A Public Hearing on the 2017 Operating Budget was held in the William H. Rogers Legislature Building in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on October 18, 2016.

Legislators In Attendance:
Legislator Monica Martinez - Acting Chair/District #9
D.P.O. Robert Calarco - District #7
Legislator Lou D’Amaro - District #17
Legislator Tom Barraga - District #11
Legislator Tom Muratore - District #4
Legislator Tom Cilmi - District #10
Legislator Kate Browning - District #3
Legislator Bridget Fleming - District #2
Legislator Rob Trotta - District #13
Legislator Sarah Anker - District #6
Legislator Leslie Kennedy - District #12

Also In Attendance:
Amy Ellis - Chief Deputy Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature
Robert Lipp - Director/Budget Review Office
Roz Gazes - Assistant Director/Budget Review Office
Benny Pernice - Budget Analyst/Budget Review Office
Craig Freas - Budget Analyst/Budget Review Office
Liz Sutton - Aide to Legislator Fleming
Liz Alexander - Aide to Legislator Spencer
Ali Nazir - Aide to Legislator Kennedy
Bob Martinez - Aide to Legislator Muratore
Justin Littell - Aide to Legislator D’Amaro
Robyn Fellrath - Aide to Legislator Anker
Vito Minei - Executive Director/Cornell Cooperative Extension
Randy Kaplan - Long Island Board of Realtors
Loretta Davis - Executive Director/The Retreat
Jim McGoldrick - Resident of Huntington Station
Danielle Skelly - Cofounder/South Country Community Information Cafe
Member/Compass Unity & Member/South Country School Board
Laurel Sutton - President/North Shore Youth Council
Lori Benincasa - Director of Health Education & Training/SCDHS
Eileen Zaoutis - Nurse Navigator/Lung Cancer Screening Program at Mather Hospital
-- Smoking Cessation Program
Susan Davis - Smoking Cessation Program
John Wharton - Smoking Cessation Program
Michelle Reyes - Thursday’s Child
Patricia Schecher - Public Health Nursing
(*The hearing was called to order at 11:58 A.M.*)

ACTING CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:
All right, we've been slightly delayed in opening up the Public Hearing on the Recommended 2017 Operating Budget; we're going the start those hearings now. We've received several cards from individuals and organizations that want to address the committee this morning. You're all welcome to come on up, you'll have three minutes, once again, to address the committee, and if there are any questions of my colleagues, of course that time may be extended.

So to open up the meeting, I'm going to ask everyone present to please rise and join the committee, once again, in the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Calarco.

Salutation

Okay. Once again, welcome. I'd like to call the first speaker for this afternoon, it's now twelve o'clock; Vito Minei from Cornell Cooperative Executive. Vito, welcome back.

MR. MINEI:
Thank you, Legislator D'Amaro. And good morning, still. I come here this morning, this afternoon with a request. If the Legislature considers to part from the County Executive's recommended budget of level funding for Cooperative Extension, I ask that you please apply an objective evaluation to any proposed cuts. In this regard, I'm offering some basic evaluation parameters that would apply to all contract agencies that are offered for your consideration. Number one, consistency with County priority issues; number two, geographic scope; are they County-wide, are they specific to the district; cost effectiveness of programs, we've been talking about that; and the last one, attainment of readily measured accomplishments or key performance indicators.

Please follow along with the information I've provided in the red folders in front of you, starting with evaluation parameter, number one, consistency with County priority issues. I have a red brochure in there and at the bottom of the cover is our four-part mission statement. Our programs are closely linked to County priority issues of public safety, quality of life, economic development, environmental preservation and infrastructure.

I'm moving on to parameter number two, geographic scope. I've included two maps. The first map in there are programs, I often have questions about our programs. We have programs in every Legislative District, hundreds of them. The second map shows nurseries and greenhouses to address the issue of where is agriculture in Suffolk County. A little known fact is that three-quarters of the approximately $300 million wholesale agricultural value is generated by the horticultural and landscaping professions and businesses that are distributed throughout the County in every one of your districts.
Moving on to evaluation parameter number three, **cost effectiveness**. I've included two different budget tables, one that really focuses on the County portion of the operating budget. In the left-hand column of that chart is the appropriation recommended of 3.47 million. I invite your attention to actually the third column; what is little known is all of our fringe benefits for Cooperative Extension are paid for by the State, $1.8 million through Cornell University. When you add that to the fees we collect, we have about a five and a half million dollar budget for the three and a half million dollars the County provides.

Next I want to go to a return on the dollar, a more expanded view of all of our revenue. You'll see by the pie chart on top that 33% of our annual financial support is provided by the County, so two-thirds of our total funding comes from other sources and that's two-thirds of our $15 million. The lower chart we're also proud of, it shows that only 12.7% of our administrative -- of our total fees are for administration.

And I'll close by saying that we are extremely proud that 87 cents on every dollar is devoted to programming. And I offer that we're ready for any performance evaluation and we hope there is an objective examination of contract agencies if you consider any further cuts.

I want to thank you again for the time.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Thank you, Vito. Pleasure to see you again.

**MR. MINEI:**
Okay.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Are there any questions from my colleagues? Legislator Browning.

**LEG. BROWNING:**
Hi, Vito. I want to say the last event, the pumpkin fest you had was tremendous, the turnout that you had. And I know that's one of your fund-raisers.

**MR. MINEI:**
Yes.

**LEG. BROWNING:**
Your numbers just keep growing. But last year, correct me if I'm wrong, there were some cuts made in your budget, and I think that you kind of would have liked to have more say in -- if you were going to make cuts or changes somewhere, that you would have the ability to -- let's say we give you a certain amount of money, that you say -- that you would have more ability and freedom to say where that money is best used. And there was the issue with the -- I'm trying to think.

**MR. MINEI:**
Meat processing.

**LEG. BROWNING:**
The meat processing facility where you were facing with additional cuts, and I couldn't understand where that came in. I know you had a lot of conversations also with Al Krupski on it. But again, is that something that works better for you when we present -- you know, when we present to you what the amount of money is that you're going to get, that you would have more flexibility to say *This is where I can best use the money.*
MR. MINEI:
Yeah, that was a glaring example. I mean, there was a 10% cut and we suggested where that cut should happen in our farm management budget. And in the program of cutting out the slaughter house, someone else went back and calculated *Well, that wasn't all the funding that went in to the slaughter house operation*, that they wanted a deeper cut, which we thought was totally unfair.

My point today is in answer to questions I've heard, Legislator Browning, over a number of years, that, *Gee, to be fair, we tend to cut right across the board equally.* And I'm all for the fairness of proposition, it's just that I believe there is a more objective way to examine it. And I've heard questions about *are you aligned with County priorities? Do you provide a return on the dollar?* I read a very interesting article written by your colleague, Legislator Barraga, that talked about the County Comptroller's report on contract agencies and return on the dollar.

What I'm saying is between now and the time you vote on November 9th, we're available to have that discussion on, number one, what are reasonable cuts. I say level funding is what I'm coming to you with, because in the continuance since 2008, Cooperative Extension has sustained over 30% cut in our budget and it's tremendous money, it's loss of programming, it's loss of senior staff and it's loss of opportunities. Thank you.

LEG. BROWNING:
Thank you. And I'm not on the Working Group, but I'm hoping that when they're looking at the different programs that you offer, because none of us know everything about every program, and I feel it's important that there be more conversation with you when they decide to cut one program over another, and then we come back to you and you say, *That wasn't a good idea.*

MR. MINEI:
And I appreciate that sentiment because I get hit with the question of *Oh, your programs are only out east;* that's one of the maps today. Agriculture is only out east.

LEG. BROWNING:
No, I'm kind of feeling a little left out, Vito, because I see more dots on the west end than in my district.

MR. MINEI:
Well, I'll go back to my office and change that for you, Kate.

LEG. BROWNING:
(Laughter).

MR. MINEI:
But the question I hear is, *Oh, why do we vote for agriculture when it's all East End?* My point is three-quarters of the funding goes to landscaping. And you say, *Well, that's kind of a trivial enterprise;* not when you look at the character of your neighborhoods, not when you're protecting livelihoods in each Legislative District of all the people that do horticulture and do the ornamentals and for what people in Suffolk County cherish. So I just ask for that opportunity for a more objective evaluation before you start uniformly cutting a contract agency.

LEG. BROWNING:
Okay. Thank you. Vito.

MR. MINEI:
Okay, thank you.
CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Legislator Trotta.

LEG. TROTTA:
How much did we cut? I mean, I didn't cut; how much did the County Executive cut?

MR. MINEI:
For us for this year it's -- he's recommending level funding, and what I'm asking is that that be sustained by the Legislative Working Group because of the reasons I just gave.

LEG. TROTTA:
If I can make a recommendation. Every time you guys come here you give us a pile of these things, you know, every single time. When I look at something like this and I get the North Shore Alliance sending me things in the mail, I question what's going on there. Why are you sending me this? Why am I getting this?

MR. MINEI:
Well, Legislator, again, in my four decades working in County government, I find that a visual presentation supports an oral presentation. And it's about four pages in there and each of them address questions like --

LEG. TROTTA:
It takes -- someone has to put this together, someone has to take time. It tells me that, you know, in my mind, I would rather have someone just tell me something than to come here and mail me things and get this stuff, it shows waste. That's the way I see it.

LEG. TROTTA:
Well, I'm sorry you take a cynical view of that. A lot of people appreciate being fully informed. A lot of times an oral presentation doesn't hit the mark; I've been told that, again, for four decades. I've come before this body each time. I was the first to have Power Point in Suffolk County, and people tell me a visual presentation is even more compelling than an oral presentation.

LEG. TROTTA:
Take me off the list.

MR. MINEI:
I'm sorry if you think it's a waste. We think it's appropriate.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
We all learn differently, Legislator Trotta.

LEG. FLEMING:
Actually, there's a compromise position. Vito sends me my information digitally, it's no waste at all and I have all the information I need, searchable, at my fingertips. So I appreciate your very conscientious approach to carefully showing us how that money is spent. I like the pie charts, I like the full charts, I think it's very helpful. I'd like to see it for -- especially because right now we're talking about sort of, you know, fine-tuning this and asking agencies, you know, what can you live with; if we do need to cut, where do we cut? I think CCE is always very consistent in terms of your -- maybe it's because of your long background in government, but you're very careful and we can see exactly where the money is spent, that's very helpful. So I'm going to have to respectfully disagree with my colleague, Legislator Trotta. But you could get it --
**LEG. TROTTA:**
I don’t mind getting digital, but I don’t need this every time.

**LEG. FLEMING:**
You could get it digitally.

**MR. MINEI:**
My last point, on a personal note, was people told me I got far more intelligent when my graphics went to color from black and white.

(*Laughter*)

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Thank you, Vito.

**MR. MINEI:**
Just a personal note, I’m sorry.

**LEG. FLEMING:**
I think that might depend on the presenter or the presentee.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Are there any other questions?  Legislator Anker.

**LEG. ANKER:**
I want to thank you for your commitment to our County and all the wonderful programs that you have.  And as a former marketing person, you have to get the word out.  If you don’t get the word out, nobody will show up to these programs, nobody will know about them.  Legislator Trotta, do you know any of the programs?  Without looking at this folder, can you name one program that Cornell extension does?

**LEG. TROTTA:**
Yes, the Diabetes Program.

**LEG. ANKER:**
Okay.  Can you name something related to children and farm?

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Yeah, I don’t think this is the time for this right now.

**LEG. ANKER:**
Okay.  Well, I just want to make sure that people understand the word needs to get out, and if you don’t promote it nobody will come.  There are so many programs that you provide that I greatly support, so thank you for coming out.

**MR. MINEI:**
I appreciate that, Legislator Anker.  Thank you, all.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Thank you, Vito.  Okay, our next presenter is Susan Davis.  Good afternoon, Ms. Davis.
**MS. SUSAN DAVIS:**
Good afternoon, everybody. After smoking for 38 years and attempting to quit many times over the years and never being successful, I decided I was going to try quitting one last time, but my approach this time would be different. With the -- I needed support. I was tired of smoking and I really didn't want to be one of the people who were forced to quit because of the medical diagnosis such as cancer or heart disease.

In our local Penny Saver, I saw an ad for Learning To Be Tobacco-Free Cessation Program. I thought if I was going to be successful, this would be the program of my choice. I hoped this would be the answer to my prayers and it was everything I hoped for and even more. The smoking cessation program taught me all about the negativities of smoking, things I never dreamt would be in a cigarette. I gained valuable knowledge, valuable tricks to quitting, but mostly I gained my much needed support from the team and from peers alike.

