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EDUCATION AND LABOR COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
MINUTES

A meeting of the Education and Labor Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held hybrid via Zoom/in person in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on August 21, 2021.

Members Present:

Legislator Samuel Gonzalez - Vice Chairman
Legislator Susan A. Berland
Legislator Leslie Kennedy
Legislator Kara Hahn
Legislator Jason Richberg
Legislator William Spencer
Legislator Kevin J. McCaffrey - Chairman (excused)

Also in Attendance:

Presiding Officer Robert Calarco
Sarah Simpson - Counsel to the Legislature
Dan DuBois - Deputy Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature
Derek Stein - Aide to Presiding Officer Calarco
Jenn Hann - Aide to Legislator Gonzalez
Benny Pernice - Budget Review Office
All Other Interested Parties

Minutes Taken By:

Gabrielle Severs - Court Stenographer

1 (The meeting was called to order at 11:32 a.m.)
2

3 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

4 Good morning. Welcome to the Education and Labor Committee
5 meeting. If we could please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance led
6 by Legislator Richberg.
7

8 (Pledge of Allegiance)
9

10 If we could remain standing for a minute just in remembrance for
11 all those who have given their lives and the ultimate sacrifice to
12 keep us free and away from all of harm's way.
13

14 (Moment of Silence Observed)
15

16 Thank you. You may be seated. So, ladies and gentlemen, once
17 again, good morning. Thank you for attending the Education and
18 Labor committee meeting. Our chair, Legislator McCaffrey, has an
19 excused absence. As the co-chair, I will be conducting today's
20 meeting. As I look, we do not have any correspondence and we are
21 actually going to begin with the public portion. Madam Clerk, we
22 do have one -- I think it's one card I have before me and I'm
23 going to admit her. Her name is Ilona Teraka (ph). Just give me
24 one minute so we could set the time. Thank you, Ilona, for
25 speaking today. You may begin, please.
26

27 **MS. TERAKA:**

28 Thank you. Good morning, Suffolk County Legislature Education and
29 Labor committee. My name is Ilona Teraka, and I am a PH.D.
30 candidate in public policy and administration, and I am also on the
31 Town of Brookhaven Republican Committee. I'd like to bring forward
32 the idea of creating a position of an education czar within the
33 office of the Suffolk County executive. The person in this
34 position will act as a liaison between the New York Department of
35 Education and Suffolk County public is school system to enforce the
36 state's education policies and to also represent Suffolk County
37 schools by giving them a voice in Albany towards creating systemic
38 changes within the education system.
39

40 The full-time salary for this position can be found from the
41 accumulation of an amount put aside in each of the school
42 district's budget within Suffolk County. For example, there are 72
43 school districts in Suffolk County; if each district line items
44 \$1,000, we have our education czar's salary. The education czar
45 can also work to create more vocational training centers throughout
46 the county to ensure that every high school graduate is on a path
47 towards financial independence and career success. Our motto
48 within Suffolk County needs to be "Let no high school graduate be
49 left behind."
50

51 Personally, I believe this new position would bring increased
52 organization within the Suffolk County school system, decrease
53 burdens of district superintendent, assist state government
54 representatives, increase student achievement levels, and improve
55 the piece of mind of parents. Everyone benefits in this equation.
56

1 Thank you for your time and consideration for this new position.
2 Have a great day.

3
4 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

5 Thank you very much, Ms. Teraka. Thank you very much for
6 testifying before us today. Are there any questions, by any chance
7 from anyone, any of the legislators? Seeing none, is there anyone
8 else from the public that would like to testify or come before us
9 at this moment? All right. Not seeing anyone, we will close the
10 public portion and move on to our agenda.

11
12 So we do not have any appointments or presentations today. All
13 right. So once again, we do not have appointments or
14 presentations. We're moving on to tabled resolutions.

15
16 **IR 1473, Adopting Suffolk County Community College budget for the**
17 **year 2021-2022. (Co. Exec.).** We adopted this budget on the 22nd.

18
19 **MR. RICHBERG:**

20 Motion to table.

21
22 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

23 I think this is motion subject to call.

24
25 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

26 Motion to table subject to call.

27
28 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

29 So there's a motion to table subject to call. Second by --

30
31 **LEG. BERLAND:**

32 I'll second.

33
34 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

35 Second by Legislator Berland.

36
37 **LEG. SPENCER:**

38 On the motion,.

39
40 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

41 On the motion.

42
43 **LEG. SPENCER:**

44 Maybe to Counsel. If we've already adopted it, why wouldn't this
45 just be withdrawn?

46
47 **MS. SIMPSON:**

48 So we adopted the legislature's budget resolution for the community
49 college. This is the county executive's resolution. The
50 legislature does not have the authority to withdraw the county
51 executive's resolutions; only the county executive has that
52 authority, so unless he withdraws this resolution, we would have to
53 continue to table it, or if we tabled it subject to call, it will
54 just stay on the agenda until it naturally dies.

