

1. 9-27-2023 Government Services Public Notice

Documents:

[9-27-23 GOVERNMENT SERVICES PUBLIC NOTICE.PDF](#)

2. 9-27-2023 Government Services & Operations Committee Meeting Agenda

Documents:

[9.27.23 - BUDGET HEARING - DEPARTMENTS.PDF](#)

3. Meeting Minutes 9-27-2023

Documents:

[09-27-23 GOVT SERV AND OP COMM2.PDF](#)



PUBLIC NOTICE

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE THAT

**THE NASSAU COUNTY LEGISLATURE WILL HOLD A MEETING OF
THE GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

ON

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2023 AT 9:30 AM

**AT WHICH TIME THE COMMITTEE WILL HOLD A PUBLIC
HEARING REGARDING THE 2024 NASSAU COUNTY BUDGET
PERTAINING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ASSESSMENT,
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, OFFICE OF THE COUNTY
ATTORNEY, DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, DEPARTMENT
OF SOCIAL SERVICES, AND DEPARTMENT OF PARKS,
RECREATION & MUSEUMS**

IN

**THE PETER J. SCHMITT MEMORIAL LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER
THEODORE ROOSEVELT EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BUILDING
1550 FRANKLIN AVENUE, MINEOLA, NEW YORK 11501**

As per the Nassau County Fire Marshal's Office, the Peter J. Schmitt Memorial Legislative Chamber has a maximum occupancy of 200 people.

Attendees who would like to address the Legislature must submit a slip to the Clerk's office staff. Public comment is limited to three minutes per person. At meetings of the full Legislature, public comment will be heard only during the pre-calendar public comment period and during public hearings that are on the calendar. At meetings of the Legislature's committees, there is no pre-calendar public comment period. Public comment will be heard on agenda items. Public comment on any item may be emailed to the Clerk of the Legislature at LegPublicComment@nassaucountyny.gov and will be made part of the formal record of this Legislative meeting.

The Nassau County Legislature is committed to making its public meetings accessible to individuals with disabilities and every reasonable accommodation will be made so that they can participate. Please contact the Office of the Clerk of the Legislature at 571-4252, or the Nassau County Office for the Physically Challenged at 227-7101 or TDD Telephone No. 227-8989 if any assistance is needed. Every Legislative meeting is streamed live on <http://www.nassaucountyny.gov/agencies/Legis/index.html>

**Scan the QR code to submit written public comment,
which will be incorporated into the record of this meeting.**



**DATED: September 20, 2023
Mineola, NY**

**MICHAEL C. PULITZER
Clerk of the Legislature
Nassau County, New York**

**NASSAU COUNTY
LEGISLATURE
GOVERNMENT SERVICES & OPERATIONS
COMMITTEE**

Theodore Roosevelt Executive and Legislative Building
1550 Franklin Avenue, Mineola, New York 11501

**2024 Nassau County Budget Hearing
September 27, 2023
9:30 A.M.**

AGENDA

1.	Office of the County Attorney Lisa LoCurto, Deputy County Attorney
2.	Department of Parks, Recreation and Museums Darcy Belyea, Commissioner
3.	Department of Consumer Affairs John Capece, Commissioner
4.	Department of Social Services Nancy Nunziata, Commissioner
5.	Department of Human Services Jill Nevin, Commissioner
6.	Department of Assessment Michele Spara, Chief Deputy Assessor

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NASSAU COUNTY LEGISLATURE

RICHARD NICOLELLO, PRESIDING OFFICER

GOVERNMENT SERVICES & OPERATIONS

COMMITTEE

JOHN FERRETTI, CHAIRMAN

Hearing Of

2024 Nassau County Budget Hearing

OFFICE OF COUNTY ATTORNEY

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, RECREATION & MUSEUMS

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF ASSESSMENT

County Executive and Legislative Building

1550 Franklin Avenue

Mineola, New York

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

TAKEN BY: KAREN LORENZO, OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

LEGISLATOR JOHN FERRETTI, JR., CHAIRMAN

LEGISLATOR DENISE FORD, VICE CHAIRWOMAN

LEGISLATOR MICHAEL GIANGREGORIO

LEGISLATOR JOHN GIUFFRE (absent)

LEGISLATOR ARNOLD W. DRUCKER - RANKING

LEGISLATOR CARRIE A. SOLAGES

LEGISLATOR JOSHUA LAFAZAN (absent)

MICHAEL PULITZER

Clerk of the Legislature

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APPEARED:

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ATTORNEY

Lisa LoCurto, Esq., Deputy County Attorney

Maria Boultadakis, Esq., Deputy County Attorney

John Hiller, Chief Deputy County Attorney

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, REC & MUSEUMS

Darcy Belyea, Commissioner

Tim Messner, Deputy Commissioner

Linda Barker, Accountant IV

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

John Capece, Commissioner

Mary Hawkins, CA

Don Harnett

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Nancy Nunziata, Commissioner

Mei-Sun Liu, Accountant IV

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APPEARED (CONTINUED)

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Jill Nevin, Commissioner

Debbie Pugliese, Deputy Commissioner

Keith Gerber

Seema Zaki

DEPARTMENT OF ASSESSMENT

Michele Spara, Chief Deputy Assessor

Daniel Ross

Michael Going

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

(Whereupon, the Pledge of
Allegiance is said.)

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

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

Legislator Carrie A. Solages?

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: (No response.)

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator Joshua
Lafazan?

LEGISLATOR LAFAZAN: (No response.)

Ranking Member Arnold Drucker?

LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator John
Giuffre?

LEGISLATOR GIUFFRE: (No response.)

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator Michael
Giangregorio?

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LEGISLATOR GIANGREGORIO: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Thank you, Mike.

Vice Chairman Denise Ford?

LEGISLATOR FORD: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Thank you. And

Chairman John Ferretti?

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Thank you, John.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you, Mr.

Clerk.

CLERK PULITZER: We have a quorum,

sir.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you.

I'd like to welcome everyone to

today's hearing of the Government

Services and Operations Committee on the

proposed 2024 Nassau County Budget.

Though the hearing is to be

conducted by the Committee, it is open to

all legislators. Today we'll hear from

several departments as to their budgetary

needs and expectations for fiscal year

2024.

A second hearing conducted by the

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

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

MS. LOCURTO: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Please proceed.

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

MS. BOULTADAKIS: Good morning.

MS. LOCURTO: And also the Chief

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Deputy of the County Attorney, John Hiller.

MR. HILLER: Good morning.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We have 29 support staff; of the 29

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are two of them are part time; 52 Deputy county attorneys, 49 or full time three or part time; we have six assistant county attorneys and law assistant temps, and those are attorneys and the law assistant temps are attorneys who are waiting at mission to the bar. We also have County Attorney and the Chief Deputy County Attorney.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Department, as it's done over

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I certainly can feel from many of

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

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

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

MS. LOCURTO: Certainly.

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

MS. LOCURTO: I think we're being

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Do you know what the amount is?

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

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

MS. LOCURTO: I would say in the

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past five years.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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LEGISLATOR GIANGREGORIO: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Mule.

LEGISLATOR MULE: Thank you.

Good morning.

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

MS. LOCURTO: That's our headcount.

LEGISLATOR MULE: That's your headcount, right.

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

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

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

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

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it out, given the backlog?

MS. LOCURTO: Well, the determination of what goes to outside counsel, yes, there is an analysis of what our resources are in-house. The determination of what goes to outside counsel are three things: One, does in-house counsel have the expertise to deal with the complexity of that particular litigation. In my opening remarks, I mentioned the Child Victims Act. That is a type of litigation that is not normally handled by a municipal government; Certain types of bankruptcy municipal governments don't have the expertise to handle; the wrongful prosecutions which deal with criminal issues, criminal trials that were dismissed, we need that expertise to come in, in that complexity. The type of litigation requires it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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weren't. They're all coming to a head all

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at the same time. Similar to like

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Superstorm Sandy, when we had high tide

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high, the surge was coming and the storm

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impact was hitting at just precisely when

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high tide. So normally we would have had

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ten feet swells of water, we had 16 to 18

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foot swells of water. It's just a perfect

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storm where you can put everything you

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have at it. But if it's all hitting at

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the same time, you're going to have the

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need for additional coverage. And that's

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what we're facing right now.

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LEGISLATOR MULE: Okay.

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So am I understanding you to say

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that this is a temporary situation and

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that within six months, one year, what's

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the time frame when when you will have

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this backlog taken care of?

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MS. LOCURTO: I can't -- litigation

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takes a life of its own, I'm not sure.

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But part of it, it isn't just we need

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additional counsel. What I think we also

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are saying is the cost of litigating even

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

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

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

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

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could be certified by Michele Spara. She has the authority to do it. But we can elucidate more on that. But I don't feel comfortable veering off onto -- I'd rather stick to the discussion of budget.

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Not that I'm dodging your question. I want to stick to talking about the budget. But to directly answer your question, the County Attorney has looked at it. We're confident that Michele can certify.

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

MS. LOCURTO: Certainly.

LEGISLATOR MULE: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Drucker.

LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Thank you, Chairman.

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

MS. LOCURTO: As I said, 52 are

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: It was over 52.

MS. LOCURTO: Yes. It was over 52.

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

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: 60,000.

MS. LOCURTO: 65.

LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: 55.

MS. LOCURTO: 65.

LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Sorry, sorry, sorry.

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

(Whereupon, off the record side conversation.)

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

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

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

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

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Your headcount is 89, but you have 84?

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

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

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

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Can I get that answer?

MS. LOCURTO: Sure.

MS. BOULTADAKIS: Good morning,

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Legislator. How are you?

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

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

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

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

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

MS. BOULTADAKIS: No.

LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Outside counsel?

MS. BOULTADAKIS: Not necessarily, no.

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

MS. BOULTADAKIS: You're correct.

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

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

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stay in house rather than going to
outside counsel.

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

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

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

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

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Do you have any numbers, any data on that?

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

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

MS. LOCURTO: As you know, Legislator --

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

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

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

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

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

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

Are the attorneys considered the ordinance employees?

MS. LOCURTO: Yes, they are.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. LOCURTO: Thank you, Legislator.

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

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

MS. LOCURTO: Correct.

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

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

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

MS. LOCURTO: Correct.

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

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

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

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

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

MS. LOCURTO: It is a value.

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

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. So under the Suozzi Administration?

MS. LOCURTO: I would say, yes.

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

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

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

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

MS. LOCURTO: Since since 2019?

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Around 2019.

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: About ten more.

MS. LOCURTO: About ten more.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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much harder to recruit in the private sector, I'm sure in the public sector.

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But I think the way the businesses and the public sector are getting by are by

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these streamlined processes where when

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you go for a deposition, you know, you're

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not traveling an hour -- I guess in

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Nassau County, you wouldn't be traveling

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an hour. But the travel time, you're

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doing it over a computer rather than in

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person so you don't have to travel there.

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The conferences, you have ten cases on

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the calendar for the calendar call

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instead of 130. There are differences

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that I think is at least justifying a

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decreased amount of attorneys in law

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offices and in the County.

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MS. LOCURTO: I would agree with

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that, Legislator. Yes.

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CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. Thank you.

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Legislator DeRiggi-Whitton.

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LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Thank

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you.

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Just to follow up with my colleague,

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

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

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Have you requested that?

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

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

MS. LOCURTO: I'm sorry.

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

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

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graduated it up to \$65,000.

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

MS. LOCURTO: That's fairly recent.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. LOCURTO: Yes.

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

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

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

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MS. LOCURTO: Agreed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So thank you.

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Thomas McKevitt.

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

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

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

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

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correct.

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

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

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

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LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Certainly

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there are times where we have issues with

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settling cases. But just as an observer,

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I used to litigate. I cannot litigate

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anymore. I just don't have the time with

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this job and being involved. But I have

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noticed the amount of judgments and

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amount of verdicts has, again,

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exponentially increased in the last

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couple of years. And again, we do have

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issues with going to outside counsel, but

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there could literally be just one case of

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one verdict which could almost literally

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be triple or quadruple the entire budget

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of your office, which can happen at this

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point; isn't that true?