Through the six-week program, I conquered the nicotine smoking addiction. I've been addiction-free without any slips since January 5th, 2014. I always thought if I faced a crisis what would I do? Would I reach out for a smoke and begin the addiction all over again? I discovered the answer on Sunday, September 25th at 5:30 PM, a date I'll never forget. My husband was going make his speciality dinner, breaded veal cutlets and spaghetti. He put the olive oil in the pan, put the flame on low, when all of a sudden the pan burst into flames. Flames were shooting up to the ceiling. He grabbed the pan and threw it in the sink. I was terrified, but in a rational moment, I grabbed the fire extinguisher and put the fire out. I took my husband to the ER; he sustained 2nd degree burns. What we both experienced in those few minutes was an emergency crisis. Our home could have been burnt down, he could have sustained 3rd degree burns, and not once did I think of smoking, not once did I falter. I owe my reactions to this crisis through the smoking free cessation program. My question was answered, I could go through an awful experience and continue to be smoke-free.

It would definitely be a detriment to the Suffolk County legislation if you terminated the smoke-free cessation program. If you shut the program down, you're encouraging smokers to continue smoking, and for individuals like myself, you're not affording them the opportunity to be successful. Thank you.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Thank you, Ms. Davis. Okay, our next speaker, Randy Kaplan.

**MR. KAPLAN:**
Congratulations to you, that's great.

**MS. SUSAN DAVIS:**
Thank you.

**MR. KAPLAN:**
Good afternoon. I have copies of this for everybody. Most of you have received them already, but I want to just hand out copies, if that's possible. Thank you.

Okay, we're here today to talk about these new mortgage recording fees. As you know, LIBOR started a real estate coalition group to oppose this and I'm just going to read a short document to you, okay?

"The Long Island Board of Realtors, the Long Island Builders Institute, the Long Island Association, the Long Island" -- I'm sorry, let's change that to "the New York State Land Title Association, the Commercial Industrial Brokers Society of Long Island and the Association for a Better Long Island
call on the Suffolk County Legislature to reject the portion of the County Executive's budget proposal that implements a $300 per lot fee to record a new mortgage or refinance an existing mortgage and increases the tax map verification fee from $200 per lot to 225. It has been less than a year since Suffolk County Legislature raised the tax map verification fee by 233%, from 60 to $200. In that past year, the aforementioned industry groups have tried to illustrate the negative effects that massive fee hikes have on the real estate industry and the economy."

And I'm going to deviate for a second by just saying we're getting a mixed message from local governments. Everybody's looking to attract and retain young people on the Island, but yet the mixed messages, the fees keep going up on anything real estate related. Young people trying to purchase a house, they don't have the extra money at closing, they don't have these extra fees, and every year it's a little chip here and a little chip there that keeps getting added to this and we just don't know where it's going to go. And I'll be quite honest with you, I'm going to leave the text here to be inserted into the record, but you all received a copy of the letter. Our coalition partners and LIBOR, we're going to fight you all on what you did last year, okay? We wanted to have that rescinded. And then when we saw what was in the budget this year, we almost fell down, okay. And you read it yourself in Newsday. The Long Island Association, who very rarely jumps on bandwagons to fight government, came on board with us; they understand this is critically important.

"So we are urging the County Legislature to reject any budget that includes increases in real estate related fees. Targeting the real estate transaction is short-sighted because it fails to recognize the positive economic impact that a home sale has on a community. The National Association of Realtors estimates that a typical real estate transaction in New York State generates on average $69,000 in economic stimulation, including additional expenditures on moving truck services, consumer items such as appliances and furniture, and dining at restaurants. Of course, the value of that stimulation is even higher here on Long Island where the cost of living is much higher than other areas of the State. Proponents of the fee increases fail to recognize that these massive fees negatively effect the real estate market."

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Thank you, Mr. Kaplan. We do have --

MR. KAPLAN:
We urge the County Legislature to please reject any budget that includes increases in real estate related fees.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Thank you, Mr. Kaplan. We do have a couple of questions for you, so if you could just stay. Legislator Cilmi.

LEG. CILMI:
Hey, Randy. How are you?

MR. KAPLAN:
How are you, sir?

LEG. CILMI:
Fine, thank you. Just what has been the nature of your communication with the County Executive's Office since this budget proposal?

MR. KAPLAN:
Sure thing. LIBOR did have a meeting with Steve Bellone and DuWayne Gregory, we expressed our
concerns, and we expressed our concerns even more so about the mixed message that's being sent. And they were honest and they agreed, they'll be a little bit more sympathetic to that mixed message in the future. But this is what it is and we do need -- they do need something to help. They told us it wasn't targeting the real estate industry.

LEG. CILMI:
(Laughter); it's like stabbing you and saying, you know, We'll try not to do that in the future.

MR. KAPLAN:
We told them it's nothing personal against anybody. We're here as advocates of homeowners and the public and we're trying to help folks get into homes. Nobody can afford to live on the Island, nobody can afford to pay the property taxes, the school taxes. So with each little added sum, we're sending a mixed message; We don't want you to stay here. Go, leave, go to North Carolina.

LEG. CILMI:
Well, I'm glad that the County Executive at least met with you. It sounds like he just agreed to disagree on this and the County Executive has, once again, left it up to the Legislature to make it right. So, we'll see what happens. Thank you.

MR. KAPLAN:
Thank you, Legislator.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Legislator Trotta.

LEG. TROTTA:
What fee went up 233%; you mentioned some fee last year?

MR. KAPLAN:
Yes, that was the Tax Map Verification Fee, it went from $60 to $200.

LEG. TROTTA:
Do you know what the -- I don't know if you would know this, maybe budget could tell me. How much did that -- how much fees did that give us? Because, you know, this is going to allegedly raise $32 million, that would be the equivalent of a 60% tax increase on your General Fund tax. So clearly, if the County Executive raised the General Fund Tax 60%, there'd be an uproar.

MR. KAPLAN:
What's wrong with a general increase across-the-board of about 23 bucks, from what we're hearing?

LEG. TROTTA:
That would not raise -- you know, it might raise about the same amount of money. That would be about -- ah, it wouldn't raise that much money but it would be close. That would be over a 20% increase.

MR. KAPLAN:
Once again, it's just -- we feel as if the real estate market -- and this is not something that we're concerned about from a self-serving interest; we're here as advocates for the public, as we mentioned. I've been lobbying now for the realtors for 23 years. We've been having a problem with fair housing issues for many, many years and affordability and availability, and I've often said, nothing's going to change until the lawmakers who are much more mature and have more experience see their grandkids and kids leaving because they can't afford to stay here.
LEG. TROTTA:
Believe me, I will not be supporting this at all, so.

MR. KAPLAN:
Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Legislator Kennedy.

LEG. KENNEDY:
It's afternoon now. Good afternoon, Mr. Kaplan. Thank you for coming --

MR. KAPLAN:
Good afternoon.

LEG. KENNEDY:
-- out today to speak on this. I will not be supporting this. We -- there is no way that I know of that we could do, whatever, a $25 across-the-board increase to delete this or anything else. Suffolk County Tax Act works on a formula that is far beyond me with population and other things. If you go back to the time of Pat Halpin, we saw some towns getting a tremendous increase and other townships getting absolutely nothing. So it can't be consistently done at a $25 or $30 tax increase here in Suffolk.

MR. KAPLAN:
Right.

LEG. KENNEDY:
But you are absolutely correct and that is exactly what I thought of, that we're giving the message that we want young people to have housing but yet we're making it harder and harder and harder. And as a parent of four adult children, only one of them owns a home here; it's very difficult.

MR. KAPLAN:
It's impossible.

LEG. KENNEDY:
It's impossible, you are correct.

MR. KAPLAN:
Unless you're going to give them $150,000 as a down payment.

LEG. KENNEDY:
And I don't have that, but you are correct, you are correct. So I agree.

MR. KAPLAN:
Thank you. And I just want to let the Legislature know, this isn't something we're just coming here to talk about. We are also talking with the Nassau County folks, too, because they've raised it 50 bucks this year on top of last year's addition. And we haven't been so lucky enough to get a meeting with the folks in Nassau County yet. Suffolk is much more receptive, so thank you.

LEG. TROTTA:
I just have one more. I called the County Clerk, I guess it is, and she said that she couldn't figure out how -- this is not just on taking out a mortgage. This is --
MR. KAPLAN:
This is refinances as well.

LEG. TROTTA:
-- refinancing and any document, apparently --

MR. KAPLAN:
Yes.

LEG. TROTTA:
If you have to submit another document, there's a $300 charge.

MR. KAPLAN:
Yes.

LEG. TROTTA:
It came to 111,000 transactions, but there was nowhere near that many mortgages or refinances. So what she's saying is that she thinks they got it from their annual report and that if you modify your mortgage or you change -- and maybe the person’s name was on it or something like that --

LEG. TROTTA:
Any documentation changes, yes.

LEG. TROTTA:
So if you get divorced or something, whatever, you've got to now pay this fee again. It's absolutely absurd. It's just like, Oh, how can we raise $32 million? They looked at and -- it's absurd.

MR. KAPLAN:
The mixed message is what caused me to be here.

LEG. TROTTA:
When I see Kevin Law coming out and saying, you know -- and I quote; "Rising closing costs is not helpful to the real estate industry and may not be helpful to the efforts to create affordable housing on Long Island."

MR. KAPLAN:
Right.

LEG. TROTTA:
You know, clearly that's sending a message.

MR. KAPLAN:
And the Newsday article said it clearly, that the LIA does not jump on board usually on these things, barking up a tree because they're very sensitive to this. So we're very happy to have everybody as part of our coalition and we urge you all to just please don't send mixed messages. Please, let's continue to be able to have our young people. I have two little babies at home, four -- I'm sorry, six and eight, and I don't know when they're going to be able to stay here unless we hit the lotto. So I thank you all very, very much for your time.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Thank you. Randy. Our next speaker, Loretta Davis.
**MS. LORETTA DAVIS:**
Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. As the Executive Director of The Retreat, I thank you for preserving and continuing to stand behind funding allocations for The Retreat in the County Proposed 2017 budget. We had been cut last year.

Since domestic violence is a public safety issue, the work we have done together helps to prevent future abuse and improves our community’s health, safety and quality of life. As a reminder, The Retreat’s core services include a 24-hour hotline/bilingual, emergency shelter, counseling, legal advocacy and prevention education. For over 29 years, The Retreat has been the safe haven for thousands of residents from Suffolk County.

As you head into budget finalization, please consider that over the past six years The Retreat has had a 75% increase in service calls, now receiving over 3600 calls a year, spiking at 20 to 30 a day. All our services are free. With your financial support, we were able to help Andrew. At five-years old, he has severe PTSD from witnessing his father assaulting his mother with a knife, causing severe damage to her face. Andrew could not speak when he came to the shelter. With months of counseling and a supportive environment, he began to open up and feel safe. We supported his mother through the process of speaking with the DA on her case and testifying before the Grand Jury, although she was very fearful of repercussions helping the DA. She now has housing and a job and has made great strides toward a safer, more sustainable, independent life.

Do we need more funding? Yes. We are diligently seeking additional funds to support our services. Thank you for safeguarding funding allocations for The Retreat while there’s a heightened demand for our services and a heightened awareness of domestic violence. We thank you because your support helps individuals like Andrew and his mother.

Any questions?

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
There are no questions, but thank you for the work that you do.

**MS. LORETTA DAVIS:**
Thank you.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Next speaker, we have Jim McGoldrick.

**MR. McGOLDRICK:**
Hello. I'd like to thank you for having me here today. I'm from Huntington Station and I'm here to speak about the Suffolk County Police Department's budget themselves. I know you're all aware of what's going on in Brentwood and Huntington Station. You have to increase the funding to the Suffolk County Police Department, and one of the reasons are in the station they had a meeting there about a week ago and these gangs, they're jumping back and forth between Brentwood and Huntington Station. They're over in Brentwood, the Police Department, now they're coming over to the station. They are recruiting in Huntington Station as we speak.

There were statements made about children getting off the school buses and getting beaten up daily. Women are afraid to leave their homes. Now, this is on -- you people have to sit down and you've got to come up with a plan. I understand the police contracts, that's a lot of -- I was in a union, so I know how they work. They're going to have to get adjusted because the Police Department will eventually bankrupt the County. People can talk about school taxes; look at the bill for the Suffolk County Police Department on your tax bill, it's getting there.
The Town of Huntington is paying 23% of the entire budget for the Suffolk County Police Department. We're number three in manpower, and this is what I've been told. I feel bad that the Town of Huntington has hired Park Rangers; we're supplementing the Suffolk County Police Department again. We cannot go on in Huntington at this pace. You'll be spending a lot more money in the future, putting these kids in jail or whatever. We've had two murders, we've had -- it spread to Greenlawn. They've taken two patrol cars -- 202B and 215 -- away from our community, and we're paying 23% of the bill. It's wrong, it's not fair to the public.

