NASSAU COUNTY LEGISLATURE

RICHARD NICOLELLO
PRESIDING OFFICER

FINANCE COMMITTEE

LEGISLATOR HOWARD KOPEL CHAIR

Theodore Roosevelt Building
1550 Franklin Avenue
Mineola, New York

November 9, 2020
3:19 P.M.

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    A P P E A R A N C E S:
    LEGISLATOR HOWARD KOPEL
    Chair
    LEGISLATOR DENISE FORD
    LEGISLATOR TOM MCKEVITT
    LEGISLATOR ROSE MARIE WALKER
    LEGISLATOR ELLEN BIRNBAUM
        Ranking member
    LEGISLATOR ARNOLD DRUCKER
    LEGISLATOR DEBRA MULE
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A P P E A R A N C E S:

``` Chair LEGISLATOR DENISE FORD
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LEGISLATOR ELLEN BIRNBAUM Ranking member LEGISLATOR ARNOLD DRUCKER

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LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Would you mind
calling the roll.
MR. PULITZER: Finance Committee
roll call. Legislator Joshua Lafazan.
LEGISLATOR LAFAZAN: Here.
MR. PULITZER: Legislator Arnold
Drucker.
LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Here.
MR. PULITZER: Thank you.
Ranking Member Ellen Birnbaum.
LEGISLATOR BIRNBAUM: Here.
MR. PULITZER: Legislator Rose
Marie Walker.
LEGISLATOR WALKER: Here.
MR. PULITZER: Legislator Thomas
McKevitt.
LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Here.
MR. PULITZER: Vice Chairman
Vincent Muscarella.
LEGISLATOR FORD: I am replacing
him on this committee.
MR. PULITZER: That would be Rose
Marie Walker.
MS. FORD: That would be Denise

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Ford.
MR. PULITZER: I'm so sorry Ms. Ford. Please forgive me. And chairman Howard Kopel.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: I am here.
MR. PULITZER: We have a quorum sir.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Since we have
a number of consent items and one of them is on the addendum I'm going to call for a motion before we start to suspend the rules. That is made by Ms. Birnbaum and seconded by Ms. Walker. All those in favor of suspending the rules signify by saying aye. Any opposed? The rules are suspended.

Now I am going to call the consent items and that would be numbers 299, 300, 301, $302,303,304,305,309,318,319,328,329$, $330,331,334,338,340,341,342$ as well as on the addendum number 346 . Those items have been -- I'm sorry. There's one more, two more on the second addendum. Those would be numbers 352 and 353.

All of those items have been

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discussed by the Majority and Minority and there's been an agreement that there is no further need for debate or discussion. Therefore, all those in favor of those items signify by saying aye. Are there any opposed to those items?

I didn't have a motion. Motion on those items made by Legislator Ford and seconded by Legislator McKevitt. All those in favor of all those items signify by saying aye. Any opposed? All those items, consent items, pass unanimously.

I'm going to call the first four
items last since they're going to require executive session. So we'll start out with number 295 which is a transfer of appropriations. Motion by Legislator Walker. Seconded by Legislator Birnbaum.

MR. PERSICH: Andy Persich,
Office of Management and Budget. Item 295 relates to the money received for the census money that we originally put into the wrong line item. We had to pull this with the legislature and this was just reallocating the Finance 11-09-19
funds into the appropriate codes.
LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Thank you
Andy. Any questions? All those in favor of -- we're going to vote at the end so we'll have a chance for public comment for those.

The next items I'm going to call together are $320,321,322$. Motion on those items by Mr. Lafazan. Seconded by Mr. McKevitt. Those are all items in connection with the Office of Community Development.

MR. CREAN: Kevin Crean, director of Office of Community Development. These three items are related to -- they're all supplemental appropriations -- related to federal grants administered by our office. These are additional funds authorized under the federal CARES Act. This is the second, it's called the third round but the second round of funding that Nassau County received an allocation for. The first round of funding of these appropriations was approved by this body back in April. So this is a second supplemental award received over the last

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couple of months.
