

NASSAU COUNTY LEGISLATURE

RICHARD NICOLELLO, PRESIDING OFFICER

GOVERNMENT SERVICES & OPERATIONS

COMMITTEE

JOHN FERRETTI, CHAIRMAN

Hearing Of

2024 Nassau County Budget Hearing

OFFICE OF COUNTY ATTORNEY

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, RECREATION & MUSEUMS

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF ASSESSMENT

County Executive and Legislative Building

1550 Franklin Avenue

Mineola, New York

Wednesday, September 27, 2023, 9:36 a.m.

TAKEN BY: KAREN LORENZO, OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

LEGISLATOR JOHN FERRETTI, JR., CHAIRMAN

LEGISLATOR DENISE FORD, VICE CHAIRWOMAN

LEGISLATOR MICHAEL GIANGREGORIO

LEGISLATOR JOHN GIUFFRE (absent)

LEGISLATOR ARNOLD W. DRUCKER - RANKING

LEGISLATOR CARRIE A. SOLAGES

LEGISLATOR JOSHUA LAFAZAN (absent)

MICHAEL PULITZER

Clerk of the Legislature

APPEARED:

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ATTORNEY

Lisa LoCurto, Esq., Deputy County Attorney

Maria Boultadakis, Esq., Deputy County Attorney

John Hiller, Chief Deputy County Attorney

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, REC & MUSEUMS

Darcy Belyea, Commissioner

Tim Messner, Deputy Commissioner

Linda Barker, Accountant IV

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

John Capece, Commissioner

Mary Hawkins, CA

Don Harnett

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Nancy Nunziata, Commissioner

Mei-Sun Liu, Accountant IV

APPEARED (CONTINUED)

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Jill Nevin, Commissioner

Debbie Pugliese, Deputy Commissioner

Keith Gerber

Seema Zaki

DEPARTMENT OF ASSESSMENT

Michele Spara, Chief Deputy Assessor

Daniel Ross

Michael Going

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LEGISLATOR GIANREGORIO: Okay.
Would everybody please rise as Colonel
William Gaylor is going to lead us in the
Pledge of Allegiance?

(Whereupon, the Pledge of
Allegiance is said.)

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. Good
morning. Mr. Clerk, would you please
start calling the roll?

CLERK PULITZER: Thank you, sir.
Government Service and Operations roll
call.

Legislator Carrie A. Solages?

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: (No response.)

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator Joshua
Lafazan?

LEGISLATOR LAFAZAN: (No response.)
Ranking Member Arnold Drucker?

LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator John
Giuffre?

LEGISLATOR GIUFFRE: (No response.)

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator Michael
Giangregorio?

LEGISLATOR GIANREGORIO: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Thank you, Mike.

Vice Chairman Denise Ford?

LEGISLATOR FORD: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Thank you. And

Chairman John Ferretti?

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Thank you, John.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you, Mr.

Clerk.

CLERK PULITZER: We have a quorum,

sir.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you.

I'd like to welcome everyone to

today's hearing of the Government

Services and Operations Committee on the

proposed 2024 Nassau County Budget.

Though the hearing is to be

conducted by the Committee, it is open to

all legislators. Today we'll hear from

several departments as to their budgetary

needs and expectations for fiscal year

2024.

A second hearing conducted by the

1
2 Public Safety Committee will be on
3 October 10th, whereby the Legislature
4 will receive a full budgetary briefing
5 from the Office of Management and Budget,
6 comment and analysis from Comptroller
7 Elaine Phillips and presentations from
8 the Nassau County Police Department,
9 District Attorney's Office and
10 Correctional Center.

11 I'll now open today's hearing and
12 call our first department the office of
13 the County Attorney. I see we have Lisa
14 LoCurto. Good morning.

15 MS. LOCURTO: Good morning.

16 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Please proceed.

17 MS. LOCURTO: Thank you, Legislator.
18 Happy to present for the County
19 Attorney's Office. My name for the record
20 is Lisa LoCurto, Deputy County Attorney
21 With me I have the Bureau Chief of
22 Litigation and Appeals, Maria
23 Boulதாகის.

24 MS. BOULTADAKIS: Good morning.

25 MS. LOCURTO: And also the Chief

1
2 Deputy of the County Attorney, John
3 Hiller.

4 MR. HILLER: Good morning.

5 MS. LOCURTO: Today, I welcome the
6 opportunity to tell you about our
7 department and our budgetary needs for
8 the '24 year. I'm going to open with some
9 remarks about our department. I think you
10 know our department, but I want to
11 highlight certain aspects of our
12 department and the requests in our budget
13 and why we need those requests. So I'll
14 begin.

15 The County Attorney's Office is
16 comprised of six legal bureaus. We have
17 an Administration that oversees the all
18 the bureaus, and we also have a Special
19 Investigations Unit. The legal bureaus
20 are comprised of Family Court, Litigation
21 and Appeals, Municipal Transactions,
22 Legal Counsel, Property Assessment
23 Litigation, and we also Have Agency
24 Counsel. Those are deputy county
25 attorneys that are embedded, so to speak,

1
2 with various departments, to provide the
3 legal counsel that those departments need
4 on a daily basis.

5 The County Attorney's Office has a
6 statutory duty pursuant to the Nassau
7 County Charter Provision 1102 and that
8 duty is to represent the County and all
9 departments, its officers, institutions
10 and agencies in all litigation
11 proceedings. We act as the legal advisor
12 to the County and the departments and all
13 the agencies. We are responsible for
14 drawing contracts, ordinances,
15 resolutions, local laws, at the request
16 of the County Executive.

17 In addition, the County Attorney,
18 upon request of the governing bodies of
19 cities or towns, villages, school
20 districts can be called upon seeking
21 legal advice and consultation with them.

22 The Department presently has a total
23 of 89 employees, and those employees are
24 broken down as follows:

25 We have 29 support staff; of the 29

1
2 are two of them are part time; 52 Deputy
3 county attorneys, 49 or full time three
4 or part time; we have six assistant
5 county attorneys and law assistant temps,
6 and those are attorneys and the law
7 assistant temps are attorneys who are
8 waiting at mission to the bar. We also
9 have County Attorney and the Chief Deputy
10 County Attorney.

11 For the last seven years, the
12 Department's headcount has fluctuated
13 between 75 to 89. This has been the
14 result of we've had, particularly in the
15 last year, we've had a great number of
16 personnel leaving the office, either
17 through retirement or seeking
18 opportunities in the private sector.
19 We've built up back our reserves to keep
20 the headcount at 89. And as you will see
21 in this budget, we were asking for that
22 headcount to remain at 89.

23 The overriding goal of the
24 Department is to provide legal counsel
25 and to limit legal liability. For the

1
2 past decade, the Department has seen an
3 increase in the number of lawsuits being
4 filed against the County and in general
5 against municipalities with significant
6 potential liability.

7 The high risk of potential liability
8 covers such claims as: Defective road
9 design and personal injuries that result
10 from those defective road design cases;
11 wrongful prosecutions; and many state
12 based creative claims such as the Child
13 Victims Act, which not only opened the
14 courts access to individuals to bring
15 civil lawsuits against not just private
16 individuals, but it also encompasses
17 municipalities such as us, where we had
18 the responsibility or care of children.
19 So that's created a whole new array of
20 claims that we now have to civilly
21 defend.

22 This year's budget -- in putting it
23 together -- our goal is to address and
24 aggressively reduce the long standing
25 liability. Many of the current caseloads

1
2 with the greatest potential liability
3 impact against the County date back ten
4 years or more. Two significant factors
5 have added to the burden of defending
6 these claims. Factor one is, while Covid
7 slowed the court system for two years, it
8 also created a backlog of cases. The
9 number of matters that are coming due for
10 trial since Covid has now considered come
11 to an end and those delays are no longer
12 a reason to adjourn cases, has ended and
13 has increased our trial caseload by three
14 fold.

15 The second factor is we've had seen,
16 particularly in the last few years,
17 significant jury verdicts, especially
18 since the pandemic, they have gone up
19 considerably. So cases that are currently
20 ten years old are ripening and the
21 potential for those liability existed ten
22 years ago, it's becoming even stronger
23 based on the recent jury verdicts that
24 we've seen.

25 The Department, as it's done over

1
2 the past 15 years, is using a combination
3 of in-house counsel and special counsel
4 to increase the County's representation
5 in and out of the courthouse and to limit
6 our liability and to dispose of the high
7 risk cases.

8 You'll see one of the significant
9 increases in our budget -- there were two
10 increases. The first I'll address is the
11 contracts with legal counsel and experts.
12 That increase in the past for a number of
13 years we've been at 4.5 million. It's
14 being increased to 8 million. Why this
15 increase? The reason for this increase is
16 the expense of litigation is not immune
17 to inflation and rising costs. Not only
18 of legal counsel costs, but those
19 contracts also cover the cost for
20 experts. And we have found, particularly
21 like in a defective road design, the cost
22 for an accident reconstructionist, costs
23 for experts to deal with the severe
24 injuries that may have been resulted,
25 wrongful deaths. Those experts and

1
2 there's those expenses are going up. We
3 need to increase our budget to
4 effectively put on better defenses to
5 these cases. So that's one of the reasons
6 for the rise in costs. And since that
7 cost has been static for the last seven
8 years, it is incumbent upon us to be
9 realistic that that budget has to come
10 up.

11 The other significant costs that
12 you'll see increasing our budget from
13 years past is the expense for in-house
14 counsel. To attract and to retain
15 talented municipal attorneys, which we do
16 have in the County Attorney's Office, the
17 Department must invest in increasing
18 their salaries not only just for the
19 attorneys, but also for the support staff
20 as well, to enable the attorneys to do
21 the jobs that they have to do to defend
22 the public fisc.

23 The Department has instituted an
24 Early Case Assessment Litigation Bureau,
25 and its job is to assess potential

1
2 liability and make determinations if a
3 matter is going to proceed to lawsuit and
4 what kind of liability could impact the
5 County.

6 The Department has also 50 active
7 appeals; give or take. The new Bureau
8 Chief to Litigation and Appeals -- and
9 Maria is going to expand on it a little
10 bit more if you have questions on it, she
11 brings a wealth of courthouse experience
12 to our office, and she is doing a more
13 aggressive job of triaging our cases and
14 making the decision, rather than if we
15 feel that the fiscal liability is such
16 that it requires the assistance of
17 special counsel, we're deciding to send
18 it out at the inception at the onset,
19 rather than letting the case linger.
20 We're being more proactive in assessing
21 those cases and making our strategy plans
22 at a much earlier stage to make a better
23 defense for the County.

24 In addition, the County Attorney's
25 Office just doesn't defend lawsuits. The

1
2 Department actively works to recover
3 monies for the County. There are rents
4 that need to be recovered, Nassau County
5 property that has been damaged, and we
6 need to recoup those losses. It should
7 not come at the taxpayers expense when
8 our property is being damaged or when
9 responsible parties are not providing the
10 services that they should and we should
11 be able to recoup that those expenses. So
12 that's another factor you'll see in our
13 budget where we are increasing our
14 efforts to recoup that money. And that's
15 why you'll see an increase to anticipated
16 expanded revenues that we hope to
17 recover.

18 That's just a general overview of
19 the Department and some of the highlights
20 of the budget. If you have additional
21 questions, I'm happy to take them and so
22 is Maria and the Chief Deputy.

23 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you, Lisa.
24 Thank you for your presentation.

25 I certainly can feel from many of

1
2 the things you said working as an
3 attorney and what you are seeing in terms
4 of the Covid backlog, in many cases being
5 pushed to trial and to resolution a lot
6 quicker and all at the same time. So
7 that's definitely an increased cost.

8 Likewise, we see it too, in the
9 private sector with the inability to
10 retain. Really very few people want to
11 work. And then if you get them to work,
12 they demand exorbitant salaries for their
13 experience and other things. So salaries
14 are certainly going up.

15 I do have just a few follow up
16 questions before I open it up to the
17 other legislators.

18 MS. LOCURTO: Certainly.

19 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: So can you tell
20 me, with regard to the increase, is there
21 any of that increase that is from
22 previous years of liability that it
23 should have been in previous budgets, but
24 we're encumbering it now?

25 MS. LOCURTO: I think we're being

1
2 more realistic in our budgets,
3 Legislator. To answer your question
4 directly, yes. The present County
5 Attorney, when he came into the office,
6 his main goal is resourcing the office
7 and allocating the resources
8 appropriately. And I think looking at the
9 backlog of the cases and the new cases
10 that are coming in, he has observed that
11 in the past, maybe we were under
12 budgeting and not being more aggressive
13 in asking for more on both sides; to keep
14 the office staffed as it should be and
15 also to seek necessary monies with
16 partnering with outside counsel and with
17 experts to adequately defend the cases.

18 So some of the current budget is to
19 to avoid what's been happening in the
20 past is not budgeting enough in terms of
21 the resources that we see. We want to be
22 adequately staffed and to be aggressive
23 in cutting liability.

24 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: I applaud that
25 forward thinking. But my question

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2 specifically; essentially, are there
3 bills from previous years that are coming
4 due now that we're budgeting for for 2024
5 that are from previous years?

6 MS. LOCURTO: Yes. In the past
7 we've been using prior budgets that were
8 approved to pay past bills and we're
9 behind and it cuts into when we get the
10 next year's budget we've already spent
11 because we're still paying past bills. So
12 this will address this adequately.

13 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Are we behind
14 right now from past years?

15 MS. LOCURTO: We are, yes; we are,
16 slightly.

17 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Do you know what
18 the amount is?

19 MS. LOCURTO: I have a general
20 number, but I don't want to give a number
21 that's not 100% accurate, but it is
22 considerable.

23 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Do you know what
24 year that liability is from?

25 MS. LOCURTO: I would say in the

1
2 past five years.

3 MS. LOCURTO: All right. I'm going
4 to open it up to any other questions.
5 Legislator Ford.

6 LEGISLATOR FORD: Lisa, thank you
7 very much for your presentation.

8 Just a quick question. A lot of
9 times we have residents that file claims
10 against the County. Maybe the road is in
11 disrepair and the houses cracked from
12 trucks, you know, all those different
13 things and maybe sewage backup and
14 whatever. Those claims are handled
15 through the County Attorney's Office,
16 correct?

17 MS. LOCURTO: Correct. They're
18 in-house.

19 LEGISLATOR FORD: Okay. So do you
20 keep a record or a log, I guess, of the
21 complaints and basically how much these
22 claims are costing the County so that
23 like, you could track maybe if there is,
24 say, like for instance, say, maybe
25 particular intersection that there is

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2 maybe a lot of accidents or it could be a
3 lot of things, maybe the road is in such
4 disrepair that a lot of people have
5 suffered damage because of this that if
6 we're not fixing it in a timely fashion,
7 we seem to keep paying out for something.
8 Do you keep a record of that or is it
9 just done case by case basis?

10 MS. LOCURTO: Legislator, we do
11 break down cases by certain types of
12 claims. So we do track them. How many
13 claims are what we consider property
14 damage; how many are vehicle motor
15 vehicle accidents; how many are excessive
16 force claims and so forth.

17 Right now we have we have 1077
18 claims, active open litigations, and we
19 have another about 2000 claims I'm sorry,
20 Legislator. We have approximately 1300
21 open claims and about another 2000 claims
22 that are, while a Notice of Claim is
23 filed against the County, not all those
24 cases actually become a lawsuit.
25 Sometimes those cases are resolved. They

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2 may not mature into lawsuit, but we still
3 have to monitor them. So overall, the
4 County Attorney's Office right now is
5 covering about 3500 cases. We have about
6 60 cases per month that Notices of Claims
7 that come into the office.

8 With regard to those particular
9 Notices of Claims, the trip and falls on
10 County property, they are investigated,
11 they are assessed and we can run
12 statistics or percentages. Because we are
13 cooperatively working with all the
14 departments, and the department we deal
15 mainly with on those types of cases would
16 be Department of Public Works, if there
17 is a particular area that we constantly
18 have a problem with, we're in contact
19 with the Department of Public Works to
20 address it and to see what can be done.
21 Because we do recommend, obviously as
22 legal counsel, we don't want to be sued.
23 We don't want to be continued to be sued.
24 And where possible, many times, to our
25 great relief, it is not a county road and

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2 not that we want to shift the the burden
3 to another municipality, but if it's not
4 our responsibility, we will let that
5 municipality take over in terms of
6 addressing what the issue is.

7 LEGISLATOR FORD: Thank you very
8 much. I didn't realize that many claims,
9 though. I was thinking like maybe the
10 hundreds, you know, but like low
11 hundreds. Thank you very much. Really
12 appreciate it.

13 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. We have
14 Legislator Giangregorio, Legislator Mule,
15 then Legislator Drucker.

16 LEGISLATOR GIANGREGORIO: I just
17 have one question. We talked about some
18 outstanding number that we're trying to
19 catch up on over the past five years. And
20 I know you can't name the number, but you
21 said it's significant. Is significant \$1
22 million? In the \$5 Million range?

23 MS. LOCURTO: It's not \$5 million. I
24 want to say it's about \$1.2 million is
25 where we're at in terms of backlog.

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LEGISLATOR GIANREGORIO: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Mule.

LEGISLATOR MULE: Thank you.

Good morning.

To continue on the issue of the
backlog. You said that there's 89 staff,
that's what's budgeted.

MS. LOCURTO: That's our headcount.

LEGISLATOR MULE: That's your
headcount, right.

MS. LOCURTO: That's a total for the
Department.

MS. LOCURTO: And there's no
increase scheduled for this year, is that
correct?

MS. LOCURTO: I think we requested
it, but I think the budget gave us a
target for headcount. And so we did ask
for an increase in headcount, but we were
held to the 89.

LEGISLATOR MULE: So this leads to
my question: Has an analysis been done
to see if it would be more cost effective
to do in-house counsel versus contracting

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2 it out, given the backlog?

3 MS. LOCURTO: Well, the
4 determination of what goes to outside
5 counsel, yes, there is an analysis of
6 what our resources are in-house. The
7 determination of what goes to outside
8 counsel are three things: One, does
9 in-house counsel have the expertise to
10 deal with the complexity of that
11 particular litigation. In my opening
12 remarks, I mentioned the Child Victims
13 Act. That is a type of litigation that is
14 not normally handled by a municipal
15 government; Certain types of bankruptcy
16 municipal governments don't have the
17 expertise to handle; the wrongful
18 prosecutions which deal with criminal
19 issues, criminal trials that were
20 dismissed, we need that expertise to come
21 in, in that complexity. The type of
22 litigation requires it.

23 The second thing is if there's
24 conflicts of interest. So even if you had
25 your dream of having 100 attorneys, if

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2 you still have a conflict of interest,
3 the case has to be necessarily sent to an
4 outside counsel. We can't represent both
5 sides when there's a conflict.

6 The third factor is the exposure of
7 the case. Right now, Bureau Chief
8 Boultadakakis told me, in the next 60 days
9 on the calendar tab, we have 98 cases
10 slated to go to trial. We just don't have
11 the bandwidth or the wherewithal. So we
12 do have to partner with special counsel
13 in order to adequately meet those trial
14 dates, defend them, to adequately prepare
15 for them. Our staff has spent a couple of
16 days on trial. When they're their on
17 trial, they're not addressing the notices
18 of claims, they're not addressing the
19 motions, they're not addressing the
20 interrogatories and all the discovery
21 aspects that are necessary to either get
22 the case dismissed or to prepare for
23 trial. So we believe in putting together
24 this budget. The combination between the
25 two of what the actual case work dictates

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2 to us and how we allocate those
3 resources. That's the analysis that we
4 put in to do this budget. And that's why
5 we're satisfied with the 89 headcount. We
6 can't go lower than that. Of course, as I
7 said, we'd like to. Again, that's why we
8 want to increase the salary budget line,
9 because while we're handling our
10 caseload, if we lose attorneys to the
11 private sector -- and we have been and
12 we've had large turnover in the last year
13 or so -- and if we lose them to private
14 sector, we won't be able to adequately
15 defend the County.

16 And the goal, this is the public's
17 money and it's our job to provide an
18 adequate defense. And more than an
19 adequate defense, we have to put every
20 amount of ounce of resource that we can
21 so that the taxpayers aren't paying more
22 than they have to pay if there is a
23 negative jury verdict. And our goal
24 always is to have the liability
25 dismissed.

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2 LEGISLATOR MULE: Right. So it's
3 it's in that third category that this
4 question is pertinent.

5 What I'm hearing you say is that due
6 to the backlog, you do not have the
7 capacity to handle those cases in-house,
8 all of those cases in-house. Some, of
9 course, you obviously do. And so you're
10 sending them out to outside counsel. And
11 it's not for reasons of expertise or
12 conflict of interest, correct?

13 MS. LOCURTO: Sometimes it's a
14 combination of both. And just to clarify,
15 thank you for giving me the opportunity
16 to clarify that. Because of the Covid two
17 year backlog, all these cases are coming
18 at one time. It's like a perfect storm.
19 Whereas, if they had been. Handled in the
20 past two years prior to the shutdown or
21 have been addressed previously, we might
22 have been able to handle some of these
23 cases in-house, the ones that aren't the
24 high exposure cases. But the fact of the
25 matter is, for whatever reason, they

1
2 weren't. They're all coming to a head all
3 at the same time. Similar to like
4 Superstorm Sandy, when we had high tide
5 high, the surge was coming and the storm
6 impact was hitting at just precisely when
7 high tide. So normally we would have had
8 ten feet swells of water, we had 16 to 18
9 foot swells of water. It's just a perfect
10 storm where you can put everything you
11 have at it. But if it's all hitting at
12 the same time, you're going to have the
13 need for additional coverage. And that's
14 what we're facing right now.

15 LEGISLATOR MULE: Okay.

16 So am I understanding you to say
17 that this is a temporary situation and
18 that within six months, one year, what's
19 the time frame when when you will have
20 this backlog taken care of?

21 MS. LOCURTO: I can't -- litigation
22 takes a life of its own, I'm not sure.
23 But part of it, it isn't just we need
24 additional counsel. What I think we also
25 are saying is the cost of litigating even

1
2 on these high exposure cases, requires us
3 to retain experts and counsel that can
4 address these high exposure cases.

5 LEGISLATOR MULE: Okay. I'm going to
6 let that drop. I think Arnie will pick
7 that up.

8 But I do have another question. So
9 at I believe it was the last full
10 Legislature, we certified the tax rolls
11 or we approved it for certification. We
12 currently don't have an Assessor. We
13 currently don't have an Acting Assessor
14 as required by law. And so we were told
15 that a Chief Deputy Assessor was going to
16 sign the rolls. And at that time we asked
17 for an opinion from the County Attorney's
18 Office whether this is in fact legal. Do
19 you have an answer to that? And if not,
20 when can we expect an answer to that?

21 MS. LOCURTO: I was prepared to talk
22 on budget, not on that specific thing. We
23 we did get that question. It was referred
24 back to the County Attorney's Office. We
25 are comfortable in saying that the roll

1
2 could be certified by Michele Spara. She
3 has the authority to do it. But we can
4 elucidate more on that. But I don't feel
5 comfortable veering off onto -- I'd
6 rather stick to the discussion of budget.
7 Not that I'm dodging your question. I
8 want to stick to talking about the
9 budget. But to directly answer your
10 question, the County Attorney has looked
11 at it. We're confident that Michele can
12 certify.

13 LEGISLATOR MULE: Okay. When you're
14 comfortable sending that in officially,
15 can we have that in writing, please?

16 MS. LOCURTO: Certainly.

17 LEGISLATOR MULE: Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
19 Drucker.

20 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Thank you,
21 Chairman.

22 Lisa, a couple of questions. In your
23 headcount of 89, how many are actually
24 lawyers?

25 MS. LOCURTO: As I said, 52 are

1
2 Deputy County Attorneys. And then we also
3 have six ACA attorneys; so that's 55.

4 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: How has that
5 been trending over the past few years?

6 MS. LOCURTO: Unfortunately, because
7 we've had attrition, we've had high
8 turnover. We've seemed to have hovered at
9 that number. Whenever we try to get ahead
10 to that number, inevitably we will lose
11 attorneys to the private sector, or to
12 other municipal entities.

13 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: There were
14 years back, I think even under the
15 Mangano years, it was much higher numbers
16 right?

17 MS. LOCURTO: In the earlier --
18 you're testing my memory.

19 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: I know you've
20 been here, so you would be able to tell
21 us. I recall it being over 100.

22 MS. LOCURTO: No. Total headcount
23 might have been over 100, but the number
24 of attorneys was not over 100. That would
25 be going back to --

1
2 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: It was over 52.

3 MS. LOCURTO: Yes. It was over 52.

4 I think the high number was because every
5 department was not immune to layoffs
6 during the 2011 and 2012 period in the
7 County under the Mangano Administration.
8 Even our department took a hit of
9 layoffs. We lost support staff and we
10 lost attorneys. So we did go down a
11 considerable number. And at one point, I
12 believe we were at 69 attorneys. We have
13 never gotten back up to that number.
14 Previous years to that, previous to the
15 Mangano Administration going back --
16 because I have been here a number of
17 years, I do go back to the Suozzi
18 Administration as well -- there was a
19 time they were budgeted for 110, but I
20 believe they had 103 attorneys. And that
21 was back in the mid early 2000 to mid
22 2000. We have, unfortunately, never
23 gotten back up to that number. But I
24 think we are committed in the County
25 Attorney's Office, no matter what our

1
2 headcount is, we never lose our dictate
3 and mandate which is to effectively
4 protect the public fisc. That's our goal.
5 And if we --

6 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: What's the
7 starting salary for an attorney?

8 MS. LOCURTO: It depends. If you're
9 referring to your number of years in
10 experience, new attorneys are starting
11 salary is \$65,000.

12 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: 60,000.

13 MS. LOCURTO: 65.

14 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: 55.

15 MS. LOCURTO: 65.

16 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Sorry, sorry,
17 sorry.

18 MS. LOCURTO: No, no. I'm sorry.

19 (Whereupon, off the record
20 side conversation.)

21 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Is it fair to
22 say that the challenge in getting staff
23 is the salary?

24 MS. LOCURTO: It's a challenge, yes.
25 To be competitive. Our starting attorneys

1
2 are starting at \$65,000 and we have to
3 start at \$65,000 and that's increased. We
4 used to start starting attorneys -- and
5 this is again going back over 20 years --
6 The starting salary used to be when I
7 started in the County Attorney's Office,
8 it was \$27,000. That was the starting
9 salary, and then it's gone up. In the
10 last ten years, it was held at \$55,000.
11 If you were a new attorney, if you were
12 just admitted to practice and had at
13 least three years of experience, it was
14 \$55,000. We've increased it to \$65,000.
15 If you're an attorney of more experience,
16 than obviously we'd like to offer and
17 attract that type of talent and attract
18 that type of attorney and that salary
19 scale is slightly different for that.
20 It's difficult to be competitive with the
21 private sector. So we are looking to
22 increase the salaries and that is
23 included in our budget.

24 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: So you have
25 five openings, right, in your headcount.

1
2 Your headcount is 89, but you have 84?

3 MS. LOCURTO: Yes, I think we're
4 looking to, because again, we've had
5 people leave the office and we're looking
6 to fill in. Some of those positions, 89
7 nine is the total headcount. It's not
8 only just attorneys we would like to fill
9 it with, but we also need support staff.
10 And some of the support staff are aging
11 and they're retiring and we need to
12 backfill them as well because the support
13 staff are the backbone to helping the
14 attorneys focus on what they need to
15 focus on.

16 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: What about
17 offering a higher salary to maybe attract
18 an attorney with more experience that
19 might be able to handle some of these
20 cases that you say that you lack the
21 expertise.

22 MS. LOCURTO: The expertise is
23 subject matter expertise. And we are
24 recruiting. I think I want to clarify
25 that the starting salary is \$65,000 for

1
2 new attorneys only, but we're actively
3 recruiting to find more experienced
4 litigators and with that experience,
5 compensating them based on their number
6 of years. So a litigator with ten years
7 or 15 years or 20 years experience,
8 obviously, we're not going to start them
9 at \$65,000. We're going to, to attract
10 them, offer a salary commensurate with
11 what their experience requires as
12 compensation.

13 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Do you have an
14 established policy or practice in the
15 office to decide which cases you're going
16 to take on at the outset and which cases
17 are going to go to outside counsel?

18 MS. LOCURTO: Yes. And I think I'm
19 going to let Maria take over because
20 she's the head of the Litigation and
21 Appeals Bureau.

22 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Can I get that
23 answer?

24 MS. LOCURTO: Sure.

25 MS. BOULTADAKIS: Good morning,

1
2 Legislator. How are you?

3 We do. We have the Early Case
4 Assessment Management Bureau. So early
5 on, once we see the Notice of Claim
6 and/or the Complaint, we assess the
7 damages and the liability exposure.
8 Typically, if it's a demand and/or an
9 injury specifically in a personal injury
10 case, if we see that it exceeds more than
11 \$1 million, I immediately conference it
12 with our Chief Deputy County Attorney. We
13 go over the facts, we go over the counsel
14 involved, the injuries involved, and will
15 assess at that point if we believe
16 special counsel is necessary to defend
17 the County.

18 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: That's just
19 because of the value of the potential
20 liability in terms of damages or
21 questions of law?

22 MS. BOULTADAKIS: Both. It's not
23 only damages. Could be questions of law.
24 It could also, like Lisa stated, it could
25 be the subject matter of the case. If we

1
2 believe like a Child Victims Act case or
3 a bankruptcy case or something of complex
4 nature or a serious wrongful death case,
5 it wouldn't be your every day tort case.
6 I mean, we do actively have 1200 cases we
7 are handling in house.

8 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Like a wrongful
9 death case -- you brought that up -- so a
10 number of my colleagues here are
11 attorneys. A simple accident involving a
12 County vehicle in which somebody dies
13 tragically, it involves a wrongful death
14 action. But the issue of law is not so
15 complicated because it's basically an
16 accident. So is that a case because it's
17 wrongful death? Today damages in any
18 cases is several million dollars. Is that
19 a case that automatically would go out to
20 third party?

21 MS. BOULTADAKIS: No.

22 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Outside
23 counsel?

24 MS. BOULTADAKIS: Not necessarily,
25 no.

1
2 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: So what would
3 be the determining factor that you would
4 keep a case like that? Any wrongful death
5 case is going to be in excess of \$1
6 million.

7 MS. BOULTADAKIS: You're correct.

8 If we believe that we could hire an
9 expert, if we believe that, in fact,
10 there is a question of liability, where
11 we think a motion would be decided in our
12 favor, we would keep that in house. We
13 would write the motion. We would make
14 those arguments before the Court.

15 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: You know, I
16 would say that and I'm speaking perhaps
17 for some of my colleagues, I know and
18 we've gone into executive session and
19 we've discussed some of the settlements,
20 a lot of times we say amongst ourselves,
21 you know, why did this have to go to
22 outside counsel? We feel that you have
23 qualified attorneys in your office that
24 could handle it. So I think I,
25 personally, would like to see more cases

1
2 stay in house rather than going to
3 outside counsel.

4 I understand the backlog and I
5 understand the manpower challenges, but I
6 just think it costs taxpayers a lot more
7 when we're sending it out to third party
8 outside counsel that are billing at
9 \$1,000 an hour. I just think that that's
10 something that we really need to be
11 mindful of.

12 Now, Lisa, you had mentioned that
13 there are 98 cases ready for trial. How
14 many of them will go to trial? How many
15 of them would you say you're going to
16 take the trial?

17 MS. LOCURTO: The 98 cases. I would
18 refer back to -- depends on -- they're in
19 tap right now. So how many will they
20 actually go to trial? It could be all of
21 them. I mean, it depends on how
22 reasonable our counsel is and whether or
23 not they're willing to settle.

24 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: What percentage
25 of cases generally do you take the trial?

1
2 Do you have any numbers, any data on
3 that?

4 MS. LOCURTO: I can get that data
5 for you. I didn't have that.

6 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: The perception
7 amongst us here is that --

8 MS. LOCURTO: As you know,
9 Legislator --

10 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: You settle for
11 too many cases. And there are a lot of
12 times, I think even my colleagues would
13 agree, you know, take the case to trial.
14 I just feel like and, you know, I'm a
15 practicing attorney, too. And I think the
16 perception out in the outside in the
17 world is that if you sue in the County,
18 they don't want to go to trial. They'll
19 settle. So, you know, proceed in that
20 direction.