55
56 **LEG. SPENCER:**

1 Thank you.

2

3 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

4 Okay. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions?

5

6 **MR. DUBOIS:**

7 Eight.

8

9 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

10 IR 1473 is tabled subject to call.

11

12 Moving on to Introductory Resolutions. **IR 1493, Appropriating**
13 **funds in connection with infrastructure college wide (CP 2149).**
14 **(Co. Exec.)**

15

16 **LEG. BERLAND:**

17 Motion.

18

19 **MR. RICHBERG:**

20 Second.

21

22 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

23 Motion by Legislator Berland. Second by Legislator Richberg.

24

25 **LEG. SPENCER:**

26 On the motion.

27

28 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

29 On the motion, please.

30

31 **LEG. SPENCER:**

32 I was wondering, Mr. Chair, would it be possible for Ben to come up
33 and maybe just give us an infrastructure overview.

34

35 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

36 Absolutely. As he has already approached the table, about to sit
37 and deliberate on this resolution.

38

39 **MR. ZWIRN:**

40 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a resolution for \$2.5 million to
41 be bonded for maintenance of the college's infrastructure. It was
42 scheduled to be in last year's capital budget, but because of the
43 financial situation of the pandemic we did not move forward with
44 it. We weren't going to burden the county at that time with
45 additional expenses, and we used up just about everything that was
46 in the account. There was about \$14 million worth of work that has
47 to be done. It's listed -- I don't know, you may have copies of
48 this. It may have been distributed. If not, I will make them
49 available, listing the projects. The state will pick up -- will
50 match the county's contribution, which is always nice in the
51 capital program, and we're down to about \$277,000 is what's left in
52 the account, and we have clearly a lot more projects that have to
53 be done.

54

55 Some of the CARES Act money that we received can be used if it's
56 use for, like, air ventilation and Covid related, but if it's a new

1 roof or it's pipes or plumbing or electrical work, that is not
2 covered, and we would have to go to our capital fund to be able to
3 make those improvements, and that's pretty much where we are.
4 Again, we only use what we need, but it would be a \$2.5 million
5 dollar obligation. Interest rates are still very good. It's a
6 good time to get things done, and we would hope that you would be
7 able to support it. As I said, we put it off an extra year because
8 we knew that there was a situation that the county had trouble --
9 everybody was dealing with on the financial side. This year,
10 things are a little bit -- or a lot better than they were a year
11 ago.

12
13 **LEG. SPENCER:**

14 So with 2.5 million on \$14 million need, with this list, is this
15 prioritized?

16
17 **MR. ZWIRN:**

18 Yes. The things that had to be done first will be done first, and,
19 again, some of the smaller projects, we might be able to do out of
20 fund balance, but this is the serious annual maintenance work that
21 has to be done on a regular basis. SUNY has come down and done an
22 analysis of our projects and again the state has been supportive,
23 and they will put up an additional \$2.5 million, so it'll be \$5
24 million, so we'll get done the things that have to be done
25 immediately.

26
27 **LEG. SPENCER:**

28 The list that we have, it's already prioritized?

29
30 **MR. ZWIRN:**

31 Yes.

32
33 **LEG. SPENCER:**

34 It is. Okay. Thank you.

35
36 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

37 That was a match, correct, with the state?

38
39 **MR. PERNICE:**

40 Yes. If the county gives it to us then the state will follow
41 through. There used to be a time the state would go first, and I
42 think it might have been Legislator Trotta who said, Why do we have
43 to go first? And the reason was the state would commit this money,
44 and if the local sponsor, which is the county legislature in a
45 particular county did not participate, then the state had this
46 money tied up and had a financial bookkeeping nightmare trying to
47 keep track of all the different projects around the state. So now
48 they want to make sure that the local sponsor thinks this is
49 important enough for them to participate, then the state will
50 participate in an equal amount of money.

51
52 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

53 Any other questions from anyone? Okay. So there is a motion to
54 approve and a second. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions?

55
56 **MR. DUBOIS:**

1 Eight.

2

3 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

4 IR 1493 is approved.

5

6 **MR. ZWIRN:**

7 Thank you very much.

8

9 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

10 IR 1515, Appropriating funds in connection with infrastructure
11 college wide (CP 2149). (Co. Exec.) This needs go on the consent
12 calendar.

13

14 **MR. RICHBERG:**

15 Motion to approve and place on the consent calendar.

16

17 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

18 Motion -- second by Legislator Berland. All in favor? Opposed?
19 Abstentions?

20

21 **MR. DUBOIS:**

22 Eight.

23

24 **VICE CHAIRMAN GONZALEZ:**

25 IR 1493 is placed on the consent calendar.

26

27 Ladies and gentlemen, this is our agenda. We are adjourned.

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29 (Meeting was adjourned at 11:43 a.m.)

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