LEGISLATOR KOPEL: There's no matching funds, correct?

MR. CREAN: No matching funds.
LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Thank you
sir. Yes, Legislator Birnbaum.
LEGISLATOR BIRNBAUM: These are
going to be distributed to local governments you said, right?

MR. CREAN: Not completely. Some
of these funds will be utilized in-house, some distributed to local nonprofits. The supplemental appropriations are -- the emergency solutions grants program funding is generally going to be with nonprofits, but there will be some collaboration with the Department of Social Services to carry out some of those activities under the Community Development Block Grant program. Which is item 322-20. It's HIE-5. Those funds, the majority of them are actually going to be contracted with nonprofits to carry out some activities that were not funded or that were not addressed under the first round of

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funding. These are economic development activities and rental assistance as well. LEGISLATOR BIRNBAUM: When you said assists local government you didn't mean government municipalities?

MR. CREAN: When I said local government?

LEGISLATOR BIRNBAUM: I thought you said to assist local government.

MR. CREAN: I'm not sure what context $I$ said that in, but the funding that will by received Nassau County will be administered by both local municipalities and nonprofits. The first round of funding was distributed to both. I think it was probably a higher percentage for nonprofits just because local municipalities don't have the infrastructure to carry out service type activities. The mental health appropriations, the food bank, the emergency food distribution, the economic development programs that were carried out in the first round were not generally provided by the municipalities. They were provided by

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noprofit organizations.
LEGISLATOR BIRNBAUM: Thank you.
LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Anyone else? The next group will be supplementals to the Department of Parks and those are numbers 323 and 324. Motion by Mr. Drucker. Seconded by Ms. Walker.

MS. KASO: Victoria Kaso,
Department of Parks. Both 323 and 324 are supplemental appropriations having to do with our hotel-motel tax. 323 is in the amount of $\$ 163,300$ and 324 is in the amount of $\$ 570,000$.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Are there any questions? Any discussion? Thank you. The next group will be numbers 325, 326 and 327. Those are all transfers of appropriations. MS. LAURAIN: Mary Ellen Laurain Department of Health.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: We don't have a motion yet. Forgive me. That is moved by Mr. Drucker once again and seconded by Mr. Lafazan. Go on please. MS. LAURAIN: Good afternoon. Mary Ellen Laurain, Department of Health.

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Item 325 is a board transfer in the amount of \$1,514. This does not have any impact on the budget. It's to maximize one of our New York State grant funded programs.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Go ahead.
MS. LAURAIN: Item 326 is also a board transfer in the amount of $\$ 403$. Again, this has no impact on the budget. Just to maximize state grant reimbursement.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: You got one more?
MS. LAURAIN: I don't have the other one.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Anyone here on 327?

MR. LANSMAN: Good afternoon
members. Doug Lansman, Nassau probation. Item 327-20 involves a requested transfer from our GIVE grant. We have excess travel due to the COVID pandemic and we have excess equipment that was not utilized. We would like to transfer these monies back to our AA salary line so we can maximize our grant. There's no problem with the budget. It's net

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neutral.
LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Thank you.
Any debate or discussion on those three items? Thank you.

MR. LANSMAN: Thank you.
LEGISLATOR KOPEL: The next two are 335 and 336 which are supplementals with the Office of Management and Budget and that motion is made by Legislator Ford and seconded by Legislator Lafazan.

MR. PERSICH: Andy Persich, Office of Management and Budget. 335 and 336 are the distributions from the New York State ILS for distribution years two and three in the amount of $\$ 537,731$. These are annual recurring grants or distributions I should say as a result of Harrell Laring Act that New York State ILS distributes to Legal Aid Society and 18B over at the bar association.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: It's part of our original budget?

MR. PERSICH: Yes. These are
part of the grant budget for ILS.
LEGISLATOR KOPEL: I meant this

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was part of our budget we anticipated?