21 MS. LOCURTO: And I understand that,
22 Legislator. I would say, though, that
23 probably most cases, I would say 90% of
24 the cases do settle once they hit the
25 courthouse on average. We do try cases,

1
2 though. The reason you settle cases is
3 you're buying your peace. There's
4 tremendous risk. We recently were just
5 discussing a case and that case was a bad
6 personal injury case. And without naming
7 names of the case you addressed it, I
8 think last month, we settled it. Almost a
9 similar case, a case tried up in the
10 Bronx the jury verdict came in for \$117
11 Million. That's a huge risk. So when we
12 come to you and we ask to settle these
13 cases, it's because we genuinely feel,
14 I'd rather buy the peace and not waste
15 taxpayer dollars doing appeal. Now, will
16 that \$117 Million Judgment stand? It was
17 an ambulance that injured an individual.
18 I probably won't stand, it will be
19 reduced. But \$117 Million is a huge risk
20 for the taxpayers to bear that liability.
21 So when we're recommending settlement of
22 cases, it's because we genuinely wish to
23 cut any potential liability and cut out
24 any risk. As much as you can cut out
25 risk.

1
2 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: There's always
3 a risk, Lisa. That's what the nature of
4 --

5 MS. LOCURTO: Correct. And you could
6 come back with a jury verdict.

7 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: But many times
8 we feel that sometimes it's worth the
9 risk of coming back with a verdict in our
10 favor and paying out zero rather than
11 settling for a few million dollars. There
12 are times that I think my colleagues
13 would agree on that. You know, sometimes
14 you really got to take it to the mat, as
15 they say.

16 Are the attorneys considered the
17 ordinance employees?

18 MS. LOCURTO: Yes, they are.

19 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Is there any
20 discretion in terms of salary? Can you
21 can you change the salary for depending
22 on the level of experience, and how high
23 do you go for a starting attorney.

24 MS. LOCURTO: Yes, there is
25 discretion, if that's your question. In

1
2 terms of starting. Unlike CSEA or union
3 employees, where contract is set out by a
4 specific plan. I think the County
5 Attorney, Judge Adams -- in the past
6 years ago, there was a career salary
7 plan. Many county attorneys have tried to
8 create equity to create a salary plan.
9 Again, as I've said in my opening
10 remarks, which is to incentivize and
11 retain talented municipal attorneys. The
12 work that municipal workers do, all of
13 us, including attorneys, we're dedicated
14 public servants. And we feel our mission
15 is to protect the public fisc. We live in
16 this county. We want to ensure that
17 fairness is done to our residents and
18 that we're equally concerned with
19 spending the county's taxpayer dollars.
20 Someone said, "Oh, do you look at it as
21 your money and you should treat it as if
22 it's your money"? I don't treat this as
23 my money because it's not my money. It's
24 the public's money. It's the residents of
25 Nassau County's money. And how I spend

1
2 that money, I want to make sure that I'm
3 spending it very judiciously and
4 appropriately and something that they are
5 getting their value and their best
6 possible defense.

7 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: We agree with
8 you, Lisa. Every one of us here agrees
9 with you. We don't want to see taxpayers
10 have to foot the bill unnecessarily, but
11 we also have to be mindful of the fact
12 that we pay a lot of money for qualified
13 attorneys to represent and defend the
14 interests. And sometimes we have to rely
15 upon their talent and their level of
16 experience to take us over the top when
17 there are cases that we feel we should be
18 coming out and we should prevail. So
19 we're all agreeing with you, but there
20 are times I think, that we tend to settle
21 cases than that it's worth the risk to
22 take it to trial.

23 My last question, the damages line
24 for fiscal year '24 is \$45 Million.
25 Despite the Litigation Reserve Fund

1
2 having approximately \$342 million
3 available for use. Can you elaborate on
4 that?

5 MS. LOCURTO: I'm sorry, Legislator.
6 Can you repeat that question?

7 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Yes. The Suits
8 and Damages line I believe in the budget
9 is \$45 million and the Litigation Reserve
10 Fund has \$342 million. So is there any
11 correlation there? Can you expand on
12 that?

13 MS. LOCURTO: Yes, because we have
14 successfully settled some certain long
15 standing liability cases, such as, for
16 example, the KeySpan litigation, which
17 had been a case that had been kicking
18 around for over 23 years. That structured
19 settlement has required us to pay over
20 time. So that's part of the reason we're
21 looking to do more structured settlements
22 for those higher liability cases. We
23 also have the Iacone case which was
24 another major case structured settlement
25 case that came before the Legislative

1
2 Body. We have certain utilities
3 litigations, those structured settlements
4 over time, that's why the proposed budget
5 is the \$45 million.

6 On average we pay, and we've been
7 very successful in over the past years of
8 keeping the costs down. But as I said,
9 inflation is going up. The cost of
10 settling cases is higher than it was
11 before. In the past, damage to a County
12 ambulance that got into an accident, the
13 repair may be \$2,000. Now the cost could
14 be \$25,000. In the span of less than than
15 five years, we've seen the costs go up.
16 So that's part of the reason. I think
17 Budget could speak to it better than I. I
18 think they're based on where we're
19 settling. Our cases we're in active
20 discussions with them, Budget says we
21 have to be realistic in setting aside
22 that money to address those claims
23 because we're not borrowing money
24 anymore. Remember we were told back in
25 2012, 2015, no more borrowing to pay down

1
2 claims, settlement claims. So we have to
3 put monies in reserves that cover those
4 expenses.

5 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Okay. Thank
6 you very much, Lisa.

7 MS. LOCURTO: Thank you, Legislator.

8 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Lisa, just a few
9 follow up questions.

10 You indicated that \$65,000 is the
11 starting salary for a new attorney,
12 meaning an attorney fresh out of law
13 school.

14 MS. LOCURTO: Correct.

15 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: So if an
16 attorney applies and they're not even
17 admitted yet, they say upon admission,
18 the salary would be \$65,000.

19 MS. LOCURTO: No. They start a lower
20 salary; I believe \$61,000. And then and
21 then upon admission to the bar, then they
22 jump up.

23 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Upon admission
24 at \$65,000.

25 MS. LOCURTO: Correct.

1
2 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Historically, at
3 least my perception of the County
4 Attorney's Office for new attorneys --
5 for example, my father out of law school
6 was a Deputy County Attorney -- was that
7 you gain quite a bit of court experience,
8 you know, whereas in the private sector
9 you might be pushing papers for five
10 years before you can get in a courtroom.
11 In the County Attorney's Office, you're
12 getting that experience not maybe from
13 that literal day one, but very early on.
14 Is that still the case in the County
15 Attorney's Office?

16 MS. LOCURTO: Absolutely. And in
17 particular, one of the litigating bureaus
18 that gets the the greatest amount of
19 experience is in Family Court. You're in
20 the courtroom every day. They are
21 defending those cases, protecting the
22 most vulnerable residents of the county,
23 children, prosecuting juvenile
24 delinquency cases. And because of Raise
25 the Age, which is a state mandate that

1
2 has come down to us, that's actually
3 increased their workload. So they are
4 constantly in the courtroom. And many
5 times with our new attorneys, we have, as
6 in the past, we like to start them in
7 Family Court so they can get that trial
8 room experience arguing before a judge,
9 prepping witnesses and putting witnesses
10 on the stand. Some of them love it down
11 there and they stay down there, some of
12 them we rotate then with that experience
13 into the Litigation Bureau.

14 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: So there's a
15 value, obviously, to that courtroom
16 experience. I know my father talks very
17 highly of his time as a county attorney
18 in the '80s. Although he wasn't making a
19 lot of money, he gained a lot of
20 experience that he still talks about it
21 till today, and uses that experience
22 today. So there's a value to that as
23 well. We should be encouraging that to
24 these applicants. You know, look,
25 \$65,000, I'm not going to sit here and

1
2 say it's a lot of money, but for a 20
3 something year old to get a salary like
4 that and get the courtroom experience is
5 certainly a value.

6 MS. LOCURTO: It is a value.

7 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: In terms of the
8 headcount that we were just discussing, I
9 want to make sure I heard you clearly. So
10 there was over 100 attorneys at one
11 point?

12 MS. LOCURTO: At one point. That was
13 in the early, early 2000.

14 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. So under
15 the Suozzi Administration?

16 MS. LOCURTO: I would say, yes.

17 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Now, has that
18 gradually been decreasing or was there a
19 sudden fall off of that number?

20 MS. LOCURTO: It's been gradually
21 decreasing. Part of it, as I mentioned,
22 was the period of when we had layoffs and
23 every department took a hit.

24 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Let's talk about
25 like 2019 before the pandemic. I am not

1
2 going to say the exact amount, but
3 approximately how many attorneys did we
4 have?

5 MS. LOCURTO: Since since 2019?

6 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Around 2019.

7 MS. LOCURTO: Around 2019, I believe
8 we had maybe 65 attorneys.

9 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: About ten more.

10 MS. LOCURTO: About ten more.

11 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Now, would you
12 agree with me, I'm sure many of the
13 attorneys up here would agree with me,
14 that since the pandemic, courts have
15 essentially streamlined a lot of stuff in
16 terms of conferences, appearances, a lot
17 are done virtually. The ones that are
18 done in person, there's many less cases
19 on the calendar. You're spending a lot
20 less time in court.

21 MS. LOCURTO: You're spending less
22 time in court, but you still have to
23 spend time prepping the case.

24 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Of course. I got
25 you, believe me. My point is, is it a

1
2 fair statement to say that post-COVID,
3 with a lot of these streamlined processes
4 in the courts, specifically in Nassau
5 County, that perhaps that could be one of
6 the reasons we have ten less attorneys
7 and we did four years ago or need ten
8 less attorneys?

9 MS. LOCURTO: I think that may be
10 part of it. I do think a large part of it
11 is the public sector is becoming more
12 attractive. And Covid did have a major
13 impact on how people view work, honestly.
14 They have opportunity in private sector
15 to literally work from home. We're
16 government, we can't work from home. We
17 have to serve the public, so we have to
18 be here five days a week. Very hard to
19 compete with someone who's offering you
20 more money and says you never have to
21 leave your house or you can work hybrid.
22 That, I think, is another factor of why
23 it's harder to recruit.

24 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: From my
25 experience, I agree with you, it's much,

1
2 much harder to recruit in the private
3 sector, I'm sure in the public sector.
4 But I think the way the businesses and
5 the public sector are getting by are by
6 these streamlined processes where when
7 you go for a deposition, you know, you're
8 not traveling an hour -- I guess in
9 Nassau County, you wouldn't be traveling
10 an hour. But the travel time, you're
11 doing it over a computer rather than in
12 person so you don't have to travel there.
13 The conferences, you have ten cases on
14 the calendar for the calendar call
15 instead of 130. There are differences
16 that I think is at least justifying a
17 decreased amount of attorneys in law
18 offices and in the County.

19 MS. LOCURTO: I would agree with
20 that, Legislator. Yes.

21 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. Thank you.
22 Legislator DeRiggi-Whitton.

23 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Thank
24 you.

25 Just to follow up with my colleague,

1
2 Legislator Drucker. If the County
3 Attorney decided to start the salary at
4 \$75,000, there wouldn't be any issue with
5 that. That would be an inner-department
6 decision.

7 MS. LOCURTO: I think we obviously
8 have some discretion, but we would have
9 to do it in consultation with Budget.

10 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Have
11 you requested that?

12 MS. LOCURTO: Yes, we've had
13 discussions with --

14 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: I
15 haven't seen that.

16 MS. LOCURTO: I'm sorry.

17 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: When
18 have you requested an increase in the
19 starting salary?

20 MS. LOCURTO: I think we increased
21 it just recently to bring it up. As I
22 said, we were at 55 for a long period of
23 time. So we requested to bring it up to
24 to the 61 for an attorney who hasn't yet
25 been admitted. And then we've actually

1
2 graduated it up to \$65,000.

3 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: That
4 was a couple of years ago.

5 MS. LOCURTO: That's fairly recent.

6 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Have
7 you requested an increase for this budget
8 year?

9 MS. LOCURTO: The starting salary, I
10 think we want a combination of we don't
11 want to just be restricted --

12 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Just
13 yes or no. Have you requested an
14 increase in starting salary?

15 MS. LOCURTO: We've requested
16 increases for starting salaries at 65.
17 Have we requested beyond 65 for this
18 budget? The answer is no.

19 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Okay,
20 so you haven't requested an increase for
21 starting salary. Maybe that's something
22 that should be explored.

23 Number two. I have two other
24 categories. One, as Legislator Ferretti
25 was mentioning, we have a couple really

1
2 good benefits to working at the County
3 Attorney's Office. One is the ten year
4 loan forgiveness, which most people don't
5 even know about. If you work in the
6 public sector for ten years, your student
7 loans are forgiven, which is really a
8 great --

9 MS. LOCURTO: Yes.

10 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: I know
11 people that have done it, but a lot of
12 people don't know of it when I speak to
13 them about it. So I think that's another
14 thing that we should push.

15 MS. LOCURTO: That is something,
16 Legislator, we do in our recruitment.
17 Particularly with our newer attorneys.
18 Part of the problem is, the private
19 sector does lure them. If you're stuck at
20 65,000 and we're limited in the amount of
21 increases we can make. The ten years is
22 a long time.

23 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: There's
24 nothing to stop you from asking for a
25 higher starting salary.

1
2 MS. LOCURTO: Agreed.

3 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Getting
4 past that point, I think you should ask
5 for a higher starting salary. Second of
6 all, I think we should really add that to
7 the recruitment because a lot of people
8 aren't aware of it. It's just my
9 suggestion.

10 The third aspect which Legislator
11 Drucker also focused on. We have a
12 reputation -- I have a lot of friends in
13 the private sector of even with the
14 assessment. We'll put in a high number,
15 you guys put in a low number and we
16 always settle in the middle. So trying
17 some of those cases I think would shake
18 that up a little bit. And honestly, I
19 respect that you see yourself as
20 protecting taxpayers' money, as do we.
21 But when you pay outside counsel so much
22 money, that's taxpayer money also. So I
23 really think trying a few cases -- we had
24 a case that we did not authorize. I don't
25 think it's come back yet. There are

1
2 times when you have to shake it up a
3 little bit. We can't just settle
4 everything. I understand risk. And we do
5 have Appellate Divisions which sometimes
6 protect us from that. But to have the
7 reputation, which I honestly hear Nassau
8 County has, is that we'll settle anything
9 and everything, is not the best message
10 to send out there.

11 As Legislator Drucker said, I don't
12 know what percentage -- I rarely read of
13 a case going to trial and getting a
14 verdict. Very, very rarely. I don't
15 remember one in quite a while.

16 So I just think we should really
17 look at boosting the salary, attracting
18 good people. Again, that's all decided
19 upon by your department. It's not
20 anything that's regulated by any labor
21 agreement.

22 And then promoting, as Legislator
23 Ferretti said, the experience as well as
24 the loan forgiveness. And we have to fix
25 our reputation of settling everything.

1
2 Honestly, even as legislators, we do
3 agree with that. It's very frustrating
4 for us. We go about hiring outside
5 counsel and then we just settle it
6 anyway. So it almost seems to me like why
7 are we hiring outside counsel to prepare
8 for trial? And I do get the mitigation
9 and risk. I get it. But every once in a
10 while we really have to try it. And it's
11 good experience for our attorneys. It's a
12 good message for those that are suing us.
13 And I think under the right
14 circumstances, it's a good practice so
15 that we don't have that reputation of
16 always settling.

17 So thank you.

18 MS. LOCURTO: Thank you, Legislator,
19 for your opinion.

20 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
21 Thomas McKevitt.

22 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Good morning,
23 Ms. LoCurto. You know, I did not work in
24 the County Attorney's Office. I worked in
25 the Town of Hempstead Town Attorney's

1
2 office for nine years. So I'm familiar
3 with a lot of the issues you have.

4 But when you bring up the issue with
5 starting salaries, when you work in a
6 public office such as yours, increasing
7 the salary of a starting attorney is not
8 simply just giving them more money. The
9 problem is, you can throw off the scale
10 your entire office. I think that's part
11 of the issue now.

12 When I worked in the town of
13 Hempstead, I made a stunning, huge amount
14 of \$38,000 a year. That's why I made.
15 But the problem is, if you're increase to
16 50, there are people for -- you start at
17 65,000 -- if you if people are there
18 several years making only 75, they're
19 going to say, well hold it. I've been
20 here several years. They're making 75. I
21 need to get more. So a simple increase of
22 just a couple of thousand dollars in your
23 starting salary, that could lead to
24 literally hundreds of thousand dollars
25 for the entire office; isn't that

1
2 correct.

3 MS. LOCURTO: Correct. And I think
4 overall, that's why we're thoughtfully
5 considering how to make an overall plan.
6 Just what you mentioned, it is a problem.

7 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: One of the
8 issues is, obviously, we have attorneys
9 who make very little amount of money.
10 Sometimes it's because of the experience.
11 I loved working for the Town of
12 Hempstead. Love the work, the people. My
13 wife didn't appreciate the salary I made
14 at that point. But it's work we had. But
15 one of the challenges you have is to keep
16 morale up. Again, people can go to
17 private sector more easily. But if they
18 really love the work, you want to keep
19 enticing them. But one of the challenging
20 things in these challenging times is
21 making sure people want to come to work
22 and do this type of work. So I'm just
23 going to mention that.

24 MS. LOCURTO: Agreed, Legislator.
25 Thank you for that.

1
2 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Certainly
3 there are times where we have issues with
4 settling cases. But just as an observer,
5 I used to litigate. I cannot litigate
6 anymore. I just don't have the time with
7 this job and being involved. But I have
8 noticed the amount of judgments and
9 amount of verdicts has, again,
10 exponentially increased in the last
11 couple of years. And again, we do have
12 issues with going to outside counsel, but
13 there could literally be just one case of
14 one verdict which could almost literally
15 be triple or quadruple the entire budget
16 of your office, which can happen at this
17 point; isn't that true?

18 MS. LOCURTO: Absolutely,
19 Legislator. It's a good point. The tort
20 based decisions that we've seen,
21 particularly in personal injury, I think
22 that the myth that because we're a large
23 suburban municipality that the juries are
24 going to guard the taxpayer dollar is not
25 true. They're giving out larger verdicts

1
2 than we've seen in years past. And to the
3 point where we do take cases to trial --
4 Actually, Bureau Chief Boultadakis and
5 another Deputy County Attorney spent two
6 days on trial and it was a success. We do
7 take cases to trial. Sometimes we're
8 successful and we get the case dismissed.
9 Sometimes it does result in liability.
10 But by forcing the case to trial, we're
11 well aware that it does make other people
12 think before that they try it. But the
13 types of verdicts we're seeing are much
14 higher. And the idea that, well, a Nassau
15 County jury would never give that kind of
16 verdict, not true. We always say other
17 jurisdictions are used to getting higher
18 verdicts. I mentioned the one in the
19 Bronx where it was \$117 Million. I don't
20 know if we'd see \$117 million in Nassau,
21 but it is possible. And that is one of
22 the factors we consider when we're
23 recommending settlement to you. We're not
24 afraid to try cases. You ultimately have
25 that power as a Legislature. And you have

1
2 turned down some of our settlements. If
3 you tell us no, we think you should bear
4 the risk, we'll take it to trial and
5 we'll try that case to the best of our
6 ability and get the best result. So we're
7 not afraid to try the cases, but we are
8 mindful.

9 That is one of the considerations,
10 is how high these verdicts have been
11 since we've seen since the pandemic.
12 They were going up prior to the pandemic.
13 Since after the pandemic, the verdicts
14 are just all over the map and high. There
15 is exposure and risk at trial.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: All right.

18 Thank you very much for your
19 presentation and your responses.

20 MS. LOCURTO: Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Any public
22 comment? I Believe there was one person
23 here who wanted to speak.

24 MR. TSIRKAS: Good afternoon. My
25 name is Spiro Tsirkas. I'm here

1
2 representing the City of Glen Cove and
3 the Glen Cove Youth Bureau. I was caught
4 a little off guard by a phone call I
5 received today while I was working that I
6 should come down here right away.

7 Not, but three days ago, we had a
8 breakfast for the Legislators to discuss
9 the impact of budget cuts, lack of money
10 and a steady budget for Youth Services
11 for the last 30 years. I've been doing
12 this since 2008 and we haven't seen a
13 dollar increase. Come to see that the
14 City of Glen Cove Youth Bureau was just
15 cut \$20,887. The reason for our breakfast
16 on Friday was to discuss why we need more
17 money, what is going on in the community,
18 in all our communities, the need for
19 Youth Services, the need for mentoring,
20 the need for counseling, the need for
21 programs that will further benefit our
22 youth. But yet, it's Wednesday morning
23 and the City of Glen Cove Youth Bureau is
24 being cut \$20,887.

25 Our total budget from Nassau County

1
2 is \$70,000. We service over 3000 kids in
3 the City of Glen Cove. We all know what
4 \$70,000 gets us at home, let alone for
5 3000 plus kids on a daily.

6 So I just wanted to go on record.
7 That I do not agree with this cut. I
8 think it's wrong. I think this needs to
9 be re-evaluated and relooked at. I don't
10 think that any agency should be receiving
11 a cut, let alone one agency having their
12 money taken away and given to another
13 agency.

14 Our numbers are there. Our product
15 is there. And I speak for the youth
16 coalition that we did something on Friday
17 to show you all are the need that the
18 community has for our agencies. And the
19 thank you that the Youth Bureau gets is a
20 deduction of \$20,887.

21 So on that note, thank you. Thank
22 you for hearing me. Any questions?

23 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you, sir.

24 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Thank
25 you, Spiro. Our budget is still fluid,

1
2 and I would really hope that -- I have no
3 idea why this was the only group that
4 lost money from what I can see, and it
5 was an over 25% decrease. I cannot
6 understand how that's possible. We
7 discussed the ongoing need for these
8 kids, their safety net, in Glen Cove.
9 The work Spiro and his Department does is
10 amazing. And we were trying to get more
11 money for you. And I cannot believe it's
12 being cut by almost 30%. I don't believe
13 it's going to be the final number. I have
14 faith in the fact that this can be fixed.
15 And I am really asking, Andy and Chris
16 Leimone and DCE Walsh, this has to be
17 fixed. I think it's a mistake.

18 MR. LEIMONE: Chris Lemoine from the
19 Administration. It's not accurate.
20 There's been no cuts there. We have Andy
21 here. Jill Nevin will be here later and
22 she can address this, but that's not
23 accurate.

24 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Oh,
25 that's the number we got. That's the

1
2 number in the report. I'm very happy to
3 hear that. But that's the number we
4 received. Believe me, I wouldn't have
5 made that guess.

6 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: All right.

7 So is there any further public
8 comment before we move on to the
9 Department of Parks Recreation and
10 Museum?

11 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Okay. I
12 just want to thank you, because if it's
13 an error, then that's totally
14 understandable. But it is in the Budget
15 Review that I received.

16 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay.

17 Thank you.

18
19 *****
20
21
22
23
24
25

1
2 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Next up is the
3 Department of Parks, Recreation and
4 Museums.

5 Good morning, Commissioner. How are
6 you?

7 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Good morning.
8 How's everybody today?

9 Can I take a moment for some opening
10 remarks?

11 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Yes, absolutely.
12 All right. Take as much time as you need,
13 as long as it's under three minutes
14 (laughter).

15 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: So good
16 morning, everybody.

17 With me is Deputy Commissioner Tim
18 Messner and our Accountant IV, Linda
19 Barker.

20 2023 has been an exciting time for
21 the Department of Parks, Recreation and
22 Museums. We just completed another very
23 busy summer that had over 80 free events
24 for our residents at six of our beautiful
25 parks. Our summer recreation program was

1
2 held at two locations, providing 829 kids
3 with a fun, activity filled summer camp
4 experience. Attendance is up at all of
5 our museums. Park permits are steady and
6 our seven beautiful golf courses are busy
7 seven days a week. Field rentals are near
8 capacity after we made a few changes
9 regarding accountability with the youth
10 leagues. We saw increased registrations
11 for the Long Island Marathon and record
12 attendance at the July Boys to Men
13 concert.

14 We again hosted the games for the
15 physically challenged, which saw over
16 1000 athletes participate and hosted the
17 Korean American Sports Festival for only
18 the second time in New York State, which
19 brought several thousand participants and
20 fans to Nassau County from across the
21 country for four days of competition at
22 five facilities.

23 Tourism numbers are up across the
24 region, which we feel is a direct
25 correlation between our robust concert

1
2 and event schedule and as a result of our
3 advertising campaigns.

4 The increase in Hotel/Motel tax
5 revenue going forward will help us to
6 offer more events and entertainment at no
7 cost to taxpayers.

8 Thanks to the support of all of you
9 at the Legislature and the support of the
10 County Executive and his Administration
11 team, as well as the Comptroller and her
12 team, we now look forward to 2024.

13 Thank you also to the team from OMB
14 for working with us to put together a
15 budget that we think will serve as a
16 solid plan as we move into next year.

17 We are adequately staffed at the
18 present time, although we continue to
19 seek to hire and fill gaps to ensure we
20 have coverage and can maintain all
21 facilities since we operate seven days
22 per week and typically 16 hours per day,
23 as you know. We are working with Civil
24 Service to fill the areas of need, rehire
25 through attrition and ensure that

1
2 employees have the correct titles for the
3 work that they're doing.

4 This new budget year will bring a
5 slight increase in our full time
6 headcount, which we're grateful for, and
7 to help us fill key supervisory positions
8 at several facilities. And the new CSEA
9 contract negotiated by the
10 Administration, well, hopefully help with
11 employee retention and recruitment of
12 qualified staff.

13 As you will note, in our budget
14 there is an increase in "Other Than
15 Personal Service Expenses". This is
16 primarily due to the cost of the
17 commodities we need to purchase to upkeep
18 our facilities, as well as elevated cost
19 and labor rates associated with some of
20 our contracts. Examples would be credit
21 card processing, pool and rink
22 maintenance, golf cart supply and repairs
23 and a cleaning contract; all necessary
24 expenses, however.

25 On the revenue side, our 2023

1
2 mid-year projections are slightly down. A
3 few explanations for you as to why:

4 Golf revenue is rightsizing. As you
5 know, after a two year high when golf was
6 one of the few activities that people
7 could do during the pandemic, we had
8 record high numbers during that time
9 period.

10 I had intended to open a North Shore
11 branch of our summer program this year,
12 but could not find a suitable location.
13 So although attendance increased by over
14 120 campers at the two locations, we did
15 not reach our intended goal of 1000
16 campers without that third location.

17 The closure of Christopher Morley
18 Pool also contributes to a little bit
19 less revenue.

20 Our concessions revenue consists of
21 several areas, including catering at
22 three facilities: The former Carlton, the
23 Barn, Chelsea Mansion, as well as
24 Nickerson Beach Park. The Carlton has
25 seen no revenue for the entire year. More

1
2 information on that to follow.

3 Bookings at the Barn are doing well
4 for future bookings, but are currently
5 hampered a bit by the loss of the fall
6 season due to the Great Pumpkin Blaze
7 event currently taking place, which
8 forces them to have weeks of blackout
9 dates in the fall at the Barn.

10 The vendor operating at Chelsea
11 Mansion only had five bookings as opposed
12 to 10 to 12 in recent years, and they
13 recently terminated their permit with us.
14 So we'll be handling bookings on our own
15 there for now for the short term.

16 To offset the slight decrease in
17 revenue, our focus in the new year will
18 be on bringing new revenue generators to
19 fruition. As was recently approved that
20 Rules, Luminosity will return to
21 Eisenhower Park for a second year. Year
22 one did pose some weather challenges on
23 weekends. It had several cancellations,
24 but we still logged a net of over
25 \$190,000 in new revenue.

1
2 The Lannin in Eisenhower Park has
3 recently opened over the past five weeks,
4 replacing The Carlton. The new operators
5 invested a tremendous amount of funds
6 into their renovations. If you haven't
7 seen it, I suggest that we set up a tour.
8 Your eyes will pop out of your head.
9 These renovations took longer than
10 anticipated, but we're thrilled to be
11 working with our new partners to make
12 this the premier catering and dining
13 experience in Nassau County.

14 As I mentioned previously, the
15 Summer Recreation Program, although not
16 firmly secured, I am planning on using a
17 school in Glen Cove to expand to that
18 third location to service the North Shore
19 and increase the enrollment to over 1000
20 children.

21 With museum attendance increasing
22 post-pandemic, we're working with our
23 museum directors and affiliated museums
24 to increase the amount and types of
25 programming we offer there. You'll see a

1
2 new TV ad premiering this week focused on
3 the Nassau County Museum of Art and their
4 new exhibit, Modigliani.

5 Various facility improvements in
6 capital projects are also taking place at
7 many facilities, with the support of
8 Commissioner Arnold and his DPW team, as
9 well as continual golf course
10 improvements, all of which improved
11 services and increased visitors.

12 We also continuously look to bring
13 new sponsorship opportunities to all of
14 our events. So although not revenue, its
15 revenue, but it offsets our operational
16 costs.

17 What I'm most excited to share with
18 you and I'll be bringing before you at
19 the next Rules is the selection of Nassau
20 County as a site for the 2024 T20 Cricket
21 World Cup. This event will make sports
22 history and put Nassau County on the
23 global stage, as this is the first time
24 the World Cup will be played in the
25 United States. But we also anticipate new

1
2 direct revenue of \$2.75 million or more,
3 as well as indirect revenue of \$165
4 million coming to the County.

5 For those of you that don't know and
6 I've been asked what is cricket? Cricket
7 is the third most watched sport in the
8 world after the Summer Olympics and World
9 Cup soccer. So I'm thrilled to be
10 presenting Nassau County to over 3.9
11 billion viewers worldwide.

12 In summary, I've thoroughly enjoyed
13 working with the Administration, the
14 awesome Parks team and all of you, and I
15 welcome any questions you have regarding
16 our budget for 2024.

17 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you,
18 Commissioner. And I don't have much to
19 ask. I think you guys are doing a great
20 job working with you, Commissioner, your
21 deputies and Tim, Mike D'Ambrosio. I'm
22 not familiar with you, I missed your
23 name.

24 MS. BARKER: Linda Barker.

25 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. So very

1
2 responsive for everything that I call you
3 for, I know we get answers very quickly
4 and immediate action. So thank you for
5 that.

6 If you could just expand a little
7 bit more about the Cricket World Cup:
8 Where the stadium is going to go, if it's
9 permanent, if it's temporary.

10 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Okay. So it is
11 temporary. News12 kind of put out the
12 first announcement initially that it was
13 a 34,000 seat stadium. It is, but it's
14 temporary and it's modular. It's going to
15 be on field six of Eisenhower Park. I'll
16 be bringing the U&O permit before Rules
17 in a couple of weeks. Those of you that
18 know Lakeside Theatre, when you pull into
19 that parking lot, 6 and 6A, you look to
20 the right is a theater in the parking
21 area. It's the wide open field to the
22 left that we actually often use for
23 overflow parking for the events.

24 Once the permit is approved -- we're
25 already in planning stages at this

1
2 point -- we will look to break ground by
3 the second week in January, hoping for an
4 easy winter. And by breaking ground, I
5 shouldn't even use that term. Everything
6 is going to be on the surface. The only
7 below surface work will be the
8 installation of a new irrigation system.
9 And all of this work is going to be at
10 the expense of the ICC and our partner
11 T20. The ICC is the International Cricket
12 Council, who their US arm is T20, who our
13 permits going to be with.

14 We anticipate the stadium to be up
15 and ready to go by mid-May. Natural
16 grass, not artificial turf. There'll be
17 some practice runs so that we can make
18 sure that that that the facility runs
19 properly. And then the games, 5 or 6
20 matches, I should use the right
21 terminology, 5 or 6 matches will take
22 place between June 5th and June 14th.
23 Once those matches are over, the modular
24 stadium will be disassembled and moved
25 offsite. We will be left with a

1
2 miraculous looking cricket pitch as
3 opposed to what is there now. And also
4 part of the permit is two additional
5 pitches. We're proposing one right now on
6 that same piece of land, and then a
7 third, which I've been endeavoring to
8 build on my own at Cantiague Park. So
9 we'll have three options for cricket
10 where right now we have two and a half,
11 so we'll be in good shape for the demand
12 for cricket, which is actually more than
13 you would ever realize.