Doc Spencer and Steve Stern, thank God they're working very hard on trying to rectify some of these problems. But I don't know what you're going to do but you have to do something. These kids are getting destroyed, between the drugs and the gangs, and you have elderly people who won't leave their houses. So something has to be done. And I don't know what you're going to do, but you're going to have to increase the funding. I know there was 30 million in overtime for this year, they spent 40 million in 2015, I think, that's the year. I have the numbers, and it's kind of crazy with what's going on here, how you can turn around and -- I mean, Sini's doing a great job. Listen, he inherited a lot of problems, we're all well aware of that, we don't have to go back there. But he needs help, and you people have got to give him the money to help and you've got to give him the resources to do his job. He can't gone go on like this, we can't go on like this.

And when the next contract comes up, you better sit down and talk. I know it's mandatory arbitration. Well, you know what? It is what it is. My kids can't afford to live here. Why? The police bill is almost as bad as the school taxes. And if a person's paying -- you know, we're paying for -- we're paying for steak and we're only getting chop meat over in Huntington and that's not right. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Thank you. All right, our next speaker John Wharton.

MR. WHARTON:
Good afternoon. I'm just here just to talk about the Smoking Cessation Program and just to tell a little bit of my story and the impact that it's had on my life and the life for my family.

I smoked for over 25 years. I took the program in February of 2014 with Deborah over here and her team at St. Charles Hospital, and so I've been smoke-free for two years and 8 months. And if you've ever -- you should participate in a class, if you can, just to sit in to see what the money is -- what our money is going towards. When we say how long we've been smoke-free, we give a little clap for everybody.

Part of the name of the program is learn-to-be-tobacco-free, the key word was learn. I thought I knew a lot about smoking and when I first signed up, I didn't plan to quit smoking, my wife told me to go and I'm glad I listened to her; so that's a good point for a man, they've just got to listen to their wives a little more. It was the right information, it offered the right tools and techniques and the support to be successful.

Life is better today. You guys have got to switch gears on the fly, it seems, and there's a lot of problems that you have to deal with, and hopefully we can keep people alive long enough to deal with some of the issues that you have. I was looking on-line at some quotes of things and it says, "Guns don't kill people, smoking does." And if you look at a bar graph of what actually takes people's lives and you look at some of the charts and statistics of smoking, you'd be surprised, smoking kills a lot more people than a lot of other things that go on. Thirteen hundred people will die today from smoking-related causes alone.
Life is better, though, today for me and for many people who have gone through this class. I have more money in my pocket, probably about an extra $3,000 a year that I'm not spending on tobacco-related products. Maybe I'll go to Disneyland with my little one here, or do something else, make a little investment; talk about return on investment.

Probably the most important thing that I wanted to bring to the table today was my little one here; she's six-years old, I quit when she was about four. The one thing that the program did for me was that it gave me life years. I don't know how much you value your kids or your life, but to me, there could be nothing more valuable than I realize now and when I was going through that class and being educated about it and what it can take way. So by God's grace, I will be able to see my little one here graduate. And more than that, one day I may be able to walk her down the aisle and give her away to a man that loves her dearly.

(*Timer Sounded*)

This class, the money that you spent, you talk about investment. I heard many people talk about money and budget, but I don't think you can invest, make a better investment in the future of people and helping them and educating them and giving them tools and the resources that they need to overcome some of these things. So this program is very worthwhile. I would ask that you would look a little deeper into it and see and support it. It probably needs about tenfold of what it's being supported by, and look at the return that will come from that in the future. Her daddy will be with her hopefully for many years and it's thankful to the people right here, Deborah and her team, the nurses and the other educators that are bringing this information that you too can be tobacco-free. So, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Thank you, Mr. Wharton, and congratulations. And you do deserve a round of applause as well.

Applause

Next speaker, Danielle Skelly.

MS. SKELLY:
Hi. How are you? My name is Danielle Skelly and I am the cofounder of the South Country Community Information Cafe and a member of Compass Unity and the South Country School Board. I'm a 20-year resident of the South Country community and I'm here to support the County Executive's cut of ShotSpotter in our community. I don't believe that ShotSpotter has acted as a deterrent. I think that eliminating that from the budget would be okay, but I would like to see the money spent on boots-on-the ground activities. As the man from Huntington stated, we need more police officers and we need more police engagement. We need resources like Weed & Seed and programs that actually work and engage the community.

The 2013 statistics for ShotSpotter, 67 -- 62%, excuse me, were unsubstantiated calls. Only 6% were substantiated, and I wonder how many of them you actually got a 911 call for, so what was the point of having ShotSpotter? But I want to see more community engagement. I'd like to see funding go to police community activities and things that will actually help trust and build community resources to solve the crimes, because I think if the police are not engaged in the community, the community is not going to give information to actually solve the crimes that we're trying to prevent with the ShotSpotter.

So agreeing with that cut, I don't agree with the cut of the Community Health Education Department. I think the people who are speaking on the Smoking Cessation and the Diabetes Education, that speaks volumes to our community. We have a scourge of diabetes in our
community, we have 4th and 5th graders who are starting to smoke cigarettes, we have a heroin epidemic, we have a marijuana and alcohol epidemic. The community health educators come out to our communities, they help our school districts, they help bring programs that actually hopefully will prevent significant issues that are in our community. So, that’s all I have to say. Thank you.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Thank you. Are there any questions? Ms. Skelly, if you don’t mind coming back. Legislator Browning.

**LEG. BROWNING:**
I’m curious that you come to not support ShotSpotter, because I don’t know if you’re aware, last night at a quarter to eleven there was nine rounds of gunfire went off on Brookhaven Avenue. I have three e-mails with three different addresses where gunfire went off, just in East Patchogue/Bellport area. Last week there was five incidents, I know I sent two to you, Monica, in her district and the other ones in Amityville and Wyandanch. And I think you have to understand -- when you say unsubstantiated, what do you think that means?

**MS. SKELLY:**
Well, I guess my concern is I’m not discounting that there’s shots being fired in our community, that’s definitely an issue that needs to be addressed, but I’m concerned with ShotSpotter being spent to actually be deterring, because I don’t see that there’s any less gunfire because ShotSpotter is there. I don’t know if crimes related to guns are being solved any more quickly because ShotSpotter is there. I think that there is the potential for money being spent elsewhere, also with maybe crime deterrent and other things, not necessarily ShotSpotter. So I’m not saying that there’s not gunfire and we don’t need to -- that that doesn’t need to be addressed, but I don’t know if ShotSpotter is actually deterring the gun crimes.

**LEG. BROWNING:**
Right. But unsubstantiated means that, yes, there was reports of gunfire, but when the police show up, you know, there are no shells on the ground --

**MS. SKELLY:**
Right, to confirm.

**LEG. BROWNING:**
-- to definitely say yes, it did or did not happen. And based on, you know, the information, and I know Legislator Calarco and I both heard from constituents and residents. If you live across the street from a gang house, you’re not going to call 911 because you’re afraid that, you know, they may know that you’re the one who made that phone call. And so that was the biggest concern, is now -- it takes away the need for someone to call 911 because of the fear factor.

And also, you know, my biggest issue is not necessarily -- yes, it is a deterrent, I believe it is a deterrent because I know police officers I’ve spoken to have said that they’ve actually had gang members and certain individuals that they know say, You will not see anything from me now in this community, because they know ShotSpotter exists.

**MS. SKELLY:**
Okay.

**LEG. BROWNING:**
But there’s also the part that I think is important, is response. And I think you remember the young man who was killed on National Night Out Against Crime.
MS. SKELLY:
I do.

LEG. BROWNING:
Fifteen years old.

MS. SKELLY:
Uh-huh.

LEG. BROWNING:
And the one thing that I do think is that because of ShotSpotter, police officers are not getting a
general idea of where that went and where that happened, but that they're able to respond much
quicker to a location from when before there was ShotSpotter.  So God forbid a child or an innocent
passerby is shot, that they can respond to that incident much quicker than they could in the past.
So it's not necessarily saying it's a deterrent, I think it's basically saying it gives them a better
response time and I do think, you know, for the community to hopefully save a life and also for the
safety of a police officer who has to respond to that call.  He doesn't know what he's walking into
when he gets that call, but now ShotSpotter tells him multiple rounds, type of weapon, that it helps
them.

And to be honest with you, take away that money from ShotSpotter, it's not going anywhere.  The
County Exec's not going to spend it on anything else, absolutely not happening.  So, and I know
that we have had Knappe-Swezey Foundation that also helped to fund this.  So it's not a lot of
money; I think just for Bellport it was about $50,000 for the year.  It's not a lot of money to help
potentially save a life.

MS. SKELLY:
And I see your point, I absolutely do, and I think some of your points are valid.  I guess the biggest
one that stuck out to me is that for someone who lives across from a gang house not willing to call
the police, and I feel like ShotSpotter is not helping that.  And I think that's a huge problem in
our community, that there's a huge mistrust of the Police Department and people are not calling
because they don't feel safe, they don't feel like they'll be kept anonymous, there's lots of concerns
with that.  And I agree that the money probably won't go away from ShotSpotter and go to things
that I think would be helpful.  But from the point of view of I think money is better spent, again,
developing community relations, building the trust relationship between the police and the
community.  Because I think our community knows a lot of what's going on in the community and
does not divulge that information because of the mistrust and that's a concern for me.

I think, you know, to do something so simple as did you ever drive through North Bellport at night
and see how many street lights are out?  You can't even see down some of the blocks.  So how
about just replace street lights so there's good visual when the police show up, so they're not going
into a very, very dark area that could potentially have gunfire and those sorts of things.

So again, I'm not discounting that it might be helpful, but I would rather see $50,000 spent on other
things that I think would be more useful in the community.

LEG. BROWNING:
Street lights would be the Town of Brookhaven, and I'll be happy to take those street light locations.

MS. SKELLY:
I have a list, I will e-mail them to you gladly.
LEG. BROWNING:
I know you know my office.

MS. SKELLY:
I do.

LEG. BROWNING:
So we'd be happy to take that information.

MS. SKELLY:
Okay, great.

LEG. BROWNING:
And I think it's a combined effort. I have to say, our current Police Commissioner is very committed to working with the communities and I think you can agree.

MS. SKELLY:
That I know, because we held an event with him already, he's incredible, absolutely.

LEG. BROWNING:
Right, and the one at Hagerman recently, yes. So when there's a distrust or a lack of trust in the Police Department and their efforts to help the community, I think you know that it is there. And, you know, the not reporting and not giving information to the Police Department -- and again, I've knocked doors with John Rogers --

MS. SKELLY:
Yeah, I'm familiar.

LEG. BROWNING:
You know, I did that with him, we had fliers. We knocked doors, talked to the people in the community and said, Look, if you don't want to make that report, if you don't want to give that information, give it to me, I'll do it. If you know of a gang member in the community, call me and I'll turn him in. I'm okay with that, but the problem is nobody wants to call.

MS. SKELLY:
I agree 100%. I can't argue that.

LEG. BROWNING:
I don't know how we fix that. I don't know how we fix that.

MS. SKELLY:
I don't know. I know that you know Regina and her and I are working very hard --

LEG. BROWNING:
You guys are great with this, yeah.

MS. SKELLY:
-- to try and change that, because I think that that's probably the root of a lot of the issues in our community.

LEG. BROWNING:
Right. And the habitat homes that we've opened up --
MS. SKELLY:
Yep.

LEG. BROWNING:
-- and bringing in more homeownership, you know, and zero tolerance of these gang members is what we need. But I don't think getting rid of ShotSpotter is going to be -- I don't think it's a good idea, and especially this past week when I saw how many e-mails I received from Wyandanch, Amityville, Brentwood and Bellport, in just one week.

MS. SKELLY:
Well, on that we can agree to disagree.

LEG. BROWNING:
Yeah. Well, like I said, if it saves one life, I'm happy to spend the money.

MS. SKELLY:
I understand. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Thank you. And just to follow-up, Legislator Browning, thank you. You know, we share a similar district, along with Legislator Calarco and I do -- I'll agree to disagree with you.

MS. SKELLY:
Okay.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Our PD is doing a lot to connect the community with the department.

MS. SKELLY:
Right.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
And they're doing their outreach, but the community also has to allow them in.

MS. SKELLY:
We agree.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
You know, so at the civics, civic councils, whatever it may be, whatever organization you may also belong to, you know, see if they can open their doors for them.

MS. SKELLY:
We're trying.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Because without the community, we really can't force ourselves in.

MS. SKELLY:
We're really trying to focus on the youth and build a youth relationship, because we feel like fundamentally if our young people, middle school, high school age kids can develop that relationship they can carry that forward, so that's a focus for us, without a doubt. Because we agree, if the community isn't open to it, the police can do everything they -- you know, Commissioner Sini has been remarkable with us, we enjoy working with him, we're looking to do another event with him to
try and foster that relationship.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Good, I'm glad to hear that. And just also remember that schools have your school resource officers, you know, where they're trying to make a connection with the kids at a young age as well.

**MS. SKELLY:**
Yep. Thank you. I appreciate it.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Thank you for coming in. Okay, our next speaker is Laurel Sutton.