MR. PERSICH: Yes. That's
correct.
LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Any debate or discussion? Next is 343 which is, well, this is with respect to authorizing a filing of a plan for federal assistance with the federal HUD. A motion is made by Ms. Walker and seconded by Ms. Ford.

MR. CREAN: Kevin Crean, director Office of Community Development. This item is substantial amendment to Nassau County's fiscal year 2019 action plan that was filed with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. This amendment is a requirement to receive the additional funding and distribute additional funding received under the CARES Act which we are under the supplemental appropriations items that $I$ just spoke about.

This is an additional $\$ 9.5$ million under the Community Development Block Grant program COVID round three and $\$ 10.6$ million under the Emergency Solutions Grant program

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COVID round three.
The county received allocations under these two programs under the first round of CARES Act funding that was approved by this legislature back in the spring. Those funds are the -- the bulk of them are allocated already. This second round of funding is requested now. This amendment will go forward to HUD so that those funds can be allocated to meet additional needs.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Any
legislators have any questions or discussion? Thank you. 344 is authorizing a grant agreement with parks, recreation and Cornell Cooperative. Motion on that is made by Ms. Ford and seconded by Mr. McKevitt. MS. KASO: Victoria Caso, Department of Parks. This is a hotel-motel grant agreement in the amount of $\$ 40,000$ for Cornell Cooperative Extension in Nassau County for ongoing programing at East Meadow Park. LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Any questions, debate or discussion? Thank you. The next one is on the addendum and

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that would be number 347 , which is authorizing additional pay for certain officers and employees of the Office of Housing. Motion is made by Mr. Drucker and seconded by Mr. Lafazan.

MS. PETTUS: Kenetha Pettus, director of housing.

MS. ZIGLER: Zoila Zigler, finance from housing.

MS. PETTUS: These funds are 100
percent reimbursable. These funds do not impact the county's budget. These funds will be used and must be spent by 12-31 from the state from the CARES Act. And part of the money, the $\$ 130,000$, will be used for a contract to scan all our files which we have almost 5,000 files in our office. And the $\$ 23,000$ will be used for the software from IT. And then the other money, the $\$ 6,009$ and $\$ 3,000, \$ 9,000$ will be used to reimburse or to pay for overtime.

Nassau County Office of Housing has acquired the Town of Hempstead's Section 8 vouchers. We received those vouchers in

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August. We had to get them into the system. That's our system that's connected to New York State and we had to do it off hours because we had to do our regular work and we were not allowed to hire anyone. So we had to use the staff that we had and work overtime. And the state paid for the overtime.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Do you have anything more? Either of you? I meant I don't want to interrupt you. Are you done?

MS. PETTUS: Yes.
LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Explain, if
you would, in terms of this grant -- first of all, let me ask you this. The people who are to get overtime here what kind of employees are they? Which employees are they?

MS. PETTUS: These are certified housing specialists.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Is that essentially pretty much all of the -- are these management, are these union?

MS. PETTUS: These are all ordinance employees.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Do you have

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union employees as well?
MS. PETTUS: No.
LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Are there any people who worked overtime beyond the ones who are scheduled to receive this payment? MS. PETTUS: No.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Essentially
everyone who worked overtime for this program would be covered under this?

MS. PETTUS: Yes.
LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Fine. I
understand. Yes Ms. Birnbaum.
LEGISLATOR BIRNBAUM: Would you
say the amount you will be receiving from CARES is sufficient for your needs?

MS. PETTUS: Yes, it is.
LEGISLATOR BIRNBAUM: Thank you.
MS. ZIGLER: Just the amount that we have received. We're not going to go over or exceed any amount.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Any others?
Ms. Walker.
LEGISLATOR WALKER: So the amount of overtime worked out to be exactly the

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amount of money you got?
MS. ZIGLER: I would like to say
that it's precisely, maybe less, but not to the exact penny. But we're not going to go over that.

LEGISLATOR WALKER: Is this job
normally only done by the housing specialists who are all ordinance employees? None of them are union employees?