14 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: And a pitch is
15 like a field?

16 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Is a field,
17 yes.

18 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: And what's the
19 shape of a pitch? Is it like a baseball
20 field, a football field?

21 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: It's perfectly
22 round. And that was some of the questions
23 that we got, is why can't it be at Citi
24 Field or at Yankee Stadium? Those stadium
25 configurations cannot handle the

1
2 diameter, which I believe a 150 yard
3 diameter is needed to create that
4 perfectly round field.

5 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. And so
6 there'll be three of them. And I guess
7 one is kind of the main --

8 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: So when they
9 remove the modular, which is going to be
10 like scaffolding like you see at PGA golf
11 tournaments, for example, enough seating
12 for 34,000. When that's removed, we'll
13 have that one pitch there. We're working
14 on the site plan with our partners now.
15 It may or may not be possible to do a
16 second smaller practice pitch on that
17 Field 6. Then the third, it wouldn't be
18 regulation size, nor would the one at
19 Cantiague. There's just not enough
20 physical space there. But it's still
21 allows them to come in before the matches
22 and practice.

23 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: So two practice
24 practice pitches.

25 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yes, but it

1
2 would be much better quality than what we
3 currently have for cricket now.

4 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: I didn't even
5 know we had cricket, to be honest.

6 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yes.

7 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay.

8 So all the actual games are going to
9 be played on that 34,000 stadium?

10 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Then after the
12 tournament is over or the World Cup is
13 over, they take the stands away.

14 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yes.

15 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: And the pitches
16 remain?

17 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Exactly. And
18 the new irrigation system.

19 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: And they're
20 paying for the irrigation as well?

21 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: They're paying
22 for everything.

23 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: I know you said
24 it, but what was the revenue that we're
25 getting?

1
2 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: We're
3 anticipating by the terms of the U&O
4 contract, \$2.75 million minimum. We're
5 still negotiating a portion of the
6 merchandising rights, which would be
7 global. So even a 2 or 3% take on the
8 merchandise could be a nice chunk of
9 change.

10 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. So
11 guaranteed, though, is 2.75.

12 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: 2.75.

13 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: And it's costing
14 us nothing.

15 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Correct.

16 I am anticipating and just speaking
17 casually with the County Executive,
18 possibly doing some viewing sites off
19 site of of Eisenhower, which would be a
20 minor expense for staffing and having
21 that broadcasted.

22 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: How many how
23 many games are there?

24 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Five or six.

25 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: So you have

1
2 34,000 times 5 or 6. And all the impacts
3 it has on the surrounding community in
4 terms of sales tax and business.

5 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Correct. And
6 the beauty of it is that they're daytime.
7 So the matches will start around 9 or 930
8 in the morning -- we'll have a firm
9 schedule in November. And T20, because
10 people who do know cricket know that the
11 games could go on for days. I'm sure that
12 you might be familiar with that. This is
13 a timed event. So the area will be
14 cleared by 1-1:30 in the afternoon.

15 For the weekends, I think we're
16 going to look to do some of our own
17 programming to keep the people in the
18 park. All of the parking except for VIP
19 and staff will be off site. We're going
20 to use the Coliseum site, the College
21 site and on Mitchell Complex for parking.

22 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: I know what the
23 concerts the parking is on site and we've
24 had probably up to 20,000 people, I would
25 think, at those concerts, right?

1
2 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: 40,000 for Boyz
3 to Men, which is a combination of on and
4 off site when we do those bigger
5 concerts.

6 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. But this
7 is going to be completely off site?

8 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Completely off
9 site, except for broadcast personnel,
10 VIPs and staff.

11 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: What are you
12 going to bus them?

13 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Bus them in.
14 We're actually working on traffic
15 management plan now as part of the
16 environmental for the U&O permit.

17 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: All right.
18 Legislator Ford.

19 LEGISLATOR FORD: Good afternoon.
20 Thank you very much.

21 I'm glad to see that Luminosity is
22 coming back. I had an opportunity last
23 year to go to it with my grandchildren,
24 and I think it was a fun event. I
25 encourage anybody, especially if you have

1
2 young children, go at night because the
3 lights are a lot of fun. And I
4 appreciated the fact that the souvenir
5 shop was not overly expensive. It was
6 something that you can actually afford
7 without crying your eyes out, buying
8 something for a child. So I'm glad to
9 see that it is coming back. And I look
10 forward to bringing the kids back there.

11 I'm sorry. I'm going to jump around
12 a bit, okay. Because I'm going through
13 all my notes and everything like that.

14 So when you talk about the
15 recreation programs and I'm glad to see
16 that we are reaching out to 800 children
17 that do get to participate in it, and
18 you're going to be in expanding up into
19 Glen Cove. From what I understand, you're
20 going to be renting a school or utilizing
21 the school.

22 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yes.

23 LEGISLATOR FORD: What are the
24 chances that we could do something like
25 that even toward the South shore? Because

1
2 what is the closest recreation program
3 that children who live on the Barrier
4 Island or an Island Park? What is the
5 closest recreation program that they can
6 participate?

7 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: It used to be
8 it used to be Nickerson and I did open
9 that up for registration last year, and
10 we had about 22 children registered. So
11 it isn't cost effective for all the staff
12 that's required under Health Department
13 mandates to operate a camp. So we ended
14 up not doing it. But the Nickerson team
15 is offering week long summer camp
16 options. And they have a sports camp
17 option and have a regular day camp
18 option.

19 LEGISLATOR FORD: But that's
20 Nickerson and the residents have to pay
21 for that, correct?

22 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Of course.
23 Ours as well.

24 LEGISLATOR FORD: How much do we
25 charge?

1
2 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: We charge \$100
3 plus \$100 registration fee.

4 LEGISLATOR FORD: And how much does
5 Nickerson charge?

6 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: I don't recall
7 because it was weekly. I have to get back
8 to you on that. I don't recall what they
9 charged.

10 LEGISLATOR FORD: Yeah. When you
11 talk about when we look at the condition
12 of the parks, that I know that we had an
13 issue with some park equipment, I
14 believe, at Cedar Creek, that was fixed.
15 There was some work done. How much do we
16 spend annually on park equipment, on
17 maintenance, because I noticed even when
18 I went to see the Creek Park that some of
19 the benches that you have there, the old
20 wooden benches were covered with mold,
21 which is not good. It's that green like
22 woody stuff or whatever. I don't know if
23 it's really mold, mold, but it is
24 something that sort of looks rather icky.
25 And if somebody is walking, I mean, there

1
2 are other places to sit, but if you're
3 walking along a path, those benches are
4 there. I'm just curious, do we allocate
5 personnel and money to make sure that we
6 do a constant upkeep within our parks?

7 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: We have daily
8 upkeep for a majority of the day. In
9 season, we have maintenance crews there
10 into the evening and then we have the
11 cleaners who come in and handle the
12 restrooms and such. But our maintenance
13 crew is proactive. But mold on the
14 benches is a new one for me. So I'm going
15 to have to look into that.

16 You mentioned the playground.

17 LEGISLATOR FORD: I know that there
18 is an issue with some of the playgrounds,
19 with the flooring. It's old. If you have
20 the playground equipment -- and I know
21 that there are challenges because all
22 pieces of playground equipment come from
23 -- and I know from Commissioner Arnold
24 saying that it's not like a one size fits
25 all. You go and like you say, well, I'm

1
2 going to buy this whole system for a
3 park. That's not the case. You might have
4 people who build the seesaws or swings or
5 whatever. Like that's one component. But
6 then you have to go to a different
7 company for something else. It's not like
8 basically just go to the shelf and just
9 pull everything off the shelf and here
10 you go. Everything has to be specifically
11 made. And as a result of that, the
12 flooring needs to be adjusted as well.
13 Because some of the flooring is old, it's
14 an old plastic.

15 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: They all have
16 lifespans too.

17 LEGISLATOR FORD: They might have
18 like a five year, ten year lifespan.

19 Are we looking at that to make sure
20 that we work with DPW so that we know
21 like if, say, in Wantagh State Park,
22 you're looking at that if it's a ten year
23 lifespan for that flooring, for whatever
24 the ground cover or whatever it's called,
25 that we're already in the eighth year, do

1
2 you look to say, well, we need to then
3 place this on the radar, put an order in,
4 because it may take two years so that we
5 do replace it in the time that we should
6 be replacing it.

7 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yes. Tim can
8 speak more to that.

9 MR. MESSNER: If I can, Legislator.
10 On two of your questions: The one on the
11 benches, as far as repair, as the
12 Commissioner mentioned, we do have staff
13 in the park, maintenance staff, that will
14 monitor that. We do try to powerwash
15 some of these benches, but we do work
16 with DPW facilities and their carpenters
17 unit as far as replacing some of these
18 benches that get old. We did have all
19 them replaced at Cantiague and Wantagh
20 and we work continuously with them to try
21 to upgrade all our park facilities in
22 replacing all these benches.

23 As far as the playground equipment,
24 that always is a task in itself. As you
25 mentioned, and as Commissioner Arnold

1
2 mentioned to you, a lot of these
3 playgrounds are custom made. So when
4 parts do go bad, they have to be made to
5 order, which takes a lot of time, lead
6 time on getting these parts in, sometimes
7 6 to 8 months, lead time just to repair a
8 couple of monkey bars. It seems a little
9 extreme, but unfortunately it's what we
10 deal with.

11 In regards to the safety service,
12 that is also something that we juggle all
13 the time. We try to buy repair kits. They
14 sell just the pour in place safety repair
15 kits, which we do buy and we try to make
16 repairs. We try to coordinate the
17 replacement of the actual apparatus with
18 the safety surface itself, too, just so
19 we don't spend the money replacing the
20 safety service and then in a few years,
21 we have to plan on ripping that all out
22 to replace the apparatus itself.

23 So that's also something we take
24 into consideration. But we do work
25 closely with Commissioner Arnold over at

1
2 DPW. I know that we have a few that are
3 ongoing right now. Wantagh and
4 Christopher Morley, I believe is just
5 being finished and there is a task order
6 going out for multiple parks and their
7 playgrounds to be designed and replaced.

8 LEGISLATOR FORD: Thank you.

9 I know that we see that you're going
10 to get an increase in the Hotel/Motel
11 revenue, correct? Aside from where you
12 can help with the Legislators, they may
13 have like movies on the beach, they may
14 be able to utilize some of these monies
15 within their districts and that you do
16 sponsor and you help pay for other
17 programs as well, what else would you use
18 the money for?

19 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: The majority
20 of the funding comes from for programming
21 support to Old Bethpage Village
22 Restoration, there are some salaries
23 built into that line for those facilities
24 and then entertainment as well as your
25 requests.

1
2 LEGISLATOR FORD: I know you had put
3 into the budget the revenue from movie
4 productions. Because we do get when they
5 rent Sands Point or whatever. Are you
6 making an adjustment considering the fact
7 that there has been a writers strike
8 since April?

9 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: I didn't make
10 an adjustment because it seems to be
11 ending very soon.

12 LEGISLATOR FORD: You still have the
13 actors strike.

14 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Right, but
15 we're also doing a lot of commercial
16 shoots, documentaries that are not
17 affected by that.

18 LEGISLATOR FORD: Okay.

19 Considering you had a private
20 company take over the operations over at
21 Nickerson Beach, I know that according to
22 the budget last year was \$1.3 Million in
23 revenue that we got from Nickerson. So we
24 lost that money. But do we have in here
25 how much we've realized from whatever

1
2 percentage we get from the owner and the
3 operations at Nickerson? Because when I
4 look at pitch and putt fees are down to
5 zero or the beach parking, cabana
6 rentals, all of that had been at
7 Nickerson. So we lost that funding. Do we
8 have an accounting yet of how much we
9 get? Because I guess we get, what, 10 or
10 15%?

11 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: We get 10% and
12 we did not lose it. It's just reduced.
13 But I have to say that that partnership
14 has been going very well. They've been
15 able to enhance the visitor experience a
16 lot more than what had gone on in the
17 past. Cabana and cabinette sales are
18 almost sold out, and I understand that
19 they have a waiting list for people that
20 are now anxious to join there. And I
21 don't have hard figures for you here. And
22 also our reporting is delayed because I
23 only have up through June so far because
24 they have that window to be able to
25 report to us.

1
2 So I can provide you with a full
3 report after the close of the season,
4 probably by the end of October, early
5 November.

6 LEGISLATOR FORD: But the \$1.3
7 million we didn't get this year, that was
8 something that we got. And I'm glad to
9 hear that if you're doing so well with
10 the cabanas, cabinettes and all that
11 other stuff, that then the loss of \$1.3
12 million should be offset by a certain
13 amount of revenue that we get from a
14 successful summer, right? Correct?

15 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Right, 10%.

16 LEGISLATOR FORD: When are they
17 required to give us those numbers?

18 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: They give it
19 to us within 60 days of the close of the
20 month. And Linda and her team, once they
21 received we sit down, verify everything
22 because they're actually still using our
23 cashiering system, Civic Rec. So there's
24 a checks and balances there. And probably
25 by early November I can give you a full

1
2 report on on how the summer season
3 looked.

4 LEGISLATOR FORD: Do you know
5 already, like from June? We're in
6 September. How much have we realized from
7 him?

8 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: I recently
9 took payment of about a quarter million
10 dollars, but that included some utility
11 reimbursements and such.

12 LEGISLATOR FORD: Maybe by Full
13 Budget we can get a better understanding
14 of where we are with that.

15 Considering now that he only has a
16 contract to operate the cabanas and all
17 of the activities basically with within
18 Nickerson, the pool, the pitch and putt
19 all that other business, once all of that
20 is shut down because the cabanas don't
21 stay open.

22 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: September
23 17th.

24 LEGISLATOR FORD: I'm hoping that
25 once again this year that the County then

1
2 will keep the dog park and the
3 skateboarding park open as it has done in
4 the past.

5 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: It's not
6 prudent to keep the skateboard park open
7 when there's no staff there. That's my
8 own feeling. I think we are open to
9 liability.

10 LEGISLATOR FORD: We have people
11 assigned to Nickerson.

12 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Right, but not
13 working in Admin, mostly maintenance. And
14 then they are building as part of the
15 capital improvement, a second dog park
16 which will be accessible just from Lido
17 Boulevard.

18 LEGISLATOR FORD: When is that dog
19 park going to be --

20 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: I actually
21 tried to touch base with them yesterday
22 to see where we stood. I haven't heard
23 back yet. But I gave him approval about
24 three weeks ago to proceed with that. And
25 the beauty of that is we can leave the

1
2 facility closed and people will still
3 have a dog park to access.

4 LEGISLATOR FORD: But in the
5 meantime, the dog park will stay open?

6 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yes.

7 LEGISLATOR FORD: Also, it is a
8 public beach.

9 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Right.

10 LEGISLATOR FORD: So how do the
11 residents access the beach through
12 Nickerson if you close it?

13 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Well, then I
14 will have to discuss that.

15 LEGISLATOR FORD: Because by law,
16 you're supposed to keep it open.

17 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Right. I
18 personally feel that if there's another
19 access point to the ocean and Lido is
20 open all year round, that that's a good
21 alternative. I think it greatly reduces
22 vandalism. But I know you don't agree
23 with that. So we'll have to disagree to
24 disagree.

25 LEGISLATOR FORD: We don't agree,

1
2 because even when you look at all of the
3 reports over the years from the police or
4 DPW, there was not a lot of vandalism.
5 Okay. I asked. And even the police
6 reports. Nothing was reported.

7 But what it is, is that the
8 residents in that area are taxpaying
9 citizens and they do pay Nassau County
10 taxes. I think in all fairness to
11 everybody that live on the Barrier Island
12 -- and a lot of people actually like
13 going to Nickerson because of the access
14 and the dunes, you could have
15 photographers, bird watches, a lot of
16 people. Just because a decision has been
17 made to hand over the operations and the
18 contract, we are not leasing that
19 property over to a private entity. This
20 is still County property.

21 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Correct.

22 LEGISLATOR FORD: And from what I
23 gather that as long as we received
24 Federal money for any type of beach
25 upgrade, and which we did, that, by law,

1
2 residents, people, are allowed to have
3 access to that beach. So by locking
4 gates, I firmly believe you are violating
5 the law.

6 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Understood.

7 LEGISLATOR FORD: I sincerely doubt
8 that the people who live across the
9 street on Marginal Road would actually go
10 into a park that they've been going to
11 for the past 40 or 50 years to go in to
12 all of a sudden destroy cabanas or to
13 destroy swings or anything like that.
14 They don't strike me. I mean, really, I
15 can't imagine anybody who would want to
16 go in there. People go into parks because
17 they love it. People go into parks, they
18 self-police one another. People don't
19 like to see things ruined regardless of
20 where they come from. It's something
21 that we have. And like it or not, Lido is
22 a town park. We have a city of people,
23 the City of Long Beach, our residents as
24 well. There's over 35,000 of them that
25 are also Nassau County residents that pay

1
2 Nassau County taxes. We do not have
3 access to town beaches. We only have
4 access to the County beach. So I would
5 encourage you to please make sure that we
6 we keep that access open and we allow
7 those people, especially the people who
8 for 40 years were able to utilize a gate.
9 I'm hoping that we could work out
10 something so that those residents, once
11 again, will be able to enjoy the beach as
12 they have been for the past 40 years. But
13 thank you very much and I do appreciate
14 the job that you've been doing.

15 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you.

17 Legislator Schaefer.

18 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Good morning.

19 How are you?

20 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Good, thank
21 you.

22 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Good.

23 So just two topics I think I wanted
24 to touch upon. I did have a resident
25 asking me about the cricket games and he

1
2 had the understanding that it was going
3 to be for a month long.

4 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: It's like an
5 11 day window for us to get 5 or 6
6 matches. He might be confusing it with
7 the way it's posted on the media. The
8 entire tournament is the month of June.
9 But we only have that portion here.

10 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Okay I see.
11 The traffic was the other concern by some
12 residents. Because he was asking about a
13 traffic study. I said, I don't think
14 that's what they do for this.

15 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: There's a
16 traffic management plan that we're
17 working on with consultants hired by T20
18 and the ICC. We haven't determined
19 exactly what that's going to look like.
20 We would endeavor to not close Merrick
21 Avenue during the weekday matches. But
22 as we do for the marathon, I would be
23 comfortable looking into closing Merrick
24 Avenue for periods of time on the weekend
25 matches. Once we know the schedule or at

1
2 minimum a one lane closure so that
3 traffic flows smoothly, but there's no
4 interruption to the businesses there.

5 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Okay. But
6 that's worked out with consultants and
7 the County.

8 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Exactly. And
9 the permit holder. Yes, of course.

10 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Okay, great.
11 My other topic was on swimming
12 pools. The revenue in the budget, does
13 that include the Aquatic Center or is
14 that separate and apart?

15 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: That includes
16 the Aquatic Center as well.

17 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Okay.
18 Looks like there's an anticipated
19 increase; is that right? A little over \$2
20 million.

21 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: The Aquatic
22 Center, our actual year to date is
23 \$1,138,040.

24 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: That's your
25 actual to date.

1
2 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: And our
3 budgeted amount was decreased \$474,000
4 for the Aquatic Center from '22 to '23.
5 So we are again still collecting, still
6 open. And I do anticipate that we'll meet
7 that budget figure for '23 of \$1.4
8 million.

9 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Okay. How long
10 is that been there? Do you know?

11 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: It was built
12 for the Goodwill Games in 1988, 89, I
13 forget -- '94.

14 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Okay. So it's
15 been there a while, right? Have there
16 been any major upgrades there in the last
17 -- well, ever?

18 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: So we do the
19 closure every August and this year we
20 endeavored to get some major projects
21 done that are difficult to do when the
22 facility's open. Working with our
23 vendors, the timing doesn't always work
24 out. We are going to be replacing
25 sections of the lockers that seem to be

1
2 rusting. As you know, you're a user,
3 it's a very damp facility. And then I'm
4 endeavoring next summer to empty the pool
5 and be able to make all of the tiling
6 repairs and replace the light fixtures.
7 Thankfully, nobody was hurt. But there's
8 been two, I think even three occasions
9 where parts of the light fixtures have
10 fallen. So Public Works came in and we
11 had to close for half a day at that point
12 and took off all of the parts of each
13 light fixture that were at risk of
14 falling. We'd like to replace it with Led
15 fixtures as part of a capital improvement
16 project next year.

17 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Okay. And when
18 you said tiling, is that including the
19 tiling around the pool?

20 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: New or repairs
21 as needed? Yes.

22 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Okay. Is it
23 bringing in the revenue that you think it
24 could? Or do you think there's more to it
25 that we could benefit from if we were to

1
2 increase the use or --

3 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: It's being
4 used and we have a lineup of requests as
5 far as groups. We've doubled the amount
6 of lifeguard training classes that we've
7 offered. I like the ability in the next
8 budget, we're going to work with OMB on
9 that, to hire possibly two more
10 instructors that can teach more swimming
11 lessons to both children and adults --
12 not lifeguard training, because those
13 classes fill up in 20 minutes. And I'd
14 like to be able to have more offerings
15 there as well, and that will help with
16 revenue.

17 And we're starting some new fitness
18 classes that have been on hold since
19 Covid. We have an instructor actually
20 starting next week and those are going to
21 be free to start if you're a fitness club
22 member. Once those gain some ground,
23 we're going to look to increase our
24 fitness club membership so that more
25 people are joining take the classes. So

1
2 we'll look to boost revenue that way. But
3 but as far as rentals and permits, we're
4 pretty much maxed out.

5 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Okay. Because
6 I remember when it opened and it was
7 touted as a world class pool and it and
8 it is and it was, you know, it was all
9 the teams want to swim there and it's
10 just it's beautiful and size and you know
11 you can have all these events there. Just
12 like the new events we're bringing,
13 cricket, things like that, I think that
14 the Aquatic Center could potentially be
15 utilized for something on a world class
16 level.

17 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yeah. We're
18 not world class at the moment, but we do
19 have the Big East Collegiate tournament
20 and we entered into a five year permit
21 with them. There was a trial basis this
22 past year. That facility is well used. It
23 needs some TLC, as you and I have spoken
24 about.

25 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Right. My

1
2 main point is that it needs a facelift.

3 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: It does. And
4 we actually did some painting. The County
5 Executive was on a tour back in the
6 spring and identified some areas. The
7 exterior bothers me. Tim's well aware. So
8 with our team, we're trying to do that in
9 a methodical way to start making visible
10 improvements.

11 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Great.

12 And I can just compliment you. The
13 staff there is always very, very nice. So
14 thank you. They don't need to know who I
15 am, it's just nice people that work
16 there.

17 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Very good.
18 Thank you. That's great.

19 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Thank you.
20 That's all I have.

21 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
22 Thomas McKevitt.

23 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Good morning,
24 Commissioner. Just to harken back to the
25 the cricket games once again. You and I

1
2 had an excellent conversation last week
3 because I think there's just a lot of
4 media disinformation which was given
5 regarding it.

6 Can you just explain regarding that
7 the current leagues, whether it's soccer
8 or softball, currently using that field,
9 whether any accommodations have been made
10 for them for the upcoming year?

11 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yes.

12 So as you may be aware from reading
13 about the cricket, they were trying to
14 place it in Van Cortlandt Park in the
15 Bronx. And the reason that they weren't
16 chosen was that there was pushback. I
17 didn't want to put us in that position.
18 So as part of our planning for this bid
19 to be chosen, I did outreach to both the
20 cricket users and the non cricket users,
21 and there was no pushback and I assured
22 them that we could safely relocate them
23 either to neighboring fields in
24 Eisenhower or some have actually asked to
25 move to other parks. So once we open the

1
2 scheduling for next year in January, we
3 will make sure that those groups are
4 taken care of.

5 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: I think when
6 people talk about the pushback with Van
7 Cortlandt Park, people really don't
8 realize that Eisenhower Park is twice the
9 size of Central Park in New York City. It
10 is a large facility. I think with the
11 issue of Van Cortlandt was that for them
12 to have that cricket stadium there, they
13 would not be able to essentially use that
14 entire park for an entire period of time.
15 And those cricket leagues, which play
16 there wouldn't be able to play at all in
17 the New York City area. So I think
18 because, again, the system we have, we
19 have the ability to relocate where they
20 couldn't do that Van Cortlandt, which I
21 think it worked for us and did not work
22 for them.

23 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Correct.

24 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: And just one
25 thing, is just to say if I look at a

1
2 Google Earth photo, which was taken on
3 June 2, 2022, if you go in the internet
4 right now of that Field 6 field by
5 Eisenhower Park, and you can see at that
6 time it was nothing but a pile of dirt.
7 It's literally none. So I'm very glad to
8 hear there'll be a permanent irrigation
9 system will help with that. Because
10 depending upon the weather you may have
11 okay grass which we do right now, because
12 we had good summer with rain. We have a
13 dry summer, that field essentially is
14 burnt grass at best.

15 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Exactly,
16 exactly. And we also use it for overflow
17 parking for lakeside events, which brings
18 some wear and tear to the field as well.

19 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
21 Schaefer has a follow up question. Then
22 Legislator Bynoe and then Legislator
23 Abrahams.

24 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Just one more.
25 I forgot. I understand the Cantiague Golf

1
2 Clubhouse is in need of repair as well or
3 upgrades. Is that something that's in the
4 plan?

5 MR. MESSNER: It is something that
6 we have been looking at and working with
7 DPW to try to get some upgrades or
8 replacements.

9 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Okay. That's
10 all. Thank you.

11 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Everything's
12 functional. It's just starting to look
13 aged and worn. We're working on it.

14 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
15 Bynoe.

16 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Thank you, Chair.
17 Hi, Commissioner.

18 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Morning.

19 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I'm going to
20 piggyback right off, for starters, off of
21 Legislative Schaefer's question regarding
22 upgrades at the park.

23 I'd like to start with Eisenhower
24 Park's Green Room for the Lakeside
25 Theater. That also looks like it needs

1
2 significant work.

3 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Everything
4 looks very 1970s, so we're trying to
5 bring it into this century. I do have on
6 my desk to discuss with Tim the staff's
7 request for some new mirrors, some new
8 painting. The flooring is in pretty good
9 shape. We upgraded the showers this year,
10 although I don't think they were used in
11 the locker room, the dressing rooms
12 there. But yes, we do need a little a
13 little modernization there.

14 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: If we're going
15 to be bringing in acts that might need
16 those facilities --

17 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Exactly.

18 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I would say
19 they're not likely to want to use them.

20 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: I actually
21 cringe a little bit when the larger acts
22 want to go there. They're clean and
23 they're cool, but they're not modern. And
24 I've noticed with the larger acts, we
25 have to provide shuttle service for them

1
2 to and from the hotels and they're coming
3 and doing their sound check or not and
4 then going back to the hotel and then
5 coming back and only there for a little
6 while right before they perform. And then
7 they're leaving right after. And I get
8 it.

9 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Because they
10 don't want to be in that space. I think
11 we should look to upgrade.

12 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Agreed.

13 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I'm going to work
14 through this list that I have here.

15 So reduction in income. You
16 mentioned that there was certain line
17 items that were experiencing reductions.
18 And so my question for you is in those
19 reductions, what line item would be
20 affected?

21 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: I referred to
22 the revenue shortfall and that was in
23 mostly in the concessions line. I
24 outlined the Carlton had a delayed start.
25 They were supposed to be opened back in

1
2 May or June. They just opened the last
3 few weeks. Chelsea Mansion needs TLC from
4 us as well, that vendor, I'm not sad to
5 see them go. They're very difficult to
6 work with. They had less than half the
7 bookings that they had in prior years. So
8 we're actually doing those bookings on
9 our own right now. So far we're doing
10 okay for '24 and beyond. And the third
11 one was the Barn at Old Bethpage Village.
12 You know, I came into this position with
13 some pre-existing contracts. To me, a
14 barn wedding is a highlight for
15 September, October, November. Actually
16 those are blackout dates because of the
17 the Great Pumpkin Blaze. And they're good
18 partners with us. But I think that kind
19 of affects affects the Lessing's revenue
20 as well. But they're completing a capital
21 project, adding a kitchen there. I think
22 that's going to boost their bookings, and
23 I think we'll see an increase there for
24 '24 as well.

25 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Specifically, I

1
2 couldn't get my act together to ask the
3 question so you wouldn't have had to
4 recount all of that. Specifically, what
5 line item would have been affected with
6 the decision to no longer allow for
7 certain groups to rent the park, the
8 Lakeside Theater? The El Salvadorian
9 community and the Haitian community
10 typically had events there. There were
11 fee there were fees associated with them
12 utilizing that space.

13 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: So that was
14 about a \$30,000 loss. But again, gross
15 revenue, our net is a loss there and that
16 goes to rents, I believe, for permits but
17 we've increased our field rentals so it
18 kind of as a wash.

19 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So while it might
20 be a a wash in a revenue producing way, I
21 think that it's a huge loss for for us,
22 the County, to the extent that I think
23 there was some tax revenue benefits that
24 obviously wouldn't have been encapsulated
25 here. You had people that were flying in.

1
2 There were very well known entertainers
3 that were coming in from Miami and all
4 over the place in terms of the Haitian
5 event and then for the El Salvadorian
6 event. And people were coming to this
7 area for that purpose. And the decision
8 to move away from allowing them to use
9 the space, I think not only impacted us
10 with this \$30,000 where you say you make
11 it up, I also think it probably hurt us
12 in a tax revenue producing way. But
13 ultimately, I think it hurts us
14 culturally.

15 How many events did we have in the
16 park this summer?

17 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: 80 over six
18 facilities. I would say it was 45 and
19 Eisenhower, maybe almost 50.

20 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Of those 45,
21 there were no events that -- and you
22 know, and you and I have this
23 conversation, we've had it before --
24 There were no events that specifically
25 provided that level of entertainment for

1
2 the Haitian community, the El Salvadorian
3 community, the Caribbean community. Those
4 folks are here. Those community members
5 are here and they had no opportunity to
6 be in that park and be entertained and
7 have their cultural needs met. And
8 reducing the opportunity for that, I
9 think it's just terrible.

10 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: I'm going to
11 agree with you on the Haitian. I'm going
12 to disagree with you on the El
13 Salvadorian. We had a Creole evening that
14 was well attended, maybe about 3-4000.
15 The El Salvadorian night was well run. We
16 also had a Colombian, which was very
17 poorly attended, and a Latino night,
18 which was not that well attended.

19 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: This is what this
20 is what I want us to be more culturally
21 competent in. The El Salvadorians are not
22 going to necessarily feel connected to
23 the Colombian experience. I am Caribbean
24 American, first generation. I'm not going
25 to the Creole, because I don't speak

1
2 Haitian Creole, Right? We have to be
3 more culturally competent. I see that we
4 spend a lot of time and I see that there
5 are opportunities when we look at even
6 the Asian community. It's broken down so
7 that we're addressing those individual
8 needs. But I'm not seeing that when it
9 comes to other other ethnicities here.
10 And we have to do that. I think it's
11 unfair that we're using taxpayer dollars
12 and we're not spending the time to make
13 sure that we're meeting the needs of the
14 community.

15 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: I would love
16 to work with you if you can identify
17 people that are leaders in those
18 communities that would help with the
19 planning and the programming, I'd be
20 happy to have it do it. I don't think
21 renting out the facility is the best
22 answer. I think that the parks team is
23 very efficient in running events along
24 with the Police Department and Public
25 Safety, where we do everything very

1
2 safely. When you are renting them out
3 and you and I've had many conversations
4 about this, you lose a piece of that
5 control and I think it becomes a money
6 maker as opposed to a public service
7 event. So I would love to bring that
8 entertainment and those communities
9 together in an event that we offer, as
10 opposed to someone coming in privately.

11 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: These are birthed
12 out of the County's inability to provide
13 the needs. I know that I personally
14 attended -- I was in service already in
15 this role, I attended a Jamaican event
16 that they had there and they no longer
17 host that event there. But I know the
18 Haitian Creole folks that held it for
19 years after year, they'd argue that they
20 really didn't make much money at all. And
21 while, we were looking at it as a revenue
22 revenue producer for the actual
23 production team, they weren't really
24 making money because they had a lot of
25 expenses and they sat down and they

1
2 showed me their books. But at the end of
3 the day, it was because they were trying
4 to fill a gap. They were trying to fill a
5 gap that we should be filling. And if we
6 can't, then I think we most certainly
7 need to revisit our decision regarding
8 allowing those individuals to be able to
9 host those type of events here.