**MS. SUTTON:**
Good afternoon. I'm Laurel Sutton, I've been a Suffolk County resident for over 30 years and I'm here representing the North Shore Youth Council. I am the President of the Board and have held that honor for a little over a year now, but I've been with the Council for, I don't know, maybe about eight years and have watched the wonderful things that they have done for our communities.

I'm here to implore that you please restore the $22,000 of funding that you are planning on cutting from our programs. We took a cut last year, which was horrible, and to take another cut would just be disastrous for the young people, especially in our community. I know that so many people think that the North Shore Youth Council is just like a before and after school care, but that's a very small piece of our business. We're one of the very front runners on the north shore that are fighting against the drug epidemic that we have, anti-bullying, we offer family services and counseling, individual counseling, we do mentoring programs. We are predominantly in five of the schools there along the north shore, in Miller Place, Mt. Sinai, Rocky Point, Shoreham-Wading River, but we service families all across the north shore and have even joined hands with coalitions on the south shore.

We work hand-in-hand with Hope House to try to educate and combat the problems that our youth are really having. That's probably where I'm the most passionate of the concentrations I like to focus on, because with the drug epidemic that we have, we're seeing, again, more and more deaths. Recently with the middle school kids we've had several suicides, cutting has taken a resurgence in our areas. And this is -- you know, obviously all of us know it's all across Long Island, and we are doing everything we can to try to help the youth. We bring prevention programs to the schools, workshops and forums to our communities, we offer services at little to no cost to help people. And these kids, these young people are crying out for help. We try to bring programs to them like open mic nights and open gym nights so that people have a safe place to come and express themselves and to be young people and find out what it's like to be normal. I was fortunate and grew up in Indiana in some wonderful times and I wish my children, who are now grown adults, would have had the same wonderful, idealic life where there were a lot less pressures and it seemed like crime-related incidences. The drug epidemic is something that affects everyone in the community, whether you personally have someone in your family who has a problem with any kind of substance abuse, alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, because then people, when they get desperate, they go out and commit crimes.

And again, we're trying to help. We work hand-in-hand with the Sheriff's Department, we help bring people back into the workforce who might have been incarcerated, come back from the military. We do so much more than just before and after school care, which is really a door opener for many of us to get to know the families and the school areas in our district so that we can get to know their children, their family to try to ward off any problems before they happen.

*(Timer Sounded)*

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So if I really had my gumption, I would say please not only restore the 22,000, I would love to have the money that was taken from us last year. We could do so much good for so many people, and I'm begging you for this because it is a serious problem.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Thank you, Ms. Sutton. And thank you for the work that you do. Are there any questions? Legislator Fleming.

**LEG. FLEMING:**
Thank you. Thank you for coming and for all your good work. I have a 14-year old, so I certainly get it, it's a scary world, and thank you.

What is your total budget? So we're talking about 135,000; is that right? North Shore youth Council, yes. So you went from 157 in the 2016 adopted to a recommended 135?

**MS. SUTTON:**
Well, that's what I think you're taking away, that you're recommending is taken away. We need every dollar. We took --

**LEG. FLEMING:**
No, no, no, I understand. No, and I appreciate your hard work and I get that you need it.

**MS. SUTTON:**
Okay.

**LEG. KRUPSKI:**
I'm just trying to figure out the numbers here. So your reduction --

**MS. SUTTON:**
Was about 22,000 from --

**LEG. FLEMING:**
Okay. And last year 157 --

**MS. SUTTON:**
I think last year we took somewhere between a 13 and a $17,000 reduction.

**LEG. FLEMING:**
It went from 175 in '15 to 157, and now has gone -- the recommended is 135.

**MS. SUTTON:**
That's correct.

**LEG. FLEMING:**
Okay. So what is your total budget? So I'm trying to understand, what percentage of your budget does the County funding represent?

**MS. SUTTON:**
Well, I don't know. I just know that we are -- we work with a $1.3 million budget in and out, so every penny that comes in, it goes right back out, back into services.

**LEG. FLEMING:**
So this would be about 10%; it was in excess of 10% prior.
MS. SUTTON:
Uh-huh.

LEG. FLEMING:
Has your budget, overall budget changed from '15, '16 and today, year over year?

MS. SUTTON:
Well, because things get more expensive and more and more people are coming to us for help and we try to, as I said, provide grants and scholarships for children to get into our before and after school care, to fund our mentoring programs, things like that. So more and more people are reaching out to us for help and we only have so many counselors. I would love to get more counselors in on staff, but we only have so much money we can pay them. So if we could keep our money, we could maybe get another counselor in to help, because they come in at night, they not only counsel all during the day, they counsel at nighttime. More and more people need our services and they only have so much time in a day that they can give, our counselors.

LEG. FLEMING:
Okay, thank you.

MS. SUTTON:
If that makes sense what I'm saying.

LEG. FLEMING:
Well, I was looking for some numbers, but --

MS. SUTTON:
I don't have the specific numbers. I really am trying to give you the overall view, and knowing that we're having a hard time keeping up with the demand of what is needed for people coming in and needing our services.

LEG. FLEMING:
Understood.

MS. SUTTON:
And that money could definitely pay for another counselor.

LEG. FLEMING:
Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Legislator Kennedy.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Thank you for coming out today to speak. Just a quick question; what is a counselor; is it a psychiatric social worker, is it a nurse practitioner?

MS. SUTTON:
A lot of them are varying degrees, but most of them are trained in substance abuse counseling, they're CASAC workers, social workers; there's different degrees, but they're all -- and they can deal with anywhere from children up through adults, so we have different levels of our counselors there, and for family counseling they're trained in this.
LEG. KENNEDY:
So you don't know how many MSWs you have?

MS. SUTTON:
I don't know those numbers off the top of my head. Every time I go to a meeting I see a couple of more and it's like, Oh, there's a new one. So I'm excited to see a new face sometimes, because I'm not there on a regular basis, I work in a business, I just am there to kind of oversee and see that the money is spent properly and we try -- I work very hard on bringing the programs to the community, like I said, to have -- we brought Chris Herren in who is an NBA player that had a drug problem and we brought him in to the schools at no cost through some connections so he could talk about his problems and hopefully be a good role model for somebody else who might be struggling and realize there is hope. And then we've brought in other speakers who try to ward off, you know, either starting the drugs to begin with and we try to cover all aspects. And our social workers, they -- we have Alateen coming in, they oversee some of these things and other programs that come in. So they're not only doing personal one-on-one counseling with families or individuals, they're over -- looking over our programs like the open mic night that I had mentioned where kids can come and they can either sing or play music or read poetry or express themselves in some way, our social workers are there. We always have it monitored for the safe nights, but they're all licensed with degrees that are beyond me because I'm in the private sector, I work as an office manager in an architectural firm.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Okay, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Thank you. Okay, our next speaker, Eileen Zaoutis? I hope I said that correctly.

MS. ZAOUTIS:
Hello. Good afternoon. My name is Eileen Zaoutis, I'm a nurse navigator for a lung cancer screening program at Mather Hospital, and I wanted to talk to you about the importance and the value of the Suffolk County Learn-to-be-Tobacco-Free Program.

I'm not sure how much you know about lung cancer screening and the new guidelines, that this is a current guideline and recommendation for people who are high risk for developing lung cancer. Within the program guidelines, one of the top educational pieces that we have to perform is smoking cessation education, and having worked with the Suffolk County program for many years, it has been invaluable for our program and for getting people to stop smoking.

We started our program in 2014 -- excuse me, the end of 2013. We have screened over 900 patients and have diagnosed 25 patients with lung cancer. Most of our patients, half of -- out of our patients, half of them are smokers, and every patient that comes through our door I meet with one-on-one to do smoking cessation education, and my referral is directly to the Suffolk County program because of how wonderful it is, the services that they provide. And patients that normally would not go because they are in a vulnerable position, they sit and meet with me and you can talk them in to going to a program where they've been unsuccessful in many other attempts. The value of being able to provide patients with medication that may be at a much cost savings than they would over the counter is a deterrent. People won't go and get medication to help them quit smoking because of how much it costs, but going through the program they at least have a value other than the educational. And I have to say, it's been very successful.

Out of -- I've been working in lung cancer for over 15 years and this has been my most success currently by working with these patients and having a great relationship with the Suffolk County program. And it's County-wide, because I also have done some work with Stony Brook, worked at
Stony Brook and that was actually my first encounter with Suffolk County, I've done a train-the-trainer program more than once with the Suffolk County program. And even though I may have tools to help patients which gives me a better approach to helping them quit smoking, it doesn't come close to the value of what they would get by going through the program. And the feedback that we get from the patients and coming back a year later for another CAT scan to look for lung cancer to tell us that they went through the program and were successful and quit smoking. And again, in my years of doing this, that has not occurred in the past as well as it has right now. So I find that invaluable.

I wanted to implore upon you that this is an extremely valuable program and that, again, I started to say with Suffolk County and Stony Brook. We were part of a bigger project, the DSRP project, that they want to implore this in other areas, smoking cessation, lung cancer screening. And without this resource, it's going to be very difficult to be successful in getting patients to attempt in quitting smoking. So, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ: Thank you.

LEG. FLEMING: Can I ask a question? Could you just wait for a minute? I just want to ask --

MS. ZAOUTIS: Sure.

LEG. FLEMING: -- the Budget Office, and then we may have a question for you.

Dr. Lipp, could you address the question of where these various funding sources come from for Office of Health Education and Tobacco Control? We've heard from folks from the Cessation Program and now we have a screener, and then there's also trainers. What exactly -- I'm looking on page 146 of your narrative that breaks it out at 156,000, but I'm not clear on what the different -- how that breaks down.

MR. LIPP: So there are different costs. I don't have the spreadsheet in front of me, and there's some revenues, so basically we're showing what the net costs are and to put them back what it would take. So it's a combination of different staffing lines, some equipment, some benefits and some amounts of aid.

LEG. FLEMING: So is the total --

MR. LIPP: The 150 something is the net.

LEG. FLEMING: The 156 is net inclusive of the $310,000 of aid that we receive under tobacco funding?

MR. LIPP: So Craig worked up these numbers, so perhaps he could be a little more specific.
MR. FREAS:
So under Article 6 of the New York Public Health Law, the County receives aid for various services that are performed in the Health Department. One of the things it receives aid for is chronic disease prevention and various prevention activities. However, in the guidance -- the guidance that's provided by New York State for Article 6 claims, tobacco cessation courses are specifically excluded from reimbursement eligibility under Article 6, okay. So the tobacco -- the Tobacco Cessation Program, which is a relatively small part of what the Office of Health Education and Tobacco Control does, is not a reimbursable program. We collect about 10 to $12,000 from the participants in the tobacco cessation classes, we pay about 140,000 in medical, dental and lab supplies, which is really various cessation medications, not just nicotine but also Zantax and we Welbutrine which help people to -- it basically helps you control the cravings for nicotine. And then there's a -- we use contract instructors and that's, say, $6,000.

So when we -- yeah. So that's -- so the program costs $156,000, basically, a year, 146,000 net, which I think is what Robert just said. But 188 is the restoration cost for the program. Okay, they have a small amount of -- because the people are still there, it's just a matter -- you don't have to pay to move the people back. But other than the tobacco costs, the tobacco cessation costs, there's about $30,000 for their various equipment and supplies that we'd also have to restore.

LEG. FLEMING:
Is there reimbursement for the medication?

MR. FREAS:
No.

LEG. FLEMING:
And it's not available through any kind of program?

MR. FREAS:
The medication -- we don't get any reimbursement for the medication. At one time we -- we've tried different -- tried to get the medication paid for in different ways and right now we cannot. We're not paying -- we try to buy -- the County tries to buy medication through a Federal program called 340-B. I don't know off the top of my head if we can buy tobacco control medications from 340-B, but there's no reimbursement available for it. And if you can see, that's the big portion of the cost for the cessation program.

LEG. FLEMING:
Right. All right, thank you.

D.P.O. CALARCO:
Craig, if we were to carve the medication out of the program, in a sense, and start billing for that medication at some price point, could then we do that in a fashion that would allow us to charge it back to insurance companies and Medicaid? Because they're under Article 6 now, so the program --

MR. FREAS:
No.

D.P.O. CALARCO:
Would they --

MR. FREAS:
The guidance specifically states that you can't use --
D.P.O. CALARCO:
But for the cessation classes.

MR. FREAS:
-- for the cessation program. I think they do try and encourage people to get the medication through their insurers if they have it.

D.P.O. CALARCO:
Well, that's what I'm saying, if we charge for the medications -- we don't charge for anything, right?

MR. FREAS:
Full price. No, we just charge a fee for whatever --

D.P.O. CALARCO:
For the class.

MR. FREAS:
We charge a $50 fee for the class.

D.P.O. CALARCO:
So if we said we were going to charge separately for the medication, could we then bill that to people's insurance?

MR. FREAS:
I don't know the answer to that question.

D.P.O. CALARCO:
And set up like a sliding scale for people who don't have insurance.

MR. FREAS:
For the medication.