MS. PETTUS: No.
LEGISLATOR WALKER: I know
Legislator Kopel did ask but none of our other employees anywhere across the board had to work overtime and were not compensated?

MS. PETTUS: No.
LEGISLATOR WALKER: Thank you.
LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Anyone else?
Ms. Ford.
LEGISLATOR FORD: You'll just be getting pay, you're not accruing any time to be used towards any days off? Strictly a monetary overtime?

MS. PETTUS: Yes.
LEGISLATOR FORD: As you

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indicated that this work this had to be completed by a certain date. Where are we with work? Is it completed or is this going to --

MS. PETTUS: We have already uploaded and entered all the files that we received from the Town of Hempstead into our system. We have now just about 5,000 applications of wait list that we have to enter into our system. But it's not going to exceed the amount that's allocated here.

LEGISLATOR FORD: Considering that you're getting more work, you have a lot more that's going to be on your plate. MS. PETTUS: We are overworked in housing.

LEGISLATOR FORD: Are there enough employees to be able to handle this once all this data is inputted and going into 2021?

MS. PETTUS: That's a good
question. The housing specialists, we have five, and they have a heavy caseload, more than any other local administrator in the

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state of New York but we're making it happen until we're able to hire another housing specialist and a clerk.

LEGISLATOR FORD: I think it's
something that we need to look into only because the people that you're working with and you're serving happen to be a lot of our poor, many of them quite possibly be uneducated whatever and look to you for guidance. It's not just a matter of a click on a keyboard and done with them. I'm sure it takes a lot of conversations.

MS. PETTUS: We get a lot of
calls from the constituents in the LD regarding Section 8 and lot of them now are calling they transferred from the Town of Hempstead to our system which is totally different from the way they were doing things in the Town of Hempstead. We are governed by the state of New York administrative plan and it's a little bit more detailed and we have strict rules to follow. So, we acquired a hundred and some odd vouchers. 243 active vouchers. They also have an extensive wait

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list and we did not get the employees to go along with those vouchers.

LEGISLATOR FORD: It's a big undertaking. It really and truly is. I'm sure that a lot of your calls may be from people who have been transferred. They're so afraid that heaven forbid their voucher gets lost and I can understand. I think that this is something that we have to look at as a legislature to see what this department, that this is something that really poses to be an emergency in my mind because we cannot let anybody fall through the cracks. Housing is so important to them.

MS. PETTUS: In addition, from the state we did receive money -- we came before you before -- for security deposit money to help people move and a lot of them are coming over from the Town of Hempstead. They had to move and we have a shortage of housing as it is here in Nassau County who accept Section 8. So we have a lot of people with vouchers and no place to live.

LEGISLATOR FORD: Do you also

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then also handle the complaints like because I know by law if somebody has an apartment for rent and the person goes and they say I would like have that apartment -- you correct me if I'm wrong, I could be wrong. I have an apartment and you come to me and I'm like okay, you can have it. The rent is going to be $\$ 2,000$ a month. And then you say I have a Section 8 voucher which is going to pay 1300. I'll pay you the additional 700. Isn't by law that the landlord must still accept you even with the Section 8 voucher?

MS. PETTUS: They're supposed to accept it, yes.

LEGISLATOR FORD: Is it your department that follows up on that or is that another department?

MS. PETTUS: It's another
department only because we're not housing locators. We just administer the Section 8 voucher and it's up to the voucher holder to find the housing.

Our department we have the housing inspectors who will inspect the unit and then

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we also have payment standards set by the state. The amount of money that we will pay for certain unit size. If it's a two bedroom it's probably $\$ 1,800$. I don't have the exact numbers. But we cannot exceed that amount and we will not allow the tenant to pay the difference on the side. Because if they can pay the difference where are they getting that income from?

LEGISLATOR FORD: They have to justify it.

