

Public Hearing - October 20, 2014

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Public Hearing

October 20, 2014 - 10 AM

*A Public Hearing on the 2015 Operating Budget
Was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium
Of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building,
725 Veterans Memorial Highway,
Smithtown, New York*

Legislators Present:

Legislator DuWayne Gregory - Presiding Officer/District #15
Legislator Jay Schneiderman - Deputy Presiding Officer/District #2
Legislator Al Krupski - Acting Chair/District Office #1
Legislator Kate Browning - District Office #3
Legislator Kara Hahn - District Office #5
Legislator Rob Calarco - District Office #7
Legislator Monica Martinez - District Office #9
Legislator Tom Cilmi - District Office #10
Legislator Steve Stern - District Office #16

Also In Attendance:

Lora Gellerstein - Chief of Staff for Presiding Officer Gregory
George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
Michael Pitcher - Aide to Presiding Officer Gregory
Christina DeLisa - Aide to Deputy Presiding Officer Schneiderman
Catherine Stark - Aide to Legislator Krupski
Tim Rothang - Aide to Legislator Browning
Sean Rogan - Aide to Legislator McCaffrey
John Becker - President/Deputy Sheriffs Police Benevolent Association
Arthur Sanchez - Treasurer/Deputy Sheriffs Police Benevolent Assoc.
Noelle Campbell - Gerald J. Ryan Outreach Center
Naycha Florival - Gerald J. Ryan Outreach Center

Minutes Taken by:

Alison Mahoney - Court Stenographer

*(*The hearing was called to order at 10:07 A.M.*)*

P.O. GREGORY:

Good morning. We'll start with the Pledge led by Deputy Presiding Officer, Jay Schneiderman.

Salutation

If you would all remain standing for a moment of silence to keep our men and women, our soldiers that are overseas protecting our freedoms in our thoughts and prayers.

Moment of Silence Observed

Okay, thank you.

Okay, welcome to today's first of two 2015 Operating Budget Public Hearings. We have several cards. We will remind the speakers that they have three minutes. The first card I have is Noelle Campbell. Excuse me, the second Public Hearing. All right. I'm sorry, Noelle. Go ahead.

MS. CAMPBELL:

Can we speak together since it's the same thing?

P.O. GREGORY:

If you want, you can split your time, but we're not pressed for time this morning.

MS. CAMPBELL:

I wonder why. Good morning, everybody. My name is Noelle Campbell, I'm from the Gerald J. Ryan Outreach Center in Wyandanch. We are one of the largest social parish ministries out of 143.

I'm here today to ask for restoration of funding. Since 2009, we suffered cuts to our youth services that support our very successful summer camp and after school program. We originally received in 2009 about 50,000, and since then every year it has declined to 25, 23 and now we're at 22. We are asking today -- really I'm asking today that at least this funding be either restored and/or sustained.

Currently we are in deficit. We are an agency that provides emergency services to the community of Wyandanch and surrounding communities. We are a very critical center to the community because we are an income support program, a kind of bridge for many people. We pretty much are really well-known for our food pantry which really is the essence of what brings many people to our front door. We see people from all walks of life. We provide services to about 17 different cultures and nationalities, and we see many people who really do not qualify for Social Services. Many of those people are immigrants and many of those people are the working poor people; many of those people do not come to us every month, but they do come. And we are trying to do our best to provide those services, but because of the cuts, it has impacted our budget.

I am honored to help and to serve those that come through our door every day. On a monthly basis we can see up to twelve to 1300 individuals a month, and it would be sad to see that if our doors were to shut, knowing that many

of those people that have been coming to us know that we have been there for over 30 years, so it would be saddened to see in any way for us to be jeopardized.

I know that we're not the only not-for-profit to come before you and ask for assistance and ask for help and ask for a restoration or to be restored or sustained for the budget, but we're asking that hopefully today you will listen and I thank you for that.

We also know that because of the youth -- cuts to our youth program, we have had to sustain an after school program and summer camp program. And so we're asking today, really, for every dollar that you're able to restore will help to reduce our deficit, will be crucial to getting our center to work back with the case management that we provide to more at-risk services such as the prevention of homelessness, utility shut-offs and working with those that come to us every day, to really help them get back up on their feet. In some ways we say that we are the emergency room of Straight Path, because people literally have been dropped off at our door. Up until two weeks ago, we actually had to call the ambulance for a gentleman that had come to us crying who was in need.