D.P.O. CALARCO:
Uh-huh.

MR. FREAS:
I suppose that would be possible. That would require probably some more complicated back office work than is currently available in the rather small office of the Office of Health Education.

D.P.O. CALARCO:
Not something somebody else in health -- I guess because --

MR. FREAS:
They're actually --

D.P.O. CALARCO:
-- we're so far --

MR. FREAS:
There actually --

D.P.O. CALARCO:
So far removed from --
MR. FREAS:
There probably is. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to speak over you. There probably is somebody else in Health who's done it, but of course we've also been downsizing that portion of the department.

D.P.O. CALARCO:
Yeah, they're far removed from that.

MR. FREAS:
Yeah.

D.P.O. CALARCO:
Okay, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Thank you. Okay, next speaker we have Franklyn Farris.

UNKNOWN AUDIENCE MEMBER:
He has left.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Okay, he has left. Next speaker we have Lori Benincasa.

MS. BENINCASA:
Good afternoon. I'm the Director of Health Education, so I'd be really happy to answer any other questions you have about the medications. But first I just want to make a few other points, because I believe the whole office is in jeopardy, and then I'd be very happy to talk about the cessation medications and anything we can do, because we are willing to do any work necessary to keep this program going.

The actual -- the budget that the County Executive put forward abolishes the Department of Health Services' Division of Preventive Medicine, and the Office of Health Education is one part of that. It says that it's eliminating the Tobacco Cessation Program, but in actuality the entire office is disbanded; the clinical staff is transferred to the jail, the enforcement staff goes to Public Health, and the remaining Health Education staff goes to the Division of Mental Health.

You already heard some budget numbers. The County Executive's budget people say this will save $500,000; you just heard from Craig that the answer is closer to 156,000. But the BRO also stated that by moving staff into the mental health appropriation, it will likely have a negative impact on Article 6 which is approximately $310,000. So we don't really know how much money will be lost by moving the staff and it really doesn't even make sense to move us from where we are.

We recently watched as Hurricane Matthew roared up the coast of the United States and we were horrified by the death and destruction left in its path. At last count, 43 lives have been lost and the cost was estimated to be about $10 billion. It's a tragic event and my intention is not to minimize the importance of that but to put it in perspective. In the United States, tobacco use costs, public and private health care costs amount to $170 billion every year. That does not include diseases caused by exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, productivity losses, property losses from smoking-caused fires, or Social Security insurance for kids who have lost at least one parent from smoking-caused disease. In New York State, every year the health care cost is over $10 billion, that's $1,428 per household every single year. Does it make good economic sense to cut this program? I would suggest that this program is worth its weight in gold.
And what about the human cost? All right, we talk dollars. In the United States, 480,000 people die each and every year from tobacco use; over 28,000 a year in New York. Why are we not horrified by those statistics? You know, we really can't fight Mother Nature, but we can fight the death and destruction caused by tobacco use and the staff of the Health Education office do that every single day. The office also conducts a Diabetes Prevention Program. Following tobacco use, overweight and obesity, including all the diseases caused by overweight and obesity including Type II Diabetes, are the next largest drain on our health care system; more than $7 billion every year in New York State. The office is a major presence in schools. We provide classroom presentations and we develop materials to aid teachers and others who work with youth. The topics include tobacco, electronic nicotine delivery systems which now more kids are trying than traditional tobacco products. We do programs to prevent HIV, sexually transmitted diseases; our Prevention Peer Education Program won a national award and now it's expanding to suicide prevention. We discuss eating disorders and teach kids to lead healthy lives by getting good nutrition and adequate physical activity. We address emerging issues such as the Zika virus and our staff is trained to do the Narcan training to reverse overdoses.

We work as a cohesive unit and there's a great deal of coordination. I hope that the Legislature will see the benefit of keeping the Office of Health Education together so that we may keep improving the health and the lives of Suffolk County residents. It's a small staff, but it's cost effective and it's the right thing to do. Would you like me to discuss the medications?

D.P.O. CALARCO:
Sure.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Yeah, if you don't mind answering the question.

MS. BENINCASA:
Okay. The budget this year for the medications was $140,000. Those are the medications; people pay a one-year fee of $50 and they get the medications that they need to help them quit smoking throughout the year. The people that smoke, for the most part, are the people in the lowest socioeconomic status, they're the people with the least education, they're the people with the least money. These products are very expensive and the uninsured and the under insured cannot possibly afford to buy these medications on their own. But from the statistics I just told you, it's in everybody's best interest to help them quit smoking. Smoking is such a drain on our economy and our health care system, that each person that we help quit smoking will save tens of thousands of dollars in the treatment of these tobacco-caused diseases. So you're looking at really a very small amount of money for a very large return.

D.P.O. CALARCO:
Go ahead.

LEG. ANKER:
I just wanted to thank you for the work that you've done in your department. We worked on bullying awareness, we worked on the drug epidemic, there is so much right there with your -- how many people in your department?

MS. BENINCASA:
Twelve or 13.

LEG. ANKER:
Twelve or 13.
MS. BENINCASA:
It’s a small staff.

LEG. ANKER:
It is, but it’s a great staff and it has great potential to do even greater things, you know, which makes no sense why the department is being disbanded, which is you, know very, concerning.

I just want to let you know I will do everything in my power to fight to keep the department, you know, cohesive. Because that’s what happens, if you break up this department, there’s less communication, there’s less organization. You know, even working with Communities For Solutions, that’s a very, very important group that addresses all the issues of this drug epidemic. So it’s like we’re taking a plug out of the drain and we’re going to see all this wonderful work disappear; that’s my greatest concern. And you’re talking about the value of your department; how about all the lives that you are saving right there, right in that one department in Suffolk County with -- what do we have, 8,000 employees, and here you have maybe 12, 13 people there that are really doing an amazing job protecting our health and protecting our lives. So I just want to commend you and your department members of all the work that you have been doing. So thank you, Lori.

MS. BENINCASA:
Thank you. And it really is important to keep us together because we don’t work in silos. Each unit in the Office of Health Education works together and, you know, our efforts are multiplied by doing that. So it’s really important to keep the entire program together.

You heard the people that came here today; it’s just a small sampling of the 18,000 people that have gone through the cessation program, and there’s probably 18,000 different stories about how that program helped improve their health and save their lives. So anything you can do to keep the program together and keep the cessation unit funded, we certainly will make every effort that we can to work with anybody that could help us to get the medication.

LEG. ANKER:
And I think also what one of your staff members had said is that how many lives are lost because of smoking; do you remember the --

MS. BENINCASA:
Four hundred and eighty thousand a year.

LEG. ANKER:
A year.

MS. BENINCASA:
Over 28,000 in New York State.

LEG. ANKER:
That’s incredible, I mean, the amount of deaths. You know, and then there’s illnesses; we haven’t even spoken about that, right?

MS. BENINCASA:
The what?

LEG. ANKER:
The illnesses, some people that -- you know, the secondary diseases.
MS. BENINCASA:
It's estimated that for every death there are another 17 individuals suffering the effects of tobacco-caused disease.

LEG. ANKER:
I've got to tell you, it's shameful that government has allowed this to happen, it really is. And we're trying to do something about it. Thank you.

MS. BENINCASA:
Okay, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Legislator Browning.

LEG. BROWNING:
Don't go anywhere.

MS. BENINCASA:
Okay.

LEG. BROWNING:
It's funny, I just got an e-mail from Mather Hospital about smoking cessation. What's the difference between what they do and what Suffolk County does; I'm assuming money?

MS. BENINCASA:
No, we do it.

LEG. BROWNING:
Oh, that's you doing it at Mather.

MS. BENINCASA:
Yes.

LEG. BROWNING:
Okay.

MS. BENINCASA:
Our staff does the programming. They advertise to get the people in, they host the program by providing the space so that we can do the program throughout the County. We are in all four corners of the County doing this program, but it is our program that's being done with our staff.

LEG. BROWNING:
So I know you mentioned about, you know, people not being able to afford the medication, but I think Doc Spencer, there was some public health nurses or an individual came and spoke on it at one of our -- I think our General Meeting and, you know, if someone does have health insurance, are we not billing the health insurance, or we don't ask for any of that information?

MS. BENINCASA:
We do collect information if they're willing to give it. We do not bill. If you look at it, it is so extremely complicated to figure out what -- and the health plans will only give you information if you are a subscriber of theirs. But it's each -- within each health company and even within Medicare and Medicaid, it depends what you have, what medications you're eligible for, how long you're eligible for the medications. It is a very difficult thing to figure out, it would have to be done on an
individual basis.

**LEG. BROWNING:**
It's just that I think if we were able to tap into it to maybe help us save --

**MS. BENINCASA:**
Uh-huh.

**LEG. BROWNING:**
-- and to reduce our cost, I think that would be something that we should really be looking at. But, I mean, I don't want to see the program being lost. I've never been a smoker but I know people who smoke and they tell me how hard it is. And plus, you know, having -- I have a family member with emphysema and his father died with emphysema. So, you know, I don't want to see us not addressing the issue, but I think is there some way -- and I appreciate getting the real numbers rather than the phantom numbers that we've been given. But I do think that maybe the work group should be looking at that and maybe trying to find a way to tap in if they're Medicaid eligible or if they are -- you know, if they have health insurance to help pay for it, I think it's certainly something that we should really consider.

**MS. BENINCASA:**
And we would be very happy to participate in that.

**LEG. BROWNING:**
Thank you.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Thank you, Lori. Okay, our next speaker is Mary McCue.

**D.P.O. CALARCO:**
Maria.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Maria McCue.

**D.P.O. CALARCO:**
I don't see her.

**LEG. BROWNING:**
Actually she just left; she did, she left.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Okay, so Maria McCue has left. We will continue with Michele Reyes.

**LEG. BROWNING:**
If she comes in I'll let you know.

**MS. REYES:**
Good afternoon, esteemed Legislators. Yes, my name is Michele Reyes and I took time off of work today to come here, I felt it was very important to come support Thursday's Child of Long Island. So please accept my presence here as a show of support for the non-profit organization, Thursday's Child of Long Island, for which Gregory L. Noone is the Program Manager. Actually, I do understand he was here at the 9:30 meeting, I wasn't able to be here then, but I am here now.
I was saddened to hear, truly, the news that funding for Thursday's Child is at risk of ending in the 2017 Operating Budget. Losing Suffolk County funding will subsequently lead to losing Federal funds that Thursday’s Child receives as part of the Federal Ryan White Aid to Long Island. This will be catastrophic for the thousands of people living with HIV/AIDS who count on the supportive services offered on a daily basis by Thursday’s Child.

I have worked with Thursday’s Child on a number of different levels and know firsthand the dedication and love with which the staff operates. Whole families, both infected and affected by the HIV/AIDS virus, depend on Thursday's Child for vital support which can range anywhere from meeting basic hierarchy of needs which supports keeping patients healthy and in care, to coordination of much needed services. I have had the pleasure of volunteering for Thursday’s Child. As I mentioned earlier, I have worked with them on a number of different levels, and one of their projects, which I’m sure you already are aware of, is the holiday magic where they deliver presents, Christmas presents to hundreds of families throughout all of Long Island, Suffolk County region, and I also volunteer delivering presents.

I see the great work that they do and the services. You know, as you know, as of yet I’m hoping in my lifetime at least that a cure will be found for the HIV/AIDS virus, but until then services such as those provided by Thursday's Child are so needed and the fact that it could potentially be lost will be devastating. So the advocacy services and care provided by Thursday's Child to residents of Suffolk County living with HIV/AIDS can only be considered a win/win situation, keeping the services. And please -- so please, help to restore funding for Thursday's Child AIDS Services Access Program. And that's what I'd like to say.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Thank you, Ms. Reyes, for being here. And yes, Gregory was here earlier this morning and we all know how important this program is, so please know that we're doing the best we can.

**MS. REYES:**
Thank you very much. And I'm sorry, I would be remiss if I did not add, although I'm here for Thursday's Child, I've heard a number of people come up here and talk about the smoking cessation. And I have my letter here and I'd like to submit it for the record, I'm not sure who collects this -- thank you. But I also, in 2007, after many years of being unable to quit cigarette smoking, I, with John Martin, did the smoking cessation here at the trailer. And by the grace of God, since 2007, November 1st, my quit date, I have been nicotine free.

*Applause*

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Very nice. Congratulations.

**MS. REYES:**
Thank you so much.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Thank you. Okay, our next speaker is Chris Cuddihy. Oh, wait, that's AME. Again, are you guys okay with waiting till the end?

**MR. CUDDIHY:**
Yes.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Okay, thank you. Patricia Schecher.
MS. SCHECHER:
Thank you very much. I'm talking on the issue of Public Health Nursing funding. I appreciate the opportunity. Again, I'm trying to take the three minutes. There was some talk and questions on the last -- when we testified, you know, at the operating -- the regular, big committee in the Health Committee about the public and private sector and what the private sector, you know, needs the public sector to do. So I just want to read a letter quickly. I don't know if -- some of you may have it. It was given -- it was sent from the President and CEO of the Nassau Suffolk Hospital Council and it was sent to County Executive Bellone and to Chairman -- you know, Dr. Spencer, Chairman of your Health Committee.

