, three year grants in many cases to match those dollars without that foundation that we call our core funding.

**LEG. BROWNING:**

Thank you.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

You had funding for that 4-H program in 2008; it got cut in 2009?

**MR. MOYER:**

Correct.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

The current year's budget there was no funds, right?

**MR. MOYER:**

Right. There was funding in 2008, it was completely cut in 2009.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

So you're trying to go back to 2008?

**MR. MOYER:**

No, we are trying to go back-- we're looking at -- we understand we're under severe economic constraints here, but we're trying to get at least a basic minimum that we've come up, and that's 82,000. From the 218,000 in 2008, we would like to restore \$82,000.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

So it was over 200,000 in 2008. In 2009 it was zero?

**MR. MOYER:**

Zero, correct.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Now you want to get 82,000 in there.

**MR. MOYER:**

Right, right. And basically, that's to support a 4-H specialist that would help out with the schools, the club programs, all our youth programs. It would be the 4-H specialist and a little bit of the money would also go to a supervisor of that particular program.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

What happened this year without the County funding for the program?

**MR. MOYER:**

The programs limped along. We had some people like Vicki Fleming, who is our Program Director at the Farm right now, and do 4-H program, stepped in to do some of that work, but we did not continue as active as we do going after grant dollars, we don't have that. Our club programs were down somewhat because we didn't have an individual or we had a part-time individual for part of the year because we're basing it on fees. And so we have a program and -- but it's kind of a shell of what it was in 2008, obviously.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Was anybody let go from service?

**MR. MOYER:**

In total, yeah, we had 15 layoffs with our cuts that we received in 2009, starting 2009, and we had another, I think, eight or ten employees that the hours were reduced. And so that's what we -- you know, we had to do. And then we moved people around and then we had actually people working a little harder and probably more hours to compensate for that, the loss of the funding, to try to keep it together, hoping that, okay, in 2010 it would get a little bit better. Unfortunately, it's not as better as we'd like. Hopefully, it's going in the right direction. But we understand that 2010 is going to be another challenging year. But we're trying to keep these programs together because we think they're valuable programs and we need to, you know, keep them at least as a shell of a program so that hopefully when we do get additional funding, we can move and expand and get them back to the level they were in 2008.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

And the County Executive's budget, in terms of CCE, are you funded at the similar levels as 2009, or did he reduce it even further?

**MR. MOYER:**

With our base appropriation we are the same funding, which means there's no funding for the 4-H Youth Program and the Family Health and Wellness Program.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

But no further reductions from --

**MR. MOYER:**

The water quality programs, which we have five programs, were reduced by 10%.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Oh, again, from beyond --

**MR. MOYER:**

From 2000 -- they were never reduced, but in 2009, Commissioner Gallagher came to us, we had this discussion a little bit before, and she asked us if we could cut our budget 10% because of the reduced revenues that were coming in for water quality.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

For 2010?

**MR. MOYER:**

For 2010, yes. And we have agreed to that, to cut back on certain supplies. In one case we did have to -- we're going to have to lay off an individual on one of those programs because of that 10% cut, but we said, "Okay, we want to continue these programs," and she felt because of the revenues -- and we agreed. We can't disagree that the revenues aren't down, so we agreed to take that 10% voluntarily and that is in the County Exec's budget right now.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Again, I would just simply make the point that while you have been asked to reduce 10% of 477 money that would go to you for water quality programs because of an estimated drop in sales tax revenue in 2010 over 2009, the same budget that the County Executive submitted to the Legislature is projecting a 5% growth in sales tax over 2009 for 2010.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

That's true. The only thing I could add, though, is that the 2009, the current figures are budget projected like a 2% growth and we ended up with an eight or so percent decrease. So we had about a 10% shortfall this year, so the numbers that you were given for 2009 were based on numbers that were higher than we actually saw. The truth may be somewhere in the middle there, that there has to be some kind of a reduction. We don't really know -- the County Executive is anticipating a 5% increase. I'm not sure what economist is saying that, I'd love to see that, but, you know, we are facing a very challenging period and, you know, these types of concessions I think, you know, ultimately we have to deal with the financial reality of the moment. Appreciate you working with us on some of that.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Thank you, Dale. Is there anyone else that would like to come up and express their concerns, opinions at this budget hearing at this time? Please come right up and just state your name, and if you're representing any organization.

**MS. WIDIRSTKY:**

Good morning. My name is Darlene Widirstky. I'm from the Town of Southold. And I'm not -- I'm representing Cornell, but I'm not an employee. I'm a Master Gardener, and I've been a Master Gardener since 1993. The Master Gardener Program is only one of many of the programs offered by Cornell. A Master Gardener pays back through time given into the community. In other words, we pay to become a Master Gardener, and then, if we want some of the money back, we volunteer our services in the community.