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MS. LOCURTO: Absolutely,

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Legislator. It's a good point. The tort

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based decisions that we've seen,

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particularly in personal injury, I think

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that the myth that because we're a large

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suburban municipality that the juries are

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going to guard the taxpayer dollar is not

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true. They're giving out larger verdicts

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

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

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

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: All right.

Thank you very much for your presentation and your responses.

MS. LOCURTO: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

Our total budget from Nassau County

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

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So I just wanted to go on record.

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That I do not agree with this cut. I

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think it's wrong. I think this needs to

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be re-evaluated and relooked at. I don't

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think that any agency should be receiving

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a cut, let alone one agency having their

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money taken away and given to another

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agency.

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Our numbers are there. Our product

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is there. And I speak for the youth

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coalition that we did something on Friday

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to show you all are the need that the

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community has for our agencies. And the

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thank you that the Youth Bureau gets is a

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deduction of \$20,887.

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So on that note, thank you. Thank

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you for hearing me. Any questions?

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CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you, sir.

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LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Thank

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you, Spiro. Our budget is still fluid,

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

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

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

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: All right.

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

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay.

Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Next up is the Department of Parks, Recreation and Museums.

Good morning, Commissioner. How are you?

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

Can I take a moment for some opening remarks?

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: So good morning, everybody.

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

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

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

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

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

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and event schedule and as a result of our advertising campaigns.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the revenue side, our 2023

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

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

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

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

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

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information on that to follow.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. BARKER: Linda Barker.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. So very

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: And a pitch is like a field?

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Is a field, yes.

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: So two practice practice pitches.

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yes, but it

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yes.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay.

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yes.

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yes.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: And the pitches remain?

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Exactly. And the new irrigation system.

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: They're paying for everything.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: 2.75.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: And it's costing us nothing.

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Correct.

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: How many how many games are there?

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Five or six.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: So you have

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: What are you going to bus them?

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: All right. Legislator Ford.

LEGISLATOR FORD: Good afternoon. Thank you very much.

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yes.

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

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what is the closest recreation program that children who live on the Barrier Island or an Island Park? What is the closest recreation program that they can participate?

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Of course. Ours as well.

LEGISLATOR FORD: How much do we charge?

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

LEGISLATOR FORD: And how much does Nickerson charge?

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

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

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

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

You mentioned the playground.

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: They all have lifespans too.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR FORD: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR FORD: You still have the actors strike.

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

LEGISLATOR FORD: Okay.

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

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Right, 10%.

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

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

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report on on how the summer season
looked.

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: September
17th.

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

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will keep the dog park and the skateboarding park open as it has done in the past.

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

LEGISLATOR FORD: We have people assigned to Nickerson.

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

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yes.

LEGISLATOR FORD: Also, it is a public beach.

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Right.

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

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR FORD: We don't agree,

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Correct.

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Understood.

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you.

Legislator Schaefer.

LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Good morning.

How are you?

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Good, thank you.

LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Good.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: That includes the Aquatic Center as well.

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

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

LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: That's your actual to date.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: New or repairs as needed? Yes.

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

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increase the use or --

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

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

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Right. My

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main point is that it needs a facelift.

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

LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Great.

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

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

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Thomas McKeVitt.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Yes.

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

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

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

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COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Correct.

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Bynoe.

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Morning.

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

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

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significant work.

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Exactly.

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Agreed.

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

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Specifically, I

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Thank you.

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Right.

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. Thank you.

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: So for each

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

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

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COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Five to six.

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I'm hearing six more frequently than I'm hearing five. We'll know that schedule in November.

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LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So what is it,

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one game? Because I got to tell you, my experience with cricket was sitting on my grandmother's veranda in Saint Kitts looking at Warner Park, where they played cricket. And it was like watching paint dry. And it was the longest matches I've ever seen in my life. So I'm just wondering how many they will be playing in a day.

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

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

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

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

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

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traffic management. Private security is going to work with our forces for the interior of the stadium during the matches.

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

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

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: That does it for me.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Abrahams.

LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Thank you, Chairman Ferretti.

How are you, Mrs. Belyea?

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Good. How are you?

LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Good.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: So our maintenance team is there regularly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Really?

MR. MESSNER: Yes.

LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Two or three times a week?

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

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far as the people throwing trash out of

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the cars, it blows up against the fence

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line, we have to take that time to walk

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the perimeter of the park. We don't see

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it always from the inside, but

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unfortunately, it's nature of the beast

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that we deal with being in an area like

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that as far as roadways and people

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littering, unfortunately. But we do try

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to send staff there regularly two or

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three times a week, yes.

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LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: All right.

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That's good to hear.

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My next question actually ties into

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a different part of the county. It's a

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facility, as we know, Mitchell Gym, which

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is in Legislator Bynoe's district, but

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many of the residents in Uniondale and

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throughout my district do use it.

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I'm sure you're familiar,

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Commissioner, with the New York Sports

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Club. There was an announcement with the

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previous Administration that there was

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that the County entered into a 15 year

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Correct.

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Okay.

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

LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: So they're back in?

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

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Correct.

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Correct.

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Okay.

LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: You're welcome.

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LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Appreciate it.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Legislator Bynoe has a follow up question.

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Yeah.

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

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

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And so it previously was 250K per year.

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It's been reduced to a 100K. They have

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significant opportunities there. They

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have challenges, but there's significant,

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significant opportunities there where I

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believe they could become a lot more

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self-sufficient if we make some of these

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investments as it relates to climate

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control and all those other things that

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they need to do there.

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The way that museum is used is not

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only for the opportunity for folks to go

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and view what's on exhibit. Actually

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it's become a space where people can

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socialize. Every Friday night they host

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a band and all these other things that

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happens there. One of the items that I

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really wanted to address with the money

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that was earmarked for them was the

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upgrade to their kitchen. I think that

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they could function a lot better if they

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were able to have that upgraded. I know

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that you have a General Parks's line that

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we might be able to utilize in

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

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

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. Thank you.

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

(Whereupon, no verbal response.)

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: There being not any public comment?

(Whereupon, no verbal response.)

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BELYEA: Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Next up is the Department of Consumer Affairs.

Commissioner Capece.

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Good afternoon.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Good afternoon. How are you?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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community service rep that is servicing the people that come. What we do is, a lot of people that come to our front desk, especially some of our newer residents to the county, don't understand all the laws. So what we try to do is we try to get the clientele to understand what they need. I do a lot of training with my staff, we try to do it every month or so. We try to have these little training sessions where I just don't want to be a commissioner. I just don't want to be an administrator. I don't want to be a manager. I want to be a leader and try to tell them how we could handle people better. We have a lot of frustrated people come to our front desk. Frustration leads to what? Leads to anger. So I'm trying to get the staff to understand people are angry, not necessarily at you. They're frustrated because they have a lack of knowledge. So what we're trying to do is give them that knowledge, tell them what they need to

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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applications. What did you say that was down to?

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: And what are we down to?

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: The backlog is pretty much gone.

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Almost.

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

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. So are

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

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Yes, there
are, about 300.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: New

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application, yes, 2023.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Basically, yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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anything. It's not a shortage.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you.

Legislator Ford.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR FORD: Wonderful. Wonderful. All right.

As a result of the ratified CSEA

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

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

LEGISLATOR FORD: Okay.

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

LEGISLATOR FORD: Wonderful. I like that.

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

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

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

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

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the Franklin Square Street fair, the street fair last week.

LEGISLATOR FORD: Come to Irish day.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator

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Bynoe.

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LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Thank you, Chair.

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Hi. Good day.

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So I'm going to probably I'm going

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to jump right into the Complaint process.

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You mentioned that it can't be done over

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the phone. Was it previously being --

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COMMISSIONER CAPECE: No. We take it

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over the phone. What we do is we'll talk

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to them over the phone, find out what

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their problem is. But we can't take a

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. Thank you.

So you talked about, you could do more if you had more staff.

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: More enforcement.

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

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I don't know

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what CBA is.

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LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Collective
Bargaining Agreement.

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COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I'm sorry.

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How it helps. Well, some of our

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positions, especially the people on the

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intake, the Community Service Aides or

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the Consumer Protection Investigators got

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a nice bump in salary instead of starting

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at like 30 something thousand. It's now

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bumped up to I don't know the exact

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numbers, so I don't want to be quoted,

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but it makes it more -- you know, some

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people, they want a civil service job,

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they want the benefits, they want the

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insurance, they want the all that good

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stuff. But when they see a low starting

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salary, they can't make ends meet.

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LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I wanted to know

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what the salary increase was.

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COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I don't know

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that exactly.

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LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. Thank you.

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All right. So I guess now I want to

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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include that in communications.

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

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

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

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

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LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay.

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

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

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

MS. HARKINS: Post the highest credit

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

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

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State level.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: You're absolutely correct because my research. Indicated that we didn't have a role in that. This Body does not have a role in that. Otherwise, I was working on something to address it. It is for the State. I know that it passed both. I called some of our state representatives and found out that it passed in both houses, but that it's pending. But once it passes, we have to enforce it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And what about our merchants? How do you communicate to them?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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required.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Correct.

MS. HARKINS: Right.

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

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challenge for us.

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

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: No.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Who in the County has that?

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Clerk's Office.

MS. HARKINS: Maybe.

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

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

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

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

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

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COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I agree.

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

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

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

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simply be putting together whatever the notification and the educational component is.

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

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

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Okay. Thank you.

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

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

MS. HARKINS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Yes.

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

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Well, that's

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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know if anybody's seen that.

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

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

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Covid?

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

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I like it.

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

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

MS. HARKINS: No.

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: No.

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

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: I've never heard of that.

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

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

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: I had a couple

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

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MS. HARKINS: No, I'll look into

that. That does not sound right at all.

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CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Anyone else have any questions?

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Legislator DeRiggi-Whitton.

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

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

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LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON:

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Yes.

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

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Bleach?

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON:

Supposedly there's a lack of bleach. Talk about an issue with people jacking up the prices. It's just something to be aware of. You can't find anything at Walgreens or any place with bleach right now.

MS. HARKINS: No, we haven't.

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

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

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

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

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something.

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: With bleach.

Thank you. We're unaware of it.

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

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Thank you.

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

MS. HARKINS: And you paid cash.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: And you're paying cash.

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

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay.

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

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER CAPECE: Thank you.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Any public comment?

(Whereupon, no verbal response.)

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CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Department of Social Services is next.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you so much.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Sure.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: So just a few questions.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Sure.

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

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yeah.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: What titles are those?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: We're at 48 right now.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: And how many cases per worker?

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

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

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yes.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: That 48, are

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: All right.
Thank you.

Legislator Ford.

LEGISLATOR FORD: Thank you.

Is there any way of trying to get

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR FORD: Even if you wanted

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

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yeah.

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR FORD: That's absolutely
crazy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR FORD: Okay, perfect.

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: It's really expensive.

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

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yeah.

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

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR FORD: All right. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator McKevitt.

LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Good afternoon, Commissioner.

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

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Correct.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Sure.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Mule.

LEGISLATOR MULE: Yes. Thank you.

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Hi, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Hi. How are you?

LEGISLATOR MULE: Good.

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

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

LEGISLATOR MULE: Okay. Do we provide them with any funding?

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: No.

LEGISLATOR MULE: No. Okay.

They've always been very responsive. This is not a complaint. But do you have any sense that they do an equivalent, better or worse job than when it was done in the County?

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Well, to be honest, I don't know much about the HIT

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team since I've been here, but I can tell you they've got tremendous resources right now. So it's not just like one employee who goes out. They have counseling staff and they have a whole bunch of of people. So they seem to be well suited based on the funding that they receive. I don't really know what existed. I only knew there was this one woman and she went out from 9 to 5, which never made sense to me because if you're going to do homeless outreach, it's around the clock. And then she got sick and that was the end of that.

LEGISLATOR MULE: Okay, thanks. I was just curious about the history.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: And I think the coalition has a 24 hour service.

LEGISLATOR MULE: Terrific.

And would you be able to provide all of us with a list of your homeless shelters? I know I haven't seen one recently. Provide each legislator with a list of them.

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COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yeah. No problem.

LEGISLATOR MULE: And that's it for me. Thank you.

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

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Hi. Thank you for all you do. I know how important it is.