And so I thank you for listening and I hope that in some ways we can find funding to restore back to youth services at our center.
Thank you.

P.O. GREGORY:

Thank you, Noelle. And as you know, I've been to your organization many times and you do an excellent job and I appreciate you coming out today. We met I guess about a month ago now, maybe three weeks ago. So obviously this is not the only program that you run. Your request is that restoring the funding for this program will help free up monies, because obviously you're a not-for-profit and you don't get -- which is a misunderstanding, that because you're affiliated with the Catholic Church --

MS. CAMPBELL:

Right.

P.O. GREGORY:

The Catholic Church does not support your outreach efforts.

MS. CAMPBELL:

No, it doesn't.

P.O. GREGORY:

Right. So, and you have hundreds of people a month that you see.

MS. CAMPBELL:

We do. As you all know, when people are in need they go to places that they can get help. This morning I opened the door and there was a line out the door. Again, very often people come in looking for food, but we also provide other case management services; citizenship, immigration services, counseling support, translations, as Naycha so eloquently speaks of that. We're a very small agency, as you see, according to the paperwork that I provided, there's only four staff. We do an amazing job with great impact in the community.

P.O. GREGORY:

Right.

MS. CAMPBELL:

But that is in jeopardy due to the cuts and our deficit. And knowing that the at-risk populations that we do serve, you know, where else would they be able to turn to and go is a concern.

P.O. GREGORY:

If I recall our conversation, obviously you don't just serve the Wyandanch community, you serve the surrounding communities.

MS. CAMPBELL:

Correct.

P.O. GREGORY:

But you also, which I found interesting, not only do you have local support, you have support from outside the community.

MS. CAMPBELL:

Yeah.

P.O. GREGORY:

I think Father Bill was talking about, or was it you that was telling me about a gentleman that helps volunteer from Southampton.

MS. CAMPBELL:

Yes.

P.O. GREGORY:

So people from all over the --

MS. CAMPBELL:

All over; Floral Park, Southampton, Massapequa.

P.O. GREGORY:

Right.

MS. CAMPBELL:

And I have to also mention that the majority of people who come through our door are not our parishioners. We are a small church with great impact. The percentage of those that are parishioners that do come to our outreach center for help are about 3%, so we're really a community-based outreach and people really have come to know us. We were the church that had the fire in '07, so even before that we were pretty much, I would say, on the map, very blessed to be a beacon for many people. Many people come in saying, *I don't know where else to go*. And so, you know, our services are critical to the community. And this is Naycha Florival.

P.O. GREGORY:

Okay. Thank you.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Question. Your agency does actually a lot of different things. One thing is the food pantries and, you know, the County has been supporting food pantries, but usually on an individual basis. We haven't been giving

one food pantry more than another, though some clearly are bigger than others.

You also do after school programs, which is something in general we haven't so much been funding because we feel the schools ought to be funding the after school programs. But then you also do other things as well. So I'm just kind of trying to wrap myself around it to see what your -- what aspect would fit our kind of funding internal rules. So maybe you could talk a little bit more about other aspects of the program.

MS. CAMPBELL:

Hello. My name is Nycha Florival and that's what I would like to talk about. Most of the funding that we received was for our after school and summer camp program. The Wyandanch School District does not provide after school programs to the children until they're failing, and currently on average the children that attend our after school are usually one to two years behind the average in other school districts. So you find 8th graders that can't write on a 3rd or 4th grade level, and those are the children that we serve in our after school program, which ranges between 30 to 60 children every afternoon.

And our summer camp has 150 children every summer. The summer camp keeps them off the streets over the summer and it just gives them experiences that most children in Wyandanch don't have. They have never been to the beach. If you come and you ask them, *Have you been to the beach*, they've never been to the beach, they've never gone to the pool. I myself was a camper when I was younger and that was, you know, a Bachelor's and a Master's ago. But the kids that stay on in our summer camp, the counselors that we have serve as mentors for them and they aspire to one day be a counselor, and we have many of them that go on to college. So cutting the funding in their summer programs -- the period of time -- this is what I always tell my staff. Making camp enjoyable for the kids is all that they have.