MS. PETTUS: They have to justify. We have so many issue with housing. As soon as we are able to get approved for our work number we have to verify employment for all the participants over 18 if they're employed. There's a system that when we put in the social security numbers we can determine if they're working if they're not reporting the income. All that's considered. So there's a lot that goes into it before we give out a Section 8 voucher.

LEGISLATOR FORD: I know the undertaking. It's a lot. I have to commend

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you really because we're always working with your office because $I$ have had people with Section 8 and $I$ know the housing inspectors they have to go out. When somebody wants an apartment you have to make sure it's good. And if the landlord didn't do the right thing they got to fix it, they got to go back.

MS. PETTUS: They get 20 days to correct it.

LEGISLATOR FORD: I've been
there. I have not walked a mile in your shoes. But $I$ know that your response has always been very good and I thank you. So that's why $I$ think it's very important that we listen to what you're saying right now knowing that your workload is getting higher and the need for additional personnel because we're these people are not rich. They're frightened. They're scared. Housing, everything. And I think we need to do the best we can for them. I hope my fellow legislators if we need to increase the numbers we could all join together.

MS. PETTUS: The increase came

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from receiving the Town of Hempstead, acquiring their vouchers. Thank you.

LEGISLATOR FORD: I know you can handle it.

MS. PETTUS: Thank you so much. LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Legislator Walker.

LEGISLATOR WALKER: I just want to say I agree with Legislator Ford. I think you were overloaded before and now you're really, really overloaded. Trying to make sure you get everyone into the system and certainly that nobody gets lost in the shuffle, which can happen. Especially when you're trying to get files and put them to you, whatever.

I just have another question only because we get bombarded with calls although it's really not up to us it's really up to the local municipalities. Do you like make sure like these are legal apartments? I just always feel bad when someone moves into a place and the finally get settled, especially if they have children involved or whatever and

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finally located someplace and all of a sudden there's complaints and complaints and complaints because they moved into an apartment in a home that isn't really supposed to have an apartment.

MS. PETTUS: Our inspection
department works closely with the local
building departments in the local villages as well as in the town. So, if there is a basement apartment, which is not allowed, we won't approve a basement apartment. If it's not illegal, if it's not an apartment that was grandfathered in we work along with the building department just to make sure it's a legal basement apartment. Those are usually the apartments that are illegal that we find. Basements or certain attics without egress.

LEGISLATOR WALKER: Right because you worry too for the safety of those people that move in that God forbid if there was a fire or God forbid there was an emergency they couldn't even escape.

MS. PETTUS: Sometimes the participants don't understand that when we

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have to deny that apartment, that unit, because it's not legal or certain means of egress is not appropriate and they get upset with us because they were searching for a unit for months we allow them to get an extension but they're already at their wits end and they go and take anything but we can't approve it. Then they will call their legislators. LEGISLATOR WALKER: And then
we're caught in the middle too because then you have the other resident are saying they can't be there. Your heart is aching. We really don't have enough housing. We don't. It's sad.

MS. PETTUS: I'm sorry to say, I
know I have received calls from some of your offices. If there is a complaint against a house on your block because that's a Section 8 because the landlord is absent, lives somewhere else, that's a landlord-tenant issue, that's not a Section 8 Nassau County Office of Housing issue. Only the unit itself. Unless you can prove that there's occupants in the house that's not listed as

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part of the household composition then they are in violation. But other things that happen -- because they're allowed to have visitors and if the other activities happen unfortunately we can't address that. It's actually a landlord-tenant matter.

LEGISLATOR WALKER: I know it's difficult because $I$ did have homes in my district where it was a Section 8 home and then the people in that home that were Section 8 they kind of had other people coming in who didn't even realize it was Section 8 and those people are paying, the Section 8 people are coming but now in that same room there's all these people in one house. And again, I'm sure that doesn't -- that's not the norm. But when it does happen that's an added extra problem within the --

MS. PETTUS: If you think it's outside of the normal mother, father or children you can report that to us because we will send out an investigator to check the house to make sure that the occupants listed on the lease are the actual occupants living

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in the house.