How long is that wait now? Have you found that to be alleviated? Like if someone shows up at the office and waits online.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: It's interesting. The wait for if you're filing a public assistance application or SNAP, now people are able to do that online and those move generally quickly through the office if people come in. The longer waits are the people who come in needing housing. And oftentimes those people come in late in the day and we have to look around and get somebody housed. Somebody could be there for a

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couple of hours if they're waiting for housing.

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Okay. Well, I'm glad because I know before I guess before it was online, it was a longer process.

And just a side note, we did discuss that during the CSEA contract hearing that those that are very close to retiring with ten years or the that do not wish to continue on, we're getting a list. We're compiling a list. If you want to send the list to Andy Person. He's supposed to be compiling the list and then giving it to Budget, if I remember correctly. Not to put Andy on the hot seat. But at least if you could just give him the information, we're going to see if we can look at them case by case. Nothing's guaranteed.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Sure.

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: I do feel for those people in that situation.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
Bynoe.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Hello,
Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Hello.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So Delia asked
the question about the wait times, so I'm
happy we don't have to deal with that.

And Legislator Ford asked about the
homeless. What group did you say is
handling that?

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Long Island
Coalition for the Homeless. They're based
in Amityville, but they cover both
counties.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And who's funding
them?

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: They get a
lot of their funding through HUD. We
don't fund them.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: We're not funding
them.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: No, we're
just members. All homeless providers

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throughout both counties are members.
I'm on the governance board myself and
the Suffolk County Commissioner.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So although the
Coalition is responsible for the
homeless, is it customary for counties to
still have some effort toward assisting?

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Well, my
understanding, and again, I'm only here a
short couple of years, but my
understanding is we had a HIT team at
some point and then it it faded. Right
now, we're certainly not in a position to
have that. And to be honest, I'm not so
sure that that would be us. I think non
profits and I think an agency like the
Coalition, it may make more sense because
they could get funded directly for those
kind of initiatives.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So I know the HIT
team existed while I was in service. So
they were here within the last ten years.
So what kind of communication are we
having with this HIT team?

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COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: We talk to them all the time. Whenever we get calls -- we just recently got one last week about someone called in saying they see an enclave of homeless gentlemen -- I forget, I don't know if it was in Westbury. We get a lot of calls like this -- and so we referred that over to them and then they will have their outreach team go over and then report back to us what they found.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay, because I don't know that I called anything in for Westbury, but I know I called in for Uniondale.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Okay.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: The MTA is looking to cut down all the trees at the Lakeview train station because apparently the homeless folks are there or they're storing their belongings there, which is like absolutely absurd to me that that would be how we would respond to that.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: I didn't

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know anything about that.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: But the point being, homelessness is a major, major issue.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Major.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I'm challenged to think that in some way or another, the County wouldn't have more of a role in the process. Especially, not for you, but especially knowing that we have ARPA money right in the middle of a crisis that will only get worse if we don't start addressing it. I'm just really struggling with the idea that we're not doing more as a county.

Can you can you contact that entity and have them give you some level of data and reports?

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: The Coalition for the Homeless?

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Greta?

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yeah. Greta.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And see if she could provide us with the data specific

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to Nassau County so that with the data we can be more informed on how we can better respond and support. Because it looks like we're just responsible for the housing of the homeless. They find them and then we pay for the housing?

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Well, listen, we're responsible for housing eligible homeless. Now, not everybody who's homeless in the county is eligible for the housing. So, yes, we house people. If they go out and they identify that the people that are living -- you know, train stations are magnets for homeless people. There's lots of homeless people that gather and that stay around train stations. So if they find people and they're our residents and they're eligible, then of course, we would place them. Yeah.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And so we're placing them in temporary shelter.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Oh, yeah.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Typically the go

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to is that we put them in the shelter and but if there are some specialty needs or what have you, we might utilize a motel as an alternative?

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Well, yeah. I mean we utilize both shelters and motels. When it comes to a family, we certainly want to put them in a shelter. So if we have a family with children, the priority is to put them in a shelter. Many of the folks that are in our hotels are homeless singles, primarily men. And so we use those resources. I mean, that's what we have.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. I'd love to get the data on how many people they're assisting and how they're assisting them across the region. I'm interested in Suffolk numbers just because I'd like to do a comparison, but specifically Nassau is important to us, obviously.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Yeah, sure.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Abrahams.

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LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Thank you,
Chairman.

Hey, how are you?

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: I'm well,
and you?

LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Good, good.

I just wanted to follow up on the
matter that my office has brought to your
office or department's attention. It's in
regards to a homeless, it could be
individual or population, that's living
along the Southern State in Uniondale.
We just found out that, I guess the
Homeless Intervention Team that we always
thought was in existence is no longer
there. I remember it from years ago. We
had a situation at Henry Street Park in
Roosevelt where we had a homeless
population living out of the portable
bathrooms there. In this particular
situation was brought to us by a local
church and we were informed that the HIT
team or HIT is no longer in existence. So
I just wanted to find out or just get

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confirmation on how our offices should be interacting with your department as it pertains to when we learn of homeless that is not willing to go to a shelter similar to what Legislator Bynoe was talking about. This is homeless that's living in the woods, could be a park, could be a preserve, so on and so forth.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Sure. The calls generally come to my office and Suzanne Sacks, my assistant, it usually takes those calls. So I would continue to do that. Call them in to my office. Suzanne generally takes those calls and then we figure out who's best to respond. So we may call the Coalition and they may go out. There may be some other details about that situation where we might be able to do something else. I think you call it in just the same way and we follow it.

LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: I believe Robin in my office has called in. So if someone can let us know the status.

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COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: And this is
a group that's living on the Southern?

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COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Sure.

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Understood.

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LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: -- to also
cut back some of the the brush trees and
limbs, because the only way he saw it was
that he heard movement. And then when

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they asked who's there, the gentleman

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came out. From that standpoint, if we

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can get a status, if you could provide

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our office with a status. I just want to

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make sure that person that's there is

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being cared for, especially with the

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really bad weather that we have over the

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last couple of days. I can't imagine

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anyone living in particular in that area

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in those conditions. So if you could just

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let us know where we are with that, I

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appreciate it.

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LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Just to make a

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comment, you are aware that if there was

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outreach to that gentleman and he does

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not want to leave that location or go

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into shelter or motel, we can't force

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them. The only time that someone could be

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picked up off the street is during "Code

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Blue", which is when the temperature is

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at or "at feel" of 32 degrees and below.

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Then the police technically could take

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that person and remove them. But we, nor

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the Coalition or anybody else, has the

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ability to remove people. Listen, we know it's not in their best interest to live in the woods, but if there is somebody and it's not Code blue, we can't simply force them into shelter or a hotel.

LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: I think what happens is, this particular gentleman, actually once the church saw movement in the trees and made the approach to him. I think what happened generally is that this gentleman from the church who doesn't claim to be anyone that has a expertise in this area, but they felt that one the gentleman that came was mentally ill. So I understand what you're saying, but that person probably couldn't tell you properly why they're in the woods or anything like that. So I would like to think there would be some type of intervention that comes from across agencies. I hope we're just not saying, okay this gentleman says he doesn't, or this woman, told us they don't want to be

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here and then we're just letting them go
back in the woods when we obviously see
that there's some type of mental illness.

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COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: No. I don't
mean to simplify things because it's
actually very complicated. Many of the
people that are out there sleeping on the
street are mentally ill. So part of it is
doing an assessment and then again,
figuring out where they could be helped.
Some of them may have to go to a
hospital. Depending on their level of
illness or maybe if they were properly
treated with medication, they would they
would do better. So it's not like we just
go out and ask somebody and if they don't
want to go, we're like, well, there's
nothing we could do. There is an
assessment that has to get done. But it's
very hard to make anyone go into shelter
against their will.

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LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Of course.

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COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: I just
wanted to put that out there.

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LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER NUNZIATA: Sure.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: All right,
Thanks.

Thank you for your presentation.

Any public comment?

(Whereupon, no verbal
response.)

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. There
being none.

(Whereupon, recess,
1:24-1:30 p.m.)

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CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Department of Human Services.

Good afternoon, Commissioner Nevin.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Good afternoon. Good afternoon, everybody. I'm Jill Nevin and I serve as the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services.

As you all are aware, the Department of Human Services consists of the Office for the Aging, the Office of Mental Health, Chemical Dependency and Developmental Disability Services, the Office for the Physically Challenged and the Office of Youth Services. All our offices work independently and collaboratively in order to serve the residents of Nassau County.

My fiscal staff and I worked closely with the Office of Management and Budget to prepare the 2024 Human Services budget. We are presenting a budget that we are all comfortable and pleased with. We will continue to work closely with OMB to meet any needs that may arise

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throughout the year. We are looking forward to a fiscally responsible and successful 2024.

I would like to point out a few highlights from the 2024 budget that are noteworthy:

First one is that salaries are remaining relatively flat compared to 2023. This does include the impact of the County's Collective Bargaining Agreement with the CSEA. There have been many position shifts within the full time headcount. However, the net proposal is higher by only one position budget to budget and two positions compared to OLBR's projection.

Part time headcount is decreasing by two positions budget to budget and is increasing by four compared to OLBR's projection. I can assure you that we are in a good staffing position and are able to meet the Department's needs. I'm confident that any additional needs that may arise throughout the year will be

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addressed.

Secondly, court remands are remaining flat for 2024, so that's a good thing.

Contractual services has a growth of approximately 2 million budget to budget. This growth is because New York State has provided Office for the Aging with additional funding. This is very helpful in many areas, including our meal program, as inflation has put an additional burden on that.

New York State has also provided Mental Health with increased funding.

We have kept the funding stable in Youth.

We're in the process of evaluating each organization's usage of funding, as we're finding some organizations are leaving funds on the table while others are coming to us and looking for more.

So those are the highlights I wanted to point out.

At this time, I just would like to

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brief everybody on an update of the usage of the opioid funds. We had announced grant awards. They were the initial announcement of the opioid awards. All those grants have been executed. They were included as part of the 2023 contracts for the agencies. It was six contracted agencies that we provided additional boosting to.

The contract with NUMC is complete. That was \$2 Million we were going to be giving them each year over four years. They've been using the funds to expand the detox and rehab beds. Specific details: They're in the process of creating a central referral unit. They're working on hiring staff. They've been purchasing equipment and doing renovations in order to prepare for that expansion.

The RFEI process that we had done is complete. Contracts are a result of that process. There's about seven of them that are completed and are moving through the

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approval process. We've had a few struggles with some organizations, outstanding disclosure forms and whatnot, but we're working on that. My staff is continually following up with all the agencies involved.

This week, I believe tomorrow, we will be posting a new RFP for media services, for a prevention messaging campaign. We're seeking media buying and creative services through this RFP directly for Human Services to use with the opioid funds. This is going to be the education component of using the opioid funds. We've already produced an ad in-house that will be launching. If it's okay with everybody, we'd like to show it to the Legislature.

Steve, thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Sure.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Thank you. We'd like to play it two times, Steve, just so you know.

(Whereupon, video is

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displayed, twice.)

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Thank you,
Steve.

At this time, I'm happy to take any
questions that the Legislature might
have.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Ford.
Thank you for your presentation.

LEGISLATOR FORD: Thank you very
much for your presentation.

I guess we forget, we get so caught
up in the opioid settlement money and
everything else and we forget that you
actually have other agencies that fall
under your umbrella. So I might be
bouncing back and forth.

Nice presentation. Is it going out
to the news media?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: We are looking
to do social media at this point and our
website and then through that RFP for
media services, buying services and
creative services, we're looking to put
that out there. And we're also looking to

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do a lot more than that. We're looking to see what other creative options they may come to us with.

LEGISLATOR FORD: So with this RFP for the media services -- and thank you very much, because I think it probably would be a good idea. How long will this RFP process take?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: So tomorrow it's supposed to be posted in *Newsday* and proposal due date is October 24th.

LEGISLATOR FORD: All right. And then how long will it take to select whoever will receive this funding?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Well, we're hoping not long at all. We're trying to move it at a quicker pace. The RFEI produced 60 proposals, which was a huge undertaking. I don't anticipate this generating that many responses.