I remember, you know, after summer camp when I was younger, because of financial -- and working poor, my mother worked two jobs, even three jobs if she had to, to put us through college and those type of things. After camp is over, they're going home to nothing. And even if the attitudes and the personalities that we deal with, I say, *You have to understand where they come from before they come to our doors*. We provide them breakfast, lunch and snack, which also takes away from our budget, because I've had kids -- you know, we're distributing something in the morning and they pass out, because they haven't eaten since they left our doors the day before. We had kids this summer, in particular one of them said, *Thank you for the sandwich. Can I have another one?* We didn't know that he was living in a car. So these are the type of children that we serve over the summer. And cutting the funding, this summer in particular was very difficult, because even with assistance paying for buses, camp has a \$400 registration fee which pays for their summer, including their trips, but I would say 80 to 90% of the people can't pay it; 90% is a good percentage. So I have people who can give you \$50, who can give you \$100, but I have to pay the staff, they're not volunteers. I can't get certified teachers to volunteer for five weeks of the summer, and I have to pay the counselors who are also kids that came from the summer camp. And it's been -- our budget cuts have been -- I've had to cut down on staff and you have to keep a ratio of staff-to-children. But this program has been running for -- in my memory, I went to camp as a 5th grader and it's been around for years. You know,

for the Wyandanch community, I can't speak upon its value to the kids that we have there. To our counselors who are now in college or college graduates. I had one this summer that came, she's like, *Remember me? I used to come here*, and I remembered her face, she graduated from college. Because she had something to do, she's like, *I always wanted to be a counselor*, and from there she went on to college. Because we try, we give donations to give them a gift just to keep them motivated for the year because they have something to look forward to the following year. I don't know if that --

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Yeah, you more than answered my question. Thank you for the work that you're doing in the community. You're really trying to get back to where you were in 2008 when the recession hit, that's kind of like the height of it for us.

MS. FLORIVAL:

Yes.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:

And there were a lot of cuts, so you're trying to get back to where you were and then adjust it for inflation.

MS. FLORIVAL:

We just want to keep the programs going, because we know what it means to the parents and to the children that we serve.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay. So your total request is to go from 22,000 back to around, what, 68 I think I saw? Sixty-five?

MS. CAMPBELL:

Sixty-five.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:

To 65.

P.O. GREGORY:

What used to happen, if I may, you know, I have the County Executive's budget. You know, they fund -- it's no real rhyme or reason, and I'm not talking about this County Executive, this goes back to County Executive Levy. He would put in \$25,000 into the budget, the Legislature would put in another 25 and as far as I recall, when I have been here, and I worked for the prior Legislator, so back to 2007 it's been 50,000, but I guess obviously it's much more than that prior to. And we would always restore the extra 25,000, but when the recession hit we made our priorities within the Working Group. It was viewed as child care, we kind of lumped it into that, which it's not, so they were reduced. And then they were at 25 and then we put 5% cut and that's what the 23 or 22.5, whatever it is, is in there now.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:

We probably saw it as an after school program.

P.O. GREGORY:

Right, right, so that's what it is. But they do much more than that and they're a tremendous organization which helps hundreds of families a month.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:

A lot of at-risk kids.

P.O. GREGORY:

Yes.

MS. CAMPBELL:

Very much so. And at-risk families, too. Case management is a big piece to helping those people in prevention.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:

The current proposed budget has you at 22,000?

MS. CAMPBELL:

Yeah, 22.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Something like that?

MS. CAMPBELL:

Naycha is actually saying it's actually 25.

MS. FLORIVAL:

Twenty-five.

D.P.O. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Twenty-five? Okay.

P.O. GREGORY:

Legislator Cilmi, you had a question?

LEG. CILMI:

Hi, Ladies. Thank you for your presentation and for the work that you do. I'd like to try and dissect the PNL statement that you provided to us a little bit, if we could?

MS. CAMPBELL:

Uh-huh.

LEG. CILMI:

It says that in terms of contributions, 148,000 or so is unrestricted. Where does that come from?

MS. CAMPBELL:

Mainly donations.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay.

MS. CAMPBELL:

We, again, are pretty well-known and have the opportunity of getting donations from many individual donors, pretty much a lump sum of individual donors.