10 I'm not going to belabor the point,
11 but I'm going to tell you that we should
12 never have another season where we have
13 45 events and we're not identifying and
14 meeting the needs of those folks that
15 that live here.

16 In terms of renovations at Cantiague
17 Park, I'm happy that cricket will go
18 there. I know that the Westbury School
19 District has been hosting and allowing
20 field use for the cricketers for years.
21 And so it would be great for that to be
22 moved into a County park so that the
23 school district can free up their space.

24 At Cantiague Park, I know that
25 there's this significant interest for

1
2 pickleball. Is is that something that's
3 part of your plan?

4 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: So every time
5 we are in our rotation and Tim could
6 probably speak to it further, when we are
7 renovating tennis courts, we are
8 allocating a portion of those courts to
9 be lined for pickleball as well. So we
10 currently have them at North Woodmere,
11 Cedar Creek and Wantagh.

12 MR. MESSNER: Yes. Wantagh and North
13 Woodmere have been renovated, the tennis
14 courts, to also be lined with pickleball
15 lines. For Cedar Creek, we will be taking
16 out two tennis courts and putting four
17 permanent pickleball courts. So it's
18 evenly divided between tennis and Pickle.

19 Cantiague, which is one of our
20 better condition courts is on the back
21 end as far as the rotation through the
22 parks. And when we do reach Cantiague, we
23 will look into adding pickleball.

24 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: What is your
25 timing for potentially reaching Cantigue?

1
2 MR. MESSNER: As of right now, we
3 are we just finishing up Grant Park and
4 Cedar. Eisenhower will be its own
5 project, considering the size of
6 Eisenhower Park having 16 tennis courts.
7 So that overall project is a much larger
8 project. After Cedar Creek, which is
9 going to be completed this fall, it looks
10 like Cantiague will be our lone standing
11 tennis courts that we'll have to look at,
12 and it'll probably be for next spring or
13 fall.

14 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Thank you.

15 So the cricket, a couple of
16 questions there. First, they are going to
17 be putting in the irrigation system, but
18 ultimately will be responsible for
19 expenses and maintenance and all of those
20 other issues moving past the use of our
21 field for the World Cup, Correct?

22 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Right.

23 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So I would really
24 like them to consider or us require them
25 to give us a Smart Water Sprinkler

1
2 Irrigation System. I think that would
3 significantly reduce our expenses into
4 the future and also help us conserve
5 water. I think it's important that we do
6 that.

7 MR. MESSNER: Legislator, that's a
8 great point. Currently on that field, we
9 do have a irrigation system. It's
10 insufficient. It will be upgraded with
11 this new cricket pitch. And currently
12 what is operating our sprinkler systems
13 in that park are Smart Systems. It'll be
14 tied right into our control systems and
15 continue that way.

16 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. Thank you.

17 I know there's been a great concern
18 about having police presence and having
19 the County shoulder the burden of
20 expenses for policing activities here.
21 Case specific was at UBS when there was
22 going to be a rap concert. What is the
23 the plan for having the police expenses
24 being shifted to the World Cup folks?

25 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: So for each

1
2 match, we will be reimbursed \$100,000 for
3 public safety. That's just for traffic
4 management and exterior. They are going
5 to be working with our police for
6 interior security, private security
7 inside the facility.

8 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So there's going
9 to be, what, 4 to 5 --

10 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Five to six.
11 I'm hearing six more frequently than I'm
12 hearing five. We'll know that schedule
13 in November.

14 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So what is it,
15 one game? Because I got to tell you, my
16 experience with cricket was sitting on my
17 grandmother's veranda in Saint Kitts
18 looking at Warner Park, where they played
19 cricket. And it was like watching paint
20 dry. And it was the longest matches I've
21 ever seen in my life. So I'm just
22 wondering how many they will be playing
23 in a day.

24 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: One, just one
25 per day. And they are timed. They're

1
2 slated to start between 9-9:30 and the
3 park will be cleared between 1-1:30.

4 This this format of T20 -- and T20
5 means something with regard to the time,
6 it's a certain number of balls that are
7 thrown in a certain amount of time. Like
8 youth baseball tournaments, they usually
9 have a time limit. So even if you're in
10 the fifth inning and you've reached that
11 time limit, you're done. And that's kind
12 of the same concept.

13 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So I just got the
14 number from the UBS Arena and I think it
15 was 80,000. So we think \$100,000 in
16 reimbursement from the World Cup for each
17 match is sufficient?

18 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: It should be.
19 We are working now through that public
20 safety plan again. I'm trying to get to
21 the U&O permit approval first. That was
22 a number that I worked up with DCE Fox,
23 and I'm hoping that that will be
24 sufficient. It should be fine. And again,
25 it's only for the exterior and for the

1
2 traffic management. Private security is
3 going to work with our forces for the
4 interior of the stadium during the
5 matches.

6 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And what kind of
7 requirements are we putting on them for
8 the security on the interior?

9 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Still working
10 through that. I'll share that through
11 Rules next month.

12 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: That does it for
13 me.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
16 Abrahams.

17 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Thank you,
18 Chairman Ferretti.

19 How are you, Mrs. Belyea?

20 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Good. How are
21 you?

22 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Good.

23 I just have two quick questions. One
24 is referencing to -- I know you manage a
25 ton of facilities throughout the county,

1
2 but the one that I'm most concerned about
3 that's in Legislative District One is the
4 MLK Peace Park in Uniondale, which is not
5 a large piece of land. Can't be more than
6 it sounds crazy, maybe 300, 400ft². But
7 it seems like it is tremendously in
8 constant need of maintenance and repair.
9 I was thankful to, I guess, your
10 department and the DPW with Ken Arnold,
11 there was an accident at the at the park
12 where the fence was damaged and you were
13 able to get the fence repaired. But it
14 seems like there's constant issues of
15 maintenance in terms of cleanliness and
16 overall just upkeep of the park. I drove
17 by today because I knew I was going to
18 see you and the amount of garbage and
19 debris that makes its way up against the
20 fence of the park and has nowhere to go.
21 Obviously, there's been an issue also of
22 homeless residents sleeping in the park.
23 That brings the question to another
24 issue, but it's not pertaining to that.
25 There's actually -- we found a homeless

1
2 population actually living not too far
3 from the MLK Peace Park adjacent to a
4 church in Uniondale as well. So I'm
5 guessing it could be some of the folks
6 that are in that neck of Uniondale
7 because it can't be more than, I would
8 say maybe 500ft from the park. But I just
9 wanted to hear your overall plans to be
10 able to address how we're going to keep
11 the park clean, how we're going to ensure
12 that it could be more utilized. And then
13 also, as I said before, just the general
14 maintenance of the park, making sure that
15 it's going to continue to be maintained.

16 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: So our
17 maintenance team is there regularly.

18 MR. MESSNER: Yes, It's part of a
19 roving stop that we have a crew that goes
20 around and accesses the park regularly.
21 We definitely are working with them
22 constantly as far as to keep up on the
23 maintenance of the facility. Garbage is
24 always a hefty task for our crew,
25 especially if they're not able to get to

1
2 the area every single day. We could clear
3 it one day, you could have access to the
4 park, people cleaning out their cars,
5 stopping, knowing there's a garbage can
6 then, and unfortunately, we don't get to
7 it for a day or two and it looks
8 unsightly. We always do respond when
9 notified as far as if it's on cleanly and
10 we send staff there directly.

11 I do know I've met some of your
12 staff there on a couple of occasions.
13 We've looked at some of the brickwork,
14 the clock, so on and so forth. I have had
15 been working with Commissioner Arnold on
16 trying to upgrade some of those issues,
17 working with facilities, the masons and
18 carpenters and so on and so forth. And
19 it's part of our daily routine that we
20 try to stay on top of as best as we can.
21 But as I mentioned before, we always
22 respond directly when notified of any
23 type of issue immediately.

24 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: How often is
25 the park swept, cleaned, blowed for

1
2 debris to ensure that? Like I said
3 before, I just drove by it this morning
4 and I saw the amount of wrappers, Dunkin'
5 Donuts cups, everything along the fence
6 line. And I'm not saying that it's being
7 done by people in the park; wind blows,
8 we can get bad weather and stuff just
9 finds its way up against fences and
10 walls. So and I understand that it's a
11 constant thing with garbage, especially
12 with people just throwing stuff out their
13 car windows or whatever may be the case.
14 But could you tell me the interval of how
15 often the park is --

16 MR. MESSNER: It's monitored about
17 two to three times a week.

18 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Really?

19 MR. MESSNER: Yes.

20 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Two or three
21 times a week?

22 MR. MESSNER: It's unfortunate when
23 you have a park along a very busy road.
24 We have this issue along Eisenhower Park,
25 along Merrick and Hempstead Turnpike. As

1
2 far as the people throwing trash out of
3 the cars, it blows up against the fence
4 line, we have to take that time to walk
5 the perimeter of the park. We don't see
6 it always from the inside, but
7 unfortunately, it's nature of the beast
8 that we deal with being in an area like
9 that as far as roadways and people
10 littering, unfortunately. But we do try
11 to send staff there regularly two or
12 three times a week, yes.

13 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: All right.
14 That's good to hear.

15 My next question actually ties into
16 a different part of the county. It's a
17 facility, as we know, Mitchell Gym, which
18 is in Legislator Bynoe's district, but
19 many of the residents in Uniondale and
20 throughout my district do use it.

21 I'm sure you're familiar,
22 Commissioner, with the New York Sports
23 Club. There was an announcement with the
24 previous Administration that there was
25 that the County entered into a 15 year

1
2 lease with this particular entity. It has
3 come to my understanding that that entity
4 has not paid the County rent. It seems to
5 me -- and this is by no fault of your
6 office, because this was done with the
7 previous Administration, different Body,
8 but obviously it's in your lap now. To
9 me, Mitchell Gym has so much potential to
10 really generate revenue for the Parks
11 Department. And here you have an entity
12 that has not paid one nickel in rent that
13 has been there, I guess, for the last two
14 years. I know it's currently in
15 litigation.

16 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Correct.

17 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: But I was
18 hoping you can share with us anything
19 that wouldn't jeopardize the litigation,
20 of course, but then also what would be
21 the future plans? Because I envision
22 based off the County's action, that we
23 are trying to remove the current tenant.
24 And then once that does happen, if it's
25 happened and I don't know if you can say

1
2 anything without jeopardizing the
3 litigation, but once that does happen,
4 what would be the future use? Are we
5 looking to RFP it again or are we looking
6 to just basically get the facility up and
7 running and be able to utilize it for our
8 residents?

9 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yeah, we're in
10 a holding pattern now. It was RFP'd
11 previously. I can't commit to RFP again.
12 Personally, I'm a little territorial. I
13 prefer to operate something ourselves.
14 You have more control over it that way.
15 But I would need to talk to the
16 Administration about what their thoughts
17 are on that as well.

18 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Okay.

19 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: But yes, it is
20 currently in litigation and they were
21 locked out as a result of litigation and
22 they're no longer locks that were placed
23 by the Sheriff on that property.

24 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: So they're
25 back in?

1
2 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Correct. On
3 their own devices, we didn't allow them
4 back in.

5 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Okay. Would
6 you know or do we have to contact the
7 County Attorney's Office to find out
8 where it is in the litigation?

9 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: I asked for an
10 update last week and they were due back
11 in court, I think tomorrow, Thursday.

12 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: If you can
13 keep our offices, especially Legislator
14 Bynoe's, abreast of where it goes. Just
15 so you know, before you became the
16 commissioner, under the previous
17 administration, that place was bustling.
18 I mean, it was a great opportunity for
19 community organizations as well as
20 community residents to be able to utilize
21 that facility. And since the New York
22 Sports Club, if I'm saying their name
23 correctly, has come in, it's become much
24 more localized and a lot of things that
25 they promised when the Rules Committee

1
2 and this Legislative Body approved their
3 contract, did not come to fruition.

4 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Correct.

5 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: And from what
6 I also understand, they have not paid one
7 nickel in rent.

8 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Correct.

9 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: I also
10 believe, and obviously this is subject to
11 more verification maybe on your end,
12 they've been operating without insurance.
13 So they've they've struck out three
14 times. They've had three strikes. So to
15 me, they should be gone. But that being
16 said, we would love to be able to see and
17 be able to utilize that facility. If it's
18 run by the Parks Department, that'd be
19 great. But we would love to be able to
20 see that facility end up where it's
21 starting to be utilized again by
22 community based organizations, average
23 residents, whoever may be the case.

24 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: It's a very
25 special, unique place and I would like to

1
2 see it -- it was renovated prior to the
3 New York Sports Club taking over the
4 lease. So when I toured it for the first
5 time last February of last year, when I
6 first started, I was pretty impressed
7 with it. So selfishly, I'd like to look
8 to bring it back under our operation, but
9 we'll have to talk further about that.
10 And again, while things are pending, I
11 can't do anything.

12 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: No, no, I know
13 you can't speak about the litigation
14 itself and nor would I ask you to speak
15 directly about that. But if you just keep
16 us abreast of what happens and if there
17 are future dates that are mentioned in
18 court, if you can mention those dates
19 just so we can be able to inform our
20 residents in terms of how this is
21 progressing and going forward.

22 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Okay.

23 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Thank you.

24 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: You're
25 welcome.

1
2 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Appreciate it.

3 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Legislator Bynoe
4 has a follow up question.

5 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: She has no
6 parks in her district, you know that?

7 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So I'm going to
8 piggyback off Legislator Abrahams and go
9 to that point that I bring up all the
10 time. I have no park my district. Even
11 with the reconfiguration.

12 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: But you still
13 like parks so much. I like that.

14 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Yeah.

15 To Legislator Kevan's point, if you
16 could bring that back under the umbrella
17 of the Parks Department, it would give me
18 some semblance of a recreation park
19 situation in district where communities
20 could congregate and have fun. So that
21 would be great.

22 The question that I have is for the
23 next three years, I believe it is,
24 there's \$100,000 earmarked for the
25 African American Museum for renovations.

1
2 And so it previously was 250K per year.
3 It's been reduced to a 100K. They have
4 significant opportunities there. They
5 have challenges, but there's significant,
6 significant opportunities there where I
7 believe they could become a lot more
8 self-sufficient if we make some of these
9 investments as it relates to climate
10 control and all those other things that
11 they need to do there.

12 The way that museum is used is not
13 only for the opportunity for folks to go
14 and view what's on exhibit. Actually
15 it's become a space where people can
16 socialize. Every Friday night they host
17 a band and all these other things that
18 happens there. One of the items that I
19 really wanted to address with the money
20 that was earmarked for them was the
21 upgrade to their kitchen. I think that
22 they could function a lot better if they
23 were able to have that upgraded. I know
24 that you have a General Parks's line that
25 we might be able to utilize in

1
2 supplementing the 100K for the next three
3 years. So I'd like to put that on your
4 radar.

5 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Okay. We can
6 talk more offline about that as well.

7 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. Any other
9 legislators have any questions?

10 (Whereupon, no verbal
11 response.)

12 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: There being not
13 any public comment?

14 (Whereupon, no verbal
15 response.)

16 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. Thank you.

17 COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Thank you.

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19 *****
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2 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Next up is the
3 Department of Consumer Affairs.

4 Commissioner Capece.

5 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Good
6 afternoon.

7 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Good afternoon.
8 How are you?

9 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I'm going to
10 keep my remarks based on four areas for
11 Consumer Affairs, and I welcome questions
12 at any time.

13 I want to talk about four areas:
14 The backlog, the front desk, staffing and
15 the programs of Consumer Affairs. With
16 me today, I have my Accountant, Don
17 Harnett, and my County Attorney, Mary
18 Harkins.

19 Getting right to the backlog.
20 January 2022, we were 7420 applications
21 backlog. I'm happy to say now we're
22 roughly about 600-800 backlog. We've cut
23 it down. And just so you understand that
24 every month we get approximately 400
25 renewals. So that number is fluid. If you

1
2 check it tomorrow, more come in, more go
3 out. I'm about 300 new applications in
4 the hole. With more staffing, I'm hoping
5 to break that down and have better news
6 next year, but I'm kind of happy how we
7 got the backlog cut down.

8 We have approximately 700 active
9 consumer complaints. I want to explain
10 that:

11 A consumer complaint. I've
12 streamlined the system. Someone has a
13 complaint. They have to sign a form. We
14 don't do anything verbally over the
15 phone. Someone has to put pen to paper
16 and be a complainant. Once we get that,
17 we immediately give it to an investigator
18 who makes an initial contact. And then,
19 according to the complaint, we try to as
20 expediently as possible, get that
21 complaint satisfied.

22 Now, 700 seems like a high number,
23 but we've been getting a lot of
24 complaints finished in a timely manner.
25 Some take longer. Consumer complaints are

1
2 very subjective. A lot of people still
3 have a misconception that we are an
4 enforcement agency. We're not. We're a
5 regulatory agency. So I do not have the
6 ability to make a contractor to pay a
7 person. We have ways, we have hearings,
8 where we look at things and I'm guided by
9 rules and regulations. We try to come to
10 an amicable solution. Sometimes we can't.
11 Then we tell them, you have to go to
12 litigation. And sometimes we do refer
13 them to the District Attorney's Office.

14 I'm happy to say that we've been
15 moving ahead. We have a very robust
16 hearing program. Our County Attorney
17 Harkins set up a great system with our
18 judge, and we've been moving along with
19 that.

20 Moving to our front desk. The front
21 desk is our front line. That's where our
22 clientele or applicants for licenses to
23 do home improvements come to find out how
24 do we do it? I'm staffed with two
25 bilingual staff members and a great

1
2 community service rep that is servicing
3 the people that come. What we do is, a
4 lot of people that come to our front
5 desk, especially some of our newer
6 residents to the county, don't understand
7 all the laws. So what we try to do is we
8 try to get the clientele to understand
9 what they need. I do a lot of training
10 with my staff, we try to do it every
11 month or so. We try to have these little
12 training sessions where I just don't want
13 to be a commissioner. I just don't want
14 to be an administrator. I don't want to
15 be a manager. I want to be a leader and
16 try to tell them how we could handle
17 people better. We have a lot of
18 frustrated people come to our front desk.
19 Frustration leads to what? Leads to
20 anger. So I'm trying to get the staff to
21 understand people are angry, not
22 necessarily at you. They're frustrated
23 because they have a lack of knowledge. So
24 what we're trying to do is give them that
25 knowledge, tell them what they need to

1
2 do, and if it warrants it, if we have an
3 applicant who doesn't really understand
4 the system or he has an incomplete
5 application, we take him to a conference
6 room and we explain things to them. And
7 that's been going very well. That's why I
8 think our backlog is down and we try to
9 keep a very positive consumer friendly
10 atmosphere. We are Consumer Affairs, so
11 we try to keep all consumers happy.

12 The hangover is over. We have to
13 move. We have to keep doing things. We
14 can't rely on blaming things on Covid. We
15 still have a lot of people come in. A lot
16 of our contractors believed that because
17 of Covid, they did not have to renew
18 their licenses. They thought they were
19 excused. So we're trying to correct those
20 type of situations in a positive manner,
21 not in a negative regulatory manner, but
22 get them back on board.

23 Staffing. I have 21 full time, four
24 part time. We're hoping with the new CSEA
25 contract, which we're happy that was

1
2 passed, that we could get more people to
3 take our jobs. We've been working with
4 OMB, working with HR to try to get people
5 onboarded. We onboarded people. That
6 just took care of attrition. We're trying
7 to make the job attractive with better
8 salary. We're hoping we'll be able to
9 onboard more people. There is a
10 correlation. The more staff I have, the
11 more I could increase my enforcement
12 efforts, increase revenue, put us in
13 compliance with New York State
14 regulations where we do get reimbursed
15 for some of the jobs we do. And my desire
16 is to make Consumer Affairs proactive,
17 not reactive.

18 And I would just like to take the
19 time to say the staff at Consumer Affairs
20 are great people. We have a great
21 workforce in Nassau County. They should
22 be respected. And I'm glad that a
23 contract was settled because when people
24 don't have a contract, they're unsure of
25 their future. They don't know what's

1
2 going on. With a settled contract, we
3 have workers that want to get down to
4 business and it's working out very well.

5 Programs. We have an item pricing
6 program, which is a large revenue
7 producer. Item pricing, just so you
8 understand what that is, they pay us
9 money. With that, they don't have to put
10 a tag on each individual item they could
11 just in front of the display: Chocolate
12 chip cookies, two for \$4. What we do is
13 we go with our machine and we check to
14 make sure that they're compliant. If
15 they're not compliant, they're given a
16 summons. To be an item pricing person,
17 they have to be in our program and it
18 does give us a lot of revenue.

19 We've also started a contract. Don
20 was very influential in this. We utilize
21 a collection agency now, which to me
22 takes a very low fee, to try to get some
23 revenue from past fines from people who
24 have just not paid us. We're going back
25 ten years, we have people that just never

1
2 paid us. So we started with a collection
3 agency. I think to date we got some money
4 coming in, not a lot of money. I hope
5 next year I'll be able to give you a
6 better snapshot of what we have. We only
7 started in June, we have about \$15,000
8 that came in so far; \$15,000 is better
9 than nothing. Also with the collection
10 agency, it lets people be reminded that
11 they can't just forget about us. So I
12 want to keep the revenue stream coming
13 in.

14 Smart Sprinkler, a great program. We
15 settled the last claims from 2020 and
16 2021. We're all set to go. There was a
17 little snafu with funding, but I worked
18 with IT, programs set to go. I sent it
19 up to the County Executive's Office and I
20 feel we can retroactively reimburse
21 people from 2022 and 2023 that put in
22 sprinkler systems. And we're thinking in
23 the spring of '24 would be a good time to
24 kick off this program. By the way, there
25 was a little snafu, that's what caused a

1
2 little bit of a delay. We're all set to
3 go.

4 Before 2000, there were three
5 Consumer Affairs laws on the books. We
6 only had to really regulate three
7 Consumer Affairs laws; now we have 28. So
8 it is a struggle. It is a challenge to
9 try to keep up with all the different
10 laws that we have to enforce or to reduce
11 staff. But my desire is to become, like I
12 said before, proactive, not reactive.

13 I'm working with HR and OMB to
14 increase our headcount and to get more
15 people out in the field to enforce the
16 laws that we have.

17 Any questions I'll be glad to answer
18 as best I can.

19 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Commissioner,
20 thank you very much. Thank you for your
21 work and to your entire team for your
22 presentation.

23 I know you went over this, but just
24 to confirm, I know in October of 2021,
25 there was a backlog of about 800 license

1
2 applications. What did you say that was
3 down to?

4 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: No. No. And
5 December of 2021, there was 7420
6 licenses.

7 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: And what are we
8 down to?

9 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Like I said
10 before, roughly according to the time and
11 month, we have 400 renewals a month. So
12 I'm about 400 down. Then when renewals
13 come in, it kicks up to about 800; about
14 800.

15 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: The backlog is
16 pretty much gone.

17 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Almost.

18 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Obviously,
19 you're always going to have new
20 applications.

21 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: We're always
22 going to have a little backlog. I'd like
23 to see the new applications serviced
24 within 30 days.

25 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. So are

1
2 there any applications that are in the
3 hopper that are over 30 days old?

4 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Yes, there
5 are, about 300.

6 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. And are
7 those more than a year old?

8 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: No, no, no.
9 And just to clarify, there's a
10 misconception. We look at an application.
11 We have the application. You have to do
12 A, B, C and D. Sometimes the contractor
13 fails to do B and C and we give it back
14 to them and say you have to comply with
15 this, takes them 3 or 4 months. Sometimes
16 they don't come back. That's still
17 ticking on our clock, but it's not on us.
18 It's on them to get it to us.

19 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay,
20 understood. I wouldn't consider that a
21 backlog either, of course. But in terms
22 of like and not to the day, but the
23 oldest application that you have is it
24 from the year 2023?

25 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: New

1
2 application, yes, 2023.

3 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Is there a
4 contractor waiting anywhere in Nassau
5 County right now that applied in 2022
6 that is still waiting?

7 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Not that I'm
8 aware of. Unless there's a problem. But
9 i'ts not that this application was there
10 and nobody looked at it.

11 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Right. So
12 essentially the backlog is gone.

13 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Basically,
14 yes.

15 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay.
16 That's pretty much all I have.

17 I know we've talked about in the
18 past the the gas gasoline prices and the
19 differing gas. And we're seeing it now
20 again with the gas prices kind of going
21 back up. It's just something that drives
22 me crazy. And, you know, I'm all for
23 capitalism and profit and all that. But,
24 when you go, you get off a parkway and a
25 gas station is \$4.09 and then you go down

1
2 another half a mile and it's \$3.49 for a
3 gallon of regular. It's just there's
4 there seems to be some trickery on the
5 parts of some of these gas stations for
6 trying to attract people who are maybe
7 from out of town, don't know what the gas
8 prices are around here.

9 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Well, people
10 people utilize the language of price
11 gouging. Gouging is when a product is not
12 available. Take during Sandy, when
13 Consumer Affairs went out -- I wasn't
14 there then -- but back then, Consumer
15 Affairs went out and some stores were
16 charging instead of \$8 or \$10 for a case
17 of water, they were charging \$25 because
18 water was short; that's gouging.

19 With gas, right now there's enough
20 gas. We're in touch with NYGRA, that's
21 New York Gas Retailers Association,
22 there's plenty of gas coming in. There is
23 no shortage. So if someone wants to
24 charge, like you said, \$4.09, I really
25 don't have any regulatory power to do

1
2 anything. It's not a shortage.

3 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: I understand
4 that in terms of the definition of
5 gouging, and certainly we haven't had a
6 shortage of gas. The only time in my
7 lifetime of driving in the last 22 years,
8 23 years that I can remember, a shortage
9 of gas was during Hurricane Sandy when
10 you literally couldn't find a gas station
11 that had gas.

12 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Well, they
13 couldn't pump it out.

14 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: They couldn't
15 pump it. Right. So you couldn't get gas.

16 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Well, I'm
17 older than you. I remember the late 70s.

18 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: It's just
19 something to keep in on. It's it rubs me
20 the wrong way. Maybe there's nothing you
21 can do, but I'm still going to call you.

22 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: And we'll take
23 your call, sir.

24 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you.

25 Legislator Ford.

1
2 LEGISLATOR FORD: Thank you very
3 much for your presentation and I'm glad
4 to see things are moving along smoothly
5 and everything.

6 So I guess like when you talk about
7 like your backlog and sending people out
8 to do fines or inspections, are you
9 planning on bringing more people into
10 your department?

11 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I'm trying to
12 increase my headcount by eight.

13 LEGISLATOR FORD: Very good. And
14 where where are you now? Have you
15 brought anybody in?

16 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: We we did on
17 board new people with that only covered
18 attrition. I have 21 full time employees.

19 LEGISLATOR FORD: And how many you
20 would like to have, close to 30?

21 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: We just spoke
22 to OMB and was slated to have 29.

23 LEGISLATOR FORD: Wonderful.
24 Wonderful. All right.

25 As a result of the ratified CSEA

1
2 contract, will that also result in like
3 hopefully an increase in starting
4 salaries that may attract people?

5 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: That's what
6 we're hoping, because when we trying to
7 onboard the people for the attrition we
8 would turn down a lot people just didn't
9 want to work for that salary.

10 LEGISLATOR FORD: Okay.

11 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: That was a
12 challenge. I'm so grateful that the
13 contract settled because now everybody is
14 kind of set. They know what's going on.
15 And hopefully with new Civil Service
16 Exams, we'll be able to get new, younger
17 people that will be our future workforce.

18 LEGISLATOR FORD: Wonderful. I like
19 that.

20 Your department is very key, as we
21 know, and we've seen it over the years.
22 When I go back to Sandy, the important
23 role that Consumer Affairs played with
24 those who were impacted by unscrupulous
25 contractors and dealing with trying to

1
2 rebuild their homes in their communities
3 and whatever. The one agency that really
4 came to bat for so many people actually
5 was Consumer Affairs. A lot of their
6 complaints fell on deaf ears, but
7 Consumer Affairs came through for them. I
8 think that a lot of the services and the
9 advice and everything that you have that
10 you can provide to residents and even
11 business owners are very key. And I was
12 wondering if you would consider doing
13 like a public service outreach. Not to
14 add to your work. I don't mean to do that
15 to you, but I don't know whether or not
16 if legislators had you out there. But I
17 think in order to to pique the interest
18 of people -- because I think that when I
19 go back to Sandy, when I think about one
20 of the downfalls for so many people and
21 unfortunately, I think it still happens,
22 that when people are dealing with
23 contractors rebuilding their homes and
24 doing work, you know that there you use a
25 benchmark like when people are going to

1
2 enter into a contract with a contractor.
3 You know, I think the rule of thumb and
4 you could correct me if I'm wrong. That
5 you would give one third up front. That
6 would be the down payment. And then while
7 the work was going on, you'd give the
8 second, third, and then when the work was
9 completed to your satisfaction, so to
10 speak, then you would pay the balance of
11 a third. But a lot of people don't
12 realize that, you know, they pay it all
13 up front or whatever, and then the work
14 isn't done. So, I think that in a way,
15 if you can formulate maybe an educational
16 piece that can go out so that consumers
17 can understand that there is an agency
18 that will advocate for them, but also if
19 you can give them some common sense tips
20 on dealing with a contractor or any of
21 the day-to-day issues that may face
22 somebody who lives here.

23 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: We do have
24 some brochures. We do attend street
25 fairs. We're at the Westbury Street Fair,

1
2 the Franklin Square Street fair, the
3 street fair last week.

4 LEGISLATOR FORD: Come to Irish day.

5 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: We'll come to
6 Irish Day. The Belmont Street fair, I
7 think due to inclement weather was
8 rescheduled. We do attend that. And I
9 have spoken and he's no longer with the
10 agency, Kenny. We get calls from state
11 senators, state legislators to go to
12 senior centers and we just try to give
13 them as much advice as we can.

14 The other component is once I get
15 more people, I want to answer the phones
16 in real time. The problem I have now is I
17 don't have enough staff to answer the
18 phones in real time. So we're a day or
19 two behind. So I'm hoping with onboarding
20 new people, by the beginning of next year
21 to have these things put in place. We do
22 have an online service where you could go
23 on Consumer Affairs, look up a contract
24 to see if they're licensed. But a lot of
25 our people that call us are seniors,

1
2 people that don't have computers. We tend
3 to think everybody's computer savvy. No,
4 they're not. So we want to have that
5 ability for them to call and talk.

6 LEGISLATOR FORD: Maybe even if you
7 could on the back side, you could put for
8 contractors how to tips on applying for a
9 license and what they need and how soon
10 they could do it to help facilitate. It
11 might be like a good PR piece. I think
12 you really should let people know about
13 Consumer Affairs and the value that you
14 have for all of us. And I think that it
15 would be nice if people know that there
16 really is this agency that is there for
17 them. Toot your own horn.

18 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I agree. I
19 don't usually do that, but I'll do it.

20 It's offered to anyone. If someone
21 has a meeting. I have staff members I
22 could send there. If you just call my
23 office, call me, 571-6005 is my direct
24 line. I'll be happy to accommodate you as
25 best I can.

1
2 LEGISLATOR FORD: Thank you. And
3 you've always been responsive, I have to
4 say that. And even with the contractors
5 in the past, if I had contractors reach
6 out to me, you've always handled them in
7 a timely fashion. And I really appreciate
8 that. And knock on wood, I'm not going to
9 jinx anything. It's been quiet and I'm
10 very happy about that. But thank you for
11 doing such a great job. Really
12 appreciate it.

13 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
15 Bynoe.

16 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Thank you, Chair.
17 Hi. Good day.

18 So I'm going to probably I'm going
19 to jump right into the Complaint process.
20 You mentioned that it can't be done over
21 the phone. Was it previously being --

22 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: No. We take it
23 over the phone. What we do is we'll talk
24 to them over the phone, find out what
25 their problem is. But we can't take a

1
2 phone call and act on it until they sign
3 a complaint form. We either mail it to
4 them or e-mail it to them. The staff will
5 give them the option. Would you like us
6 to mail it to you or e-mail it to you?