LEGISLATOR FORD: So if it's October 24th and this is September 27th, we're talking about a month, how much of this funding will be allocated toward

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this media service outreach?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: We haven't committed to a specific dollar amount. We want to keep that flexibility open because we want to be able to see what creative comes back to us, which media buying options there are. So we're flexible there.

LEGISLATOR FORD: Will this be targeted for drug overdose, mental health? What is specifically --

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: The RFP talks about obviously opioid usage, but drug usage in general and also mental health as well.

LEGISLATOR FORD: We discussed the importance of reaching out to people. And now that October 24th is right on the cusp of a holiday season, which I think that it seems sometimes people might drink more or use drugs more during the holidays, but even more so, while many of us feel that the holidays is a happy time, people who have some mental health

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issues find it to be rather depressing time which then can lead to more drug use and more alcohol use. I would hope that -- the point is for doing this and expending this money and this effort, which I commend you on, will be so that the message will be out prior to the holidays so that people are aware of whatever the message is that we get, we get it sooner rather than later. Is that the intent of this RFP?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yes. Our intent of this RFP is to move this at a quick pace because we understand the urgency and need of prevention messaging at this point.

LEGISLATOR FORD: All right.

When you talked about the grants, we allocated \$15 million for this year to expend, that was basically what the County Executive decided at the beginning of this year. How much have we expended out of that \$15 million so far?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: The grants were

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approximately 500,000. Those have all been completed and are in the '23 contracts for the six agencies. For the RFEI, those seven organizations that received award, that is approximately \$5 million, and then the NUMC contract is \$2 million. So that takes us to approximately \$7.5 million.

LEGISLATOR FORD: All right. The last of the awards went out and were announced in June. So that would be mid-year, correct?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Correct.

LEGISLATOR FORD: So now we're in the third quarter of this year. And so we have \$7.5 million left. From what I gather, I don't think that we've cured the drug epidemic or we've seen all of a sudden like a downturn in the number of cases of mental health cases, especially for our young people. So where is the \$7.5 million going to go? Because you have three months now before the end of this year.

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COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yeah. Like I said, the Prevention Messaging Campaign, we're keeping the dollar amount open and flexible so we're able to invest whatever the Administration is comfortable investing in it. We have the ability to roll over anything not used into next year to be able to focus on additional opportunities as well.

LEGISLATOR FORD: All right. So I hope that it's not going to be like a lot of money. I mean, social media is important, but I'm sure that anybody who works -- I don't, but I've had, unfortunately in Long Beach been involved with organizations and with groups and families that suffered losses due to drug overdose and subsequent people who committed suicide, young people. And you see the pain and the agony that these families go through. I just know of the families that belong to the Purple Circle. And I'm sure that those numbers have grown over these years. I think

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about how our own County Executive had a press conference probably at the beginning of this year and announced how with this fentanyl epidemic that we lose 300 people a day to fentanyl throughout the United States. I'm sure that there's a good number of people in Nassau County who lose their lives to fentanyl and drug use. And he said it was paramount to an airline going down every single day of the year for a year. And so and that was a strong message really resonated with me. And I think of the people that we've lost to drugs. And so I think to myself, common sense would say well, we have this money, we have opioid settlement money. So here we go. And this is not for you, Jill, because I think you're doing a fine job. An excellent job. To be quite honest with you.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Thank you.

LEGISLATOR FORD: But I find it unbelievable that we're here at the end of September and we're still looking at

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\$7.5 million. Never mind the \$45 million, which might even be more for the next three years. And it's like it's as if all of a sudden nobody is dying from fentanyl or drug overdoses because there is no urgency on anybody's part. And I do appreciate the fact and I talked to you, Doctor -- well, I'm probably going to say you name wrong -- because both Legislator Walker and I way back when were in on this Committee in the beginning to take a look at the allocation of opioid settlement money. And we expressed our concerns because we do work in our districts, and as every legislator does, we become personally involved in what happens in our neighborhoods with the families that we represent. We celebrate when things are happy, but sure as hell we mourn when things are bad. When we took a look at this and when we watched over the years, people that were dying, you know, when we think about the families that came before us to say that

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their children -- trying to stop an epidemic -- when they would go downstairs on a Christmas morning and find that their son died of an OD in the bathroom and that's how they opened up their Christmas Day. It hurts. It hurts.

And I know that Rose and I both expressed this, and we told you, Doctor, that how important it was that if we have this money, that it would be nice to be able to say, let's think about what we want to do. And we say, yes, we can think about it because we went along with taking the \$60 million and dividing it up into four years to give you a buffer to say that, well, maybe we don't want to spend it here, maybe we want to move it here. But we also said that there is an urgency why we need to spend it now.

Because every time and every day that we delay in sending money to some of these organizations, we're putting a child at risk. We're putting somebody at risk. And since we've had these meetings,

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we've lost three very good people, very good young people in my district. And I want to tell you something. It hurts. And if I sound like I'm angry, I'm pissing mad. That's exactly what I am. And I'm very angry with the response. And it bothers me that I know that you have people working in this Department, the Commissioner and the DCE and everybody else who shares the compassion and the drive that we have. But I feel that it's falling on deaf ears. And I really think that it's up to the Administration to step up to the plate. You have this money. There's no reason to hold on to it for whatever God reason, because you're so afraid that all of a sudden an organization may be political and maybe not spend the money properly. Well, there are a lot of these organizations have been around for decades. There are in our communities.

It's about time that this Legislature and this Administration work

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together on this problem, because if we don't work together, we're going to fail and we're going to lose a lot more young people and it's going to be on your heads, not on mine.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. Legislator Bynoe.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Just a point of clarification. I'm sorry. Only 7 million has been used of the the total; how much?

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: John, can I actually correct that?

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator DeRiggi-Whitton first.

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: I have the numbers from our Finance System and as of today only 2.24 -- \$2,240,000 has been distributed. That's it.

Denise, just so you know, that conference that we went to, as you recall, it was in 2022, and that was when the first \$15 million was supposed to be disbursed in 2022. So we're in 2023. So

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this should be the second set of \$15 million. So we should be up to \$30 million right now according to that plan.

I know the hospital was given \$2 million and I do have a few of the agencies that receive \$60,000, but it's nowhere close to the number you gave. Jill, again, this is not you directly. It's not. I understand that you're in the situation you're in. But for you to have the facts, only \$2,240,000 out of the \$82.2 million has been distributed to date. Many groups like Dr. Jeff Reynolds Group did not receive a penny. You know, we were just at an event on Friday. They are they've all been promised it from 2022 and no one has received it. I don't understand it because this is not money that we can be using for anything else. To promise them \$15,000,000 in 2022. And here we are at the almost the end of 2023, and they haven't even received the first \$15 million. Forget the second \$15 million.

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We're also supposed to be receiving another \$30 million approximately from CVS. Do you know if that's come in yet?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: I don't think so. I have to follow up with OMB on on that settlement.

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: I have a copy of it. I'll distribute this to everyone. But the \$60,000 has gone to four groups it looks like.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: I just want to correct that. All the agencies that were awarded grant funds, they were already contracted with us. And late 2022, we made the announcement. Five of them were being awarded \$60,000. Another one was being awarded \$180,000. All of those were built into -- I discussed with them and it was it made more sense to build it into '23 rather than forcing them to do claims within '22. So we built it into their '23 contracts and it's there. They all have it readily available. Have they claimed? Have they put claims through

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for the usage of it? Not yet. There's one organization that processed claims through 2023, but all of those for the grants, that's adds up to approximately \$500,000, have been have been awarded.

The RFEI, those contracts, I believe four of them are actually working their way through the approval process. They were just approved by Robert Cleary yesterday, I believe, and they're making their way through the chain.

Unfortunately, it's always a very lengthy process, the contract approval process, and it's frustrating on everybody's end, I believe. But we're going through the motions.

We set those dates for an October. I never set October contract start dates. But the reality of the contracting approval process, we set those dates.

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: You know, with all due respect, the reason that we sort of went along with the fact that you wanted to use groups that you're

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already familiar with was because you already have their disclosures and you have all their information.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Those disclosures expire every six months and they're required -- it's a very frustrating process, especially for these non profits who don't have the manpower like a big organization, to continually update the disclosure forms and keep up with the vendor portal. Three of those seven agencies I'm having some vendor disclosure issues with still for the RFEI contracts.

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: With all due respect, I feel I'm totally in line with Denise Ford and I feel that this money is saving lives if we get it out and if we're not, it could be costing us lives. It's that detrimental. So if Suffolk County is able to do it so much better than we are, there must be an issue. Maybe you do need additional staffing because for this -- it shouldn't

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-- we announced it a year ago in his chambers September of 2022 that it was going to be for '22/'23. So we should really be up to \$30 million now. You know, and and only 2.24, it's been distributed. I mean, we're not even 10%. I'm very concerned about it.

I also am glad that the hospital received the \$2 million. But in my opinion, and I spoke with a number of CSEA members, I really think this is a once in a lifetime opportunity, especially with the next wave of funding that's going to come in from the CVS settlement, that we should put a lot more into the hospital and really make it a permanent facility that can house those that need beds. Because I know I've been there at two in the morning when I've gotten calls and I started calling around trying to find a bed for people and we can't find beds. Just to have a permanent place for available beds. And I really think with this much money we could

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probably do what we want to do, which is extend their treatment over the 28 days. Because as you know, you can actually see on an MRI, the receptors of people on an opioid are expanded and it takes more than the 28 days. It takes almost three months to get the receptors back to where they should be so that they don't just come out of their rehab and look for drugs immediately.

So I again, all I can tell you is this is from today. This is what's been disbursed as of today; it's 2.240. That is our system. So it's not like it's anything that's questionable. Now we're in the second year, we should be almost halfway through the initial promise of \$60 million.

Again, I don't think it's your fault at all. And no one's casting the blame on you, but you're the one who has to be really pushing this. And I think it might mean that you need additional staff. See what Suffolk did, copy them. They did a

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similar program and they've gotten a lot more out. And kudos to them because the crisis, it's a nightmare what's happening to our youth. And that's why this money was allocated. It was a punishment. It was punitive to the pharmaceutical companies. And this money is to help us handle that crisis, and we're not handling it quick enough. We could we could have given out all the money. Honestly, I think I would have done that because I trust these groups that have been in business for 20 years. Rather than holding it in an account when kids are dying, it's driving me crazy.

Again, to only have this much out there is a real problem. And I wrote a column on it which is hitting this week. I really think it might take public outreach to get this moving faster. But it's got to happen, Jill. And I think you should start with demanding some more personnel. We can't be nice in this war. We're in a war that we have to protect

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our kids, you know?

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Solages.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Thank you.

I just like to thank my colleague from Long Beach and the many statements you said, and I really appreciate you. Thank you very much.

And thank you, Ms. Nevin, I know you're doing the best you can with the resources you have.

I just want to get this straight. On September 15, 2022, the County Executive announced that he had \$15 million available; is that correct?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: I believe so.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: And then also in March of 2023 this year, the County Executive also announced that he had \$15 million available for this war.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: In May, I believe we did a press conference about the awards for the --

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: May not March.

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COMMISSIONER NEVIN: May.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: So from September 2022 and from May of 2023 this year that's a total of \$30 million that was allocated, but only 2.2 has been spent. Why are we leaving all this money on the table?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Well, with the announcement in 2022, the initial announcement was to go to boost some existing contracts. We determined after speaking with the organizations, that it's just better to put it in '23 since we were rounding the end of '22. So we put it in there, '23 contracts. Those like I have said, are available, they're in there, they're able to claim against it and hire against it. I know some have hired against it. They not they have not necessarily filed their claims yet.

In '23, the announcement of the RFEI awards, it's part of that \$15 million. The grant agencies, it's intended to be for four years so that will fall into the

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'23 \$15 million. The RFEI the \$5 million that was awarded out of that, that will fall into every year's \$15 million as long as they're performing up to our standards and it's a productive program.

I know you're looking at it that Legislator DeRiggi-Whitton said there's only \$2.2, but this is an annual thing, but these grants, these contracts, are annual. So the \$7.5 that we have committed thus far is for each year.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: But then under that logic, by now at least, you would have you spent at least more than 7 million. At least \$30 million you should have spent.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: I know it was announced in '22. We started the process for year '23 because we were so close to the end of '22.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: In the press conference, it was stated that in 2022 alone that you would have accomplished that goal, the \$15 million.