MS. FLORIVAL:

That's what keeps the outreach running is the monthly donations.

MS. CAMPBELL:

Right.

LEG. CILMI:

I didn't hear what you said.

MS. FLORIVAL:

That's what keeps the outreach running is the monthly donations.

LEG. CILMI:

Sure. And are they corporate donations or just personal donations?

MS. CAMPBELL:

Yeah, personal.

LEG. CILMI:

Do you accept any corporate donations, or you're not able to?

MS. CAMPBELL:

With some of the restrictions that we have because we're affiliated with the Catholic Church, that does -- we're not eligible for those. So that's what even more so brings us here today.

MS. FLORIVAL:

We would if you have any (*laughter*).

LEG. CILMI:

Well, I mean, if there are restrictions based on your affiliation --

MS. CAMPBELL:

Right.

LEG. CILMI:

But the Catholic church doesn't provide you with any funding despite your affiliation.

MS. CAMPBELL:

No.

LEG. CILMI:

So what's the nature of the affiliation, then?

(*Legislator Hahn entered the meeting at 10:24 A.M.*)

MS. FLORIVAL:

The Outreach was started by the church because they saw a need. So we're a 501(c)3 on the property of the church, but that is the affiliation.

LEG. CILMI:

I see.

MS. FLORIVAL:

Because of that, the 501(c)3 comes under the church, but it's just -- they started the organization and we're on the physical property of the church, but that is the only relationship that there is.

LEG. CILMI:

And you're on Straight -- your facility is on Straight Path? How far north?

MS. FLORIVAL:

Right across the street from the administrative building for the Wyandanch School District.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay.

MS. FLORIVAL:

Either direction, so about two or three lights from the Southern State or the --

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. Your donations that you've been receiving on an annual basis; have you seen an increase, a decline?

MS. FLORIVAL:

A drastic decline. For example, the fire brought many donors, but that only lasted for a few years. And for example, one -- for the camp anyway; I'll give you an example from the camp because that's what I know, Noelle can speak on her part. We had one donor who gave us \$25,000 and it for was for about two years and that stopped, so this year this person in particular sent us a thousand dollars.

In terms of financing, when camp ended, I wasn't even able to pay the buses this summer, so that bill will stay until I receive more money in my accounts to pay for those type of things. Because between trying to scrape for registration fees and any donations that I ask for through different people, we have different Jewish temples also, we have people that come in and they give us donations for trips and things of that nature. Many of the bills I couldn't pay. I was able to just pay the basic overhead, I made the payrolls and snacks and lunches and we did as much as we could for the children, but a lot of the bills stayed after camp that are still unpaid for this past summer.

LEG. CILMI:

And I guess that's reflective of the year-end deficit, which is \$81,000 or so.

MS. CAMPBELL:

Uh-huh.

LEG. CILMI:

So that deficit basically represents unpaid bills?

MS. CAMPBELL:

Unpaid bills. And we're subsidizing summer camp, so we're -- if our bills are not paid, we know that we cannot be in good standing without paying bills, so the center will be forced to pay those bills.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. So if the Legislature increases your funding this year, it almost seems like it just sort of gets you back to square -- I mean, it wouldn't even get you back to square one, right?

MS. CAMPBELL:

Well --

LEG. CILMI:

If we're going to -- I mean, if we increase your budget, it seems like a lot of that -- and I don't know what the technicalities of our funding, you know, what sort of criteria they come with, but you have to take care of this \$81,000, really, before you can move forward. How are you going to do that?

MS. CAMPBELL:

Well, we have a board that has recently met to come up with a plan, and in that plan is coming up with a budget of about 60,000 based on fund-raising projects for this year. So -- and in addition to our request today.

LEG. CILMI:

I guess the last set of questions revolve around your payroll. So it says here your annual payroll is about \$261,000.

MS. CAMPBELL:

Uh-huh.

LEG. CILMI:

And how many people does that cover?

MS. CAMPBELL:

Currently -- that's encompassing both the center and the youth program.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay.

MS. CAMPBELL:

And as far as the center goes, it's four paid staff.

MS. FLORIVAL:

And summer it is --

MS. CAMPBELL:

For the summer camp I think is about 20?

MS. FLORIVAL:

About 22.

MS. CAMPBELL:

Twenty-two?