So basically it's, "I'm here for Long Island hospitals and health systems. I urge you to reconsider the proposal to eliminate the Public Health Nursing Program in the 2017 Operating Budget. Providers at every level are being incentivized by government in market forces to improve health outcomes and focus on keeping people well rather than treating them when they are sick. We cannot address population health imperatives like reducing substance abuse, preventing chronic disease without focusing on the most vulnerable populations. Dr. Tomarken and his staff have been exceptional partners in the Hospital Council, State funded Population Health Improvement Program which brings together health providers, academic institutions, community organizations. The goals of this collaboration are to improve the health of people living with chronic disease, obesity, behavioral conditions on Long Island and ultimately reducing expenditures on health care. The County's public health nurses work directly with at-risk populations to prevent unnecessary utilization of health services now and insure healthier outcomes in the long run. The program is one of the very few public health resources that put boots-on-the-ground in vulnerable communities which is critical to early intervention. The elimination of this important resource would run contrary to the strides being made in population health. For these reasons, I encourage you to reconsider funding for the Public Health Nursing Program. If you have any questions." And this is, again, "Kevin DaHill, President and CEO of the Hospital Corporation." So I think -- I know -- I think you all understand the need for both public and private. So again, we're imploring you not to remove this from the budget; and if you do, put it back in the budget. Thank you so much.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Thank you. Any questions? Okay, our following speaker is Alison Abrams.

MS. ABRAMS:
Hi. I'm the Director of Public Health Nursing, so I'm here again to talk about not eliminating us from the budget. So you just heard the letter, we have the support of the Nassau County -- Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council to not eliminate us because they are so aware of our needs. Our patients have been identified as high-risk, and those at other agencies are not obligated and do not really -- have not wanted to take. I just heard from Dr. Tomarken, he confirmed that statement with the Director of Home Care from New York State, that they do not have to and this is an issue that goes on.

So we're looking at transition of care as a high cost of things and of health care in our society today. And what transition of care means to us, and especially a certain segment of our population which is a pretty big population, is it means that there's no barriers for the service they need for addiction problems, post-partum depression, domestic violence and family planning; all things that we kind of are intertwined with its crime rates and everything else. So translate that into a new Mom who comes home with an addiction problem with an overly cranky baby, goes home to no support. How long before addiction becomes a crime at a much more expensive rate? The rate of care for incarceration is $167,000 per year to -- in New York State; and that's an average, it's probably higher here. We have one baby -- so without -- say the -- we go in, we talk about family planning, we make sure there's no barriers to that, okay? So now you take we're not there, the woman doesn't go for her family planning needs. Now how long is it before one baby is two and two babies
are three? And the services that are being provided currently are different than the services that we used to provide when we had the health centers. So I would like to see those statistics in about five years to see how many more unwanted children we want.

So I wanted to talk now more about the budget because this is what you are about. So it says that our cost relates to $560,000 needed to be added to the Jail Medical Unit to mitigate the loss of personnel who would be transferred there. Okay, so you're going to take our highly educated nurses -- not saying a nurse is a nurse is a nurse, which is not true at all by multiple measures. The problem is the nurses that we have are Public Health Nurses, they're Bachelors-prepared and greater, they can do much more fuller assessments. And what you need at the jail, basically, is LPNs to hand out medications and do treatments; that's basically it. You need a few RNs, but you only need really the Jail Medical Unit. The reason why you have more RNs now is because the health centers were closed and those RNs were paid over there now and you really only need the Jail Medical. So if you looked at hiring all new Jail Medical attendants taking the twelve of us that you want to go over there for $560,000 -- which I don't think really is the right thing anyway, I think it's much more than that -- those would cost $445,000, so that's a difference of about $115,000 right there. Also, now you minus what I have suggested before of letting some people retire and having them come back to utilize them in the most effective way, the knowledge, the service that they've always provided, and now we're down another $225,000. So we're basically around 200, $215,000 now from 560.

So then we started and we're looking line-by-line, what can we eliminate from the proposed budget, and we're coming down with more things. And we're also coming with more ways to increase our revenue by getting more contracts, we're rapidly working on this, we're working on the transition with Hudson River and all those things. So I think we can really legitimately cut even more. Like all nurses and a lot of women do, they roll up their sleeves and do more with less, and that's really what happens.

So do we want to look the other way and not take care of this vulnerable population where despair is more prevalent than hope, where anger becomes bigger than fear, where the fix of addiction is rampant. Our patients are typically high-risk who can become future bad guys that have a greater risk of getting locked up, creating more despair and have an extremely expensive revolving door of incarceration which we know really does exist. We can help this not by working in the jail, but by working to keep people out of the jail. At some point in time, other agencies might actually be mandated to do the services that we do, but at this time they are not, they are not ready, they are not prepared and they can't provide it. This is definitely not the time.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Thank you. Are there any questions? Okay, moving on, Lisa Clark. Lisa Clark was also here representing Public Health Nursing.

**UNKNOWN AUDIENCE MEMBER:**
I think she's not here.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
She's not here, thank you. And our last speaker is Owen Durney?

**MR. DURNEY:**
I haven't been here in a while, and usually when I come it's when something's gone wrong. So it's -- not that it's gone wrong, it's a budget issue.
My name is Owen Durney, I’m also with the Division of Preventive Medicine. I read the BRO report, it focuses primarily on obviously false -- obviously health education, Office of Health Education and Tobacco Cessation, it also focuses on Public Health Nursing. But there's also a third component to that division which is being eliminated from the budget, it's the smallest component and that's the administrative component as well as the Senior Citizen Falls and Injury Prevention Program, which is part of that appropriation, 4500.

So I’m here today to discuss the impact of eliminating funding for the Senior Citizen Falls Prevention Program from the 2017 Operating Budget. But before I do that, I do want to mention the fact that it is disappointing that we are not focused on prevention and health care, because as my -- as Lori Benincasa and Alison Abrams spoke to you very truthfully and very well, the health care system as a whole is focusing on prevention and partnering with government in an effort to prevent disease rather than treat disease after the fact, and all of our programs do just that.

(*The following testimony was taken & transcribed by Diana Flesher - Court Stenographer*)

(Continuing). So I'm hoping that the Legislature keeps that in mind in terms of the long-term savings that our programs provide; and not just savings, but that there are actually people out there who live in your communities, in your districts that are benefitting greatly from our programs.

So the administration appropriation in the Division of Preventive Medicine is the smallest appropriation in the budget, which includes three staff: One position dedicated to the administrative functions of the entire decision, that would be me; as well as two full-time equivalents dedicated to the implementation of falls prevention programs in our communities.

So what is Falls Prevention all about; why is it important? So these are senior citizens, people that are typically over the age of 60. Well, 16% of older adults in the US have fallen at least one time in the past three months. This is according to the CDC. 31% of older adults in the US sustain an injury that resulted in a visit to a primary care doctor or an emergency room. Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury-related deaths. Falls-related injuries are largely preventable, which is why it's in the Division of Preventive Medicine.

Each year more than one-third of adults age 60 and over sustain a fall; and each year more than one half of those over the age of 80. Many cases senior citizens suffer one or more fall -- one or more falls before seeking help. Not only do falls suffered by older adults place enormous strain on the healthcare system in terms of costs and utilization, again, ERs that are our in communities, all 11 hospitals, they also place an enormous stress and expense on the individual who suffers the fall and their families and caregivers. And I bet you every single person in this room knows somebody, a family member, an older adult in their family who has fallen and has seen their life and their quality of life severely compromised as a result of that.

So what does that mean for Suffolk? Suffolk County has one of the fastest growing senior citizen populations in New York State. As of 2014 there are approximately 450,000 -- so that's two years ago. I bet it's a little bit more now -- senior citizens who live in Suffolk County. And since 2000 Suffolk County has experienced more than 30% increase in senior citizen population in that period, faster than any other age demographic in Suffolk County.

The US Bureau of Census reports that senior citizens represent approximately 15% of the total population of Suffolk County. And in 2013, Suffolk County ambulance call data identified 17% of the calls for EMT services was due to a falls-related injury. So of our EMS providers, that's a strain on them. Because they are now responding to calls that are largely preventable. In many cases these are the same people that are being -- that are falling. It's not just one -- a onetime event;
it's frequent. So as the older population continues to increase in Suffolk --

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Mr. Durney, I just want to advise you that your three minutes are up but -- so if you can just wrap up.

**MR. DURNEY:**
Can I just wrap up?

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Yes.

**MR. DURNEY:**
So, anyway, as the older population continues in Suffolk -- I thought it was a hearing, I thought it was five, I'm sorry -- year after year these statistics will continue to rise in Suffolk.

So our division requested 16,000 to continue these programs. We initially got the startup costs done through a grant. I'm not going to read what I wrote, just muddle through it. We -- and then the department cut that down to 12 and the County Exec's recommendation cut it out. We provide three different types of programs. We've reached over 11,000 people in that time. We also work with our hospital partners. We have an injury-prevention committee that has over 25 members in it. Our local hospitals are part of that committee. Stony Brook University Hospital, Northwell, Catholic Health are all major partners of ours and provide our services in partnership; very similar to what smoking cessation does with tobacco, with their hospital partners. So, we also work with community-based organizations. And essentially what we're doing is, our goals, if I can go over them really quick because I asked --

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
How many goals do you have?

**MR. DURNEY:**
Excuse me?

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
How many goals --

**MR. DURNEY:**
Four. I kept it simple. And because it's sort of omitted from the BRO, I want to make a report. I want to make sure it's --

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Yes. No, we appreciate that. Thank you.

**MR. DURNEY:**
So we've implemented our programs. We have Staying Dependent For Life, which is an overview; Stepping On, which is a seven-week intensive program; and then Tai Chi, which is an eight-week intensive program. And often the goal is to get one senior to pass through all the programs so they actually get a full comp -- I'm sorry?

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Sorry.
MR. DURNEY:
These programs are implemented by County staff. And we've also partnered with our hospitals including Catholic Health, Northwell, Stony Brook as well as community organizations such as RSVP to train trainers to do their own programs.

So the goal here is is that while we're helping and supporting our hospital partners and our community partners focus in their communities, we can then identify areas that are under-focused and underserved, places like Wyandanch -- we've been to Shelter Island three times. We've been to every town in Suffolk County; places like Bellport, Wyandanch, Central Islip Ambulance Company, we work with them. And so that allows them to serve their population and we can continue to identify other populations that need service.

We also want to continue to support our hospital partners so that they can provide their programs and that's what this funding is going towards. They don't have the time and the resources and the staff for the materials and for the scheduling and getting venues going. We do. So that's -- that's our role.

We also recently set up a project with EMS to work with their providers, to use them because they are the first responders, they see what the problem is; and to schedule programs in their facilities that they can refer their patients to so that they're not re-frequently responding to their community -- to the same person over and over. The long and short is this cost about with the $16,000 that I requested, $6 per person, if we went with 16,000. County Exec's Office request -- the department requested 12,000. So it's even less per person. It's a very small amount of money for a very long-term large impact on an ever-growing population in our County.

So I appreciate the extension in time. I leave you with that.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Of course.

MR. DURNEY:
I do have information I can hand out to you, too.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
You may have to stay there just a little longer. We have a couple question for you. Legislator Kennedy.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Mr. Durney?

MR. DURNEY:
Yes.

LEG. KENNEDY:
So the three people that -- they're doing away with your job and two others?

MR. DURNEY:
No, it's the same thing that they're doing with health education and public health nursing. They're taking us and they're scattering us about -- well, they're -- I think two of the people that are -- two people doing the instruction are actual nurses. So they're going to be going to the jail and I'm going to be going to the Division of Public Health. Budgetarily anyway. I don't know --
LEG. KENNEDY:
Yeah.

MR. DURNEY:
-- where I'll particularly be going but I'm in the budget going.

LEG. KENNEDY:
I have to say that the seniors fall prevention program, as a nurse is -- it's excellent. I was just at St. Catherine's over the weekend. They had an area where they were discussing how excellent it is. They had results from seniors that had -- had frequent falls or -- you do basic training as to the proper way to walk, the proper way to move. You do -- yeah, I know that's your program, yeah. I don't think people realize how -- what is it a $16,000 request dropped down to a 12 affects the cost in the County medically. This program should not be cut.

MR. DURNEY:
Could I just speak to something you said about St. Catherine's? St. Catherine's has actually been a part of our -- they've been a partner of ours since the very beginning. We started this in 2010 with a small grant from the state to basically cover supplies and equipment. They were one of our first partners. That's why -- and they -- so what we -- exactly what we did is we trained people from their hospital to do the programs that we're doing so now that frees capacity up for us to go to communities that were not -- that we're not in. Once we establish relationships in those communities, we can then hand off to one of our hospital partners or one of our other partners and then focus on another community that we're not in currently. So we're constantly identifying areas that we're not getting to and making sure that we get there. Because so we can free up capacity with our hospital partners. It's a brilliant plan.