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COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Well, we have
it set up that it started in '23.

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LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: All right. But
but again, just to be clear. The \$15
million that was supposed to be spent in
'22, '23 and '24. But we're not near
that.

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COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Like I said, we
wanted to boost people immediately.

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That's why we went the route of already
contracted agencies.

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The RFEI, unfortunately, that
process took a very long time. We had a
very big response and it was a lengthy

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process. And the RFP for the media, the prevention messaging, we are trying our best to fast track it and we are hopeful that we will turn it around pretty quickly and be able to invest additional opioid funds in that prevention messaging campaign.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Thank you. One last question: What are the RFEI results and when will they be awarded?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: It came with seven contracts. They are in the process of being awarded. All contracts have been drawn up and they are through the approval process. Some of them we're waiting on some vendor disclosure issues. But I believe four out of the seven are in the pipeline right now in the approval process.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay.
Commissioner, thank you.

Commissioner, just a follow up question. Is it true that there are some agencies that have contracts that have

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not claimed the money that they are entitled to?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yes. So the grants that we've put out there, that was the initial tranche of money, that's been executed. Everybody has that availability. We only have had one organization thus far file claims through July '23. Now, does that mean they're not going to? No. A lot of times we have to often ride organizations to be timely on their claims. We are we. Barry here is the liaison for the opioid funds. So he is often reaching out to the organizations to remind them of the necessity of filing claims in a timely manner and that this money is available. And if they're not going to be using it, that's part of our whole position is that if you don't have the need or you're not using it appropriately, then you're not going to get it next year.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: It just seems like that the process that's being

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implemented is a pretty deliberate process. And I think that the fact that there are agencies out there that are entitled to these funds but are not even claiming them, I think supports the idea that it should be a deliberate process. Now we can debate how deliberate it should be, but simply throwing money out there, I mean, we're looking to solve a problem here. We're looking to save lives. And we have to figure out the best way to do that. And I think being responsible with the money deliberate and making sure that the agencies that we're providing this money to these resources to actually need them and will use them. And it does seem like there are some instances where that's not happening right now.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Correct.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Not at the fault of you or anyone in the Administration. But I think that just goes to show that a deliberate process may be warranted.

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Can you tell me now what the process is to get a contract for these funds?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: So for the RFEI, after the Committee concluded, Barry is the liaison on that, he met with each organization to just really go over in detail their plans to make sure it's exactly what was submitted and exactly what we're looking to do. And also, Barry has a great amount of expertise in the field, so we wanted to make sure it makes sense to the approach.

And so after that, we had to draw up contracts from scratch. These aren't these aren't just multi-year contracts that were just renewing. These are brand new contracts, brand new programs. So that was a process. There's a lot of back and forth between the organizations asking them to make sure that their vendor disclosure forms are updated -- nothing can move forward without that -- that the program narratives are correct. And once we do get that, if we do get all

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of that, we're able to move on to the approval processes. And we all know that there's many layers to that. And I have my staff reaching out to me daily. If there is something stuck somewhere, if it's sitting somewhere for too long, I pick up the phone or I send an e-mail saying, we're trying to move this along. We really need you to pay a little closer attention to this.

So it's challenging on the vendor side. It's frustrating on both sides. And I understand and I agree the need for movement and speed. But the contract process is the process that's there. I mean, maybe it's something that in the future we could all discuss. I know we're looking to obviously protect taxpayer funded dollars, but let's say for opioids or something like that, maybe maybe it is a process that we could potentially amend to make it more speedy.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Well, I think when it comes to something that's

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important, it's something we definitely should look into, working with the Administration to streamline the process. If this is something that's a cumbersome process, that's delaying money that's needed to be provided to these agencies, we absolutely have to look into that. And thank you.

Thank you for your response.

Legislator Giangregorio.

LEGISLATOR GIANGREGORIO: So if the contracts are sitting out there and these agencies haven't used it or haven't claimed, do they have a time period where they have to use this money or we just say the contract is void and give it to someone else who's going to use it?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: We want them to turn in claims within two months. But there's going to be an annual, and that's where Barry's role is imperative here, annual reviews. So that was a big part of the County Executive's position that if we're giving you money, it doesn't mean

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we're going to continue to just sign off every year. There's going to be an evaluation if the program is running properly and if it's impactful and if they are using the funds appropriately or at all. So the contact between the liaison and the organization will be key.

LEGISLATOR GIANGREGORIO: At some point, though, if they're not using it, would we take it back?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yeah, there's a clause in there that if their services aren't up to our standards, we can, in fact, cancel the contract.

LEGISLATOR GIANGREGORIO: Thank you.

LEGISLATOR FORD: My outburst is over. Thank you very much, Commissioner, for your understanding.

I do want to just go back to 2022. And just for clarification on my part, I know that we knew about the money because we had gotten it, I guess, in 2021. But to your credit, you had wanted to take a

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look at how to disperse the money because there is a concern. I agree that I think that doing it over time is a little bit better than all of a sudden just throwing it right out there because it keeps programs going for at least four, six or even eight years which I think is commendable. And I know that you then issued the RFP, that you had given a deadline that was much earlier than the end of the year as we had requested from you, because we knew that some agencies were not aware of the RFP and they failed to respond in a timely fashion. So not that they would be excluded, you at least then granted an extension so that more agencies were able to respond to the RFP in the hopes of getting this funding. And I know that even speaking with one of the agencies that did receive, they were very comfortable in the fact that they knew they were getting the money and their contract didn't start till October 1st. So they whatever money they were going to

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be allocated, they will be getting it.
But I'm very happy to hear that NUMC did
get everything resolved because I know
that they were delayed in getting their
paperwork in.

Speaking of NUMC, they are in the
center of Nassau County. They do have a
program where they have in one building,
they deal with drug treatment. And,
Doctor, you can correct me because I'm
just going by for what I little that I
know about the hospital, but I know that
they also then have an area for mental
health and that I believe that New York
State has granted them the ability to
expand the number of beds so that they
can take in more patients, whether or not
they're young people as well as older.
That being said, I think that it might be
prudent if we're looking to see what we
can spend the money, because we do focus
on the drug treatment. But there also is
that mental health component, which is
very, very key.

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We had a forum in Long Beach not too long ago where we talked about the mental health with our young people. Aside from social media, just all of the pressures that come around the pandemic, whatever, just really plays into them, and they're very, very vulnerable. I ended up having somebody I know whose child had to go to that mental health clinic and had to stay there for two nights. And while it was important for them that that person was safe in this environment, they were like, well, you know, they wish it could have been a little bit better. Maybe we should look at NUMC, because we know that it is a good hospital, that it does provide a great service. They already deal with mental health and opioid addiction. So maybe provide them with some of this \$7 million in addition to what we've already given them so that they can then expand, especially in the mental health component, renovate it, I don't know, make it nice looking, whatever, more

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conducive so that if young people have to go there, they don't feel like they're in this scary hospital type environment. I would recommend and suggest and ask that you do that, that you work with them. And this would be a nice way of spending some of this money this year that I think would be very key and it would not have to be a promise of next year because you're doing the work this year and then it'll give you an opportunity then when you look to 2024, how do you want to spend the money?

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But I also think that as we look at this and you do make these decisions, with some of the agencies that you picked that are the recipients, I wonder how many of them just do care or how many of them actually do preventative? Do they work with the young people to try to come up with programs to help prevent possibly drug use?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Out of the seven organizations that were awarded

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through the RFEI, one of them is, YES, Youth Environmental Services. We awarded them on a prevention program, they provide coordinated continuum of care model that offers prevention and intervention services in the schools. They are partnering with Massapequa, Farmingdale, Island Trees, Levittown and I think Wantagh.

Another organization that one award was Central Nassau Guidance and Counseling, and this was for their crisis stabilization center. This is a very critical facility that's going to --

LEGISLATOR FORD: I would even ask that you even give them even more money.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yeah. I mean, we awarded them what they asked for in their proposal. They're also getting funded by the State. I believe they may have received ARPA funding, but this is a 24/7 alternative to the E.R. for appropriate patients who are experiencing substance use or mental health crisis. So

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rather than bombarding the emergency rooms, not bombarding, but bringing these people, they're going to a more focused area for their needs.

The other organization, Catholic Health Services, a patient Navigator program that's a treatment recovery type program, it'll help individuals who are struggling with substance use issues and challenges. They'll be able to engage people who are contemplating treatment, kind of walk them through, make that warm handoff, that connection to resources that could assist them in their recovery.

FCA, their Sherpa program, that's another treatment recovery. It's similar to the Patient Navigator program. And again, it assists people struggling with substance use for that warm handoff to resources that could help them in their recovery.

We supported a program that assists first responders who are on the front lines encountering overdoses, victims and

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their families, the Police Department, Probation, fire departments, EMTs and mental health professionals. This program will offer compassion training in order to assist their focus on wellness and help protect them from burnout because they see and go through a lot.

An organization you're familiar with, Legislator Ford, Long Beach Reach. They fall under the treatment recovery category. The program will provide a coordinated continuum of care model that offers intervention to students exhibiting drug and alcohol use, behavioral problems that includes academic and emotional. The program will enhance the existing relationship with the Long Beach School District and its collaboration with Port Washington, East Williston and Malverne school districts.

And the final program that was awarded was through LIJ. It's called Empower, Educate, Motivate and Provide Opportunities For School Based Workforce

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to Encourage Refraining. That's an educational component of the award. The program will bring educational training to Nassau County schools, targeting school professionals and parents to help rethink and reframe how we talk about substance use. The education will give a perspective of looking at substance use as a disorder rather than just a criminal problem or moral weakness. The program was successful at changing the culture among the internal team at Northwell LIJ.

LEGISLATOR FORD: When we look at this, and I'm not going to belabor all of this, but for me and you know, when we've had the meetings and we discussed the concern even over mental health and part of this opioid settlement money is to go toward mental health programs, and I think that one of the problems or I guess one of the problems that we have in regard with dealing with mental health is that we don't have enough mental health providers. I know school districts --

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we'll go back to Long Beach, with my school district and when we had the forum, they were saying how it's very difficult when they identify a child who was at risk and then they try to find a provider, somebody that that child could go to; a therapist or a doctor or somebody that will help with this child. They're very few or the ones that are there. They're so overwhelmed. I mean, we had our own doctor who does work with a lot of young people, and he just can't take any more patients. Like when we look at our social workers, we limit them to like 15 or 18 cases. These doctors and practitioners are overwhelmed with the number of cases that they have. Is there anything that we can do, you know, through your organization, through Human Services, to maybe help boost that number? Is there anything? Can any of this money be used to help facilitate and help bring more mental health workers, for want of a better word, into the

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system?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yes. So that's been a topic of discussion. In the mental health social work field, there's a shortage, a critical shortage. The line of work isn't appealing necessarily to the younger generations. Just to pay alone, it's just not on par with what they do and what they handle. They should definitely be compensated more.

We have discussed internally about the potential to do some sort of a workforce retention type scholarship program or even an incentive for someone to go back to school who may not be an MSW, to go get that. It's definitely something we can consider and discuss going forward.

LEGISLATOR FORD: Does the ARPA money fall onto you or is that something separate? Would that be for the Youth Youth Agency?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: The ARPA money was managed at the executive level. But

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we came up with the structure -- the prior Administration came up with the structure and distribution amounts for that initial.

LEGISLATOR FORD: I don't think all the agencies -- have they received all their funding?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yes. Anything that we had committed to be given out through ARPA under Human Services has been provided to the agencies.

LEGISLATOR FORD: And is there any possibility in this budget to increase any of the funding to the youth agencies? I know that there was something Friday at their breakfast and I understand their concerns and they do provide a great service here in Nassau County. But I know that we have some money, but I'm wondering if there's any way of like trying to boost some of the allocations.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: One thing that we're -- and we get this every year and we understand and we we hear everybody at

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all of these discussions. One thing we're looking at is that we have some organizations that are leaving money on the table every year, and then we have other organizations that are begging us for more. So right now, my team is in the process of evaluating and having conversations with the organizations that may be leaving money on the table to understand why. Do they not need it? Is it for better use elsewhere? So we're in the process of that. And before we're going to start handing out anything else, we're going to see what we could do to maximize what we already have and maybe redistribute.