7 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So the intake is
8 taken, then they e-mail or hard mail and
9 then send it back.

10 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Right. When we
11 get it back, I get the form back. We give
12 it a number that's given to an
13 investigator. Within a day or two, I want
14 an investigator to reach out to that
15 person to know we received it so they
16 know we're on it. And then according to
17 what the complaint is, it's processed.

18 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. Thank you.
19 So you talked about, you could do
20 more if you had more staff.

21 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: More
22 enforcement.

23 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: You have the CBA
24 that I guess bolstered the salaries?

25 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I don't know

1
2 what CBA is.

3 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Collective
4 Bargaining Agreement.

5 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I'm sorry.
6 How it helps. Well, some of our
7 positions, especially the people on the
8 intake, the Community Service Aides or
9 the Consumer Protection Investigators got
10 a nice bump in salary instead of starting
11 at like 30 something thousand. It's now
12 bumped up to I don't know the exact
13 numbers, so I don't want to be quoted,
14 but it makes it more -- you know, some
15 people, they want a civil service job,
16 they want the benefits, they want the
17 insurance, they want the all that good
18 stuff. But when they see a low starting
19 salary, they can't make ends meet.

20 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I wanted to know
21 what the salary increase was.

22 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I don't know
23 that exactly.

24 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. Thank you.

25 All right. So I guess now I want to

1
2 go into the smart water sprinkler. So
3 when you say there's a snafu, I'd like to
4 know in terms of giving these folks back
5 money retro, in terms of funding, how
6 much do you think that process would
7 require? For the retro.

8 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Well, we did
9 '20 and '21, like I said, last year --
10 well, actually, earlier this year -- we
11 finished it. That was about \$80,000 for
12 the two years. There's \$100,000 granted
13 per year. I don't have a worry about
14 running out of funding.

15 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. That's the
16 point I wanted to make to you. It was
17 birthed out of a process that came
18 through this Legislature. We didn't just
19 require the program be created. We
20 actually tied a number to it, which is
21 the 100K. So if you say there's a snafu.
22 If you haven't processed '22 and '23,
23 you're sitting on 200K. And so for the
24 retros, you should be able to handle
25 that. But you mentioned -- you said it

1
2 because I heard it -- that there was a
3 problem with money.

4 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Yeah. There
5 was some sort of issue with funding and
6 it was more of a technical issue. Not
7 that the money wasn't there or is
8 earmarked somewhere else or spent
9 somewhere else. It's not in our budget.

10 MR. HARNETT: It's not so much a
11 snafu.

12 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: It should be in
13 your budget because it is. We wrote the
14 legislation to require that it was in
15 your budget.

16 MR. HARNETT: Correct. It's in our
17 budget. And we were advised that there
18 was ARPA, American Rescue Plan Act
19 funding into the County for which we
20 could then get reimbursed through for
21 this program; the Smart Sprinkler
22 Program.

23 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. If that's
24 what the Administration would like to do,
25 that's fine. But they should not be

1
2 slowing down a process that this Body
3 directed the Department to fund at 100K a
4 year.

5 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: We're all set.
6 We went met with IT. Don worked very
7 hard. We changed the application process
8 slightly. We changed the application to
9 make it more user friendly. So we're set.
10 When someone says push the button, we're
11 ready to go.

12 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. I think I'm
13 a little annoyed by this because we
14 shouldn't be this delayed. We had no
15 program for 2023 and or 2022, basically
16 because you were still in a backlog
17 situation. I personally did not want this
18 program to go to Consumer Affairs. I
19 wanted it to sit somewhere else. But it's
20 there. And if you're understaffed and you
21 don't even have enough people to generate
22 your revenue, and that had been the case
23 from the time this program went to
24 Consumer Affairs, I don't see how you can
25 effectively run this program with your

1
2 staffing levels to assist our residents
3 in being able to receive their rebate
4 timely and to really have the intended
5 outcome of this program materialize.
6 We're talking about a finite resource,
7 water. We're talking about trying to
8 conserve it and we're trying to
9 incentivize people to do that. And if
10 we're not in a position to do that in
11 this department, then I think we need to
12 move this someplace else where they're
13 staffed appropriately to do it.

14 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I'm here to
15 serve; wherever they want to put it. But
16 I can tell you, I believe in the program
17 because in 2019, before the rebate, I put
18 it in my house and it saved me money. So
19 it's not a baloney program. It works.

20 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Well, that's what
21 birth the program here. I put it in my
22 house and then I thought that we should
23 be encouraging other people to do it at
24 their homes. And I just feel like we're
25 not moving this program along.

1
2 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: We're set to
3 go. We have everything set with IT. If
4 it wants to be moved somewhere else, I
5 have no problem. But it's all set.
6 Wherever we move it to, they just have to
7 turn it on.

8 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: What is your what
9 is your plan for the public service
10 announcement to say that we're finally
11 properly in business to process these
12 rebates?

13 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: That was given
14 to my upline, to the County Executive
15 Office. That we're ready to go. I didn't
16 think I had to announce. I thought it
17 would be announced by someone else.

18 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Some years ago,
19 when this Body unanimously approved this,
20 there was a press conference. I
21 personally mailed to my community to
22 advise them of it. And I'm hopeful that
23 the folks here on the dais did the same
24 thing. I believe the Democratic caucus
25 put it in newsletters or what have you,

1
2 but this is something that annually we
3 should be reminding people that it's
4 available because we want them to take
5 advantage of it. So there should be some
6 public service announcement that's tied
7 to making folks aware. Access and
8 awareness have to be shared together
9 here.

10 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Just speaking,
11 not off the record, I'm on the record,
12 but this time of year -- I think it would
13 probably be best to do it in March or
14 April.

15 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I think April's
16 too late, honestly. We turn on our
17 systems in April and May. I think you do
18 it in February. When people are starting
19 to hope for spring and start to get
20 themselves together.

21 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I agree. I'll
22 speak to my upline and we'll plan to do
23 it for February.

24 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And I think
25 everybody here on this Body would love to

1
2 include that in communications.

3 Personally, I have been reluctant to do
4 that because I'm sandwiched between two
5 people who installed it and every time I
6 see them, they're like, I didn't get my
7 rebate, I didn't get my rebate. So, you
8 know, I was not going to continue to
9 advertise.

10 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Any '20 or '21
11 person that was eligible, received their
12 rebates. When I took over, there was 400
13 outstanding. We paid them.

14 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay, good. So
15 they finally got paid.

16 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: They got paid
17 earlier in the year. Then we worked on
18 redoing the program. We got the program
19 redone. Don worked very hard with IT,
20 because you have to attach this through a
21 pathway to our link from the website. So
22 we're all set and we're ready. We could
23 process '22 and '23 and '24. It's not an
24 extra burden to do the extra ones. It's
25 set to go.

1
2 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay.

3 So my final questions or things I'd
4 like you to address is, I have a pet
5 peeve about going into an establishment,
6 having them tell me what the price is on
7 an item and then when I pull out my debit
8 card, they tell me that I have to pay a
9 fee for using it.

10 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Sure. We
11 receive a lot of complaints about that.

12 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: A real problem
13 with that. So I started doing some
14 research and I've been advised through
15 the research, I've been informed through
16 my research that. There are laws on the
17 book similar to the gas situation, when
18 you pull into the gas station, credit is
19 this much, cash is this much. I'm
20 understanding that the retailers, the
21 service providers, are also required to
22 do that, or they're supposed to give you
23 the credit amount and then give you the
24 cash discount.

25 MS. HARKINS: Post the highest credit

1
2 price. Previously, like the General
3 Business Law said that you couldn't have
4 a credit card surcharge. But then there
5 was a court of appeals decision that
6 interpreted that statute, and basically
7 it said you have to post the higher
8 credit card price. You're allowed to
9 charge a surcharge, but you have to post
10 the price so that the consumer does not
11 have to do the math. So it's got to be in
12 dollars and cents.

13 But there's so much confusion out
14 there right now. There are bills pending
15 in the Senate and the Assembly in New
16 York. And we're waiting for some
17 clarification. It seems like some
18 establishments, like even the ones that I
19 like, my pizza parlor, it has like a sign
20 someone's giving them this wrong
21 information that they're allowed to say
22 if you use a credit card, there's a 4%
23 surcharge. I don't know if we're big
24 enough or strong enough to enforce that.
25 I think we need it from the New York

1
2 State level.

3 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: You're absolutely
4 correct because my research. Indicated
5 that we didn't have a role in that. This
6 Body does not have a role in that.

7 Otherwise, I was working on something to
8 address it. It is for the State. I know
9 that it passed both. I called some of our
10 state representatives and found out that
11 it passed in both houses, but that it's
12 pending. But once it passes, we have to
13 enforce it.

14 MS. HARKINS: Then we'll take an
15 educational outreach and then we'll do
16 enforcement.

17 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: But the current
18 law still prohibits what they're doing.
19 The law in the state right now is for the
20 purpose of trying to clarify it. What
21 they're doing now is wrong, period. And I
22 think we should be enforcing it. I'm
23 going to tell you that my nail salon is
24 doing it. Everybody's doing it. I'm like
25 running every everywhere I go now, I'm

1
2 like running around with cash. I don't
3 carry cash. But now I'm carrying cash.
4 The whole idea of having these debit
5 cards and credit cards and not having to
6 use cash or having to walk around with a
7 lot of cash is that there's a safety
8 element of that.

9 MS. HARKINS: I totally agree. And
10 the debit card is a little different than
11 the credit card with that law, with the
12 Durbin Act. It's it's confusing. It
13 really is confusing. And I do know the
14 Commissioner's policy is whenever we
15 receive a phone call with a complaint
16 about an establishment that's not
17 following the law, our investigators go
18 out and that establishment receives a
19 violation. So we're doing it that way.

20 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: That's to the
21 point of Legislator Ford, there needs to
22 be a lot of public service announcements
23 and creating a hyper awareness around
24 these issues because every time they
25 nickel and dime you for these 3% and 4%,

1
2 it's just flat out wrong. I feel that
3 specifically like if I'm using a credit
4 card and you and you've got to charge me
5 -- I don't use a credit card. I use a
6 debit card. And now I'm paying you a fee
7 to use my own money. And and you're
8 getting it almost instantaneously. It's
9 wrong. I'm not saying you have to mail
10 to every house; Facebook, social media.
11 That's that's a methodology for doing
12 that. We've got to be able to inform
13 people that they don't have to pay these
14 fees unjustly.

15 MS. HARKINS: We did a flyer last
16 year on the credit card surcharge issue.
17 Got to get it out there.

18 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: You guys got to
19 keep doing it. It's just because a lot of
20 people may not even understand what
21 you're saying until they experience it.

22 MS. HARKINS: New York State
23 Attorney General had a great piece of
24 information, and we use those examples to
25 try to make it simple for people.

1
2 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And what about
3 our merchants? How do you communicate to
4 them?

5 MS. HARKINS: Well, I think last
6 year we went out to like 1 or 2 Chamber
7 of Commerce's. I went out with Ken Hino
8 and did that.

9 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: The merchants
10 are also confused because some of them
11 put that sign --

12 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: How are you going
13 to help them understand how they can
14 follow the law so that they don't have to
15 be penalized?

16 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Well, the
17 problem is we've discussed the law. We're
18 kind of confused about the law ourselves.
19 If someone puts a sign -- Well, no,
20 you're not. I'm a regular person. I'm
21 confused. You can help us.

22 MS. HARKINS: Yeah. No, I think
23 we'll be in a better position. We'll get
24 more bang for our buck when the New York
25 State Senate and Assembly come down with

1
2 their bills. And then we'll go out with
3 an educational outreach. It's just I
4 don't know if I'm speaking out of tune,
5 but it's hard when you're putting out
6 fires. Like the Commissioner kept
7 saying, we want to be proactive, but
8 we're really reactive. We have TLC
9 Weights and Measures, Consumer Protection
10 and Licensing with 21 people. And I'm
11 not even on staff. I'm with the County
12 Attorney's Office. I'm on loan.

13 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: But she's been
14 a great resource.

15 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I hope my
16 colleagues are hearing this. It's
17 terrible. You guys are terribly
18 understaffed with a significant amount of
19 responsibility. And when you're not
20 meeting the needs, it's directly
21 impacting our residents directly with
22 directly allowing for money to be taken
23 out of their bank accounts because we're
24 not able to do the level of enforcement
25 and the level of education that's

1
2 required.

3 MS. HARKINS: Mary worked very hard.
4 We tried to figure out the genesis of
5 this. How did this start? I always like
6 to get to the grassroots. How did this
7 start? We don't know. Some merchants,
8 they put up a sign, 3.5% surcharge for
9 using a credit card. According to the
10 law, when they read it, a lot of these
11 pizzerias, they don't understand it.
12 They're supposed to put the --

13 MS. HARKINS: The highest credit
14 card price has to be posted.

15 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Supposed to
16 advertise at the highest and then
17 discount if you use cash.

18 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Correct.

19 MS. HARKINS: Right.

20 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: But now it's
21 spreading to not just pizzerias and
22 restaurants. We're getting calls from
23 nail salons. I hate to use the word
24 cancer, but it's spreading. It's like
25 just going all over the place and it's a

1
2 challenge for us.

3 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Don't you have a
4 record of everyone who's doing business
5 in Nassau County?

6 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: No.

7 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Who in the County
8 has that?

9 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Clerk's
10 Office.

11 MS. HARKINS: Maybe.

12 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. So I think
13 you get that information from the Clerk's
14 Office and you do a mailing that tells
15 them that if you're operating your
16 business utilizing this process, you're
17 in violation of the law and we will find
18 you. Somebody's got to stop that. It's
19 wrong.

20 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: We have a fine
21 system in place. What is it, \$100?

22 MS. HARKINS: Yeah, I think it was
23 \$100 fine. More of an educational --

24 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: If you're
25 confused as the Commissioner of Consumer

1
2 Affairs, the merchant is too. I think we
3 owe it to them --

4 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I agree.

5 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: To give them the
6 right information so that they handle
7 these transactions properly. Let's give
8 them an opportunity to self-correct by
9 educating them. And then when they don't
10 do that, then we fine them. But you got
11 to give them the opportunity. I think
12 it's flat out wrong if we don't do
13 something to prevent them from doing
14 this. We have to be proactive in this
15 measure.

16 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Unfortunately,
17 Mary said it very succinctly. We're
18 putting out fires with the staff.

19 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I don't disagree,
20 but this is a process where you can write
21 up, you could put together this
22 collateral, this mailing that needs to go
23 out. The print shop will print it. The
24 mail house will mail it. The labor to
25 this particular department will just

1
2 simply be putting together whatever the
3 notification and the educational
4 component is.

5 MS. HARKINS: We have it. The flyer
6 is very good.

7 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Let's get it
8 done. It needs to go to the merchants.
9 They have to stop. Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Okay. Thank
11 you.

12 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: So just
13 following up Legislator Bynoe, so I
14 understand. Because I want to make sure I
15 understand.

16 So you go to a restaurant, you have
17 the menu, chicken parmesan, 24.95. That's
18 supposed to be the credit card price?

19 MS. HARKINS: Yes.

20 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Yes.

21 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. That's not
22 happening anywhere, right? Forget Nassau
23 County. That's not happening anywhere in
24 New York State.

25 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Well, that's

1
2 why the Legislature of New York State, I
3 believe the Senate and the Assembly are
4 trying to change it. A lot of the
5 restaurateurs are saying, and it almost
6 makes sense, if we say that's the cash
7 price, we just add 3.5%.

8 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: That's 100% what
9 they're doing. It says at the top, there
10 will be a 3.5% charge.

11 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: But I think
12 when the law was written by the State,
13 they wanted the higher price listed. And
14 a lot of restaurateurs said I'd have to
15 change all my menus. It's hundreds of
16 dollars, you know.

17 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: No, they don't.
18 They don't have to charge the fee.

19 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: They could just
20 increase all the prices to compensate
21 like they used to do.

22 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Some bakery
23 shops just to cash now. They got rid of
24 credit cards and they have an ATM
25 machine.

1
2 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: I agree with
3 Legislator Bynoe. It's definitely
4 something you have to do, some kind of
5 outreach to these businesses, give them
6 time to understand what this law is. And
7 I don't think we should wait for the
8 State Legislature. I never think we
9 should rely on anything going on in
10 Albany.

11 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: We have a
12 flyer. I'm going to send it to every
13 member of the Legislature, take a look at
14 it and maybe we could discuss this again.

15 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Yeah, it's
16 definitely something -- because this is
17 something that I mean, look, taken one
18 time, it's not a huge amount of money,
19 but every day and it's everywhere you go
20 now. I mean, this is like I said, I go
21 upstate, I'm in the city, I'm here. It's
22 there's nowhere that I see anywhere. I've
23 never seen that before. That the price
24 that you're reading on a menu is the
25 credit card price. Ever, ever. I don't

1
2 know if anybody's seen that.

3 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: But how did
4 this start? I don't know how this
5 started. That's the thing.

6 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: It started with
7 Covid. Mike Giangregoria was just
8 saying. That's when it seems that this
9 change where the retailers were allowed
10 to charge a fee.

11 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Covid?

12 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Yeah, that's
13 when they changed it. But that being that
14 being said, I just I do think it's
15 something that maybe we could be the
16 first county to kind of tackle this
17 issue.

18 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I like it.

19 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: It's definitely
20 something that's happening.

21 Similar question: Have you heard
22 anything from any residents or retailers
23 about convenience fees on gift cards?

24 MS. HARKINS: No.

25 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: No.

1
2 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: So in other
3 words, you go in, you get \$100 gift card.
4 Whether you pay cash or credit, they
5 charge you \$110.

6 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I've never
7 heard of that.

8 MS. HARKINS: Yeah, that doesn't
9 sound right.

10 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. I've heard
11 a couple people yet say that they're now
12 putting convenience fees on gift cards,
13 but that had never happened before.

14 MS. HARKINS: It's funny because
15 there's always so many different consumer
16 issue laws. I'm constantly looking things
17 up, but I'm pretty sure and I always
18 refer to the New York State Attorney
19 General website. I go on there, but that
20 does not sound right at all. There's
21 legislation passed. They're very strict
22 about what merchants are allowed to do
23 with regard to gift cards. That does not
24 sound right at all.

25 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: I had a couple

1
2 of e-mails on it and then I actually was
3 getting gift cards for my mother for her
4 birthday. It was a nail salon and a
5 spa-type place where they give massages
6 right next door. Both gift cards they
7 charged me was 5%. I think it was a 5%
8 convenience fee to hand me the gift card,
9 which I paid. And I paid cash too. If
10 you could just let us know.

11 MS. HARKINS: No, I'll look into
12 that. That does not sound right at all.

13 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Anyone else have
14 any questions?

15 Legislator DeRiggi-Whitton.

16 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: I have
17 seen that. And actually, if you go to
18 like Walgreens or whatever and you buy a
19 gift card, they'll say it's 4.99 for the
20 gift card. And then that does get added
21 on.

22 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: So the gift
23 cards, 100 bucks and then they're saying
24 it's a 4.99?

25 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON:

1
2 Yes.

3 Just real quick, have you heard
4 anything about the bleach issue going on
5 right now?

6 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Bleach?

7 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON:
8 Supposedly there's a lack of bleach. Talk
9 about an issue with people jacking up the
10 prices. It's just something to be aware
11 of. You can't find anything at Walgreens
12 or any place with bleach right now.

13 MS. HARKINS: No, we haven't.

14 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: We haven't
15 heard any complaints. Thank you.

16 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: A
17 gallon of bleach for \$12.99 in a place in
18 Glen Cove.

19 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I suggest you
20 go to Costco. I just bought bleach there,
21 I think it was \$4.99.

22 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Just be
23 aware. I think it's the next gouging
24 thing. I heard it was due to a
25 cybersecurity issue with the company or

1
2 something.

3 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: With bleach.
4 Thank you. We're unaware of it.

5 MS. HARKINS: Yeah, no complaints,
6 but we'll definitely look into that so
7 we're ready.

8 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Thank
9 you.

10 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: And you'll let
11 us know about that administrative fee.
12 And just a distinction. I know I have
13 heard of you go to get, like an Outback
14 gift card at CVS. Yes. That I've heard of
15 fees. But I'm talking more about you're
16 going to the actual place you're going to
17 -- I don't want to say Outback because it
18 wasn't Outback -- but you go into that
19 nail salon, \$100 gift card and it's \$105.

20 MS. HARKINS: And you paid cash.

21 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: And you're
22 paying cash.

23 MS. HARKINS: Because sometimes I
24 think that they, you know, with the
25 surcharge, it gets a little confusing

1
2 about the extra fees. But if you paid
3 cash and they charged you \$5 -- we will
4 definitely get back to you.

5 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay.

6 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Not to
7 belabor this, but the reason why I think
8 there was an issue with cash during Covid
9 was because they were concerned about the
10 germs. So some people weren't taking
11 cash. And I think that just sort of
12 started this whole process of, well, I'm
13 not taking cash and cash or if you're
14 going to use -- so I think that's that
15 was the genesis of this.

16 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: So just in
17 closing, I want to thank you for your
18 presentation today. Obviously, you guys
19 are doing a great job.

20 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Thank you.
21 It's the staff. It's not just me. It's
22 the staff.

23 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: You're doing a
24 great job. The backlog, I mean, we had so
25 many complaints about Consumer Affairs

1
2 from so many contractors. And I know when
3 you came in, Commissioner, you said you
4 were going to get this done. You got it
5 done. So thank you all for your hard
6 work.

7 COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Thank you.
8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Any public
10 comment?

11 (Whereupon, no verbal
12 response.)

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2 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Department of
3 Social Services is next.

4 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Good
5 afternoon. I'm Nancy Nunziata, the
6 Commissioner of Nassau DSS.

7 MS. LIU: My name is Mei-Sun Liu,
8 I'm the Account IV for DSS.

9 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: All right.
10 I'll do a brief presentation, and then I
11 guess if you have questions, I'm happy
12 take them.

13 So we worked hard on the budget and
14 we certainly work closely with OMB to
15 come up with a budget that I think is a
16 fair one, and that I think meets the
17 needs of our residents.

18 That being said, there are a couple
19 of changes, particularly some increases
20 you're going to see. And much of that has
21 to do with some changes in how the State
22 is conducting business and also some of
23 the federal regulations.

24 So one of the things you'll see is
25 that our safety net numbers are up. We

1
2 know that, for example, TANF, that's our
3 Temporary Assistance has gone up. We took
4 a point in time look, from last August to
5 this August. So it's gone up about 6.4%.
6 And again, that's because the cases are
7 going up. Same thing with safety net has
8 gone up about 11%, and total public
9 assistance has gone up about 9.8%. And
10 this is just due to volume and getting
11 some additional cases. So that's one
12 area.

13 The other area that you'll see has
14 jumped quite a bit is daycare. That is
15 directly related to changes in the state
16 regulations. So, for example, what the
17 State has done is made the income levels
18 much higher for people. So, virtually,
19 there are many, many more people now who
20 will qualify, families, I should say,
21 that will qualify for child care
22 assistance that we pay for.

23 The other thing, another example is
24 regulation used to say you can have 40
25 absences per year per child that we would

1
2 have to pay the daycare center for.
3 They've doubled that to 80. So a child
4 could be out 80 days of the year. We
5 still need to pay the bill. And there are
6 a couple of other changes like that that
7 is really driven the cost of daycare up
8 for us, for the County.

9 And finally, the other big area is
10 Medicaid. What has been happening at the
11 state level is essentially they're
12 pushing the cost back to the County. And
13 as a result of that, our Medicaid costs
14 are going up. Our headcount is only
15 increased a little bit by seven, and that
16 is directly due to hiring more child
17 protective staff, which is a good thing.
18 And just as my predecessor said, the CSEA
19 contract that being finalized is going to
20 be helpful for us because we were having
21 same difficulties recruiting new people
22 based on the entry level salaries. They
23 were just too low. So we were getting a
24 lot of nos when we canvassed. So we're
25 glad that many of the salaries have gone

1
2 up significantly. So we think that we'll
3 be able to fill the positions that we
4 need filled in a shorter fashion than
5 regular.

6 Again, overall, we have a really
7 good working relationship with OMB and we
8 sometimes don't always agree, but we work
9 it out in the end.

10 So that's just a general overview. I
11 don't know if you have specific
12 questions.

13 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you so
14 much.

15 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Sure.

16 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: So just a few
17 questions.

18 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Sure.

19 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: There are
20 currently 96 vacancies; is that correct?

21 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yeah.

22 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: What titles are
23 those?

24 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: All different
25 ones throughout the building, SWEXs,

1
2 Social Welfare Examiner positions, Some
3 Caseworkers, Admin Assistants, Attorneys.
4 A variety. It's throughout the building.
5 It's not in one particular area over
6 another.

7 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. And
8 there's 54 vacancies in Adult and Child
9 Protective Services; is that correct?

10 MS. LIU: The 54 consists of APS,
11 Children Protective Services, Preventive
12 Children's Services and Daycare. Total
13 54.

14 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: It's all of
15 our Children's Services. There are a
16 number of subcategories.

17 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Understood.
18 So how many full time caseworkers
19 are on staff for Child Protective
20 Services?

21 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: For Child
22 Protective, we have 48 right now and we
23 have 13 that are in training. As many of
24 you may know, the training period before
25 a caseworker can take a CPS case is

1
2 almost a year's worth of training that
3 they have to go through. It's a state
4 required training. And so we have 13
5 people in the pipeline right now that
6 actually should be finished soon because
7 they've been going for the past couple of
8 months. So that'll bring us up to 61
9 people.

10 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: But we're at 48
11 right now.

12 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: We're at 48
13 right now.

14 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: And how many
15 cases per worker?

16 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Right now
17 we're averaging about 16. Now, that could
18 go up because the school year started. So
19 we don't know. Like anything else, our
20 caseload tends to be higher during the
21 school year than over the summer.

22 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Right now
23 they're at 16 per Caseworker?

24 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yes.

25 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: That 48, are

1
2 they all Caseworkers or are there any
3 supervisors in that case?

4 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: No, they're
5 all Investigative Caseworkers.

6 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. And is
7 that 16 cases, which I think you just
8 indicated might go up now that the school
9 year started, is that in line with the
10 State recommendations?

11 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: State wants
12 you to be somewhere between 12 and 15. So
13 we're a little over right now. But again,
14 when we have these 13 workers who are
15 going through the pipeline and are ready
16 to take cases, that will help drop the
17 caseload as well.

18 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: So what's the
19 timeline on those 13 workers? Where are
20 they in the process?

21 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: I think
22 they're going to be ready to start taking
23 cases, I think by the mid or late
24 October. They've been in training for
25 quite some time.

1
2 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Describe the
3 training process. How long is it?

4 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Well, you
5 have to go up to Rensselaer for almost
6 eight weeks. And that's eight week full
7 time training. And then when you get back
8 here, you have to go into the city, take
9 several trainings. I think it's a 6 to 9
10 month training period before we actually
11 are allowed to assign a case to somebody.

12 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. So those
13 that are in the hopper to fully become
14 caseworkers in the next, let's say 1 to 2
15 months, is there a plan to continue to
16 add caseworkers in addition to that when
17 some of our current Caseworkers retire?

18 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: That's what
19 we try to do, as we know, people are
20 retiring. Even if we hire a lot of
21 caseworkers all at once, that doesn't
22 mean that they all stay. Sometimes they
23 can't get through the training. Sometimes
24 when they find out that there is this
25 kind of exhaustive training, people can't

1
2 take 6 or 8 weeks out of their life and
3 go upstate to take full time training. So
4 sometimes we lose people that way. Also
5 through retirements.

6 We've had situations where a CPS
7 worker, they go through the training,
8 they get on board, they begin the job,
9 and then they realize, guess what? I just
10 can't do this. It's just too hard for me.
11 So we're always hiring. Does it mean that
12 when we bring "X" number of people on
13 board, that that's the number that always
14 makes it through.

15 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Have these 13
16 already gone to Rensselaer and done the
17 training?

18 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yeah. We're
19 past that hurdle. Usually starts when
20 they're brand new so.

21 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: All right.
22 Thank you.

23 Legislator Ford.

24 LEGISLATOR FORD: Thank you.

25 Is there any way of trying to get

1
2 some of this training to be closer? I
3 mean, why go all the way upstate?

4 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: I know. I
5 absolutely agree with you. We have, and
6 not only Nassau County, but many of the
7 Commissioners have been asking the State,
8 why can why can't we do a good majority
9 of it virtually or why can't the State
10 send someone down and say, do say Nassau
11 and Suffolk together or set up a training
12 in the city? They've been very resistant
13 to changing that. You know, I have my own
14 opinions about why I think so. But we've
15 been asking.

16 Some of the training really does
17 need to be in person because there's some
18 didactic training and interviewing skills
19 and how to deal with trauma and all of
20 that, de-escalating. So some things have
21 to be done in person, but I think much of
22 it, it's classes that can be done
23 virtually, or it would be great if the
24 State could send --

25 LEGISLATOR FORD: Even if you wanted

1
2 to do in-person training, which I think
3 that there is a benefit for sure. But
4 when you think about the highest density
5 of population happens to be down in New
6 York City and Nassau and Suffolk. When
7 you go upstate, you can go for miles.

8 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yeah.

9 LEGISLATOR FORD: So it would seem
10 more logical to also provide some sort of
11 education down here to make it easier,
12 because if this is a deterrent, we're in
13 such desperate need of social workers.
14 When you look at how many cases they're
15 supposed to handle and you just think of
16 now it's going to be even more critical,
17 especially in the city with the influx of
18 immigrants. They're going to have to deal
19 with so many of those people. And it
20 would be unfair to both the recipients as
21 well as the social workers. So we need to
22 have more. So common sense would dictate
23 that, like if Muhammad doesn't come to
24 the mountain, you bring them out into
25 Muhammad. So I think that that is

1
2 something that we should look at, too,
3 and try to see if we can get it so that
4 they can be moved and hopefully attract
5 more workers and keep them.

6 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: I couldn't
7 agree with you more and I would welcome
8 the help.

9 LEGISLATOR FORD: That's absolutely
10 crazy.

11 When you look at the attrition and I
12 know that thank heavens we have a CSEA
13 contract and that will result in higher
14 starting salaries for many of our
15 workers, but I know that there is a
16 problem with the change from the ten
17 years to 20 years to health insurances.
18 And it seemed that a lot of the people
19 who spoke to us in regard to that, they
20 came before us, I think they're from
21 either from your area or from the Health
22 Department. I'm hoping that maybe
23 something can be done so that you are not
24 all of a sudden saddled with even more of
25 a greater loss of qualified people that

1
2 are working, that people will have this
3 knowledge and are experienced and
4 everything. Because I think that you need
5 to keep as many people as you can because
6 you seem to be pretty short.

7 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: DSS has an
8 older workforce in general. When I came
9 aboard, which is three years ago, at that
10 time, 65% of the workforce could have
11 retired at any moment, 65%. So we've lost
12 a lot of people in the three years that
13 I've been here just through retirements.
14 And Covid, of course, that pushed some
15 people's retirement schedule a little bit
16 earlier. But there is definitely some
17 concern because we have some people I
18 know who've come and spoken to me like
19 they're right at or near that ten year
20 mark. And some of them are
21 chronologically older, so they're like,
22 there's no way I'm staying here another
23 ten years. So I don't know how it's all
24 going to pan out, but it's definitely
25 something to watch for.

1
2 LEGISLATOR FORD: Well, I hope that
3 we can actually work that out.

4 I'm just going to jump around to it.
5 And I want to apologize.

6 The proposed budget for the training
7 school expenses. What is a training
8 school like? What what exactly is that?

9 MS. LIU: That's a State training
10 school, special school charge back. We
11 have to pay; no reimbursement.

12 LEGISLATOR FORD: Okay, perfect.

13 When you said with the increase in
14 daycare, which I guess I can understand
15 that because that they raise the income
16 level. So a family makes more, then they
17 at least will be able to access daycare.
18 Do they get to pick the daycare where
19 they send their children to and then you
20 reimburse or do they have to go to a
21 specific daycare?