Well, in the first year, 1994, I finished all of my volunteering, so I got my money back or, you know, half of my money. The Master Gardening Program is self-sufficient in that way. But then we're supposed to go out into the community and help people with their issues and teach gardening techniques and procedures and have people go to Cornell to have their soil tested.

I took a different route. I teach horticulture at the Suffolk County Jail, maximum security, in Riverhead. I'm here on my lunch hour, so I'm not going to be here too long, I have to go back. But I don't get paid for teaching there. And I wrote up the program, which is a mini Master Gardening course. It's a six-week program, and then when they graduate, another six week program throughout the year. So this, however, is my last program for this year.

I wanted to talk about the ladies that I instruct, because I only teach the ladies, and their problems when they get out. So what we're talking about here is the family services issue, the Family Health and Wellness Program. I bring as much information to these ladies as I can from Cornell on this, because I found, and I've been doing this for four years now, I'm in my fifth year, that when they're released, they have nothing, they have no place to live. They have to figure out how they're going to feed their kids and take care of a home, which they don't have, and get a job. So they are issued a certificate, and I made a copy. I can hand it up to you so that you can see. It's not much. I don't get paid, they don't get paid, but they get a certificate. And over the four years many of them have used this certificate to get a job, so it really does work in that way.

And research supports that during stressful economic times, the incidents of domestic violence, both physical and verbal, increases dramatically. The children are often the victims of the misdirected anger of adults and will benefit directly from programs that Cornell has in their Family and Wellness -- Family Health and Wellness Program.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Parent Education Program is the only local resource qualified to bring research-based information to all residents, regardless of income level. And I've seen people there at Cornell taking this course, learning how to cook from whatever funds they get from the County, and learning how to become better parents, learning how to hold down their sometimes hostilities. We're all parents, or if you're parents you know that when children are young or when you're under stress, sometimes a child can be harmed by your stress, you take it out on someone that's weaker. But at Cornell, through this Family Service Health and Wellness Program, they're instructed how to handle situations like that. And before I was a Master Gardener, I worked in the court system and I know about the hotlines, because I was on hotlines talking to parents when they would call in their last effort to not hurt their child and we would talk them down. So Cornell, in their own way, does that. So the education program is the only local resource qualified to bring research-based information to all residents, regardless of income level. Last year more than 80 to 100 residents participated in parent education programs.

We are only asking for a portion of the core funding to be restored, just enough to keep the program intact. One-hundred eighty-eight thousand and five hundred dollars will continue core program funding, so that these crucial educational initiatives will continue to serve Suffolk County residents at the lowest level, and they really need it. We all know that economic times are hard and they're getting harder, and the trickle down system works. There are many people and there'll be many more with nothing and no hope. That funding may sound like a lot of money, but if it saves our residents some grief and helps them give them a little hope, that's all that's necessary. Thank you.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Kate, did you have any questions?

**LEG. BROWNING:**

No, no.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Jay?

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

No.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

I want to thank you. We, obviously, have a concern about what you're saying. We also have concern about people who are released from jail with no place to live, or people that have no place to live at all; the homeless population continues to grow. And as of yesterday we have over 60 people placed in motels because the Social Service contract providers don't have enough beds to take in the homeless, and that's a growing concern. I've toured motels when the County had active -- used motels actively for Social Service homeless placement. The conditions there are despicable. I don't want to see the County stepping back even in stressed times, because that has implications well into the future.

I appreciate you taking the time from your schedule. It's deeply appreciated. Thank you so much for the work you do at the jail.

**MS. WIDIRSTKY:**

Thank you.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Thank you. Anyone else? Yes, please come up.

**MR. CANTWELL:**

Hi. Thank you for the opportunity. I'm Kevin Cantwell. I am currently the President of Cornell Cooperative Extension. I live in Legislator Dan Losquadro's district. My business is in Legislator Dan Losquadro's district. I'm a volunteer for Cornell Cooperative Extension and I have a very long history as a constituent of Cornell Cooperative Extension. That's the reason that I have accepted this volunteer responsibility. There's a passion about this organization that has provided a benefit that's tangible and intangible to a cross-section of our County residents. I consider myself to be a relatively average slice of that core County resident.

I'm a business owner, I'm a parent. I've been involved with Cooperative Extension at many levels for 25 years. They made me a better business owner, they made me a better parent, they made me a better grandparent. They made me aware of the resources that were around me, and I'm asking, again, for your support.

I'll echo what Dale said. Thank you for the 92-year history that we've had with the County, the partnership with the County. We understand the economic times are very difficult. As a taxpayer, I understand and applaud you for your diligence in what's going on in the County finances, but there's a passion about this organization that's leveraging County dollars to bring in other dollars. The two programs that we're asking you to find funding for just to put a base blanket in place, allow us to leverage program through fee base and matching dollars, New York State and Federal dollars; that without the base level of supervision as a Board President, I don't really have the ability to allow this to continue. As the County reduction will come, so will some of the reductions in the matching dollars that -- so it will be a downward spiral rather than an upward spiral.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to let us come out here. We've chosen basically to just bring the support here, have the faces. You've heard our pleas, and thank you.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Thank you very much for your testimony. The Clerk will give you a green card to fill out so we can make sure that we have it recorded properly. And I appreciate you coming forth. Any of my colleagues have questions?