LEGISLATOR FORD: My last on this topic would be that with the respondents to the RFP from last year, you said there were a number of like 60.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yeah, 60.

LEGISLATOR FORD: So seven, eight or nine of them, say ten of them. You know, got, they got awards. So there's 50 that

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were left that did not. Have these agencies been weighted based on their responses to the RFP so that if you were going to disperse any more funding? You might say, the Jill Nevin Center would have been number 11 and the Delia DeRiggi-Whitton Center would be number 12. So you would know that already that if you are going to disperse money, you already have agencies that you know that you can give funding to them?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: The agency is part of the scoring process. The program is another thing. We work with these agencies regularly. We understand who's reputable, who may not be so reputable. So we have an idea. But the scoring process takes into account all the aspects; the agency, the program, their stability. So we'll know if there's another RFP or we want to distribute money. And also with our follow ups with our liaisons, we know what's working. We know who's a good organization, who

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provides good resources and programs and we kind of know who doesn't.

LEGISLATOR FORD: And have you looked at the geographic locations of all of the agencies so that you all of a sudden you don't take an agency that responded and it seems that the majority of the money would be like in Eastern Nassau County as opposed to maybe Western. Or all of a sudden, you have a cluster of all agencies receiving and then all of a sudden, say, the Barrier Island gets absolutely nothing. Just so that you could distribute the funding so that you try to hit all of the areas, all of the residents in Nassau County.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Right. At least through the most recent RFEI process that was that was discussed about is it repetitious? Are we eliminating a community? With the RFEI, we received responses from people out of state in Massachusetts. And for us, that was just a strike because there's just no

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connection to Nassau County itself. So location does play a part in the evaluating process.

LEGISLATOR FORD: Well, thank you very much for your responses. And I do urge you to get this Administration to take a look at this funding and really distribute it and get it out there so that it could do some good.

I will advocate because I think the mental health component at NUMC is very vital. And if you can distribute to some of the agencies that are already providing services that we know that a good agencies, let's give them some money, because the holidays are coming up, let's try to save as many people as we can.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Bynoe.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Thank you, Chair. Hi. Good afternoon.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Hi.

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LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I have a couple of questions in a couple of your different program areas, but I'll piggyback off of this current conversation.

Back in 2019, there was a considerable amount of work that was undertaken for an action plan as it related to opioids. Are you familiar with that report?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: I am somewhat familiar with it.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So the folks on that action plan, it included myself and another legislator, the Commissioner of police, folks from the DA's office, it included someone from Human Services, it also included educators from local school districts, folks from advocacy groups and community service groups. And there was a lot of work put in here. They highlight it back then in 2019, the need to do some of the media campaigns that you talked about, retention programs. It talked

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about two parts of legislation, something that we could introduce here at the County, something that we might be able to do for Call of Action to make sure the State got involved. It also spent a lot of time on discussing preventative measures. In the preventative measures, it was looking at therapy from the perspective of trauma being trauma informed. Some of the issues regarding trauma specifically deals with emotional and physical sexual abuse, neglect. It deals with dysfunction, one parent missing from the household. It dealt with other domestic violence issues within the household.

At the end of the day, when we boiled it all down, we determined that we needed to have programming that really was done in a form of collaboration, and we identified the school districts as one of the best and more, I guess, consistent across communities as a stakeholder. And there were a variety of different

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measures in ways that we could do that. One was to provide mental health first aid training to each school district and have them receive the trainer module in in the mental health first aid for adolescents. And it was also to make sure that they had direct services that they could get services for therapy and the like.

I understand that there was a changing of the Guard in the Administration and the like, but this report -- and I brought this up before. This is not the first time I'm going to speak to it. I spoke directly to the Administration in a meeting upstairs, and I spoke on this on the record before. I feel like we may have squandered a lot of time trying to reinvent the wheel when a report was in place. It was here to jump start us. And so I'm not going to spend time, I think folks have already expressed the urgency and kind of lamented about the lost in time on this

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issue. I'm going to probably delve more into what we're doing in terms of the RFEI, because I want to make sure that we're hitting all notes.

The prevention piece is critical, right? We spend more money trying to help someone once they become addicted and it's less expensive to deal with someone when we can just start helping them unpack those traumas and maybe alleviate or prevent any addiction. So what does your RFEI do for that particular approach?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: So some of the recipients -- two of the recipients; YES, Youth Environmental Services and Long Beach Reach, they partner with school districts to work in and out of the school. So the goal to have a social worker inside the school, but also available outside of the school and they're there to provide a coordinated continuum of care model that offers prevention and intervention services. So

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trying to get into the schools to have counselors inside the schools that are also part of a community based organization is one of the goals out of that.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. That's great. But what I didn't hear was the consistency, like making sure that every school district had that level of service. Because what I'm hearing when you stated YES, YES was providing services to Plainedge, Plainview -- I don't know, Wantagh, Massapequa and then you said Long Beach.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Long Beach and Port Washington. This is the first round. And I could let Barry speak. If you want to speak about the detailed importance of this type of programming.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I don't need him to speak to the detail. I'm well informed of what that is.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Okay.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: What I'm sensing

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and hearing here is that there isn't any effort on this County Administration's behalf to make sure that it's in every single school district.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yes. And we would love to see that.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: That should have been.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: If there were more of that responded, I'm sure they probably would have been awarded because there was agreeance upon the Review Committee that it is a very important program to embed into the school districts. But we were limited in terms of who responded to the RFEI.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So then an RFEI may not have been the best approach, right?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: It doesn't say that we couldn't we couldn't consider this as its own entity in the future that we see results --

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: When you wait for

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the future, you're losing people.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: No, I understand.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And I don't want to be repetitious in my responses or in my questions. What I'm saying is we should have put out something that required someone to be able to service 55 school districts. To allow this process where it's only targeting or the target audience will only be five to six school districts, that's not equitable. That's not right. It's not right that we're only assisting a handful of school districts. Drug addiction is rampant through Nassau County school districts. Suicide rates are up. We have truancy that's up. You have young people that are struggling because of the impacts of the pandemic. And this was report and this opioid pandemic was prior to that, it's only gotten worse. It's not getting better. And for us to have a process in place where you're identifying entities that

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can only serve as five and six school districts, I don't think that's the approach.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: So most of the non profits that do this, that's their capability. I wish there was one organization in Nassau --

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: No, no, no. That's their capability under their current framework. If we had taken this money. And set it aside for the purpose of making sure that we were providing this preventative care through 55 school districts, then it would allow one of these non-for-profit community organizations to ramp up. To ramp up their staffing, to create programming to go into these schools. The way we're doing it, it's just not just the way you create programming and policy when you're trying to target an issue. This is the way we've been doing it. YES is not a new service. They've been doing this work prior to the pandemic. They've been

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doing this work prior to the lawsuit being settled and us getting the money. So the purpose of this money is not to keep doing the same thing over and over. The purpose of getting this money was to create policy and programs and put them in place. It's not to keep doing the same thing because we already know that that same thing wasn't working. I feel like we've lost our ability to be innovative. Innovative at a time when we have money to really do something that's impactful and meaningful.

I think this whole process is flawed. Because I think that you guys are moving forward without a plan. Without a concrete plan. You're asking people to respond for interest in providing education, but you haven't given them a real goal. And the goal should be to provide that education and preventative care across the county. And the only way to do that and reach just about every kid, young person, is to do it within the

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school district. You're shaking your head. But how can you correct this flawed process?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: It's definitely something I could talk to the Administration about to see their thoughts on how they want to proceed forward. We started with the RFEI and we got some responses. Barry has educated me quite well on the importance of what you're talking about, of having these providers embedded within the school districts. I support it, and it's something that we definitely can discuss to see if we could move forward at a bigger and better pace like your suggesting.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Because we're going to be leaving communities, scores of children behind with the process that you currently have in place. It's not acceptable.

So while I support and echo the sentiments of my colleagues who have

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spoken before about getting the money into the communities, I'm of the mindset that we need to do it as quickly as we can, but we have to do it in a way that provides success. Provides for an opportunity for these kids that are struggling to have care and it has to happen across the county. I need to see a plan that does that because I think this is flawed.

I know you're not in a position to really make any type of decision on your own right here on the floor, so I'm going to leave that there in the moment, but know that I'm following up on it.

I want to move to Alzheimer's. And based on the reporting and the budget. When I look at your Aging numbers, Long Island Alzheimer's is getting \$233,000. And when I look at the study that was conducted by *Newsday*, which indicates that one out of eight Long Islanders have Alzheimer's is suffering, that that's about 31,000 seniors in Nassau County

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that are suffering. It's stated that Nassau County is ranking in one of the highest categories across the state for people that are suffering from

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Alzheimer's. And when I look at this aging population here in Nassau County,

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which will continue to grow, I can't

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understand how we only earmarked \$233,000

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for the purpose of aiding our community

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residents that are suffering.

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I can tell you already that I see a

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lack in our ability to do that because we

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aren't doing any level of high level

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investing in the disease. I've gone out

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to the Long Island Dementia and

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Alzheimer's Center and I visited that

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center and it should be a center like

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that duplicated. Tenfold. We should be

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creating centers like that across the

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county where folks can go and get the

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respite, so that families can get the

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respite that they need and that

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individuals can be working towards having

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some of their cognitive abilities

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addressed in the earlier onset because they're saying that that helps retard the disease from progressing. And so I can't see where \$233,000 does anything, anything to touch that. I think it was like \$7.51 per person, that's what we're allocating towards the disease when you look at the number of our community residents that are suffering. Isn't there more that we can do?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: We're limited in terms of what the state provides us, and we're trying we have needs across the board between food insecurities and obviously Alzheimer's and all sorts of other aging issues. And we're trying our best to touch on all the areas. It's definitely a conversation to be had with the State in terms of asking for additional funding to support additional respite and whatnot. Debbie Pugliese, my Deputy Commissioner, has started a Memory Cafe at the County level just to kind of bring people in, to give them the respite

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and programming updates and whatnot to support them and their families. Debbie, do you want to --

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I'm taking about the number that's specifically given to Long Island Alzheimer's Association.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: Right. I understand that, but we have --

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So if there's more that I need to know, tell --

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: Yeah, I wasn't sure if you are aware, we also have what they call the Adult Day. We have one in Hewlett. We have one in East Hills. We have Glen Cove.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: What is it that you have at these locations?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: They're Adult Day programs for --

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: They're Adult Day, so they provide respite for the families.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Specifically with Alzheimer's, ma'am?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: Yes.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Glen Cove has a program as well.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Who's running those programs?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Sid Jacobson is an organization we contract with. They have they have a program.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: They have East Hills and they have Herricks.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Long Island Alzheimer's, as you're aware of, Glen Cove Senior Center.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: The Senior Center is not specifically dealing with --

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: The lower --

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: The lower level is specifically for Adult Day.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: New Horizons is in Hewlett. They have a Senior Center on one level and they have Adult Day on another level. Then we have Glen Cove does it the same way; so they

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have two. Then we have Herricks, they have Three E and a Senior Center, but their Three E is run through Sid Jacobsen as well.

Herricks has Alzheimer's patients. Glen Cove is in the lower level. Glen Cove Senior Center is a Senior Center on the first floor when you walk in big center and then on the lower level, they run their Adult Day program. That's all I have, then. What do you want me to say?

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Please don't respond to me that way.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: I'm sorry.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: What I want you to do, I wanted you to continue because I thought you were going to list other entities and venues. So don't do that.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: So I'll just tally it up. So in Glen Cove, we have support through Sid Jacobson's in East Hills; in Herricks we are funding them

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between the two of them, almost \$300,000.
Long Island Alzheimer's is \$235,000; Glen
Cove, part of it embedded in a \$402,000.

(Whereupon, side
discussion.)

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: So it's not
just \$235,000. It's probably more than
double that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: I can
get you an exact number.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: -- giving you the
opportunity to provide those numbers.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Absolutely.
I'll provide them to you.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: If you could do
that and go through each program line
where it might be coupled with other
programming and pull it out, that would
be helpful.