22 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: No. A parent
23 would take a look at what's available to
24 them. Certainly you want something that's
25 in proximity to either their home or

1
2 their job. And then we would work with
3 that daycare center.

4 LEGISLATOR FORD: It's very good.
5 And it actually is a good benefit. I
6 mean, daycare is expensive.

7 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: It's really
8 expensive.

9 LEGISLATOR FORD: It's all I can
10 say. I have a granddaughter who is 15
11 months, three days a week was \$1,800 a
12 month. I mean, you got to be kidding me.

13 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yeah.

14 LEGISLATOR FORD: How do they expect
15 women to go back to work if they have to
16 do it five days and if they have two
17 children?

18 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yeah.

19 LEGISLATOR FORD: And that's
20 unfortunately a deterrent to women
21 working outside their home.

22 I might have to come back to you
23 because I know that there might be other
24 -- but I do want to say I thank you very
25 much for all the hard work that our

1
2 social workers and everybody. I know
3 that when we call over for people in need
4 of emergency assistance, we've always got
5 a good response. I know that you work
6 under some direst conditions because so
7 many people who come to see you, if not
8 all of them, do have issues. And some of
9 them are so down on their luck. And I
10 just think that you do a great job and I
11 thank you very much for helping them out.

12 My last thing would be the Homeless
13 Intervention Team. We used to have that
14 where they worked out of Social Services
15 and they would work in conjunction or in
16 partnership with the Police Department.
17 From what I understand, we don't do that
18 anymore.

19 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: No, we
20 haven't done it. It was ending by the
21 time I got here. We had, I think at that
22 time, we had one worker and she had taken
23 ill and then other staffing priorities.
24 But the good news is that the Long Island
25 Coalition for the Homeless has gotten

1
2 funding to do a HIT team. So now when we
3 get those calls that say there are
4 enclaves of people here, there or
5 whatever, we can refer that to them and
6 they have a whole cadre of people that
7 can go out. But we don't have it
8 anymore.

9 LEGISLATOR FORD: All right. Thank
10 you very much.

11 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
12 McKeivitt.

13 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Good
14 afternoon, Commissioner.

15 Just to harken back to the issue
16 with Child Protective Services, I think
17 you'd mention that you're talking about
18 an average of 16 cases per caseworker
19 right now, correct?

20 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Correct.

21 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: What is the
22 highest number of cases that's assigned
23 to any particular case worker if the
24 average is 16, are some dealing with many
25 more than that?

1
2 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Some are.

3 And some of that doesn't necessarily have
4 to do with staffing. It may have to do
5 with we have a couple of workers that
6 have difficulty, may not be processing
7 the cases the way they need to. So in a
8 case comes in, we have 48 hours to get
9 out to see the client and make sure that
10 the children are safe or not. And then we
11 have 60 days to process the whole case.
12 So within 60 days we're either closing
13 the case because we didn't find anything
14 or we're going to indicate the case,
15 which means that there was a finding and
16 then that case gets transferred to our
17 ongoing CPS unit where they do work with
18 families over time. We've had some
19 struggles with some workers who haven't
20 closed these cases, so they stay as an
21 open case, even though it should have
22 been closed.

23 So one of the things that we're
24 working on, I brought on a new program
25 supervisor, Carolyn O'Brien. She is

1
2 overseeing all of our children's
3 services, CPS being one of them. And a
4 lot of her work right now is getting
5 those outstanding cases that have just
6 been lingering on our rolls. Nothing is
7 going on, the children are fine, and
8 closing them out, and that helps to also
9 reduce the cases per worker.

10 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: But do you
11 know the highest amount that's allocated
12 to any one caseworker right now?

13 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Probably we
14 have some as high as 25.

15 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Okay. And my
16 understanding, too, is that in order for
17 a caseworker to find that a case is
18 indicated, is it a rather high standard
19 which the Department has to meet?

20 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yes, it's
21 very high. And they've just in the last
22 year or so, Office of Children and Family
23 Services, came out with what they call
24 the Administrative Directive. And it
25 raises the bar in terms of what you have

1
2 to prove to the Family Court in terms of
3 any potential removal or finding of
4 neglect, so that's made it harder for our
5 folks.

6 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Yeah, it makes
7 it difficult for us too. And obviously
8 we all know what happened with Thomas
9 Valva in Suffolk, and I'm sure it
10 probably weighs very heavily on you every
11 day as as many of us, we try to do
12 everything we can and give the resources
13 that you need to make that happen,
14 because we don't want to see anything
15 like that happen in Nassau County.

16 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Of course,
17 listen, if there's anything that's front
18 and center in our CPS unit, it's that
19 case. First of all, you never want to
20 see a child die and you certainly don't
21 want it on your watch. So, I'm clear.

22 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Thank you.

23 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Sure.

24 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Mule.

25 LEGISLATOR MULE: Yes. Thank you.

1
2 Hi, Commissioner.

3 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Hi. How are
4 you?

5 LEGISLATOR MULE: Good.

6 So, getting back to the Long Island
7 Homeless Coalition, my office, probably
8 all of our offices, have used that
9 organization. Is that a contracted
10 organization with the County, or are they
11 completely independent?

12 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: No, they're
13 independent. We're a member. All of us
14 who serve the homeless are a member.

15 LEGISLATOR MULE: Okay. Do we
16 provide them with any funding?

17 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: No.

18 LEGISLATOR MULE: No. Okay.

19 They've always been very responsive.
20 This is not a complaint. But do you have
21 any sense that they do an equivalent,
22 better or worse job than when it was done
23 in the County?

24 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Well, to be
25 honest, I don't know much about the HIT

1
2 team since I've been here, but I can tell
3 you they've got tremendous resources
4 right now. So it's not just like one
5 employee who goes out. They have
6 counseling staff and they have a whole
7 bunch of of people. So they seem to be
8 well suited based on the funding that
9 they receive. I don't really know what
10 existed. I only knew there was this one
11 woman and she went out from 9 to 5, which
12 never made sense to me because if you're
13 going to do homeless outreach, it's
14 around the clock. And then she got sick
15 and that was the end of that.

16 LEGISLATOR MULE: Okay, thanks. I
17 was just curious about the history.

18 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: And I think
19 the coalition has a 24 hour service.

20 LEGISLATOR MULE: Terrific.

21 And would you be able to provide all
22 of us with a list of your homeless
23 shelters? I know I haven't seen one
24 recently. Provide each legislator with a
25 list of them.

1
2 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yeah. No
3 problem.

4 LEGISLATOR MULE: And that's it for
5 me. Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. Thank you.

7 Legislator DeRiggi-Whitton.

8 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Hi.
9 Thank you for all you do. I know how
10 important it is.

11 How long is that wait now? Have you
12 found that to be alleviated? Like if
13 someone shows up at the office and waits
14 online.

15 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: It's
16 interesting. The wait for if you're
17 filing a public assistance application or
18 SNAP, now people are able to do that
19 online and those move generally quickly
20 through the office if people come in. The
21 longer waits are the people who come in
22 needing housing. And oftentimes those
23 people come in late in the day and we
24 have to look around and get somebody
25 housed. Somebody could be there for a

1
2 couple of hours if they're waiting for
3 housing.

4 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Okay.
5 Well, I'm glad because I know before I
6 guess before it was online, it was a
7 longer process.

8 And just a side note, we did discuss
9 that during the CSEA contract hearing
10 that those that are very close to
11 retiring with ten years or the that do
12 not wish to continue on, we're getting a
13 list. We're compiling a list. If you want
14 to send the list to Andy Person. He's
15 supposed to be compiling the list and
16 then giving it to Budget, if I remember
17 correctly. Not to put Andy on the hot
18 seat. But at least if you could just give
19 him the information, we're going to see
20 if we can look at them case by case.
21 Nothing's guaranteed.

22 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Sure.

23 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: I do
24 feel for those people in that situation.

25 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
Bynoe.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Hello,
Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Hello.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So Delia asked
the question about the wait times, so I'm
happy we don't have to deal with that.

And Legislator Ford asked about the
homeless. What group did you say is
handling that?

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Long Island
Coalition for the Homeless. They're based
in Amityville, but they cover both
counties.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And who's funding
them?

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: They get a
lot of their funding through HUD. We
don't fund them.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: We're not funding
them.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: No, we're
just members. All homeless providers

1
2 throughout both counties are members.

3 I'm on the governance board myself and
4 the Suffolk County Commissioner.

5 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So although the
6 Coalition is responsible for the
7 homeless, is it customary for counties to
8 still have some effort toward assisting?

9 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Well, my
10 understanding, and again, I'm only here a
11 short couple of years, but my
12 understanding is we had a HIT team at
13 some point and then it it faded. Right
14 now, we're certainly not in a position to
15 have that. And to be honest, I'm not so
16 sure that that would be us. I think non
17 profits and I think an agency like the
18 Coalition, it may make more sense because
19 they could get funded directly for those
20 kind of initiatives.

21 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So I know the HIT
22 team existed while I was in service. So
23 they were here within the last ten years.
24 So what kind of communication are we
25 having with this HIT team?

1
2 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: We talk to
3 them all the time. Whenever we get calls
4 -- we just recently got one last week
5 about someone called in saying they see
6 an enclave of homeless gentlemen -- I
7 forget, I don't know if it was in
8 Westbury. We get a lot of calls like this
9 -- and so we referred that over to them
10 and then they will have their outreach
11 team go over and then report back to us
12 what they found.

13 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay, because I
14 don't know that I called anything in for
15 Westbury, but I know I called in for
16 Uniondale.

17 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Okay.

18 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: The MTA is
19 looking to cut down all the trees at the
20 Lakeview train station because apparently
21 the homeless folks are there or they're
22 storing their belongings there, which is
23 like absolutely absurd to me that that
24 would be how we would respond to that.

25 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: I didn't

1
2 know anything about that.

3 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: But the point
4 being, homelessness is a major, major
5 issue.

6 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Major.

7 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I'm challenged to
8 think that in some way or another, the
9 County wouldn't have more of a role in
10 the process. Especially, not for you, but
11 especially knowing that we have ARPA
12 money right in the middle of a crisis
13 that will only get worse if we don't
14 start addressing it. I'm just really
15 struggling with the idea that we're not
16 doing more as a county.

17 Can you can you contact that entity
18 and have them give you some level of data
19 and reports?

20 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: The
21 Coalition for the Homeless?

22 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Greta?

23 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yeah. Greta.

24 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And see if she
25 could provide us with the data specific

1
2 to Nassau County so that with the data we
3 can be more informed on how we can better
4 respond and support. Because it looks
5 like we're just responsible for the
6 housing of the homeless. They find them
7 and then we pay for the housing?

8 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Well,
9 listen, we're responsible for housing
10 eligible homeless. Now, not everybody
11 who's homeless in the county is eligible
12 for the housing. So, yes, we house
13 people. If they go out and they identify
14 that the people that are living -- you
15 know, train stations are magnets for
16 homeless people. There's lots of homeless
17 people that gather and that stay around
18 train stations. So if they find people
19 and they're our residents and they're
20 eligible, then of course, we would place
21 them. Yeah.

22 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And so we're
23 placing them in temporary shelter.

24 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Oh, yeah.

25 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Typically the go

1
2 to is that we put them in the shelter and
3 but if there are some specialty needs or
4 what have you, we might utilize a motel
5 as an alternative?

6 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Well, yeah.
7 I mean we utilize both shelters and
8 motels. When it comes to a family, we
9 certainly want to put them in a shelter.
10 So if we have a family with children, the
11 priority is to put them in a shelter.
12 Many of the folks that are in our hotels
13 are homeless singles, primarily men. And
14 so we use those resources. I mean, that's
15 what we have.

16 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. I'd love to
17 get the data on how many people they're
18 assisting and how they're assisting them
19 across the region. I'm interested in
20 Suffolk numbers just because I'd like to
21 do a comparison, but specifically Nassau
22 is important to us, obviously.

23 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yeah, sure.

24 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
25 Abrahams.

1
2 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Thank you,
3 Chairman.

4 Hey, how are you?

5 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: I'm well,
6 and you?

7 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Good, good.

8 I just wanted to follow up on the
9 matter that my office has brought to your
10 office or department's attention. It's in
11 regards to a homeless, it could be
12 individual or population, that's living
13 along the Southern State in Uniondale.
14 We just found out that, I guess the
15 Homeless Intervention Team that we always
16 thought was in existence is no longer
17 there. I remember it from years ago. We
18 had a situation at Henry Street Park in
19 Roosevelt where we had a homeless
20 population living out of the portable
21 bathrooms there. In this particular
22 situation was brought to us by a local
23 church and we were informed that the HIT
24 team or HIT is no longer in existence. So
25 I just wanted to find out or just get

1
2 confirmation on how our offices should be
3 interacting with your department as it
4 pertains to when we learn of homeless
5 that is not willing to go to a shelter
6 similar to what Legislator Bynoe was
7 talking about. This is homeless that's
8 living in the woods, could be a park,
9 could be a preserve, so on and so forth.

10 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Sure. The
11 calls generally come to my office and
12 Suzanne Sacks, my assistant, it usually
13 takes those calls. So I would continue to
14 do that. Call them in to my office.
15 Suzanne generally takes those calls and
16 then we figure out who's best to respond.
17 So we may call the Coalition and they may
18 go out. There may be some other details
19 about that situation where we might be
20 able to do something else. I think you
21 call it in just the same way and we
22 follow it.

23 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: I believe
24 Robin in my office has called in. So if
25 someone can let us know the status.

1
2 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: And this is
3 a group that's living on the Southern?

4 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Yeah. So I'll
5 give you the exact location as best as I
6 can, because again, it's there in the
7 woods. But there is a church across the
8 street on Brookside Avenue in Uniondale.
9 It's Tabernacle of Joy. Directly across
10 the street is the entrance. I guess it'd
11 be Exit 21 on the Southern State. There
12 is a very wooded area that is across the
13 street from the church. But then also
14 right along the Southern State, the
15 church had identified that there was at
16 least one gentleman that was living in
17 that woods. It was kind of deep. I was
18 also asking for the State -- because you
19 wouldn't see it from the street.

20 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Sure.
21 Understood.

22 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: -- to also
23 cut back some of the the brush trees and
24 limbs, because the only way he saw it was
25 that he heard movement. And then when

1
2 they asked who's there, the gentleman
3 came out. From that standpoint, if we
4 can get a status, if you could provide
5 our office with a status. I just want to
6 make sure that person that's there is
7 being cared for, especially with the
8 really bad weather that we have over the
9 last couple of days. I can't imagine
10 anyone living in particular in that area
11 in those conditions. So if you could just
12 let us know where we are with that, I
13 appreciate it.

14 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Just to make a
15 comment, you are aware that if there was
16 outreach to that gentleman and he does
17 not want to leave that location or go
18 into shelter or motel, we can't force
19 them. The only time that someone could be
20 picked up off the street is during "Code
21 Blue", which is when the temperature is
22 at or "at feel" of 32 degrees and below.
23 Then the police technically could take
24 that person and remove them. But we, nor
25 the Coalition or anybody else, has the

1
2 ability to remove people. Listen, we
3 know it's not in their best interest to
4 live in the woods, but if there is
5 somebody and it's not Code blue, we can't
6 simply force them into shelter or a
7 hotel.

8 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: I think what
9 happens is, this particular gentleman,
10 actually once the church saw movement in
11 the trees and made the approach to him. I
12 think what happened generally is that
13 this gentleman from the church who
14 doesn't claim to be anyone that has a
15 expertise in this area, but they felt
16 that one the gentleman that came was
17 mentally ill. So I understand what you're
18 saying, but that person probably couldn't
19 tell you properly why they're in the
20 woods or anything like that. So I would
21 like to think there would be some type of
22 intervention that comes from across
23 agencies. I hope we're just not saying,
24 okay this gentleman says he doesn't, or
25 this woman, told us they don't want to be

1
2 here and then we're just letting them go
3 back in the woods when we obviously see
4 that there's some type of mental illness.

5 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: No. I don't
6 mean to simplify things because it's
7 actually very complicated. Many of the
8 people that are out there sleeping on the
9 street are mentally ill. So part of it is
10 doing an assessment and then again,
11 figuring out where they could be helped.
12 Some of them may have to go to a
13 hospital. Depending on their level of
14 illness or maybe if they were properly
15 treated with medication, they would they
16 would do better. So it's not like we just
17 go out and ask somebody and if they don't
18 want to go, we're like, well, there's
19 nothing we could do. There is an
20 assessment that has to get done. But it's
21 very hard to make anyone go into shelter
22 against their will.

23 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Of course.

24 COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: I just
25 wanted to put that out there.

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LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Sure.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: All right,
Thanks.

Thank you for your presentation.

Any public comment?

(Whereupon, no verbal
response.)

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. There
being none.

(Whereupon, recess,
1:24-1:30 p.m.)

1
2 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Department of
3 Human Services.

4 Good afternoon, Commissioner Nevin.

5 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Good afternoon.
6 Good afternoon, everybody. I'm Jill Nevin
7 and I serve as the Commissioner of the
8 Department of Human Services.

9 As you all are aware, the Department
10 of Human Services consists of the Office
11 for the Aging, the Office of Mental
12 Health, Chemical Dependency and
13 Developmental Disability Services, the
14 Office for the Physically Challenged and
15 the Office of Youth Services. All our
16 offices work independently and
17 collaboratively in order to serve the
18 residents of Nassau County.

19 My fiscal staff and I worked closely
20 with the Office of Management and Budget
21 to prepare the 2024 Human Services
22 budget. We are presenting a budget that
23 we are all comfortable and pleased with.
24 We will continue to work closely with OMB
25 to meet any needs that may arise

1
2 throughout the year. We are looking
3 forward to a fiscally responsible and
4 successful 2024.

5 I would like to point out a few
6 highlights from the 2024 budget that are
7 noteworthy:

8 First one is that salaries are
9 remaining relatively flat compared to
10 2023. This does include the impact of the
11 County's Collective Bargaining Agreement
12 with the CSEA. There have been many
13 position shifts within the full time
14 headcount. However, the net proposal is
15 higher by only one position budget to
16 budget and two positions compared to
17 OLBR's projection.

18 Part time headcount is decreasing by
19 two positions budget to budget and is
20 increasing by four compared to OLBR's
21 projection. I can assure you that we are
22 in a good staffing position and are able
23 to meet the Department's needs. I'm
24 confident that any additional needs that
25 may arise throughout the year will be

1
2 addressed.

3 Secondly, court remands are
4 remaining flat for 2024, so that's a good
5 thing.

6 Contractual services has a growth of
7 approximately 2 million budget to budget.
8 This growth is because New York State has
9 provided Office for the Aging with
10 additional funding. This is very helpful
11 in many areas, including our meal
12 program, as inflation has put an
13 additional burden on that.

14 New York State has also provided
15 Mental Health with increased funding.

16 We have kept the funding stable in
17 Youth.

18 We're in the process of evaluating
19 each organization's usage of funding, as
20 we're finding some organizations are
21 leaving funds on the table while others
22 are coming to us and looking for more.

23 So those are the highlights I wanted
24 to point out.

25 At this time, I just would like to

1
2 brief everybody on an update of the usage
3 of the opioid funds. We had announced
4 grant awards. They were the initial
5 announcement of the opioid awards. All
6 those grants have been executed. They
7 were included as part of the 2023
8 contracts for the agencies. It was six
9 contracted agencies that we provided
10 additional boosting to.

11 The contract with NUMC is complete.
12 That was \$2 Million we were going to be
13 giving them each year over four years.
14 They've been using the funds to expand
15 the detox and rehab beds. Specific
16 details: They're in the process of
17 creating a central referral unit. They're
18 working on hiring staff. They've been
19 purchasing equipment and doing
20 renovations in order to prepare for that
21 expansion.

22 The RFEI process that we had done is
23 complete. Contracts are a result of that
24 process. There's about seven of them that
25 are completed and are moving through the

1
2 approval process. We've had a few
3 struggles with some organizations,
4 outstanding disclosure forms and whatnot,
5 but we're working on that. My staff is
6 continually following up with all the
7 agencies involved.

8 This week, I believe tomorrow, we
9 will be posting a new RFP for media
10 services, for a prevention messaging
11 campaign. We're seeking media buying and
12 creative services through this RFP
13 directly for Human Services to use with
14 the opioid funds. This is going to be
15 the education component of using the
16 opioid funds. We've already produced an
17 ad in-house that will be launching. If
18 it's okay with everybody, we'd like to
19 show it to the Legislature.

20 Steve, thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Sure.

22 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Thank you. We'd
23 like to play it two times, Steve, just so
24 you know.

25 (Whereupon, video is

1
2 displayed, twice.)

3 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Thank you,
4 Steve.

5 At this time, I'm happy to take any
6 questions that the Legislature might
7 have.

8 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Ford.
9 Thank you for your presentation.

10 LEGISLATOR FORD: Thank you very
11 much for your presentation.

12 I guess we forget, we get so caught
13 up in the opioid settlement money and
14 everything else and we forget that you
15 actually have other agencies that fall
16 under your umbrella. So I might be
17 bouncing back and forth.

18 Nice presentation. Is it going out
19 to the news media?

20 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: We are looking
21 to do social media at this point and our
22 website and then through that RFP for
23 media services, buying services and
24 creative services, we're looking to put
25 that out there. And we're also looking to

1
2 do a lot more than that. We're looking to
3 see what other creative options they may
4 come to us with.

5 LEGISLATOR FORD: So with this RFP
6 for the media services -- and thank you
7 very much, because I think it probably
8 would be a good idea. How long will this
9 RFP process take?

10 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: So tomorrow
11 it's supposed to be posted in *Newsday* and
12 proposal due date is October 24th.

13 LEGISLATOR FORD: All right. And
14 then how long will it take to select
15 whoever will receive this funding?

16 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Well, we're
17 hoping not long at all. We're trying to
18 move it at a quicker pace. The RFEI
19 produced 60 proposals, which was a huge
20 undertaking. I don't anticipate this
21 generating that many responses.

22 LEGISLATOR FORD: So if it's
23 October 24th and this is September 27th,
24 we're talking about a month, how much of
25 this funding will be allocated toward

1
2 this media service outreach?

3 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: We haven't
4 committed to a specific dollar amount. We
5 want to keep that flexibility open
6 because we want to be able to see what
7 creative comes back to us, which media
8 buying options there are. So we're
9 flexible there.

10 LEGISLATOR FORD: Will this be
11 targeted for drug overdose, mental
12 health? What is specifically --

13 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: The RFP talks
14 about obviously opioid usage, but drug
15 usage in general and also mental health
16 as well.

17 LEGISLATOR FORD: We discussed the
18 importance of reaching out to people. And
19 now that October 24th is right on the
20 cusp of a holiday season, which I think
21 that it seems sometimes people might
22 drink more or use drugs more during the
23 holidays, but even more so, while many of
24 us feel that the holidays is a happy
25 time, people who have some mental health

1
2 issues find it to be rather depressing
3 time which then can lead to more drug use
4 and more alcohol use. I would hope that
5 -- the point is for doing this and
6 expending this money and this effort,
7 which I commend you on, will be so that
8 the message will be out prior to the
9 holidays so that people are aware of
10 whatever the message is that we get, we
11 get it sooner rather than later. Is that
12 the intent of this RFP?

13 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yes. Our
14 intent of this RFP is to move this at a
15 quick pace because we understand the
16 urgency and need of prevention messaging
17 at this point.

18 LEGISLATOR FORD: All right.

19 When you talked about the grants, we
20 allocated \$15 million for this year to
21 expend, that was basically what the
22 County Executive decided at the beginning
23 of this year. How much have we expended
24 out of that \$15 million so far?

25 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: The grants were

1
2 approximately 500,000. Those have all
3 been completed and are in the '23
4 contracts for the six agencies. For the
5 RFEI, those seven organizations that
6 received award, that is approximately \$5
7 million, and then the NUMC contract is \$2
8 million. So that takes us to
9 approximately \$7.5 million.

10 LEGISLATOR FORD: All right. The
11 last of the awards went out and were
12 announced in June. So that would be
13 mid-year, correct?

14 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Correct.

15 LEGISLATOR FORD: So now we're in
16 the third quarter of this year. And so we
17 have \$7.5 million left. From what I
18 gather, I don't think that we've cured
19 the drug epidemic or we've seen all of a
20 sudden like a downturn in the number of
21 cases of mental health cases, especially
22 for our young people. So where is the
23 \$7.5 million going to go? Because you
24 have three months now before the end of
25 this year.

1
2 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yeah. Like I
3 said, the Prevention Messaging Campaign,
4 we're keeping the dollar amount open and
5 flexible so we're able to invest whatever
6 the Administration is comfortable
7 investing in it. We have the ability to
8 roll over anything not used into next
9 year to be able to focus on additional
10 opportunities as well.

11 LEGISLATOR FORD: All right. So I
12 hope that it's not going to be like a lot
13 of money. I mean, social media is
14 important, but I'm sure that anybody who
15 works -- I don't, but I've had,
16 unfortunately in Long Beach been involved
17 with organizations and with groups and
18 families that suffered losses due to drug
19 overdose and subsequent people who
20 committed suicide, young people. And you
21 see the pain and the agony that these
22 families go through. I just know of the
23 families that belong to the Purple
24 Circle. And I'm sure that those numbers
25 have grown over these years. I think

1
2 about how our own County Executive had a
3 press conference probably at the
4 beginning of this year and announced how
5 with this fentanyl epidemic that we lose
6 300 people a day to fentanyl throughout
7 the United States. I'm sure that there's
8 a good number of people in Nassau County
9 who lose their lives to fentanyl and drug
10 use. And he said it was paramount to an
11 airline going down every single day of
12 the year for a year. And so and that was
13 a strong message really resonated with
14 me. And I think of the people that we've
15 lost to drugs. And so I think to myself,
16 common sense would say well, we have this
17 money, we have opioid settlement money.
18 So here we go. And this is not for you,
19 Jill, because I think you're doing a fine
20 job. An excellent job. To be quite honest
21 with you.

22 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Thank you.

23 LEGISLATOR FORD: But I find it
24 unbelievable that we're here at the end
25 of September and we're still looking at

1
2 \$7.5 million. Never mind the \$45 million,
3 which might even be more for the next
4 three years. And it's like it's as if all
5 of a sudden nobody is dying from fentanyl
6 or drug overdoses because there is no
7 urgency on anybody's part. And I do
8 appreciate the fact and I talked to you,
9 Doctor -- well, I'm probably going to say
10 you name wrong -- because both Legislator
11 Walker and I way back when were in on
12 this Committee in the beginning to take a
13 look at the allocation of opioid
14 settlement money. And we expressed our
15 concerns because we do work in our
16 districts, and as every legislator does,
17 we become personally involved in what
18 happens in our neighborhoods with the
19 families that we represent. We celebrate
20 when things are happy, but sure as hell
21 we mourn when things are bad. When we
22 took a look at this and when we watched
23 over the years, people that were dying,
24 you know, when we think about the
25 families that came before us to say that

1
2 their children -- trying to stop an
3 epidemic -- when they would go downstairs
4 on a Christmas morning and find that
5 their son died of an OD in the bathroom
6 and that's how they opened up their
7 Christmas Day. It hurts. It hurts.

8 And I know that Rose and I both
9 expressed this, and we told you, Doctor,
10 that how important it was that if we have
11 this money, that it would be nice to be
12 able to say, let's think about what we
13 want to do. And we say, yes, we can think
14 about it because we went along with
15 taking the \$60 million and dividing it up
16 into four years to give you a buffer to
17 say that, well, maybe we don't want to
18 spend it here, maybe we want to move it
19 here. But we also said that there is an
20 urgency why we need to spend it now.

21 Because every time and every day
22 that we delay in sending money to some of
23 these organizations, we're putting a
24 child at risk. We're putting somebody at
25 risk. And since we've had these meetings,

1
2 we've lost three very good people, very
3 good young people in my district. And I
4 want to tell you something. It hurts. And
5 if I sound like I'm angry, I'm pissing
6 mad. That's exactly what I am. And I'm
7 very angry with the response. And it
8 bothers me that I know that you have
9 people working in this Department, the
10 Commissioner and the DCE and everybody
11 else who shares the compassion and the
12 drive that we have. But I feel that it's
13 falling on deaf ears. And I really think
14 that it's up to the Administration to
15 step up to the plate. You have this
16 money. There's no reason to hold on to it
17 for whatever God reason, because you're
18 so afraid that all of a sudden an
19 organization may be political and maybe
20 not spend the money properly. Well, there
21 are a lot of these organizations have
22 been around for decades. There are in our
23 communities.

24 It's about time that this
25 Legislature and this Administration work

1
2 together on this problem, because if we
3 don't work together, we're going to fail
4 and we're going to lose a lot more young
5 people and it's going to be on your
6 heads, not on mine.

7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. Legislator
9 Bynoe.

10 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Just a point of
11 clarification. I'm sorry. Only 7 million
12 has been used of the the total; how much?

13 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: John,
14 can I actually correct that?

15 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
16 DeRiggi-Whitton first.

17 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: I have
18 the numbers from our Finance System and
19 as of today only 2.24 -- \$2,240,000 has
20 been distributed. That's it.

21 Denise, just so you know, that
22 conference that we went to, as you
23 recall, it was in 2022, and that was when
24 the first \$15 million was supposed to be
25 disbursed in 2022. So we're in 2023. So

1
2 this should be the second set of \$15
3 million. So we should be up to \$30
4 million right now according to that plan.

5 I know the hospital was given \$2
6 million and I do have a few of the
7 agencies that receive \$60,000, but it's
8 nowhere close to the number you gave.
9 Jill, again, this is not you directly.
10 It's not. I understand that you're in the
11 situation you're in. But for you to have
12 the facts, only \$2,240,000 out of the
13 \$82.2 million has been distributed to
14 date. Many groups like Dr. Jeff Reynolds
15 Group did not receive a penny. You know,
16 we were just at an event on Friday. They
17 are they've all been promised it from
18 2022 and no one has received it. I don't
19 understand it because this is not money
20 that we can be using for anything else.
21 To promise them \$15,000,000 in 2022. And
22 here we are at the almost the end of
23 2023, and they haven't even received the
24 first \$15 million. Forget the second \$15
25 million.

1
2 We're also supposed to be receiving
3 another \$30 million approximately from
4 CVS. Do you know if that's come in yet?

5 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: I don't think
6 so. I have to follow up with OMB on on
7 that settlement.

8 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: I have
9 a copy of it. I'll distribute this to
10 everyone. But the \$60,000 has gone to
11 four groups it looks like.

12 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: I just want to
13 correct that. All the agencies that were
14 awarded grant funds, they were already
15 contracted with us. And late 2022, we
16 made the announcement. Five of them were
17 being awarded \$60,000. Another one was
18 being awarded \$180,000. All of those were
19 built into -- I discussed with them and
20 it was it made more sense to build it
21 into '23 rather than forcing them to do
22 claims within '22. So we built it into
23 their '23 contracts and it's there. They
24 all have it readily available. Have they
25 claimed? Have they put claims through

1
2 for the usage of it? Not yet. There's one
3 organization that processed claims
4 through 2023, but all of those for the
5 grants, that's adds up to approximately
6 \$500,000, have been have been awarded.

7 The RFEI, those contracts, I believe
8 four of them are actually working their
9 way through the approval process. They
10 were just approved by Robert Cleary
11 yesterday, I believe, and they're making
12 their way through the chain.

13 Unfortunately, it's always a very lengthy
14 process, the contract approval process,
15 and it's frustrating on everybody's end,
16 I believe. But we're going through the
17 motions.

18 We set those dates for an October. I
19 never set October contract start dates.
20 But the reality of the contracting
21 approval process, we set those dates.

22 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: You
23 know, with all due respect, the reason
24 that we sort of went along with the fact
25 that you wanted to use groups that you're

1
2 already familiar with was because you
3 already have their disclosures and you
4 have all their information.

5 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Those
6 disclosures expire every six months and
7 they're required -- it's a very
8 frustrating process, especially for these
9 non profits who don't have the manpower
10 like a big organization, to continually
11 update the disclosure forms and keep up
12 with the vendor portal. Three of those
13 seven agencies I'm having some vendor
14 disclosure issues with still for the RFEI
15 contracts.