LEG. KENNEDY:
It's a brilliant program. I'm definitely aware with the amount of seniors we have in this County, $16,000 is nothing to put -- we should put back in.

MR. DURNEY:
And if it's necessary, I'm going to work with what I got. Just don't, you know, give us something.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Okay.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Thank you. You have one more question by Legislator Anker.

LEG. ANKER:
I also want to thank you for the work that you've done. You know, I'm looking at your stats. That's part of the paperwork that you had handed out. In 2011 there was a total of about 1,006 people participating in the Falls Prevention and Stepping On programs. And, again, it's trying to help people with their balance. Because once a senior person falls, they're -- you know, it creates substantial health problems, financial burdens. It's really almost the turning point of having to deal with a number of challenges.

So, again, 2011 1006 people attended; 2013 1988 people participated; 2015 2214 people; and then just 2016, then we had an estimate, 2500 people are now participating in these programs. And I met with Stony Brook -- Stony Brooks Trauma Center Director, what's his name? And they partner with the County. James Vossinkel. And the amount of patients or emergencies that they see with our senior community is literally off the charts, you know, because of, you know, the falling part. And people don't understand that. So as chair of the senior committee, I commend you for
the work that you've done with our community seniors. And I will be supporting not only keeping the funds but increasing the funds as our senior population increases. Thank you.

**MR. DURNEY:**
Can I speak to something that you just said? Because it's exactly the same thing. Stony Brook is also one of our earliest partners. And it's the same thing -- and they've been great. Stony Brook is actually through their -- through their school, we've been working with them and EMS to complete this EMS project.

The other thing that I have to stress is there are 12 commitments we have already for 2017. So if we get rid of the program now, what do we tell our senior centers that we're going to, our hospital centers that we're going to? I mean, we can -- you know, we can do our best, but Stony Brook has been an amazing partner with us as well from the very beginning and --

**LEG. ANKER:**
I think -- I think it's the number one trauma issue. When you have hundreds of thousands of people, you know, going to the emergency -- it's the senior falling. It's this issue that's -- you know, people don't think about it, but it is so important. And I think that's what these programs do. And, you know, I'm thinking perhaps you may consider using Stony Brook students and creating additional stats. These are really important.

**MR. DURNEY:**
We do that all the time.

**LEG. ANKER:**
Yeah. And present it to the Legislature and the County Exec just so they have the numbers to understand, you know, how important this program is and the cost -- the costs if we don't have this program. Thank you.

**MR. DURNEY:**
Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:**
Thank you. Any other questions? All right, so thank you, Mr. Durney, for coming before us.

**PRESENTATIONS**

Okay, that was our last card. I know that Suffolk County AME has been so patiently waiting and I do appreciate that. So if you don't mind coming forward, they have a presentation for us. Yes, they got -- they got the whole presentation.

**MR. LEVLER:**
Okay, there we go. Well, I want to thank you, again, for letting us speak here and reiterate I don't envy the position you guys are in; there's a lot of difficult decisions to be made here and a lot of good causes that have to be looked after. And I'd like to just start by reading a prepared statement. Joe Biden was quoted as saying, "Don't tell me what you value. Show me your budget and I will tell you what you value."

Here we are again, another budget, another opportunity. AME has been coming before this Committee for a over decade now to urge its members to take action on behalf of the people of Suffolk County. This year will be no different and some of what we present this morning will be familiar.
MR. BOUGHAL:
You don't have to keep holding it.

MR. LEVLER:
Oh, I don't? All right, good. Back on track. We've discussed the General Fund. We've discussed staffing levels and funding for simple materials such as paper and pens. We've also done our part to help the County and the people we serve. With layoffs, lag pay, contributions to the health benefits and a one-year suspension to payments to our benefit fund, that by itself equals approximately $12 million. We have signalled that AME members are first and foremost altruistic. AME members love and care for the County they serve tirelessly.

This year we see more familiar actions in the proposed budget. We see a strong sense of value for public safety and this is not wrong. But AME has to ask how public safety protect the public's groundwater, how public safety keep the public's food safe or keep the gas station pumps honest? How will public safety process DSS caseloads that protect the most vulnerable in the County? I can go on but more to the point how public safety performed their duties without the support of the thousands of AME members whose average salary is less than 45,000 a year.

This budget, like all Suffolk County government, it is cooperative. And our members need to be shown their value in the 2017 operating budget. With public safety contracts increasing 35% over the past five years, 35% of a pay scale almost AM -- almost no AME member ever earns, and AME pay scales increasing 14% over the same time period, it's no wonder why members -- our members, your essential workforce has dangerously low morale.

This year AME has to negotiate a contract for our members who need room in this budget that you pass for us to negotiate with. Again, we've done layoffs, lag payroll, health benefit contributions and suspension of payment to our benefit fund. Now is the time to show your appreciation by helping us provide the essential services your County needs and deserves. Now is the time to ensure that the workforce that has been giving so much to the people of Suffolk County and receiving much less be given a fair shot at the negotiation table.

Rather than just make a blanket statement without offering solutions, consider the following: Relief from the General Fund could be realized by transferring public safety personnel out of the General Fund back into the police districts and restoring sales tax revenue to the General Fund; additionally, restoring traffic fines to the General Fund which are issued and collected countywide and belong in the General Fund.

Funded but unfilled positions are a major source of low morale for the County workforce. And in the packets that we gave you, there's a third sheet, you can see the example given there, Department of Social Services is 299 funded but unfilled positions listed in that department. This budget trick leaves departments dangerously understaffed. It also forces managers to cut corners to make ends meet. Keep in mind that AME -- 1,581 AME positions have been removed from the payroll since 2010. This reduction in staffing represents a reduction in productivity and efficiency in providing essential services. Consideration in this budget will be to reduce the turnover savings from 13% to a more reasonable 3.5%.

A point we ask you to consider is Public Works. Public works Commission was created in 1933 in response to the Great Depression as part of the New Deal. It was a means to employ Americans who in return would use the wages they earned to spur the economy. It worked then and I would contend that it would work now.
In 2008 AME custodial staff was at a 131 full-time employees. Today it's at 61 with 24 of those positions mandated exclusively to the courts. That leaves 37 custodians to cover 80 buildings in 3.1 million square feet referenced in the proposed 2017 operating budget. This is an average of over 70,000 square foot per employee. Industry standard levels are between 20 to 30,000 square feet per employee for custodial coverage.

Full-time starting custodian earns less than 30,000 a year in salary and they are desperately needed, not just to improve the morale of the custodians but to increase the morale of all the workers in the buildings they service and to increase public confidence in the government that was elected to serve them. This is just one simple example of how restoring staffing levels will increase not just the AME worker's morale, but will restore the confidence the public should have in their government.

It's not a stretch to say that the public perception of the County is not great. The sentiment being that if government can't clean their buildings inside and out, they probably can't handle some of the more difficult tasks involved with collecting and appropriating tax revenue. We in this room know that perception to be false, but the saying perception is reality is one that all Suffolk County government must combat on a daily basis. A great way to combat that perception that Suffolk County leadership does not value its employees in AME would be to increase the hiring in understaffed departments and ensure that we have something left in this proposed budget to negotiate with. And, finally, our members aren't just doing a good job; they're doing a phenomenal job all those things considered.

I would like to ask, just to give you some information regarding the General Fund.

**MR. BOUGHAL:**
Edward Boughal. I was Budget Director. I worked in the Budget Office for 25 some odd years and I'm retired from the Suffolk Federal Credit Union as the CEO.

When I first came into the Budget Office in '71, the tax levy then for the General Fund was higher than it is now. The General Fund tax levy is -- was when I left Suffolk County about $165 million; it's down to 49. I understand the concern that people have regarding the taxpayer in Suffolk County, but there's three things to consider: You got the taxpayer, which is a shareholder; you have the employees, which are the -- also someone who you're concerned with, that probably the biggest asset; and you also have the customer, which you been listening to all day. So you have to worry about all three. And I understand it's a balancing act.

But what's happened is that over the last ten years the property tax levy has decreased. You got yourself into a box. Because what's going to happen is that the County Executive has gone on record saying he will never submit a budget that's over the tax gap, which is artificially placed. It came at the worst possible time for the County because the County tax levy was already at a decreased level. And so he is saying that the -- that public safety and the tax gap are his high priority; and that that leaves about three percent of the budget on a net basis that you're going to have to deal with going forward.

And what we do is we do a forecast going into the next year. We're talking about $160 million that's going to have to be made up next year in the General Fund; where if you're going to maintain, as priorities, you're only dealing with 3% of the total budget. That's going to have a tremendous impact, not just on the employees. It's going to have a tremendous impact on the customer. So you really have to think about where you want to go.
And I bring your attention to the official statement -- you know, the official statement that goes out on all bond. And the official statement is very clear that we have a situation where we're borrowing over $550 million where we used to borrow about $100 million. So that's a clear indication that you got a fiscal crisis. And the fiscal crisis is because you're balancing the budget with revenues that are really borrowings and one shots. So you really have to deal with that issue. Otherwise the people sitting at this table are going to be seriously impacted. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Thank you.

MR. LEVLER:
Yeah, just in closing, we'd love to work with all of you, propose some suggestions and ideas and we'll be available to meet with and speak to you on any of the issues that our membership faces. And, again, thank you for your time.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Thank you. We have a couple of questions. Legislator Cilmi.

LEG. CILMI:
Thanks you for your presentation as usual. My question to for Ed, did you say?

MR. BOUGHAL:
Yes.

LEG. CILMI:
Or possibly Budget Review, whichever one of you may be able to answer this question. You referenced, Ed, that there was a time when the County’s General Fund property tax levy was three times as high as it is now.

MR. BOUGHAL:
That's correct.

LEG. CILMI:
What was the number that it was?

MR. BOUGHAL:
A hundred sixty-five million.

LEG. CILMI:
And that was -- and you were with the County at the point?

MR. BOUGHAL:
I was with the County at that time, the early nineties.

LEG. CILMI:
In what capacity were you at that point?

MR. BOUGHAL:
I was -- I was Budget Director.

LEG. CILMI:
Okay.
MR. BOUGHAL:
But -- I was the Budget Director with Cohalan. But then you had a change in administration. So somebody was going to lose their job so I went back down to Deputy Budget Director.

LEG. CILMI:
Got you. So maybe you recall, because we hear that a lot, that the General Fund property tax levy used to be very, very high. What was the police district property tax levy at that point?

MR. BOUGHAL:
Oh, I don't know exactly but it was -- what we presented to you was a series of historical charts. And we just went back over since 1985 just to see what has happened over the last, you know, between 1985 and 2015. And the biggest -- there was a significant increase in property taxes, but most of that property tax increase, obviously, was in the police district. The police district has had, you know, an increase because basically the perception is that the police district, the people are willing to pay for the police district, which is obvious. And people are willing to pay for the school districts because they vote on them every year. So people -- I mean, you're in a quandary because you have a situation where you're looking at people saying, well, taxes are too high. But if you look at the official statement, you know, the average -- I pay $12,000 in the Town of Islip. Eighty-nine dollars basically goes to the General Fund.

LEG. CILMI:
Right, right, I understand.

MR. BOUGHAL:
I mean, that's the situation. And you're facing that, you're trying to deal with the total taxes. You're holding the General Fund hostage to the total taxes that exist out there.

LEG. CILMI:
I understand. I completely understand. I'm looking at this chart that Robert has brought up and -- while my eyes may not be the best it looks --

MR. LIPP:
Obviously Mr. Boughal is wrong. It's not 165. It's 166.

MR. BOUGHAL:
Oh, I'm sorry.

LEG. CILMI:
Well, that just discredits his entire testimony.

(LAUGHTER)

MR. LIPP:
And actually --

MR. BOUGHAL:
Wouldn't be the first time.

(LAUGHTER)

MR. LIPP:
There are two years you could see that. In 1989 the General Fund was 166.49.
LEG. CILMI:
And if I see correctly it looks as if the police district is around 186 million. And then --

MR. LIPP:
Also note that in 1993 the General Fund and college combined is also 166 million. What they did around that time is they -- we, the County, sort of separated out a community college tax in 1991. So really you should consider both of them together. So it was two years, it was 166 million. It was 1989 and 1993.

LEG. FLEMING:
Can I --

LEG. CILMI:
Right. Allow me to finish. So -- but the -- the community college budget, it looks like at that time was in the five or $6 million range.

MR. LIPP:
It's a tax; not the budget.

LEG. CILMI:
No, I understand that. Right, the tax, not the budget. Gotcha, gotcha. So -- and -- so if we're looking at a reduction in General Fund property tax levy from roughly 160 or $170 million annually to roughly $50 million annually now, we're looking at a commensurate increase in police district property taxes from roughly a hundred and -- what was the number, Robert?