So let me ask you something. What do
you have -- I heard the communities and
if you wouldn't mind recapping, you said
Glen Cove --

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: Glen

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Cove, Westbury, East Hills, Herricks and Hewlett.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay, so what about folks in Uniondale?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: They would go to Westbury.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: What about folks in Roosevelt?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: Westbury.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: We pay for transportation?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: They have a bus.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: We pay for the transportation.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: Yes, we provide transportation.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Why is it that it's embedded in some communities and not in others and that there's a significant requirement for those folks to travel further than others?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: Those

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are the agencies that we have contracts with right now.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Have we looked to expand those services?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: We are looking to expand --

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Being that we have quite a prevalence for it here.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: We are looking to expand those services. Right now, the State is launching a new program, so we need to get a better understanding of what they're launching. Now it's focusing on the caregiver. So once we understand that program, then we'll be able to move forward with an RFP for Adult Day Services.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. Are you aware that some time ago -- You know what? I'm not going to do this here with you today. I'm going to move on.

I want to talk about Youth Services then.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Okay.

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LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Can you talk to me a little bit about specifically what funding is earmarked toward education recovery?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: In Youth?

We haven't put specific opioid funds in terms of Youth, but Keith is our liaison and he could speak to the specifics of some of the programs.

MR. GERBER: Many of our programs provide after school homework assistance and after school programming.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. And so where are those services located?

MR. GERBER: Throughout Nassau County.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Give me some locations.

MR. GERBER: Elmont; Freeport; Big Brothers Big Sisters countywide; Choice For All in Roosevelt; Circulo De La Hispanidad is in Long Beach and Hempstead; Glen Cove Youth Bureau; Community Parent Center is countywide;

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Copay in Great Neck; Cornell Cooperative Extension is countywide; EAC and Hempstead; EOC of Nassau County in Hempstead; we have runaway and homeless youth providers through Family and Children's Association, which are both countywide services; Five Towns Community Center, which is in the located in the Five Towns; Gateway Youth Outreach in Elmont; Glen Cove Boys and Girls House, Glen Cove; Hempstead, Hispanic Civic Association; Hicksville Teenage Council, Hispanic Brotherhood in Rockville Center; Hispanic Counseling Center in Hempstead; La Fuerza Unida in Glen Cove; Leadership Training Institute in Roslyn; Littig House Community Center in Port Washington; Long Beach Reach, which is in Long Beach; Long Island Advocacy Center is countywide; Long Island Crisis Center provides our 24 hour crisis hotline, they're Countywide; Manhasset -- Great Neck, EOC --

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Can I stop you

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for one second. I'm sorry. Instead of having you just recite a whole list. When you say countywide, how would can you identify one of those countywide entities that you just --

MR. GERBER: Sure like Long Island Crisis Center.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: That's education recovery?

MR. GERBER: No, that's not education. That's crisis intervention.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I asked specifically about education recovery.

MR. GERBER: EOC Of Nassau County is countywide.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay.

EOC of Nassau County. They're located in Hempstead, how would someone who might need the services that they provide that lives in Elmont reach that type of service, since it's countywide?

MR. GERBER: Well, they would need their own transportation in order to get there.

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LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So what I'd like then is to find out where education recovery happens locally in each community. And then I would like to know the countywide services separate.

What I'm attempting to do is to make sure that no community is left behind. That we're not saying that there isn't a localized service in a part of this Nassau County that we're trying to address by saying that someone could tap into one of the countywide services that might be miles and miles away from their home.

MR. GERBER: Well, unfortunately, we don't have services in every single village, town, hamlet in Nassau County. But we do stretch from the northeast to the southeast to the northwest to the southwest corners of Nassau County.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I want to personally know where these gaps are.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: We could get you that.

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LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I'd like to know that for the Youth Services and i'd like to know that for the Mental Health Chemical Dependencies. And I'd like to then understand how the numbers are staying flat in so many of these program areas, in so many of these community organizations, how they're staying flat. I know that you're saying that some aren't spending their money. At the end of the year, there's a surplus, and then some are asking for additional funds. I'd love to be able to identify who those entities are as well. Because the folks leaving the money on the table -- and we should do some level of analysis -- because if they've left the money on the table for the last five years, then we don't need to fund them at that amount anymore. And then we need to create other programs to address challenges in the community. That would be an opportunity to address other challenges.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Agreed.

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LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So I think that we need to do that level of analysis because if we know they can't spend it --

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Someone else needs it. Right.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And maybe create some opportunities for some of these countywide folks to have opportunities to localize.

This money staying flat around this time that -- all the things that we talked about. All the behavioral health issues, the mental the mental health issues, it just seems very odd to me that we have an ability to stay flat there. I think we have opportunity there and we should be doing more.

ARPA money. I know that we sent out, what was it?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: \$60,000 to each.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Did we find that that money was used?

MS. ZAKI: It's managed by Haggerty.

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COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Have we had an update from Haggerty?

MS. ZAKI: We don't directly.

The way the setup is, Haggerty manages not only the funding, it is reimbursed through us. They review the application process, and it is directed to the Department, and Fiscal reimburses the total one lump sum amount.

Again, they have to submit their actual expenditure to Haggerty. Department is not involved in the accountability of the ARPA funds. We have reimbursed them the lump sum amounts.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. Thank you.

Do we contract any level of a study across all of these different program lines like Youth Services, through the Aging, the Mental Health piece? Have we commissioned anyone to study the programs that are in place to study the trends so that we can create new benchmarks? You've never undertaken that level of a study?

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COMMISSIONER NEVIN: We do not, no.
We have not funded a study.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I think it would be a real good process to consider so that we know how to move forward. I think that sometimes we might be moving blindly or we're being responsive or reactionary to folks in certain communities saying certain things. But I think that if we did a study across the whole county about programming across all of these different program lines, we might have a better way of mapping a way forward. Taking this Alzheimer's piece into consideration, and whatever you're going to be able to tell me about the cafes in this community and that community. Even speaking to those program providers, have we undertaken that effort to find out how we might better resource them to to meet the current needs that they're experiencing? I just feel like some research goes a long way in making sure that we're not squandering our opportunities and our

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money. I Really suggested the
Administration do that.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Okay.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator
Solages.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Thank you to
the Chair.

I understand your previous point
about deliberate. According to, for
example, Brown versus Board of Education,
great legal decision, deliberate means
take time, but that would prevent waste,
fraud, abuse. But here we have a crisis
and a delay creates an injustice. And as
you know, justice delayed is justice
denied.

You mentioned a study. My colleague
mentioned a study. Wouldn't the
Comptroller, Ms. Phillips, be best suited
to do such a study to see where all this
funding is going and if it's actually
creating a result?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: The opioid

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funding?

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Yes.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Quite possibly.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Has her office reached out to ask for information regarding?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: No.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: And my colleague asked which communities are being left out. I see in the proposed budget for 2023, the LGBT network was allocated \$75,000, and then in 2024 there is no allocation. How are we serving the LGBT community?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: It was held up through compliance at contracts. So we removed it out of the 2024.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Has there been any effort to -- I mean, this is not a gotcha program where if they leave money on the table or if they don't have a disclosure form, we say, hey, too bad. We want to work with these potential vendors or vendors. How can we make sure

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that this funding for Youth Services go to the intended source, such as the LGBT network?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: They had run into lots of issues with their disclosure forms and not properly disclosing things. We followed up with them and to no avail. And that was put on hold Chief Procurement Officer.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Okay.

Nothing further. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Bynoe.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I'm sorry. I had I forgot I had a couple of granular questions on funding as well.

Could you tell me about in Aging, there's seems to be a new program or new funding, about half \$1 million going to Salvation Army. The Win Program. It wasn't funded in 2023, being funded at \$575,000.

(Whereupon, off record discussion amongst Human

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Services Department.)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: Win
is home delivered meals.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Is that something
new we're doing because or was it moved
from one program line to another? It
looks like it had zero funding in 2023,
but in 2024 we're projecting \$575,000.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: They
started a breakfast program. That could
be the breakfast program.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: That's why I'm
asking.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: That
would be my guess would be the breakfast
program. I have to see where we're
looking at.

(Whereupon, perusing.)

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: You can get back
to me on that.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Sorry about
that. We'll get back to you with the
specifics on that.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: I would love if

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everything promised was provided to the Full Body prior to our next budget hearing where OMB will appear, because we can probably follow up with any questions related to whatever you provide at that time.

And then I have a question specifically about Morrison Mentors, why they are not being funded. They had funding placed in 2023, which they never got, and now we're not even proposing anything for them. Is there a reason why we won't engage with them?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: The issue with that is that on December 31, 2021, they were given a contract that was not through an RFP award. Coming in, the Administration was not comfortable just handing over a contract that was not attached to an RFP. So it was placed on hold.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So they were funded without responding with to an RFP.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Correct. It

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was a last minute -- I don't know. It was under the previous Admin, but it was just something we weren't comfortable moving forward with.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay. Have we engaged them for --

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Have they responded to our subsequent RFPs; they have not. We RFP every year. We do cycles every year cycles for RFP and we're on our second one and they have not responded.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: How do folks know about these RFPs?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: They get posted in *Newsday*, we send it out to our e-mail list as well.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And your e-mail list is comprised of people who are currently receiving funding or is it --

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: It's anybody who's inquired, anyone we've interacted with, any organization.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: So I'd like

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verification that your e-mail list included them.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Sure.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Thank you.

MS. ZAKI: Jill, can I just clarify one thing?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Sure.

MS. ZAKI: With the Salvation Army, Legislator, that's a typo. It is actually Pure Foods or it's called Mom's Meals and it's a mistake on my end, I should have typed that name.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And what does that entity do?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: That's a home delivered meal program.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Okay.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: During the pandemic, we picked up an additional home delivered meal program. They are very different than our normal ones. Our normal ones are a door-to-door, person-to-person through Catholic Charities in EAC. Mom's meals, they're a

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national organization and it actually gets shipped via Fedex, I believe, in a dry ice. They get shipped meals and it gives us an ability to reach areas that some of the EAC and Catholic Charities were not able to reach with the boots on the ground type of delivery.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Addressing the gaps.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: And they have the ability to do therapeutic meals, which are regular providers don't do.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: So if you're diabetic, if you have a gluten intolerance. We actually had brought them on under the emergency order of Covid. Since that expired, we have just RFP'd, and we're in process of reviewing, and they were one of three respondents.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: And so how did you identify those gaps? You just had people calling and saying we needed food, but you knew EAC couldn't do it?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PUGLIESE: I
wasn't here at that point during the
pandemic.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yeah, I wasn't
here.

LEGISLATOR BYNOE: That's exactly
what I want to find out about those other
services. Where the gaps are and how we
can innovatively plug those gaps is
exactly what I'm concerned about. I'm
happy you've done that in that arena.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator Ford.

LEGISLATOR FORD: I'll be brief.

Just going back to where you
withdrew the funding you're holding the
funding for the LGBT network. Is that an
organization that is present here in
Nassau County or are they in Suffolk
County?

MR. GERBER: They are based in
Suffolk County, but they do have
programming here in Nassau.

LEGISLATOR FORD: Okay. Is it a

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standalone or are they part of -- because

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I know the Long Island Crisis Center has

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Pride For Youth.

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MR. GERBER: Correct. They are

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different organizations.

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LEGISLATOR FORD: Would you hold

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that money in abeyance until they maybe

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can either come into compliance or if in

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order to fill that gap, that maybe take

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some of that money and add to Pride For

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Youth, the Long Island Crisis Center,

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because they do deal with gay youth. Can

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that be done?

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COMMISSIONER NEVIN: I'm sorry. Can

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you repeat that? To roll over --

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LEGISLATOR FORD: The \$75,000 right

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now, you're holding it because of the

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noncompliance of LGBT network. So will

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you hold that money for either that they

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come into compliance or if they can't do

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that, perhaps maybe see if you can then

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give some additional funding to Pride for

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Youth, which falls under the Long Island

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Crisis Center?

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COMMISSIONER NEVIN: We can consider it for sure. We will continue to try to work with them to see if they can come into compliance.

LEGISLATOR FORD: I hope they do.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: It's a struggle we find for some of these organizations, especially the smaller ones, with all the paperwork and and even responding to RFPs. I know Legislator Bynoe has a concern about not being all over Nassau County, but a lot of these organizations struggle to respond. It's overwhelming just to see an RFP and to read it and to understand all the details that you have to provide.