16 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: With
17 all due respect, I feel I'm totally in
18 line with Denise Ford and I feel that
19 this money is saving lives if we get it
20 out and if we're not, it could be costing
21 us lives. It's that detrimental. So if
22 Suffolk County is able to do it so much
23 better than we are, there must be an
24 issue. Maybe you do need additional
25 staffing because for this -- it shouldn't

1
2 -- we announced it a year ago in his
3 chambers September of 2022 that it was
4 going to be for '22/'23. So we should
5 really be up to \$30 million now. You
6 know, and and only 2.24, it's been
7 distributed. I mean, we're not even 10%.
8 I'm very concerned about it.

9 I also am glad that the hospital
10 received the \$2 million. But in my
11 opinion, and I spoke with a number of
12 CSEA members, I really think this is a
13 once in a lifetime opportunity,
14 especially with the next wave of funding
15 that's going to come in from the CVS
16 settlement, that we should put a lot more
17 into the hospital and really make it a
18 permanent facility that can house those
19 that need beds. Because I know I've been
20 there at two in the morning when I've
21 gotten calls and I started calling around
22 trying to find a bed for people and we
23 can't find beds. Just to have a permanent
24 place for available beds. And I really
25 think with this much money we could

1
2 probably do what we want to do, which is
3 extend their treatment over the 28 days.
4 Because as you know, you can actually see
5 on an MRI, the receptors of people on an
6 opioid are expanded and it takes more
7 than the 28 days. It takes almost three
8 months to get the receptors back to where
9 they should be so that they don't just
10 come out of their rehab and look for
11 drugs immediately.

12 So I again, all I can tell you is
13 this is from today. This is what's been
14 disbursed as of today; it's 2.240. That
15 is our system. So it's not like it's
16 anything that's questionable. Now we're
17 in the second year, we should be almost
18 halfway through the initial promise of
19 \$60 million.

20 Again, I don't think it's your fault
21 at all. And no one's casting the blame on
22 you, but you're the one who has to be
23 really pushing this. And I think it might
24 mean that you need additional staff. See
25 what Suffolk did, copy them. They did a

1
2 similar program and they've gotten a lot
3 more out. And kudos to them because the
4 crisis, it's a nightmare what's happening
5 to our youth. And that's why this money
6 was allocated. It was a punishment. It
7 was punitive to the pharmaceutical
8 companies. And this money is to help us
9 handle that crisis, and we're not
10 handling it quick enough. We could we
11 could have given out all the money.
12 Honestly, I think I would have done that
13 because I trust these groups that have
14 been in business for 20 years. Rather
15 than holding it in an account when kids
16 are dying, it's driving me crazy.

17 Again, to only have this much out
18 there is a real problem. And I wrote a
19 column on it which is hitting this week.
20 I really think it might take public
21 outreach to get this moving faster. But
22 it's got to happen, Jill. And I think you
23 should start with demanding some more
24 personnel. We can't be nice in this war.
25 We're in a war that we have to protect

1
2 our kids, you know?

3 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
4 Solages.

5 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Thank you.

6 I just like to thank my colleague
7 from Long Beach and the many statements
8 you said, and I really appreciate you.
9 Thank you very much.

10 And thank you, Ms. Nevin, I know
11 you're doing the best you can with the
12 resources you have.

13 I just want to get this straight. On
14 September 15, 2022, the County Executive
15 announced that he had \$15 million
16 available; is that correct?

17 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: I believe so.

18 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: And then also
19 in March of 2023 this year, the County
20 Executive also announced that he had \$15
21 million available for this war.

22 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: In May, I
23 believe we did a press conference about
24 the awards for the --

25 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: May not March.

1
2 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: May.

3 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: So from
4 September 2022 and from May of 2023 this
5 year that's a total of \$30 million that
6 was allocated, but only 2.2 has been
7 spent. Why are we leaving all this money
8 on the table?

9 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Well, with the
10 announcement in 2022, the initial
11 announcement was to go to boost some
12 existing contracts. We determined after
13 speaking with the organizations, that
14 it's just better to put it in '23 since
15 we were rounding the end of '22. So we
16 put it in there, '23 contracts. Those
17 like I have said, are available, they're
18 in there, they're able to claim against
19 it and hire against it. I know some have
20 hired against it. They not they have not
21 necessarily filed their claims yet.

22 In '23, the announcement of the RFEI
23 awards, it's part of that \$15 million.
24 The grant agencies, it's intended to be
25 for four years so that will fall into the

1
2 '23 \$15 million. The RFEI the \$5 million
3 that was awarded out of that, that will
4 fall into every year's \$15 million as
5 long as they're performing up to our
6 standards and it's a productive program.

7 I know you're looking at it that
8 Legislator DeRiggi-Whitton said there's
9 only \$2.2, but this is an annual thing,
10 but these grants, these contracts, are
11 annual. So the \$7.5 that we have
12 committed thus far is for each year.

13 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: But then under
14 that logic, by now at least, you would
15 have you spent at least more than 7
16 million. At least \$30 million you should
17 have spent.

18 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: I know it was
19 announced in '22. We started the process
20 for year '23 because we were so close to
21 the end of '22.

22 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: In the press
23 conference, it was stated that in 2022
24 alone that you would have accomplished
25 that goal, the \$15 million.

1
2 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Well, we have
3 it set up that it started in '23.

4 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: All right. But
5 but again, just to be clear. The \$15
6 million that was supposed to be spent in
7 '22, '23 and '24. But we're not near
8 that.

9 I just expressed my concern that in
10 Elmont this past summer, we lost to my
11 knowledge at least three young people. We
12 need to have this money dispersed to
13 these organizations, and not just to the
14 ones that we're familiar with, but also
15 to other organizations that really have
16 the grasp in their community. And so I
17 would ask, why hasn't this been spent yet
18 and what can we do to expedite this?

19 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Like I said, we
20 wanted to boost people immediately.
21 That's why we went the route of already
22 contracted agencies.

23 The RFEI, unfortunately, that
24 process took a very long time. We had a
25 very big response and it was a lengthy

1
2 process. And the RFP for the media, the
3 prevention messaging, we are trying our
4 best to fast track it and we are hopeful
5 that we will turn it around pretty
6 quickly and be able to invest additional
7 opioid funds in that prevention messaging
8 campaign.

9 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Thank you. One
10 last question: What are the RFEI results
11 and when will they be awarded?

12 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: It came with
13 seven contracts. They are in the process
14 of being awarded. All contracts have been
15 drawn up and they are through the
16 approval process. Some of them we're
17 waiting on some vendor disclosure issues.
18 But I believe four out of the seven are
19 in the pipeline right now in the approval
20 process.

21 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay.
22 Commissioner, thank you.

23 Commissioner, just a follow up
24 question. Is it true that there are some
25 agencies that have contracts that have

1
2 not claimed the money that they are
3 entitled to?

4 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yes. So the
5 grants that we've put out there, that was
6 the initial tranche of money, that's been
7 executed. Everybody has that
8 availability. We only have had one
9 organization thus far file claims through
10 July '23. Now, does that mean they're not
11 going to? No. A lot of times we have to
12 often ride organizations to be timely on
13 their claims. We are we. Barry here is
14 the liaison for the opioid funds. So he
15 is often reaching out to the
16 organizations to remind them of the
17 necessity of filing claims in a timely
18 manner and that this money is available.
19 And if they're not going to be using it,
20 that's part of our whole position is that
21 if you don't have the need or you're not
22 using it appropriately, then you're not
23 going to get it next year.

24 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: It just seems
25 like that the process that's being

1
2 implemented is a pretty deliberate
3 process. And I think that the fact that
4 there are agencies out there that are
5 entitled to these funds but are not even
6 claiming them, I think supports the idea
7 that it should be a deliberate process.
8 Now we can debate how deliberate it
9 should be, but simply throwing money out
10 there, I mean, we're looking to solve a
11 problem here. We're looking to save
12 lives. And we have to figure out the best
13 way to do that. And I think being
14 responsible with the money deliberate and
15 making sure that the agencies that we're
16 providing this money to these resources
17 to actually need them and will use them.
18 And it does seem like there are some
19 instances where that's not happening
20 right now.

21 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Correct.

22 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Not at the fault
23 of you or anyone in the Administration.
24 But I think that just goes to show that a
25 deliberate process may be warranted.

1
2 Can you tell me now what the process
3 is to get a contract for these funds?

4 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: So for the
5 RFEI, after the Committee concluded,
6 Barry is the liaison on that, he met with
7 each organization to just really go over
8 in detail their plans to make sure it's
9 exactly what was submitted and exactly
10 what we're looking to do. And also, Barry
11 has a great amount of expertise in the
12 field, so we wanted to make sure it makes
13 sense to the approach.

14 And so after that, we had to draw up
15 contracts from scratch. These aren't
16 these aren't just multi-year contracts
17 that were just renewing. These are brand
18 new contracts, brand new programs. So
19 that was a process. There's a lot of back
20 and forth between the organizations
21 asking them to make sure that their
22 vendor disclosure forms are updated --
23 nothing can move forward without that --
24 that the program narratives are correct.
25 And once we do get that, if we do get all

1
2 of that, we're able to move on to the
3 approval processes. And we all know that
4 there's many layers to that. And I have
5 my staff reaching out to me daily. If
6 there is something stuck somewhere, if
7 it's sitting somewhere for too long, I
8 pick up the phone or I send an e-mail
9 saying, we're trying to move this along.
10 We really need you to pay a little closer
11 attention to this.

12 So it's challenging on the vendor
13 side. It's frustrating on both sides. And
14 I understand and I agree the need for
15 movement and speed. But the contract
16 process is the process that's there. I
17 mean, maybe it's something that in the
18 future we could all discuss. I know
19 we're looking to obviously protect
20 taxpayer funded dollars, but let's say
21 for opioids or something like that, maybe
22 maybe it is a process that we could
23 potentially amend to make it more speedy.

24 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Well, I think
25 when it comes to something that's

1
2 important, it's something we definitely
3 should look into, working with the
4 Administration to streamline the process.
5 If this is something that's a cumbersome
6 process, that's delaying money that's
7 needed to be provided to these agencies,
8 we absolutely have to look into that. And
9 thank you.

10 Thank you for your response.

11 Legislator Giangregorio.

12 LEGISLATOR GIANGREGORIO: So if the
13 contracts are sitting out there and these
14 agencies haven't used it or haven't
15 claimed, do they have a time period where
16 they have to use this money or we just
17 say the contract is void and give it to
18 someone else who's going to use it?

19 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: We want them
20 to turn in claims within two months. But
21 there's going to be an annual, and that's
22 where Barry's role is imperative here,
23 annual reviews. So that was a big part of
24 the County Executive's position that if
25 we're giving you money, it doesn't mean

1
2 we're going to continue to just sign off
3 every year. There's going to be an
4 evaluation if the program is running
5 properly and if it's impactful and if
6 they are using the funds appropriately or
7 at all. So the contact between the
8 liaison and the organization will be key.

9 LEGISLATOR GIANREGORIO: At some
10 point, though, if they're not using it,
11 would we take it back?

12 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yeah, there's a
13 clause in there that if their services
14 aren't up to our standards, we can, in
15 fact, cancel the contract.

16 LEGISLATOR GIANREGORIO: Thank
17 you.

18 LEGISLATOR FORD: My outburst is
19 over. Thank you very much, Commissioner,
20 for your understanding.

21 I do want to just go back to 2022.
22 And just for clarification on my part, I
23 know that we knew about the money because
24 we had gotten it, I guess, in 2021. But
25 to your credit, you had wanted to take a

1
2 look at how to disperse the money because
3 there is a concern. I agree that I think
4 that doing it over time is a little bit
5 better than all of a sudden just throwing
6 it right out there because it keeps
7 programs going for at least four, six or
8 even eight years which I think is
9 commendable. And I know that you then
10 issued the RFP, that you had given a
11 deadline that was much earlier than the
12 end of the year as we had requested from
13 you, because we knew that some agencies
14 were not aware of the RFP and they failed
15 to respond in a timely fashion. So not
16 that they would be excluded, you at least
17 then granted an extension so that more
18 agencies were able to respond to the RFP
19 in the hopes of getting this funding. And
20 I know that even speaking with one of the
21 agencies that did receive, they were very
22 comfortable in the fact that they knew
23 they were getting the money and their
24 contract didn't start till October 1st.
25 So they whatever money they were going to

1
2 be allocated, they will be getting it.

3 But I'm very happy to hear that NUMC did
4 get everything resolved because I know
5 that they were delayed in getting their
6 paperwork in.

7 Speaking of NUMC, they are in the
8 center of Nassau County. They do have a
9 program where they have in one building,
10 they deal with drug treatment. And,
11 Doctor, you can correct me because I'm
12 just going by for what I little that I
13 know about the hospital, but I know that
14 they also then have an area for mental
15 health and that I believe that New York
16 State has granted them the ability to
17 expand the number of beds so that they
18 can take in more patients, whether or not
19 they're young people as well as older.
20 That being said, I think that it might be
21 prudent if we're looking to see what we
22 can spend the money, because we do focus
23 on the drug treatment. But there also is
24 that mental health component, which is
25 very, very key.

1
2 We had a forum in Long Beach not too
3 long ago where we talked about the mental
4 health with our young people. Aside from
5 social media, just all of the pressures
6 that come around the pandemic, whatever,
7 just really plays into them, and they're
8 very, very vulnerable. I ended up having
9 somebody I know whose child had to go to
10 that mental health clinic and had to stay
11 there for two nights. And while it was
12 important for them that that person was
13 safe in this environment, they were like,
14 well, you know, they wish it could have
15 been a little bit better. Maybe we should
16 look at NUMC, because we know that it is
17 a good hospital, that it does provide a
18 great service. They already deal with
19 mental health and opioid addiction. So
20 maybe provide them with some of this \$7
21 million in addition to what we've already
22 given them so that they can then expand,
23 especially in the mental health
24 component, renovate it, I don't know,
25 make it nice looking, whatever, more

1
2 conducive so that if young people have to
3 go there, they don't feel like they're in
4 this scary hospital type environment. I
5 would recommend and suggest and ask that
6 you do that, that you work with them. And
7 this would be a nice way of spending some
8 of this money this year that I think
9 would be very key and it would not have
10 to be a promise of next year because
11 you're doing the work this year and then
12 it'll give you an opportunity then when
13 you look to 2024, how do you want to
14 spend the money?

15 But I also think that as we look at
16 this and you do make these decisions,
17 with some of the agencies that you picked
18 that are the recipients, I wonder how
19 many of them just do care or how many of
20 them actually do preventative? Do they
21 work with the young people to try to come
22 up with programs to help prevent possibly
23 drug use?

24 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Out of the
25 seven organizations that were awarded

1
2 through the RFEI, one of them is, YES,
3 Youth Environmental Services. We awarded
4 them on a prevention program, they
5 provide coordinated continuum of care
6 model that offers prevention and
7 intervention services in the schools.
8 They are partnering with Massapequa,
9 Farmingdale, Island Trees, Levittown and
10 I think Wantagh.

11 Another organization that one award
12 was Central Nassau Guidance and
13 Counseling, and this was for their crisis
14 stabilization center. This is a very
15 critical facility that's going to --

16 LEGISLATOR FORD: I would even ask
17 that you even give them even more money.

18 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yeah. I mean,
19 we awarded them what they asked for in
20 their proposal. They're also getting
21 funded by the State. I believe they may
22 have received ARPA funding, but this is a
23 24/7 alternative to the E.R. for
24 appropriate patients who are experiencing
25 substance use or mental health crisis. So

1
2 rather than bombarding the emergency
3 rooms, not bombarding, but bringing these
4 people, they're going to a more focused
5 area for their needs.

6 The other organization, Catholic
7 Health Services, a patient Navigator
8 program that's a treatment recovery type
9 program, it'll help individuals who are
10 struggling with substance use issues and
11 challenges. They'll be able to engage
12 people who are contemplating treatment,
13 kind of walk them through, make that warm
14 handoff, that connection to resources
15 that could assist them in their recovery.

16 FCA, their Sherpa program, that's
17 another treatment recovery. It's similar
18 to the Patient Navigator program. And
19 again, it assists people struggling with
20 substance use for that warm handoff to
21 resources that could help them in their
22 recovery.

23 We supported a program that assists
24 first responders who are on the front
25 lines encountering overdoses, victims and

1
2 their families, the Police Department,
3 Probation, fire departments, EMTs and
4 mental health professionals. This program
5 will offer compassion training in order
6 to assist their focus on wellness and
7 help protect them from burnout because
8 they see and go through a lot.

9 An organization you're familiar
10 with, Legislator Ford, Long Beach Reach.
11 They fall under the treatment recovery
12 category. The program will provide a
13 coordinated continuum of care model that
14 offers intervention to students
15 exhibiting drug and alcohol use,
16 behavioral problems that includes
17 academic and emotional. The program will
18 enhance the existing relationship with
19 the Long Beach School District and its
20 collaboration with Port Washington, East
21 Williston and Malverne school districts.

22 And the final program that was
23 awarded was through LIJ. It's called
24 Empower, Educate, Motivate and Provide
25 Opportunities For School Based Workforce

1
2 to Encourage Refraining. That's an
3 educational component of the award. The
4 program will bring educational training
5 to Nassau County schools, targeting
6 school professionals and parents to help
7 rethink and reframe how we talk about
8 substance use. The education will give a
9 perspective of looking at substance use
10 as a disorder rather than just a criminal
11 problem or moral weakness. The program
12 was successful at changing the culture
13 among the internal team at Northwell LIJ.

14 LEGISLATOR FORD: When we look at
15 this, and I'm not going to belabor all of
16 this, but for me and you know, when we've
17 had the meetings and we discussed the
18 concern even over mental health and part
19 of this opioid settlement money is to go
20 toward mental health programs, and I
21 think that one of the problems or I guess
22 one of the problems that we have in
23 regard with dealing with mental health is
24 that we don't have enough mental health
25 providers. I know school districts --

1
2 we'll go back to Long Beach, with my
3 school district and when we had the
4 forum, they were saying how it's very
5 difficult when they identify a child who
6 was at risk and then they try to find a
7 provider, somebody that that child could
8 go to; a therapist or a doctor or
9 somebody that will help with this child.
10 They're very few or the ones that are
11 there. They're so overwhelmed. I mean, we
12 had our own doctor who does work with a
13 lot of young people, and he just can't
14 take any more patients. Like when we
15 look at our social workers, we limit them
16 to like 15 or 18 cases. These doctors and
17 practitioners are overwhelmed with the
18 number of cases that they have. Is there
19 anything that we can do, you know,
20 through your organization, through Human
21 Services, to maybe help boost that
22 number? Is there anything? Can any of
23 this money be used to help facilitate and
24 help bring more mental health workers,
25 for want of a better word, into the

1
2 system?

3 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yes. So that's
4 been a topic of discussion. In the
5 mental health social work field, there's
6 a shortage, a critical shortage. The line
7 of work isn't appealing necessarily to
8 the younger generations. Just to pay
9 alone, it's just not on par with what
10 they do and what they handle. They should
11 definitely be compensated more.

12 We have discussed internally about
13 the potential to do some sort of a
14 workforce retention type scholarship
15 program or even an incentive for someone
16 to go back to school who may not be an
17 MSW, to go get that. It's definitely
18 something we can consider and discuss
19 going forward.

20 LEGISLATOR FORD: Does the ARPA
21 money fall onto you or is that something
22 separate? Would that be for the Youth
23 Youth Agency?

24 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: The ARPA money
25 was managed at the executive level. But

1
2 we came up with the structure -- the
3 prior Administration came up with the
4 structure and distribution amounts for
5 that initial.

6 LEGISLATOR FORD: I don't think all
7 the agencies -- have they received all
8 their funding?

9 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yes. Anything
10 that we had committed to be given out
11 through ARPA under Human Services has
12 been provided to the agencies.

13 LEGISLATOR FORD: And is there any
14 possibility in this budget to increase
15 any of the funding to the youth agencies?
16 I know that there was something Friday at
17 their breakfast and I understand their
18 concerns and they do provide a great
19 service here in Nassau County. But I know
20 that we have some money, but I'm
21 wondering if there's any way of like
22 trying to boost some of the allocations.

23 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: One thing that
24 we're -- and we get this every year and
25 we understand and we we hear everybody at

1
2 all of these discussions. One thing we're
3 looking at is that we have some
4 organizations that are leaving money on
5 the table every year, and then we have
6 other organizations that are begging us
7 for more. So right now, my team is in the
8 process of evaluating and having
9 conversations with the organizations that
10 may be leaving money on the table to
11 understand why. Do they not need it? Is
12 it for better use elsewhere? So we're in
13 the process of that. And before we're
14 going to start handing out anything else,
15 we're going to see what we could do to
16 maximize what we already have and maybe
17 redistribute.

18 LEGISLATOR FORD: My last on this
19 topic would be that with the respondents
20 to the RFP from last year, you said there
21 were a number of like 60.

22 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yeah, 60.

23 LEGISLATOR FORD: So seven, eight or
24 nine of them, say ten of them. You know,
25 got, they got awards. So there's 50 that

1
2 were left that did not. Have these
3 agencies been weighted based on their
4 responses to the RFP so that if you were
5 going to disperse any more funding? You
6 might say, the Jill Nevin Center would
7 have been number 11 and the Delia
8 DeRiggi-Whitton Center would be number
9 12. So you would know that already that
10 if you are going to disperse money, you
11 already have agencies that you know that
12 you can give funding to them?

13 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: The agency is
14 part of the scoring process. The program
15 is another thing. We work with these
16 agencies regularly. We understand who's
17 reputable, who may not be so reputable.
18 So we have an idea. But the scoring
19 process takes into account all the
20 aspects; the agency, the program, their
21 stability. So we'll know if there's
22 another RFP or we want to distribute
23 money. And also with our follow ups with
24 our liaisons, we know what's working. We
25 know who's a good organization, who

1
2 provides good resources and programs and
3 we kind of know who doesn't.

4 LEGISLATOR FORD: And have you
5 looked at the geographic locations of all
6 of the agencies so that you all of a
7 sudden you don't take an agency that
8 responded and it seems that the majority
9 of the money would be like in Eastern
10 Nassau County as opposed to maybe
11 Western. Or all of a sudden, you have a
12 cluster of all agencies receiving and
13 then all of a sudden, say, the Barrier
14 Island gets absolutely nothing. Just so
15 that you could distribute the funding so
16 that you try to hit all of the areas, all
17 of the residents in Nassau County.

18 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Right. At least
19 through the most recent RFEI process that
20 was that was discussed about is it
21 repetitious? Are we eliminating a
22 community? With the RFEI, we received
23 responses from people out of state in
24 Massachusetts. And for us, that was just
25 a strike because there's just no

1
2 connection to Nassau County itself. So
3 location does play a part in the
4 evaluating process.

5 LEGISLATOR FORD: Well, thank you
6 very much for your responses. And I do
7 urge you to get this Administration to
8 take a look at this funding and really
9 distribute it and get it out there so
10 that it could do some good.

11 I will advocate because I think the
12 mental health component at NUMC is very
13 vital. And if you can distribute to some
14 of the agencies that are already
15 providing services that we know that a
16 good agencies, let's give them some
17 money, because the holidays are coming
18 up, let's try to save as many people as
19 we can.

20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
22 Bynoe.

23 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Thank you, Chair.

24 Hi. Good afternoon.

25 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Hi.

1
2 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I have a couple
3 of questions in a couple of your
4 different program areas, but I'll
5 piggyback off of this current
6 conversation.

7 Back in 2019, there was a
8 considerable amount of work that was
9 undertaken for an action plan as it
10 related to opioids. Are you familiar with
11 that report?

12 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: I am somewhat
13 familiar with it.

14 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So the folks on
15 that action plan, it included myself and
16 another legislator, the Commissioner of
17 police, folks from the DA's office, it
18 included someone from Human Services, it
19 also included educators from local school
20 districts, folks from advocacy groups and
21 community service groups. And there was a
22 lot of work put in here. They highlight
23 it back then in 2019, the need to do some
24 of the media campaigns that you talked
25 about, retention programs. It talked

1
2 about two parts of legislation, something
3 that we could introduce here at the
4 County, something that we might be able
5 to do for Call of Action to make sure the
6 State got involved. It also spent a lot
7 of time on discussing preventative
8 measures. In the preventative measures,
9 it was looking at therapy from the
10 perspective of trauma being trauma
11 informed. Some of the issues regarding
12 trauma specifically deals with emotional
13 and physical sexual abuse, neglect. It
14 deals with dysfunction, one parent
15 missing from the household. It dealt with
16 other domestic violence issues within the
17 household.

18 At the end of the day, when we
19 boiled it all down, we determined that we
20 needed to have programming that really
21 was done in a form of collaboration, and
22 we identified the school districts as one
23 of the best and more, I guess, consistent
24 across communities as a stakeholder. And
25 there were a variety of different

1
2 measures in ways that we could do that.
3 One was to provide mental health first
4 aid training to each school district and
5 have them receive the trainer module in
6 in the mental health first aid for
7 adolescents. And it was also to make sure
8 that they had direct services that they
9 could get services for therapy and the
10 like.

11 I understand that there was a
12 changing of the Guard in the
13 Administration and the like, but this
14 report -- and I brought this up before.
15 This is not the first time I'm going to
16 speak to it. I spoke directly to the
17 Administration in a meeting upstairs, and
18 I spoke on this on the record before. I
19 feel like we may have squandered a lot of
20 time trying to reinvent the wheel when a
21 report was in place. It was here to jump
22 start us. And so I'm not going to spend
23 time, I think folks have already
24 expressed the urgency and kind of
25 lamented about the lost in time on this

1
2 issue. I'm going to probably delve more
3 into what we're doing in terms of the
4 RFEI, because I want to make sure that
5 we're hitting all notes.

6 The prevention piece is critical,
7 right? We spend more money trying to help
8 someone once they become addicted and
9 it's less expensive to deal with someone
10 when we can just start helping them
11 unpack those traumas and maybe alleviate
12 or prevent any addiction. So what does
13 your RFEI do for that particular
14 approach?

15 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: So some of the
16 recipients -- two of the recipients; YES,
17 Youth Environmental Services and Long
18 Beach Reach, they partner with school
19 districts to work in and out of the
20 school. So the goal to have a social
21 worker inside the school, but also
22 available outside of the school and
23 they're there to provide a coordinated
24 continuum of care model that offers
25 prevention and intervention services. So

1
2 trying to get into the schools to have
3 counselors inside the schools that are
4 also part of a community based
5 organization is one of the goals out of
6 that.

7 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. That's
8 great. But what I didn't hear was the
9 consistency, like making sure that every
10 school district had that level of
11 service. Because what I'm hearing when
12 you stated YES, YES was providing
13 services to Plainedge, Plainview -- I
14 don't know, Wantagh, Massapequa and then
15 you said Long Beach.

16 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Long Beach and
17 Port Washington. This is the first round.
18 And I could let Barry speak. If you want
19 to speak about the detailed importance of
20 this type of programming.

21 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I don't need him
22 to speak to the detail. I'm well
23 informed of what that is.

24 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Okay.

25 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: What I'm sensing

1
2 and hearing here is that there isn't any
3 effort on this County Administration's
4 behalf to make sure that it's in every
5 single school district.

6 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yes. And we
7 would love to see that.

8 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: That should have
9 been.

10 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: If there were
11 more of that responded, I'm sure they
12 probably would have been awarded because
13 there was agreeance upon the Review
14 Committee that it is a very important
15 program to embed into the school
16 districts. But we were limited in terms
17 of who responded to the RFEI.

18 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So then an RFEI
19 may not have been the best approach,
20 right?

21 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: It doesn't say
22 that we couldn't we couldn't consider
23 this as its own entity in the future that
24 we see results --

25 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: When you wait for

1
2 the future, you're losing people.

3 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: No, I
4 understand.

5 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And I don't want
6 to be repetitious in my responses or in
7 my questions. What I'm saying is we
8 should have put out something that
9 required someone to be able to service 55
10 school districts. To allow this process
11 where it's only targeting or the target
12 audience will only be five to six school
13 districts, that's not equitable. That's
14 not right. It's not right that we're only
15 assisting a handful of school districts.
16 Drug addiction is rampant through Nassau
17 County school districts. Suicide rates
18 are up. We have truancy that's up. You
19 have young people that are struggling
20 because of the impacts of the pandemic.
21 And this was report and this opioid
22 pandemic was prior to that, it's only
23 gotten worse. It's not getting better.
24 And for us to have a process in place
25 where you're identifying entities that

1
2 can only serve as five and six school
3 districts, I don't think that's the
4 approach.

5 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: So most of the
6 non profits that do this, that's their
7 capability. I wish there was one
8 organization in Nassau --

9 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: No, no, no.
10 That's their capability under their
11 current framework. If we had taken this
12 money. And set it aside for the purpose
13 of making sure that we were providing
14 this preventative care through 55 school
15 districts, then it would allow one of
16 these non-for-profit community
17 organizations to ramp up. To ramp up
18 their staffing, to create programming to
19 go into these schools. The way we're
20 doing it, it's just not just the way you
21 create programming and policy when you're
22 trying to target an issue. This is the
23 way we've been doing it. YES is not a new
24 service. They've been doing this work
25 prior to the pandemic. They've been

1
2 doing this work prior to the lawsuit
3 being settled and us getting the money.
4 So the purpose of this money is not to
5 keep doing the same thing over and over.
6 The purpose of getting this money was to
7 create policy and programs and put them
8 in place. It's not to keep doing the same
9 thing because we already know that that
10 same thing wasn't working. I feel like
11 we've lost our ability to be innovative.
12 Innovative at a time when we have money
13 to really do something that's impactful
14 and meaningful.

15 I think this whole process is
16 flawed. Because I think that you guys are
17 moving forward without a plan. Without a
18 concrete plan. You're asking people to
19 respond for interest in providing
20 education, but you haven't given them a
21 real goal. And the goal should be to
22 provide that education and preventative
23 care across the county. And the only way
24 to do that and reach just about every
25 kid, young person, is to do it within the

1
2 school district. You're shaking your
3 head. But how can you correct this flawed
4 process?

5 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: It's definitely
6 something I could talk to the
7 Administration about to see their
8 thoughts on how they want to proceed
9 forward. We started with the RFEI and we
10 got some responses. Barry has educated me
11 quite well on the importance of what
12 you're talking about, of having these
13 providers embedded within the school
14 districts. I support it, and it's
15 something that we definitely can discuss
16 to see if we could move forward at a
17 bigger and better pace like your
18 suggesting.

19 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Because we're
20 going to be leaving communities, scores
21 of children behind with the process that
22 you currently have in place. It's not
23 acceptable.

24 So while I support and echo the
25 sentiments of my colleagues who have

1
2 spoken before about getting the money
3 into the communities, I'm of the mindset
4 that we need to do it as quickly as we
5 can, but we have to do it in a way that
6 provides success. Provides for an
7 opportunity for these kids that are
8 struggling to have care and it has to
9 happen across the county. I need to see a
10 plan that does that because I think this
11 is flawed.

12 I know you're not in a position to
13 really make any type of decision on your
14 own right here on the floor, so I'm going
15 to leave that there in the moment, but
16 know that I'm following up on it.

17 I want to move to Alzheimer's. And
18 based on the reporting and the budget.
19 When I look at your Aging numbers, Long
20 Island Alzheimer's is getting \$233,000.
21 And when I look at the study that was
22 conducted by *Newsday*, which indicates
23 that one out of eight Long Islanders have
24 Alzheimer's is suffering, that that's
25 about 31,000 seniors in Nassau County

1
2 that are suffering. It's stated that
3 Nassau County is ranking in one of the
4 highest categories across the state for
5 people that are suffering from
6 Alzheimer's. And when I look at this
7 aging population here in Nassau County,
8 which will continue to grow, I can't
9 understand how we only earmarked \$233,000
10 for the purpose of aiding our community
11 residents that are suffering.

12 I can tell you already that I see a
13 lack in our ability to do that because we
14 aren't doing any level of high level
15 investing in the disease. I've gone out
16 to the Long Island Dementia and
17 Alzheimer's Center and I visited that
18 center and it should be a center like
19 that duplicated. Tenfold. We should be
20 creating centers like that across the
21 county where folks can go and get the
22 respite, so that families can get the
23 respite that they need and that
24 individuals can be working towards having
25 some of their cognitive abilities

1
2 addressed in the earlier onset because
3 they're saying that that helps retard the
4 disease from progressing. And so I can't
5 see where \$233,000 does anything,
6 anything to touch that. I think it was
7 like \$7.51 per person, that's what we're
8 allocating towards the disease when you
9 look at the number of our community
10 residents that are suffering. Isn't there
11 more that we can do?