MR. LIPP:
Which year you want to go for? I think it was --

LEG. CILMI:
So roughly $180 million then to roughly half a billion now; right? Roughly 500 million now?

MR. LIPP:
Last year -- I should say the current year is 521.

LEG. CILMI:
Right.

MR. LIPP:
So you got another -- another 20 million to that.

LEG. CILMI:
Right.

MR. LIPP:
This number over here. And you could see over the last seven, now it'll be eight for 2017, that the General Fund tax is flat; didn't change. You can see that over here, the shaded area.

LEG. CILMI:
Right.

MR. LIPP:
I love this file. For the record.
LEG. CILMI:
So the police district's property tax levy has increased every year basically? It looks like most years. There wasn't any single precipitating factor that made that amount jump, right? It looks like it's a pretty steady increase year after year.

MR. LIPP:
If you want, I can put down a change column.

LEG. CILMI:
It's not necessary. I'm just -- if you would just kind of -- it looks that way. Really, I'm more thinking out loud than anything else here. All right. Thank you. That's all I needed to know.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Thanks for letting us into your mind. Legislator Fleming.

LEG. FLEMING:
I was just wondering about this chart. I mean, it's a pretty dramatic number. Is the change in the tax rate reflected? I cannot see this chart, by the way. Even with these very fancy glasses. So -- oh, thank you. Is there a year-over-year rate delta on there; or it's just the levy?

MR. LIPP:
It's not -- no, there's no rate. It's just the levy itself.

LEG. FLEMING:
What is the rate?

MR. LIPP:
It's hard to understand the rate because each town assesses differently, number one. And there is a way to calculate what's called a fully cause value rate, but it's really to fully cause value of property equalizes the properties across towns for the purposes of apportioning the tax across the towns. And it's not indicative at all of what you're paying, that rate. So I would venture to say no. That being said, we also have another file that estimates what the average homeowner tax bill is. That would probably be more indicative.

LEG. FLEMING:
And what about sales tax?

MR. LIPP:
That's a different tax. If you want, I could give you a very interesting file on that, too.

LEG. FLEMING:
Well, it'd be interesting to compare the two and to sort of just watch year-over-year how -- you know, what comprises --

MR. LIPP:
So here's another interesting --

LEG. FLEMING:
-- budget.

MR. LIPP:
-- view that I'm going to try to make bigger for you. Okay. Bear with me. So what we're talking about, this is sales tax revenue. And this particular file just happens to go back to the year 2000.
So here you had a couple of growth rates for sales tax that we're -- that we're referring here as the good ol' days, double digits. Then you had the great recession come in. And we had our first and only two years of negatives in 2008 and nine. And we were taken by surprise because the first negative really was the fourth quarter of the year. We already had adopted the 20 -- 2009 budget when we found that negative. And then if we go further down here, you could see how we had, number one, as I said, the two negatives, the great recession. And then back in 2010 it was sort of like a bounce back year. So it was a high growth rate. Then we had, perhaps, I would say, more normal to current times growth rates of 2.6 and 3.1.

And then when -- after Super Storm Sandy, and I believe it was October of 2012, we had a bounce back there, too, because there was a lot of money coming in injected from FEMA, from insurance companies. So a lot of rebuilding. And then we -- the last couple of years we had much lower growth rates. I'll include 2014 as well as '15 and '16. These numbers are not right. I was just putting this together as we were talking. And what happened there is we're observing 2015 and 2016 in particular as low growth rate years. And there's a reason for that in part and that's the decrease in motor fuel prices; has been a big deal for there.

And if you look at the other numbers, you'll see that the Recommended Budget is including a 0.85% growth rate for the current year 2016. And for next year, which will be Recommended, at 2%, which are -- based on our review, which are very reasonable numbers, we believe. Silence?

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
She's good. Legislator Calarco.

D.P.O. CALARCO:
Dr. Lipp, just to follow up on these -- and it's interesting you brought up the sales tax numbers and, unfortunately, it doesn't go further back, I know we talk about the General Fund tax warrant used to be much larger than it is today, but I think it's also important to note, whether correctly or incorrectly, for the reasons they did it, there's a cause to that, right? In the early '90s we had a budget crisis. I'm not sure of the exact year; it was when I was still in grade school, but we had a budget crisis. And as a result we were able to gain an extra percent in sales tax from the state; correct?

MR. LIPP:
I'm sorry. I believe it was in September of '92 and September of '93 we had two -- in each of those years a half a percent increase or a full one cent, which in today's dollars is over $300 million. So we got out of the last big recession early '90s.

D.P.O. CALARCO:
But by getting an extra 1% sales tax.

MR. LIPP:
That's right.

D.P.O. CALARCO:
And, of course, then once the economy improved, then those numbers were growing at a rather steady clip at the time the Legislature felt that it was more prudent to return or not tax as high on property taxes and led the County becoming more and more reliant on sales tax.

MR. LIPP:
Correct.
D.P.O. CALARCO:
And you could -- there's a good debate on whether or not we should be so reliant on sales tax, which is a very volatile number, but that's kind of how we got into the situation we're in right now.

MR. LIPP:
Correct.

D.P.O. CALARCO:
Okay. Thanks.

MR. BOUGHAL:
Yeah, what happened -- I mean, what happened was at one time we had a balancing act with regards to the revenues that supported the General Fund. And we thought it very prudent to maintain a 25% equal balance because -- because, you know, what happens is, as Robert pointed out, the sales tax can fluctuate. Property taxes, on the other hand, is rather steady. I mean it's an easy --

D.P.O. CALARCO:
When you got a warrant, it is what it is --

MR. BOUGHAL:
It's always -- it's there. I mean you can't run away from it. It's right there. Right now the General Fund property tax levy is 2% of your total revenue base. I mean, you really -- I'm just pointing this out. I don't think --

D.P.O. CALARCO:
I think most of us are very aware of that.

MR. BOUGHAL:
No, I don't -- I'm not telling you anything that you're not familiar with so I'm not suggesting I'm doing that. I just want -- because what I'm trying to do here, because I used to be an AME member myself when it was the CSEA way back when I used to work for the Medical Examiner's Office, but -- I mean, they're really -- they're in a box because nobody really does recognize the fact that there are three -- there are three things -- three customers you're really dealing with. And they're one of them. And the other one, of course, is the ones you been listening to today.

The only one that seems to get the attention is the taxpayer. The taxpayer is both the customer as well as a payor. And whenever the customer is -- whenever the taxpayer is asked to do something -- the real problem in the County isn't the General Fund, as far as taxes, I mean, I just want to point that out; and yet the General Fund is the only tax levy that's been held constant over the last 10, 15 years. I mean, that's the point I'm trying to make. And it's going to have an impact. And it has to have an impact especially when I read the narrative saying that I'm always going to stay within the tax cap, which is arbitrarily set and is good.

If you look at the official statement, we are well below the constitutional tax limit that the County's under. And the constitutional tax limit is based upon the ability to pay. And if you look at the official statement, the official statement says that we -- the medium income in a family in Suffolk County is in the 1% of the national average, which, is, you know, again, trying to point out to the investor who's purchasing the bonds, the people at Suffolk County -- Suffolk County families, the Suffolk County people who are standing behind these bonds are doing very well. I mean, there's a lot of -- you know, there's a lot of things you can look at with that Suffolk County official statement, which is selling the bonds. And, unfortunately, the people who are working for the County are really feeling the brunt of it. That's all I wanted to point out.
CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Thank you.  Legislator Barraga.

LEG. BARRAGA:
Well, just a couple of comments.  I think one of the reasons why the General Fund basically is still at $50 million is that it's a political decision.  It's nice to be able to run and say you didn't increase the General Fund.  That's a real plus.  And that's been that way for many, many years.  Even if you want to increase the General Fund by 20%, it only generates another $10 million.  And you have at least a $200 million dollar deficit, but it's much than that.  I mean, you take a look at -- in terms of what we're borrowing from the sewer stabilization fund, not the normal 30 million; now it's going to be $88 million.  We're also borrowing, again, from the pension another 34 million.  And we borrowed so far $350 million.  Now we're looking for state legislation to be passed for $60 million for unused sick and vacation time for the Police Department for the next two years.  What happens after that two-year period?  But that has to be paid back.

And what's happened with this budget is that they take a look at all of this debt as revenue coming into the County.  It's false revenue.  It's like a person who gets a second mortgage on a house and gets $200,000 and is able to pay his expenses.  But sooner or later what, you gotta pay back the bank with the interest.  So this 200 million is a misnomer.  This deficit is closer to $400,000.  And the question is are we taking the appropriate action to try to deal with it on the expense side?  Because every time we try to generate revenues whether it's red light cameras or whatever it is, there's all sorts of hullabaloo.

But on the expense side, I take a look at this County and I see that, you know, we fund 480 nonmandated programs.  If you were sitting here this morning, some of these people have come up.  And nobody wants a cut.  They want to keep what they have or they want more.  We just can't afford it.  We just do not have the dollars.  The money is just not there.  We are broke.

MR. BOUGHAL:
Yeah, what I was trying to point out earlier was that I agree with you, I mean, I think that there's a serious -- there's a real problem that you have to face.  But if you're going to take the position that we're going to stay within the cap, the tax cap which I said was arbitrarily established, and you're not going to deal with public safety, now you're dealing with only 3%.  Whatever's left is 3% that you're going to have to cut of the total General Fund budget.  And that's -- that's almost as -- the analogy is what they're dealing with on the federal level, where they want to increase military spending, they don't want to touch the entitlements and you got a very small percentage of the budget that you have to deal with.  And that's -- that's the situation you're in.

And to get to your point about -- if you look at the -- if you look at the -- if you're doing an investment on any company, the first thing you look at is their cash flow.  You know you have a problem if you know that you have -- where your cash flow needs go from $100 million in 1999 -- or $175 million in 1999 to almost $600 million.  You know you got a serious -- you know there's something wrong with what's balancing your budget.  And the longer it takes to deal with that, the bigger the problem's going to get.

And the other thing is I'm old enough to remember the same problem we had when we were dealing with the Southwest Sewer District.  And that took a lot of getting together to sit down on both sides of the aisle and -- to resolve that problem.  And the way they resolve the problem is a combination of sales tax and property tax to the point where the Southwest Sewer District ends up with a huge surplus that you're now borrowing funds from.
LEG. BARRAGA:
For example, if we made a proposal here to increase the sales tax to be on par, let's say, with New York City, increase it by, say, a quarter of a percent, that generates about $70 million a year. But the problem is you always have a political problem depending upon the level of government. When the state legislators are running, they're not going to vote for a sales tax increase. Because when they come home, the opponent, to that individual assembly person or senator's going to nail them on it. And down here with the state elections being done come January or February, it will be difficult to get a Home Rule Message out of this group to go up there because they're all running.

So even though the sales tax is probably the best route to go to generate presumably steady income, and it fluctuates as you pointed out, projections have not been that good, there isn't much of a recourse, unless you want to deal with these nonmandated programs.

I'll give you a good example. Like Medicaid is an extremely expensive program in the State of New York. And there have been charges over the years that people come to New York to participate in Medicaid because the federal government requires that we do so much. But in New York State, we have 13 additional programs that we offer Medicaid recipients that other states don't. That's why they come here. Try to get rid of one of those programs. The same way with these nonmandated programs, they cost us $66 million a year.

But, you know, my feeling is you take a look at them and say "look folks, you've had our support over the years but financially we can't afford to continue to do this." I don't agree with cutting a program entirely, but I don't think there's anything wrong with taking a look at all 480 programs and have an overall decrease of maybe 20%. They're all worthwhile programs. Every single one that comes up here, they're right, they feel their program is good, it's invaluable, it's helping people, it's drugs, whatever it may be. We just can't afford to do it anymore.

But I see an executive budget coming over that doesn't really want to deal with that issue. And a legislature that's even willing to less deal with it. 'Cause what's going to happen here, whatever the County Executive comes in with, he's going to get about 98%. Our history here unfortunately is that we put programs back. We're not really dealing with this deficit. And it's getting worse as the years go by. And that's going to affect AME; it's going to affect right across the board all the unions. To a point where, you know, not too many years ago, we had to do considerable layoffs. I mean, I see these people come up and they're complaining about maybe a ten or twenty percent cut; in a few years, it won't be that. It'll be all Thursday's Child, they're all out. We don't have the money. We're facing a financial control board, a bankruptcy. That's not too far away. All right, that's enough.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:
Thank you, Legislator Barraga. Any other questions?

Okay, thank you for coming before us and thank you for your patience. We really do appreciate it.

That concludes our public hearing portion of today's committees. So we are adjourned. And I believe that Vets and Seniors as well as Health is up next. So if you're here for those, please stay. Oh. Public Safety as well. Thank you.

THE PUBLIC HEARING ENDED AT 2:17 PM
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