LEGISLATOR WALKER: You were extremely helpful -- I don't know if it was you -- you were extremely helpful for us and finally that house now could no longer be a Section 8 home because the landlord of that home was really not doing the work. He wasn't doing the right thing nor were the original Section 8 people living there.

MS. PETTUS: Legislator Walker, I know this is beyond what I'm supposed to be doing do at Section 8 but we send a letter out to the landlord making them aware that there's been some allegations. A lot of times they get nervous and they correct the problem. That's what I do when I get a call or constituent affairs call. I send out a letter and hopefully that will correct it. But that's the extent of what $I$ can do in a situation like that.

LEGISLATOR WALKER: I thank you for all you're doing. As I said, I totally agree that your work load has been heavy enough. We have to address the fact that you

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need additional staff there.
MS. PETTUS: Thank you so much.
LEGISLATOR WALKER: Thank you.
LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Thank you. Anyone else? Did I miss anyone? Thank you.

Number 348 and that is a resolution amending the boundary description of the collection and disposal zone of assessment to include real property in the Village of Lawrence.

That is moved by Ms. Walker and is seconded by Mr. Drucker. Have we anyone here for this? I imagine this is part of our settlement.

MR. ARNOLD: Ken Arnold. This item is the follow-up to the recently passed IAM and settlement where we now are required to put the people within the Village of Lawrence into the -- it's under the assessment sector collection and disposal. That's what this ordinance will do.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: What about Cedarhurst?

MR. ARNOLD: Cedarhurst they had

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a different arrangement. They don't get entered into the district until their debt is paid.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Got it. Any questions, debate or comment legislators? Thank you Ken.

Back on the main calendar. We will do number 306 and that motion is made by Mr. McKevitt and seconded by Mr. Lafazan. That is directing the treasurers to pay to supervisors certain funds. Go ahead please. MS. CALLEY: Diedre Calley, legislative budget review. The resolution before you contains the mortgage recording tax collection from October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020 as well as the July 1, 2020 through September 30, 2020 quarterly allocation.

Today 31.9 million is being distributed to the towns, villages and cities located in Nassau County. That's up 26.8 million from the same quarter last year. Thus the quarterly collections have increased 18.9 percent or roughly 5.1 million.

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On a year-to-date basis collections
have raised 19.5 percent inclusive of all quarterly and reserve payments. I'm available for any questions you may have.

LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Any
questions? Any comments? Thank you.
Now I'm going to call four items
together, the last four items, and then we will have a motion for executive session. Number 282 is McCarthy against the county. 283 is Hayes versus the county. 284 is Gleeson versus the county. And 285 is Behr versus the county.

That motion is made by Ms. Walker. Seconded by Ms. Birnbaum.

Motion for executive session by
Mr. McKevitt. Seconded by Mr. Drucker. All those in favor of executive session signify by saying aye. Any opposed? Members of the Rules Committee are invited as well.
(Committee recessed to executive
session at 3:52 p.m.)
(Committee reconvened at 4:57 p.m.)
LEGISLATOR KOPEL: I just want to

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ask the clerk's office $I$ think we voted on all the other items besides those four. Did we? We didn't. Okay. Fine.

On 282 of ' 20 which is the McCarthy versus the county case, Mr. McKevitt makes a motion to table. Seconded by Mr. Drucker. All those in favor of tabling that item say aye. Any opposed? That item is tabled. On the rest of the items that we called is there any public comment? Hearing none, I'm going to ask for a vote on all those items. All those in favor of those items please signify by saying aye. Any opposed?

Mr. Lafazan makes a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Ms. Walker. All those in favor of adjourning? Any opposed? (Committee adjourned at 5:03 p.m.)

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## CERTIFICATION

I, FRANK GRAY, a Notary Public in and for the State of New York, do hereby certify: THAT the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of my stenographic notes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 13th day of November 2020

FRANK GRAY