12 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: We're limited
13 in terms of what the state provides us,
14 and we're trying we have needs across the
15 board between food insecurities and
16 obviously Alzheimer's and all sorts of
17 other aging issues. And we're trying our
18 best to touch on all the areas. It's
19 definitely a conversation to be had with
20 the State in terms of asking for
21 additional funding to support additional
22 respite and whatnot. Debbie Pugliese, my
23 Deputy Commissioner, has started a Memory
24 Cafe at the County level just to kind of
25 bring people in, to give them the respite

1
2 and programming updates and whatnot to
3 support them and their families. Debbie,
4 do you want to --

5 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I'm taking about
6 the number that's specifically given to
7 Long Island Alzheimer's Association.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE:
9 Right. I understand that, but we have --

10 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So if there's
11 more that I need to know, tell --

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: Yeah,
13 I wasn't sure if you are aware, we also
14 have what they call the Adult Day. We
15 have one in Hewlett. We have one in East
16 Hills. We have Glen Cove.

17 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: What is it that
18 you have at these locations?

19 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: They're Adult
20 Day programs for --

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE:
22 They're Adult Day, so they provide
23 respite for the families.

24 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Specifically with
25 Alzheimer's, ma'am?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: Yes.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Glen Cove has a program as well.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Who's running those programs?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Sid Jacobson is an organization we contract with. They have they have a program.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: They have East Hills and they have Herricks.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Long Island Alzheimer's, as you're aware of, Glen Cove Senior Center.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: The Senior Center is not specifically dealing with --

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: The lower --

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: The lower level is specifically for Adult Day.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: New Horizons is in Hewlett. They have a Senior Center on one level and they have Adult Day on another level. Then we have Glen Cove does it the same way; so they

1
2 have two. Then we have Herricks, they
3 have Three E and a Senior Center, but
4 their Three E is run through Sid Jacobsen
5 as well.

6 Herricks has Alzheimer's patients.
7 Glen Cove is in the lower level. Glen
8 Cove Senior Center is a Senior Center on
9 the first floor when you walk in big
10 center and then on the lower level, they
11 run their Adult Day program. That's all
12 I have, then. What do you want me to
13 say?

14 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Please don't
15 respond to me that way.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: I'm
17 sorry.

18 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: What I want you
19 to do, I wanted you to continue because I
20 thought you were going to list other
21 entities and venues. So don't do that.

22 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: So I'll just
23 tally it up. So in Glen Cove, we have
24 support through Sid Jacobson's in East
25 Hills; in Herricks we are funding them

1
2 between the two of them, almost \$300,000.
3 Long Island Alzheimer's is \$235,000; Glen
4 Cove, part of it embedded in a \$402,000.

5 (Whereupon, side
6 discussion.)

7 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: So it's not
8 just \$235,000. It's probably more than
9 double that.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: I can
11 get you an exact number.

12 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: -- giving you the
13 opportunity to provide those numbers.

14 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Absolutely.
15 I'll provide them to you.

16 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: If you could do
17 that and go through each program line
18 where it might be coupled with other
19 programming and pull it out, that would
20 be helpful.

21 So let me ask you something. What do
22 you have -- I heard the communities and
23 if you wouldn't mind recapping, you said
24 Glen Cove --

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: Glen

1
2 Cove, Westbury, East Hills, Herricks and
3 Hewlett.

4 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay, so what
5 about folks in Uniondale?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: They
7 would go to Westbury.

8 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: What about folks
9 in Roosevelt?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE:
11 Westbury.

12 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: We pay for
13 transportation?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: They
15 have a bus.

16 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: We pay for the
17 transportation.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: Yes,
19 we provide transportation.

20 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Why is it that
21 it's embedded in some communities and not
22 in others and that there's a significant
23 requirement for those folks to travel
24 further than others?

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: Those

1
2 are the agencies that we have contracts
3 with right now.

4 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Have we looked to
5 expand those services?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: We
7 are looking to expand --

8 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Being that we
9 have quite a prevalence for it here.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: We
11 are looking to expand those services.
12 Right now, the State is launching a new
13 program, so we need to get a better
14 understanding of what they're launching.
15 Now it's focusing on the caregiver. So
16 once we understand that program, then
17 we'll be able to move forward with an RFP
18 for Adult Day Services.

19 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. Are you
20 aware that some time ago -- You know
21 what? I'm not going to do this here with
22 you today. I'm going to move on.

23 I want to talk about Youth Services
24 then.

25 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Okay.

1
2 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Can you talk to
3 me a little bit about specifically what
4 funding is earmarked toward education
5 recovery?

6 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: In Youth?

7 We haven't put specific opioid funds
8 in terms of Youth, but Keith is our
9 liaison and he could speak to the
10 specifics of some of the programs.

11 MR. GERBER: Many of our programs
12 provide after school homework assistance
13 and after school programming.

14 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. And so
15 where are those services located?

16 MR. GERBER: Throughout Nassau
17 County.

18 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Give me some
19 locations.

20 MR. GERBER: Elmont; Freeport; Big
21 Brothers Big Sisters countywide; Choice
22 For All in Roosevelt; Circulo De La
23 Hispanidad is in Long Beach and
24 Hempstead; Glen Cove Youth Bureau;
25 Community Parent Center is countywide;

1
2 Copay in Great Neck; Cornell Cooperative
3 Extension is countywide; EAC and
4 Hempstead; EOC of Nassau County in
5 Hempstead; we have runaway and homeless
6 youth providers through Family and
7 Children's Association, which are both
8 countywide services; Five Towns Community
9 Center, which is in the located in the
10 Five Towns; Gateway Youth Outreach in
11 Elmont; Glen Cove Boys and Girls House,
12 Glen Cove; Hempstead, Hispanic Civic
13 Association; Hicksville Teenage Council,
14 Hispanic Brotherhood in Rockville Center;
15 Hispanic Counseling Center in Hempstead;
16 La Fuerza Unida in Glen Cove; Leadership
17 Training Institute in Roslyn; Littig
18 House Community Center in Port
19 Washington; Long Beach Reach, which is in
20 Long Beach; Long Island Advocacy Center
21 is countywide; Long Island Crisis Center
22 provides our 24 hour crisis hotline,
23 they're Countywide; Manhasset -- Great
24 Neck, EOC --

25 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Can I stop you

1
2 for one second. I'm sorry. Instead of
3 having you just recite a whole list. When
4 you say countywide, how would can you
5 identify one of those countywide entities
6 that you just --

7 MR. GERBER: Sure like Long Island
8 Crisis Center.

9 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: That's education
10 recovery?

11 MR. GERBER: No, that's not
12 education. That's crisis intervention.

13 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I asked
14 specifically about education recovery.

15 MR. GERBER: EOC Of Nassau County is
16 countywide.

17 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay.

18 EOC of Nassau County. They're
19 located in Hempstead, how would someone
20 who might need the services that they
21 provide that lives in Elmont reach that
22 type of service, since it's countywide?

23 MR. GERBER: Well, they would need
24 their own transportation in order to get
25 there.

1
2 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So what I'd like
3 then is to find out where education
4 recovery happens locally in each
5 community. And then I would like to know
6 the countywide services separate.

7 What I'm attempting to do is to make
8 sure that no community is left behind.
9 That we're not saying that there isn't a
10 localized service in a part of this
11 Nassau County that we're trying to
12 address by saying that someone could tap
13 into one of the countywide services that
14 might be miles and miles away from their
15 home.

16 MR. GERBER: Well, unfortunately, we
17 don't have services in every single
18 village, town, hamlet in Nassau County.
19 But we do stretch from the northeast to
20 the southeast to the northwest to the
21 southwest corners of Nassau County.

22 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I want to
23 personally know where these gaps are.

24 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: We could get
25 you that.

1
2 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I'd like to know
3 that for the Youth Services and i'd like
4 to know that for the Mental Health
5 Chemical Dependencies. And I'd like to
6 then understand how the numbers are
7 staying flat in so many of these program
8 areas, in so many of these community
9 organizations, how they're staying flat.
10 I know that you're saying that some
11 aren't spending their money. At the end
12 of the year, there's a surplus, and then
13 some are asking for additional funds. I'd
14 love to be able to identify who those
15 entities are as well. Because the folks
16 leaving the money on the table -- and we
17 should do some level of analysis --
18 because if they've left the money on the
19 table for the last five years, then we
20 don't need to fund them at that amount
21 anymore. And then we need to create other
22 programs to address challenges in the
23 community. That would be an opportunity
24 to address other challenges.

25 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Agreed.

1
2 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So I think that
3 we need to do that level of analysis
4 because if we know they can't spend it --

5 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Someone else
6 needs it. Right.

7 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And maybe create
8 some opportunities for some of these
9 countywide folks to have opportunities to
10 localize.

11 This money staying flat around this
12 time that -- all the things that we
13 talked about. All the behavioral health
14 issues, the mental the mental health
15 issues, it just seems very odd to me that
16 we have an ability to stay flat there. I
17 think we have opportunity there and we
18 should be doing more.

19 ARPA money. I know that we sent out,
20 what was it?

21 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: \$60,000 to
22 each.

23 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Did we find that
24 that money was used?

25 MS. ZAKI: It's managed by Haggerty.

1
2 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Have we had an
3 update from Haggerty?

4 MS. ZAKI: We don't directly.

5 The way the setup is, Haggerty
6 manages not only the funding, it is
7 reimbursed through us. They review the
8 application process, and it is directed
9 to the Department, and Fiscal reimburses
10 the total one lump sum amount.

11 Again, they have to submit their
12 actual expenditure to Haggerty.
13 Department is not involved in the
14 accountability of the ARPA funds. We have
15 reimbursed them the lump sum amounts.

16 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. Thank you.

17 Do we contract any level of a study
18 across all of these different program
19 lines like Youth Services, through the
20 Aging, the Mental Health piece? Have we
21 commissioned anyone to study the programs
22 that are in place to study the trends so
23 that we can create new benchmarks?
24 You've never undertaken that level of a
25 study?

1
2 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: We do not, no.
3 We have not funded a study.

4 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I think it would
5 be a real good process to consider so
6 that we know how to move forward. I think
7 that sometimes we might be moving blindly
8 or we're being responsive or reactionary
9 to folks in certain communities saying
10 certain things. But I think that if we
11 did a study across the whole county about
12 programming across all of these different
13 program lines, we might have a better way
14 of mapping a way forward. Taking this
15 Alzheimer's piece into consideration, and
16 whatever you're going to be able to tell
17 me about the cafes in this community and
18 that community. Even speaking to those
19 program providers, have we undertaken
20 that effort to find out how we might
21 better resource them to to meet the
22 current needs that they're experiencing?
23 I just feel like some research goes a
24 long way in making sure that we're not
25 squandering our opportunities and our

1
2 money. I Really suggested the
3 Administration do that.

4 Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Okay.

6 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
7 Solages.

8 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Thank you to
9 the Chair.

10 I understand your previous point
11 about deliberate. According to, for
12 example, Brown versus Board of Education,
13 great legal decision, deliberate means
14 take time, but that would prevent waste,
15 fraud, abuse. But here we have a crisis
16 and a delay creates an injustice. And as
17 you know, justice delayed is justice
18 denied.

19 You mentioned a study. My colleague
20 mentioned a study. Wouldn't the
21 Comptroller, Ms. Phillips, be best suited
22 to do such a study to see where all this
23 funding is going and if it's actually
24 creating a result?

25 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: The opioid

1
2 funding?

3 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Yes.

4 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Quite possibly.

5 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Has her office
6 reached out to ask for information
7 regarding?

8 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: No.

9 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: And my
10 colleague asked which communities are
11 being left out. I see in the proposed
12 budget for 2023, the LGBT network was
13 allocated \$75,000, and then in 2024 there
14 is no allocation. How are we serving the
15 LGBT community?

16 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: It was held up
17 through compliance at contracts. So we
18 removed it out of the 2024.

19 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Has there been
20 any effort to -- I mean, this is not a
21 gotcha program where if they leave money
22 on the table or if they don't have a
23 disclosure form, we say, hey, too bad.
24 We want to work with these potential
25 vendors or vendors. How can we make sure

1
2 that this funding for Youth Services go
3 to the intended source, such as the LGBT
4 network?

5 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: They had run
6 into lots of issues with their disclosure
7 forms and not properly disclosing things.
8 We followed up with them and to no avail.
9 And that was put on hold Chief
10 Procurement Officer.

11 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Okay.

12 Nothing further. Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
14 Bynoe.

15 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I'm sorry. I had
16 I forgot I had a couple of granular
17 questions on funding as well.

18 Could you tell me about in Aging,
19 there's seems to be a new program or new
20 funding, about half \$1 million going to
21 Salvation Army. The Win Program. It
22 wasn't funded in 2023, being funded at
23 \$575,000.

24 (Whereupon, off record
25 discussion amongst Human

Services Department.)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: Win
is home delivered meals.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Is that something
new we're doing because or was it moved
from one program line to another? It
looks like it had zero funding in 2023,
but in 2024 we're projecting \$575,000.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: They
started a breakfast program. That could
be the breakfast program.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: That's why I'm
asking.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: That
would be my guess would be the breakfast
program. I have to see where we're
looking at.

(Whereupon, perusing.)

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: You can get back
to me on that.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Sorry about
that. We'll get back to you with the
specifics on that.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I would love if

1
2 everything promised was provided to the
3 Full Body prior to our next budget
4 hearing where OMB will appear, because we
5 can probably follow up with any questions
6 related to whatever you provide at that
7 time.

8 And then I have a question
9 specifically about Morrison Mentors, why
10 they are not being funded. They had
11 funding placed in 2023, which they never
12 got, and now we're not even proposing
13 anything for them. Is there a reason why
14 we won't engage with them?

15 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: The issue with
16 that is that on December 31, 2021, they
17 were given a contract that was not
18 through an RFP award. Coming in, the
19 Administration was not comfortable just
20 handing over a contract that was not
21 attached to an RFP. So it was placed on
22 hold.

23 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So they were
24 funded without responding with to an RFP.

25 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Correct. It

1
2 was a last minute -- I don't know. It was
3 under the previous Admin, but it was just
4 something we weren't comfortable moving
5 forward with.

6 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. Have we
7 engaged them for --

8 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Have they
9 responded to our subsequent RFPs; they
10 have not. We RFP every year. We do cycles
11 every year cycles for RFP and we're on
12 our second one and they have not
13 responded.

14 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: How do folks know
15 about these RFPs?

16 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: They get posted
17 in *Newsday*, we send it out to our e-mail
18 list as well.

19 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And your e-mail
20 list is comprised of people who are
21 currently receiving funding or is it --

22 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: It's anybody
23 who's inquired, anyone we've interacted
24 with, any organization.

25 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So I'd like

1
2 verification that your e-mail list
3 included them.

4 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Sure.

5 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Thank you.

6 MS. ZAKI: Jill, can I just clarify
7 one thing?

8 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Sure.

9 MS. ZAKI: With the Salvation Army,
10 Legislator, that's a typo. It is actually
11 Pure Foods or it's called Mom's Meals and
12 it's a mistake on my end, I should have
13 typed that name.

14 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And what does
15 that entity do?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE:
17 That's a home delivered meal program.

18 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay.

19 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: During the
20 pandemic, we picked up an additional home
21 delivered meal program. They are very
22 different than our normal ones. Our
23 normal ones are a door-to-door,
24 person-to-person through Catholic
25 Charities in EAC. Mom's meals, they're a

1
2 national organization and it actually
3 gets shipped via Fedex, I believe, in a
4 dry ice. They get shipped meals and it
5 gives us an ability to reach areas that
6 some of the EAC and Catholic Charities
7 were not able to reach with the boots on
8 the ground type of delivery.

9 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Addressing the
10 gaps.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: And
12 they have the ability to do therapeutic
13 meals, which are regular providers don't
14 do.

15 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: So if you're
16 diabetic, if you have a gluten
17 intolerance. We actually had brought them
18 on under the emergency order of Covid.
19 Since that expired, we have just RFP'd,
20 and we're in process of reviewing, and
21 they were one of three respondents.

22 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And so how did
23 you identify those gaps? You just had
24 people calling and saying we needed food,
25 but you knew EAC couldn't do it?

1
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: I
3 wasn't here at that point during the
4 pandemic.

5 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yeah, I wasn't
6 here.

7 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: That's exactly
8 what I want to find out about those other
9 services. Where the gaps are and how we
10 can innovatively plug those gaps is
11 exactly what I'm concerned about. I'm
12 happy you've done that in that arena.

13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Ford.

15 LEGISLATOR FORD: I'll be brief.

16 Just going back to where you
17 withdrew the funding you're holding the
18 funding for the LGBT network. Is that an
19 organization that is present here in
20 Nassau County or are they in Suffolk
21 County?

22 MR. GERBER: They are based in
23 Suffolk County, but they do have
24 programming here in Nassau.

25 LEGISLATOR FORD: Okay. Is it a

1
2 standalone or are they part of -- because
3 I know the Long Island Crisis Center has
4 Pride For Youth.

5 MR. GERBER: Correct. They are
6 different organizations.

7 LEGISLATOR FORD: Would you hold
8 that money in abeyance until they maybe
9 can either come into compliance or if in
10 order to fill that gap, that maybe take
11 some of that money and add to Pride For
12 Youth, the Long Island Crisis Center,
13 because they do deal with gay youth. Can
14 that be done?

15 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: I'm sorry. Can
16 you repeat that? To roll over --

17 LEGISLATOR FORD: The \$75,000 right
18 now, you're holding it because of the
19 noncompliance of LGBT network. So will
20 you hold that money for either that they
21 come into compliance or if they can't do
22 that, perhaps maybe see if you can then
23 give some additional funding to Pride for
24 Youth, which falls under the Long Island
25 Crisis Center?

1
2 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: We can consider
3 it for sure. We will continue to try to
4 work with them to see if they can come
5 into compliance.

6 LEGISLATOR FORD: I hope they do.

7 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: It's a struggle
8 we find for some of these organizations,
9 especially the smaller ones, with all the
10 paperwork and and even responding to
11 RFPs. I know Legislator Bynoe has a
12 concern about not being all over Nassau
13 County, but a lot of these organizations
14 struggle to respond. It's overwhelming
15 just to see an RFP and to read it and to
16 understand all the details that you have
17 to provide.

18 LEGISLATOR FORD: I know and I do
19 have to give a shout out to Commissioner
20 LaDonna Taylor in regard to working with
21 a lot of the youth agencies. And we
22 happen to know of one that you're being
23 very considerate and very helpful with,
24 because I do know that some of these
25 organizations are delaying in responding

1
2 to RFPs. They think they did; they
3 didn't. They don't have all the
4 paperwork. So rather than just literally
5 cut them off at the knees, you're like,
6 all right, we're going to give you
7 another chance. And I appreciate. I'm
8 hoping that we can continue with that.

9 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Right. We want
10 to work with people. We want to. We're
11 not trying to be sticklers. So we will
12 do whatever we can to help progress the
13 process.

14 LEGISLATOR FORD: Thank you.

15 And then with Haggerty, when you
16 were saying about with the ARPA funding
17 with the \$60,000.

18 MS. ZAKI: \$60,000 was allocated to
19 Office of Mental Health and Office of
20 Chemical Dependency. But there are
21 different amounts for Office for Aging
22 and Office for Youth.

23 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: It's percentage
24 based.

25 LEGISLATOR FORD: This is an outside

1
2 agency that's overseeing this, right? Is
3 there somebody in the County that is
4 working directly with this agency to
5 oversee them to make sure that if
6 anything needs to be done or signed --

7 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yeah, we often
8 get e-mails from David Vienna or the
9 Boost Portal asking us for information,
10 asking for us to approve any budget
11 adjustments or anything. So there is
12 communication and I do foresee -- the
13 reviewing process I think only started
14 recently. We did do a Zoom call on that
15 not too long ago. So we will be following
16 up to see about the usage. I would
17 imagine we would get a report considering
18 we work with these organizations.

19 LEGISLATOR FORD: With the portal,
20 we had an issue with the veterans when
21 they were getting they were allocated
22 certain monies and there was a lack of
23 oversight, whatever it was, where they
24 were held up for months because somebody
25 from the County was not overseeing and

1
2 the person who was in charge of the
3 portal -- things fell through the cracks.
4 That's all I'm asking.

5 I promise my last. I don't know if
6 we discussed the Office of Physically
7 Challenged, which is very important. And,
8 you do a great job in advocating for
9 those that need a special voice.

10 Just curious, does the office -- I
11 know that you'll go out like if there's a
12 road project that is done and all of a
13 sudden you go by and you notice that when
14 they did the ramp, there's that little,
15 little lift there. So the office will go
16 out and if there's a complaint, they'll
17 say to whatever entity like, say, it
18 could be the Town of Hempstead, it's not
19 compliant. Then they have to go out and
20 redo the ramp so that a person who is in
21 a wheelchair is able to easily leave a
22 parking lot to get up onto the sidewalk,
23 so forth. Does the Office of Physically
24 Challenged, say you have sidewalks that
25 are impassable like if people you know

1
2 those of us that can walk to and from and
3 go around obstacles it's easy for us to
4 do that, but if you happen to be somebody
5 who's in a wheelchair, you may find that
6 all of a sudden you're not able to go
7 from one corner to the next -- is that
8 something that the Office looks at and
9 makes a determination as to whether or
10 not that has to be remediated by
11 whomever?

12 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yeah.

13 So my director, Matt Dwyer, he's the
14 biggest advocate out there. He goes out
15 regularly to review complaints and issues
16 and he follows up. Some of them are
17 internal, they're County issues at Parks
18 and whatnot. He does, he follows up with
19 the entity who oversees that.

20 LEGISLATOR FORD: Okay. Thank you
21 very much. Once again, thank you for the
22 good job that you all do.

23 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: All right. Just
25 before before you go, any public comment?

1
2 (Whereupon, no verbal
3 response.)

4 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. There be
5 none. Thank you very much for your
6 presentation. I appreciate it.

7 Especially, I know you asked a lot
8 of questions about the funding from the
9 settlement, and that is not part of your
10 Operational Budget. So I don't know if
11 you were prepared today to talk on that
12 or not, but I appreciate that you that
13 you gave the responses you did. So thank
14 you for your presentation.

15 COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Thank you.

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17 *****
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2
3 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Good afternoon.

4 CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: Good
5 afternoon. I'm Michele Spara. I'm the
6 Chief Deputy Assessor with the Department
7 of Assessment. I'd like to begin by
8 telling you some facts and happenings
9 that are happening within the Department
10 of Assessment.

11 As you know, Nassau County is the
12 second largest assessing unit in New York
13 State, second only to New York City. We
14 are designated a Special Assessing Unit
15 governed only along with New York City by
16 Real Property Tax Law Article 18. This
17 means that we are governed by a unique
18 set of laws different from the rest of
19 the state; therefore, creating unique
20 challenges for us.

21 We are responsible for the valuation
22 of over 425,000 parcels with a fair
23 market value of over \$330 billion.
24 However, the Department of Assessments
25 public service responsibilities is not

1
2 limited to setting property values. We
3 are continuously working with other
4 government agencies regarding economic
5 development and of course the public to
6 assist residents to better understand the
7 assessment process and take advantage of
8 any possible savings that they may
9 qualify for due to property exemptions.

10 To that end, we are conducting over
11 40 outreach programs this year alone
12 where the Department of Assessment
13 exemption specialists go out to the
14 public to educate and assist residents
15 with any assessment related questions. We
16 plan to expand this program in 2024 to
17 visit senior centers, VFWs, fire
18 department events to ensure that everyone
19 has a better understanding of the
20 assessment process and any potential
21 benefits that they may be entitled to.

22 An example of this would be the
23 recent legislation that this Legislature
24 and approximately 30 school districts
25 opted into to increase the senior

1
2 exemption scale. This hasn't been
3 increased since 2007 and was sorely
4 needed to keep our seniors in their
5 homes. We applaud you for this. This is
6 an example of how important our outreach
7 program is for educating the public. We
8 had some seniors who were unaware of this
9 change. They now have applied and they
10 will be receiving this exemption. So
11 again, we thank you.

12 The Department of Assessment
13 budgeted headcount remains at 169. We
14 currently have 137 employees. We've lost
15 15 employees this year alone, either due
16 to retirements or accepting employment
17 elsewhere.

18 I'd like to take this opportunity to
19 thank this Administration and also this
20 Legislature for approving the recent CSEA
21 contract. We firmly believe that this
22 will assist in hiring new talent to join
23 the talent that we already have on staff.

24 The importance of maintaining the
25 Assessment roll each year is to keep the

1
2 data and valuations current and accurate.
3 This requires constant processing
4 annually of thousands of permits,
5 updating property inventory, verification
6 of over 30,000 sales, administering over
7 300,000 exemptions, as well as handling
8 over 50,000 constituents that either call
9 or come into our offices.

10 For the 2024 tax year, we had over
11 27,000 cases filing for SCAR (small
12 claims) in which we were able to mediate
13 over 25,000 of them. This left us with
14 approximately 2000, thus eliminating the
15 need for refunds, severely limiting the
16 County liability.

17 We are constantly looking at our
18 software and technologies to help us
19 improve efficiency within the Department
20 and keep us on the cutting edge as we
21 strive to be an industry leader in this
22 field.

23 To that end, we have several
24 initiatives with the IT department that
25 are or will improve our overall

1
2 functionality and quality control. This
3 includes recollecting imagery. Thanks to
4 this Legislative Body for the second time
5 through our vendor cycle media, they're a
6 great vendor that collects the imagery
7 from the street level and integrates
8 these images into our GIS system. This is
9 revolutionary technology that allows us
10 to operate in a much more efficient
11 manner.

12 Additionally, the Department plans
13 to roll out our field mobile technology.
14 This allows our field collection to be
15 collected and input into our computer
16 system in real time. Picture it as
17 somewhat of a mobile office. This
18 together with Near Map, our vendor for
19 aerial imagery, provides for the most
20 efficient use of our resources ever and
21 we are improving it annually.

22 All of these initiatives are
23 designed to improve efficiency, reduce
24 the margin of human error and free up
25 personnel to be signed in other areas

1
2 within the Department. We'd like to thank
3 Nancy Stanton and her IT team for always
4 providing the resources that we need.

5 The times that we are certainly
6 interesting. It is our job to constantly
7 monitor market conditions. However, these
8 recent times have been unprecedented
9 historically. The Covid-19 worldwide
10 pandemic caused shutdowns, thus caused
11 the Assessment roll for the '23 and '24
12 tax years to remain static. The 2025 year
13 was treated the same as the world exited
14 from a pandemic and entered into an era
15 of extreme market instability, including,
16 but not limited to, inflation, stock
17 market fluctuations, 20 year high
18 mortgage interest rates, and
19 international conflict.

20 This brings up the question of the
21 2026 tax year. As we all know, the County
22 is currently engaged, as reported, and I
23 believe spoken to earlier today, in a
24 nationwide search to find a new Assessor.
25 As previously stated, we are in

1
2 unprecedented times. We know that
3 everyone reads in the paper that home
4 prices are setting record prices, and
5 Nassau County's median sales have never
6 been higher. However, the continuing
7 pressures of the high interest rates,
8 along with the unbalanced supply and
9 demand of the market, make any updates to
10 the Assessment roll extraordinarily
11 challenging and likely would be unfair
12 and inequitable.

13 Regular updates are always advisable
14 when market conditions are stable.
15 However, the Department's position is
16 that it is in the best interest of the
17 residents of Nassau County to not perform
18 and update and allow the laws of Article
19 18 to govern the Assessment roll for the
20 upcoming year, as these outside pressures
21 are showing conflicting market results
22 within Nassau County and its various home
23 values.

24 We thank you for your time, and
25 along with my team, if you have any

1
2 questions regarding the budget, we'd be
3 more than happy to answer them.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you for
6 your presentation. I will be fairly
7 quick.

8 I want to thank you for providing
9 those classes for the exemptions in the
10 communities. I've done a bunch of them in
11 the last six years, but even this year
12 alone, I think we've done 2 or 3. Just
13 did one with Legislator McKeivitt about a
14 week ago and we get an incredible turnout
15 at these events. I don't know how many we
16 had, Tom. I would say about 75 people, 80
17 people at least. The one request I would
18 have is that if there is additional staff
19 that can be provided to sit with the
20 people, because some people -- and this
21 is a good thing that there's a lot of
22 people that are coming to get this
23 information. But there were some people
24 that were waiting for a good two hours.

25 CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: Understood.

1
2 We do have challenges over the summer
3 with people on vacation and things like
4 that. We try to send at least three to
5 every program and we're going to continue
6 that throughout the rest of the year.

7 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay, great.

8 Legislator Solages.

9 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: What is the
10 hiring plan to fill the vacancies?

11 CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: We
12 continuously have been recruiting
13 throughout the year. Unfortunately, due
14 to the low scale, we get very little
15 responses. We started with one CSEA list
16 that had 260 candidates on it. We
17 received responses from six that they
18 were interested and only four showed up.
19 Two of them declined after that, two of
20 them were hired and one of them since has
21 left for a better employment. So we're
22 going to continuously work through the
23 recruiting process, through Civil
24 Service.

25 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: I saw in the

1
2 newspaper, how a church received a high
3 tax bill in New Hyde Park. Is there
4 still a unit of employees overseeing
5 quality control?

6 CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: Absolutely.
7 We've beefed up that area over the course
8 of the last several months.

9 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Why didn't they
10 catch that church getting the high bill?

11 CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: The person
12 that was responsible for that is no
13 longer employed with the County.

14 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: What does
15 beefed up mean? How many are in that
16 Unit?

17 CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: We have
18 three statisticians. We have, I would say
19 a total of about eight full time.
20 Previously there were four.

21 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Okay. And how
22 is that search going for the new head of
23 the office?

24 CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: It's my
25 understanding that interviews are

1
2 ongoing.

3 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Thank you very
4 much.

5 CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: You're
6 welcome.

7 CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
8 DeRiggi-Whitton.

9 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: I want
10 to thank you guys. I know if any
11 department has received a lot of bumps in
12 the last five years, it's you guys.
13 Thanks for hanging in there. Thank you
14 for doing that. The local government is
15 always received well. So people really
16 love when they can talk to someone face
17 to face at these tax workshops.

18 But I was just looking at the job
19 description for an assessor, and I know
20 it's a range, but the lower part of the
21 salary was 115. You know, maybe we should
22 try to get that moved up.

23 CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: It did have
24 the range going up to 150.

25 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Look,

1
2 it's a lot of money, but perhaps, you
3 know, if we get the right person, it
4 would certainly be worth more than that.
5 Might be worth to advertise it at a
6 little bit of a higher number. How close
7 are you to being a Certified Assessor?
8 Can we send you to school or whatever?

9 CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: Thank you
10 for the offer (laughter).

11 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: I've
12 been rejected before (laughter).

13 All right. Well, perception is a
14 lot. Not having an Assessor gives people
15 uncertainty. Having frozen the rolls for
16 a couple of years again, and the idea of
17 mass settlements is sort of back. So I
18 hate to see it go backwards. I think in
19 the long run, it hurts all of us. It
20 hurts the homeowners.

21 If there's anything you can think
22 of, if it's staffing or anything else,
23 please let us know. In my heart, I know
24 until we find a real Assessor, that's
25 going to be the start of us getting back

on track.

CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: Thank you
for the offer, I appreciate that.

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: If
there's anything that we can do to make
it easier, we appreciate it.

CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. Thank you.

Any public comment?

(Whereupon, no verbal
response.)

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: All right. There
being none.

Thank you. Thank you for your
presentation.

(Whereupon, above matter concludes,
3:24 p.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF NEW YORK)

: SS.:

COUNTY OF NASSAU)

I, KAREN LORENZO, a Notary Public
for and within the State of New York, do
hereby certify:

That the above is a correct
transcription of my stenographic notes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
set my hand this 27th day of September, 2023.

Karen Lorenzo

Karen Lorenzo

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