LEGISLATOR FORD: I know and I do have to give a shout out to Commissioner LaDonna Taylor in regard to working with a lot of the youth agencies. And we happen to know of one that you're being very considerate and very helpful with, because I do know that some of these organizations are delaying in responding

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to RFPs. They think they did; they didn't. They don't have all the paperwork. So rather than just literally cut them off at the knees, you're like, all right, we're going to give you another chance. And I appreciate. I'm hoping that we can continue with that.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Right. We want to work with people. We want to. We're not trying to be sticklers. So we will do whatever we can to help progress the process.

LEGISLATOR FORD: Thank you.

And then with Haggerty, when you were saying about with the ARPA funding with the \$60,000.

MS. ZAKI: \$60,000 was allocated to Office of Mental Health and Office of Chemical Dependency. But there are different amounts for Office for Aging and Office for Youth.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: It's percentage based.

LEGISLATOR FORD: This is an outside

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agency that's overseeing this, right? Is there somebody in the County that is working directly with this agency to oversee them to make sure that if anything needs to be done or signed --

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yeah, we often get e-mails from David Vienna or the Boost Portal asking us for information, asking for us to approve any budget adjustments or anything. So there is communication and I do foresee -- the reviewing process I think only started recently. We did do a Zoom call on that not too long ago. So we will be following up to see about the usage. I would imagine we would get a report considering we work with these organizations.

LEGISLATOR FORD: With the portal, we had an issue with the veterans when they were getting they were allocated certain monies and there was a lack of oversight, whatever it was, where they were held up for months because somebody from the County was not overseeing and

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the person who was in charge of the portal -- things fell through the cracks. That's all I'm asking.

I promise my last. I don't know if we discussed the Office of Physically Challenged, which is very important. And, you do a great job in advocating for those that need a special voice.

Just curious, does the office -- I know that you'll go out like if there's a road project that is done and all of a sudden you go by and you notice that when they did the ramp, there's that little, little lift there. So the office will go out and if there's a complaint, they'll say to whatever entity like, say, it could be the Town of Hempstead, it's not compliant. Then they have to go out and redo the ramp so that a person who is in a wheelchair is able to easily leave a parking lot to get up onto the sidewalk, so forth. Does the Office of Physically Challenged, say you have sidewalks that are impassable like if people you know

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those of us that can walk to and from and go around obstacles it's easy for us to do that, but if you happen to be somebody who's in a wheelchair, you may find that all of a sudden you're not able to go from one corner to the next -- is that something that the Office looks at and makes a determination as to whether or not that has to be remediated by whomever?

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Yeah.

So my director, Matt Dwyer, he's the biggest advocate out there. He goes out regularly to review complaints and issues and he follows up. Some of them are internal, they're County issues at Parks and whatnot. He does, he follows up with the entity who oversees that.

LEGISLATOR FORD: Okay. Thank you very much. Once again, thank you for the good job that you all do.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: All right. Just before before you go, any public comment?

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(Whereupon, no verbal
response.)

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. There be
none. Thank you very much for your
presentation. I appreciate it.

Especially, I know you asked a lot
of questions about the funding from the
settlement, and that is not part of your
Operational Budget. So I don't know if
you were prepared today to talk on that
or not, but I appreciate that you that
you gave the responses you did. So thank
you for your presentation.

COMMISSIONER NEVIN: Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Good afternoon.

CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: Good afternoon. I'm Michele Spara. I'm the Chief Deputy Assessor with the Department of Assessment. I'd like to begin by telling you some facts and happenings that are happening within the Department of Assessment.

As you know, Nassau County is the second largest assessing unit in New York State, second only to New York City. We are designated a Special Assessing Unit governed only along with New York City by Real Property Tax Law Article 18. This means that we are governed by a unique set of laws different from the rest of the state; therefore, creating unique challenges for us.

We are responsible for the valuation of over 425,000 parcels with a fair market value of over \$330 billion. However, the Department of Assessments public service responsibilities is not

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limited to setting property values. We are continuously working with other government agencies regarding economic development and of course the public to assist residents to better understand the assessment process and take advantage of any possible savings that they may qualify for due to property exemptions.

To that end, we are conducting over 40 outreach programs this year alone where the Department of Assessment exemption specialists go out to the public to educate and assist residents with any assessment related questions. We plan to expand this program in 2024 to visit senior centers, VFWs, fire department events to ensure that everyone has a better understanding of the assessment process and any potential benefits that they may be entitled to.

An example of this would be the recent legislation that this Legislature and approximately 30 school districts opted into to increase the senior

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exemption scale. This hasn't been increased since 2007 and was sorely needed to keep our seniors in their homes. We applaud you for this. This is an example of how important our outreach program is for educating the public. We had some seniors who were unaware of this change. They now have applied and they will be receiving this exemption. So again, we thank you.

The Department of Assessment budgeted headcount remains at 169. We currently have 137 employees. We've lost 15 employees this year alone, either due to retirements or accepting employment elsewhere.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank this Administration and also this Legislature for approving the recent CSEA contract. We firmly believe that this will assist in hiring new talent to join the talent that we already have on staff.

The importance of maintaining the Assessment roll each year is to keep the

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data and valuations current and accurate. This requires constant processing annually of thousands of permits, updating property inventory, verification of over 30,000 sales, administering over 300,000 exemptions, as well as handling over 50,000 constituents that either call or come into our offices.

For the 2024 tax year, we had over 27,000 cases filing for SCAR (small claims) in which we were able to mediate over 25,000 of them. This left us with approximately 2000, thus eliminating the need for refunds, severely limiting the County liability.

We are constantly looking at our software and technologies to help us improve efficiency within the Department and keep us on the cutting edge as we strive to be an industry leader in this field.

To that end, we have several initiatives with the IT department that are or will improve our overall

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functionality and quality control. This includes recollecting imagery. Thanks to this Legislative Body for the second time through our vendor cycle media, they're a great vendor that collects the imagery from the street level and integrates these images into our GIS system. This is revolutionary technology that allows us to operate in a much more efficient manner.

Additionally, the Department plans to roll out our field mobile technology. This allows our field collection to be collected and input into our computer system in real time. Picture it as somewhat of a mobile office. This together with Near Map, our vendor for aerial imagery, provides for the most efficient use of our resources ever and we are improving it annually.

All of these initiatives are designed to improve efficiency, reduce the margin of human error and free up personnel to be signed in other areas

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within the Department. We'd like to thank Nancy Stanton and her IT team for always providing the resources that we need.

The times that we are certainly interesting. It is our job to constantly monitor market conditions. However, these recent times have been unprecedented historically. The Covid-19 worldwide pandemic caused shutdowns, thus caused the Assessment roll for the '23 and '24 tax years to remain static. The 2025 year was treated the same as the world exited from a pandemic and entered into an era of extreme market instability, including, but not limited to, inflation, stock market fluctuations, 20 year high mortgage interest rates, and international conflict.

This brings up the question of the 2026 tax year. As we all know, the County is currently engaged, as reported, and I believe spoken to earlier today, in a nationwide search to find a new Assessor. As previously stated, we are in

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unprecedented times. We know that everyone reads in the paper that home prices are setting record prices, and Nassau County's median sales have never been higher. However, the continuing pressures of the high interest rates, along with the unbalanced supply and demand of the market, make any updates to the Assessment roll extraordinarily challenging and likely would be unfair and inequitable.

Regular updates are always advisable when market conditions are stable. However, the Department's position is that it is in the best interest of the residents of Nassau County to not perform and update and allow the laws of Article 18 to govern the Assessment roll for the upcoming year, as these outside pressures are showing conflicting market results within Nassau County and its various home values.

We thank you for your time, and along with my team, if you have any

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questions regarding the budget, we'd be more than happy to answer them.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Thank you for your presentation. I will be fairly quick.

I want to thank you for providing those classes for the exemptions in the communities. I've done a bunch of them in the last six years, but even this year alone, I think we've done 2 or 3. Just did one with Legislator McKeivitt about a week ago and we get an incredible turnout at these events. I don't know how many we had, Tom. I would say about 75 people, 80 people at least. The one request I would have is that if there is additional staff that can be provided to sit with the people, because some people -- and this is a good thing that there's a lot of people that are coming to get this information. But there were some people that were waiting for a good two hours.

CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: Understood.

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We do have challenges over the summer with people on vacation and things like that. We try to send at least three to every program and we're going to continue that throughout the rest of the year.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay, great.
Legislator Solages.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: What is the hiring plan to fill the vacancies?

CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: We continuously have been recruiting throughout the year. Unfortunately, due to the low scale, we get very little responses. We started with one CSEA list that had 260 candidates on it. We received responses from six that they were interested and only four showed up. Two of them declined after that, two of them were hired and one of them since has left for a better employment. So we're going to continuously work through the recruiting process, through Civil Service.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: I saw in the

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newspaper, how a church received a high tax bill in New Hyde Park. Is there still a unit of employees overseeing quality control?

CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: Absolutely. We've beefed up that area over the course of the last several months.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Why didn't they catch that church getting the high bill?

CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: The person that was responsible for that is no longer employed with the County.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: What does beefed up mean? How many are in that Unit?

CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: We have three statisticians. We have, I would say a total of about eight full time. Previously there were four.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Okay. And how is that search going for the new head of the office?

CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: It's my understanding that interviews are

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ongoing.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Thank you very much.

CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: You're welcome.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Legislator DeRiggi-Whitton.

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: I want to thank you guys. I know if any department has received a lot of bumps in the last five years, it's you guys. Thanks for hanging in there. Thank you for doing that. The local government is always received well. So people really love when they can talk to someone face to face at these tax workshops.

But I was just looking at the job description for an assessor, and I know it's a range, but the lower part of the salary was 115. You know, maybe we should try to get that moved up.

CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: It did have the range going up to 150.

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Look,

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it's a lot of money, but perhaps, you know, if we get the right person, it would certainly be worth more than that. Might be worth to advertise it at a little bit of a higher number. How close are you to being a Certified Assessor? Can we send you to school or whatever?

CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: Thank you for the offer (laughter).

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: I've been rejected before (laughter).

All right. Well, perception is a lot. Not having an Assessor gives people uncertainty. Having frozen the rolls for a couple of years again, and the idea of mass settlements is sort of back. So I hate to see it go backwards. I think in the long run, it hurts all of us. It hurts the homeowners.

If there's anything you can think of, if it's staffing or anything else, please let us know. In my heart, I know until we find a real Assessor, that's going to be the start of us getting back

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on track.

CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: Thank you
for the offer, I appreciate that.

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: If
there's anything that we can do to make
it easier, we appreciate it.

CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: Okay. Thank you.
Any public comment?

(Whereupon, no verbal
response.)

CHAIRMAN FERRETTI: All right. There
being none.

Thank you. Thank you for your
presentation.

(Whereupon, above matter concludes,
3:24 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF NEW YORK)

: SS.:

COUNTY OF NASSAU)

I, KAREN LORENZO, a Notary Public
for and within the State of New York, do
hereby certify:

That the above is a correct
transcription of my stenographic notes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
set my hand this 27th day of September, 2023.

Karen Lorenzo

Karen Lorenzo

\$			
\$1,000 ^[1] - 41:9	\$233,000 ^[3] -	35:2, 35:3, 35:14,	40:5, 179:6,
\$1,138,040 ^[1] -	290:20, 291:9,	36:25, 37:9,	201:14, 309:20
106:23	292:5	49:10, 49:18,	1-1:30 ^[2] - 86:14,
\$1,800 ^[1] - 208:11	\$235,000 ^[2] - 296:3,	49:24, 51:25, 57:2	129:3
\$10 ^[1] - 156:16	296:8	\$7.51 ^[1] - 292:7	1.2 ^[1] - 23:24
\$100 ^[6] - 90:2, 90:3,	\$25 ^[1] - 156:17	\$70,000 ^[2] - 68:2,	1.3 ^[3] - 96:22, 98:6,
182:21, 182:23,	\$25,000 ^[1] - 48:14	68:4	98:11
188:3, 191:19	\$27,000 ^[1] - 35:8	\$75,000 ^[3] - 56:4,	1.4 ^[1] - 107:7
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