**LEG. BROWNING:**

No, just a reminder of the budget hearings.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Yes, there is a budget hearing in Hauppauge at 2:30 on Tuesday, October 13th. That is the meeting, that's a full Legislative meeting, and at -- and there are committee meetings which my office will be happy to share with Dale. There are several committees that will meet I think the third week in October. There were several meetings of different various committees and you would probably fall at least under two or three of those. So I will give you the committee schedule. And again, the second Public Hearing is in Hauppauge, on October 13th, Tuesday, October 13th at 2:30. That's when the full Legislature meets. As part of that meeting at 2:30 we're conducting the second Public Hearing. So we certainly would invite anyone that has the time, I understand Hauppauge is a travel, to come down and talk to all 18, because we'll all be there because it's a full meeting day. So I appreciate you showing up. Thank you very much.

I saw one other hand in the back. Please, come forward.

**MR. CANTWELL:**

Thank you.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Thank you.

**MS. GERARDI:**

Good morning, everyone. My name is Cathy Gerardi and I am Development Director at the East End Arts Council. We came today to thank you for holding a meeting in the local community. Like Darlene, we're a very small staffed organization and we wouldn't be able to be represented otherwise. I am here to thank you for your past support of our cultural tourism initiatives, which includes the Long Island Winter Fest, the Harvest Gospel Concerts, the Community Mosaic Street Painting Festival, which happens right here in Riverhead, and many other arts, education and cultural tourism initiatives.

We understand that the economic times are very tough, but cultural tourism is an important benefit to the economy. The Long Island Winter Fest brings in an enormous amount of tourism dollars to the East End during the off-season, and the Community Mosaic brings thousands down to Riverhead in May. The Harvest Gospel Concerts, which are coming up in a few weeks, are also a diversity initiative and they cover the full East End. There's a concert in Mattituck, one in Bridgehampton and one right here in Flanders, and we also have the gallery exhibits. All of it is important for people. It's affordable or free and open to the public, and we encourage your support for 2010.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Thank you very much. I'll just take the opportunity to comment that the quality of life is defined in many different ways, but, obviously, in enjoyment of the arts and having access to the arts, both music and all the other arts, it's highly important. And as an economic component, certainly Winterfest is a perfect example of that. But I am so impressed with the -- with your Harvest Gospel. I've attended some of those and just phenomenal. And, of course, I attend the street fair when you do all the wonderful chalk drawings, and all the other activities that the East End Arts Council has. It has a tremendous impact on the quality of life on the East End. And I just want to commend you for the work you do. I'm very supportive.

**MS. GERARDI:**

This summer, when we were able to host, through the funding by the North Fork Alliance, a drug and alcohol prevention program in arts education for youth, so we're -- and we're really doing a lot of things to support the community and keep it -- keep kids off the streets and have a productive career possibly in the arts. But a lot of what they learn -- the Teen Year Awards is a good example. It's a theater initiative where it's sort of a high school version of the Tony Awards to encourage kids to develop their communication skills and be able to get a job when they get out of high school. So I thank you so much.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Thank you. Any questions? Jay?

**LEG. BROWNING:**

No.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Thank you again.

**MS. GERARDI:**

Thank you.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Anyone else? If not, I want to thank everyone for coming and listening and giving us your input. We will take this back to our colleagues in Hauppauge. And if anyone has the time and they can show up on the 13th at 2:30 in Hauppauge at our full Legislative meeting, we will have our second hearing then, and I think that would be worthwhile. Jay, do you want to make any --

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Thank you for coming out today to let us know your feelings about the proposed budget.

**LEG. BROWNING:**

Same also. Actually I'm looking at my calendar. The Health and Human Services Committee will be meeting on October 19th at 1:00 for the budget. So that would probably be one of the ones that you would -- the Health and Wellness, obviously. So, hopefully, you will be there. I look forward to seeing you.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

And for anyone that wants a list of the committees that are meeting the third week in October, call my office, or stop by my office if you're at Cornell, and we'll give you a list of the committees and we'll be happy to provide that.

**MS. ALLONCIUS:**

And it's on the website.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

And it's also on the website, right, but some people work right down the hall from me, so.

**LEG. BROWNING:**

Thank you, Debbie.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay. Thank you, Debbie, for reminding us.

**MS. ALLONCIUS:**

Thanks for that wonderful website from Mr. Laube.

***[THE HEARING WAS ADJOURNED AT 10:52 A.M.]***