MS. FLORIVAL:

And the after school is an additional two people.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay.

MS. CAMPBELL:

Twenty-six people in all.

LEG. CILMI:

Do you -- when you -- I think I saw somewhere in here that you have lots of volunteers. Is that summer camp related or otherwise?

MS. CAMPBELL:

Mainly our center. We're very lucky to have at least 30 volunteers, again, coming from all walks of life with amazing resources and backgrounds, social workers, retired nurses and guidance counselors to do case management that's so critically needed for the community. They incorporate a lot. In addition to groups from ACLD and Lifespire, we now currently have two interns from Suffolk Community College and we recently partnered with Urban League, we hired two seniors from their program. So we are doing everything we can to meet the need by not having to pay any additional salaries, and so far it's been great.

LEG. CILMI:

What about summer jobs for kids, like paid summer jobs for kids?

MS. FLORIVAL:

That's our summer camp. I hire six teachers because we have six classrooms for grades 1 through 6, and about 15 youth which range from age 14 up until 17 years old. And most of them are campers that used to come to camp and now they're out of camp age, and then we do a Counselor-in-Training for one year and the following year they get a job. But that's become more and more difficult because year after year I can't hire any new people, I just have to stick to the people I've had. But they're all youth, but it's becoming very difficult. And we only pay them minimum wage and the hours are long, even for our teachers, they haven't gotten a raise in seven -- six or seven years. And depending on what trips we go on, the day can range from seven hours to ten for the same rate, a day rate.

LEG. CILMI:

I'm wondering, you know, we have this huge project going on in Wyandanch, Wyandanch Rising. And as part of that, there'll be a lot of corporate money, not only from the developer of the project, but from, you know, some of the business that find their home there. And it may be worth your while, I'm sure you've thought about this already. But despite your affiliation with the Catholic Church, it may be worth your while to discuss, I guess with the Diocese, reaching out for some support from those organizations, because there are some deep pockets there. And certainly, if we want that project, Wyandanch Rising, to be successful, part of that success depends on having programs in place like yours.

MS. CAMPBELL:

Yeah, and I wanted to add to that, that exactly. We have been approached by the Albanese Foundation who has funded us for the last two years, around December he usually does come around and helps with a donation, and I would say today it's been 5,000. So we're very much a part of the community. We attend the community leadership meetings, which I was just saying to Nycha we won't be able to go tomorrow because we'll be here. But I'm very excited about the entire project of Wyandanch Rising, we're also a party and affiliated with that as well. But thank you for that.

LEG. CILMI:

Terrific. Thank you very much.

P.O. GREGORY:

All right, thank you. Thank you for coming.

MS. CAMPBELL:

Thank you, everybody. Stay warm.

P.O. GREGORY:

We'll try. All right. I don't have any other cards. Was there anyone else in the audience that would like to speak? Please come forward. I see -- come on up, John.

MR. BECKER:

Good morning.

P.O. GREGORY:

Good morning.

MR. BECKER:

Just real quick --

P.O. GREGORY:

John, just state your name and affiliation for the record.

MR. BECKER:

Absolutely. John Becker, President of the Suffolk County Deputy Sheriffs PBA.

We had spoken last week to the Legislature. We had some concerns in reference to the \$4 million that's supposed to be paid out at the end of 2015. In looking at the review of the operating budget, we see that there's a recommendation that the funding be allocated. Just wanted to know where we are as far as working on that budgetary concern. Also, new Deputies being assigned to the upcoming academy, as well as obviously you're all aware that we're five years now without a contract and we also don't see the pay raises or anything like that in the budget.

P.O. GREGORY:

Okay. We will certainly look into it. I was going through the review over the weekend, I don't recall there being any Deputy Sheriff positions. I know there's some Correction Officer positions.

MR. SCHNEIDER:

Yeah, it speaks to a new Corrections class.

P.O. GREGORY:

Right. And the four million, we'll get that answered for you.

MR. BECKER:

Very good.

P.O. GREGORY:

Okay? Anything else?

MR. BECKER:

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That was it. Thank you.

P.O. GREGORY:

All right, thank you.

All right. Seeing no one else, we -- this Public Hearing is closed.
Thank you.

*(*The hearing was closed at 10:34 A.M.*)*