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4 **WAYS & MEANS, BUDGET & FINANCE**
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6 **AND EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEES**
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8 **OF THE SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**
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11 **Operating Budget**
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14 A joint meeting of the Ways & Means, Budget & Finance and Education
15 & Labor Committees of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in
16 the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H.
17 Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway,
18 Smithtown, New York on October 13, 2021, via in-person and Zoom
19 conference to discuss the matter of the Operating Budget.
20

21 **Members Present:**

22 Legislator Bridget Fleming - Chair of Ways and Means
23 Legislator Jason Richberg - Chair of Budget and Finance
24 Legislator Kevin McCaffrey - Chair of Education and Labor
25 Legislator Tom Cilmi - Vice Chair of Budget and Finance
26 Legislator Susan Berland - Vice Chair of Ways & Means/Member of
27 Budget & Finance and Education & Labor
28 Legislator Sarah Anker - Member/Budget & Finance
29 Legislator Rob Trotta - Member/Ways & Means
30 Legislator Leslie Kennedy - Member/Ways & Means/Education & Labor
31

32 **Also in Attendance:**

33 Presiding Officer Robert Calarco - District No. 7
34 Amy Ellis - Clerk of the Legislature
35 Lance Reinheimer - Director/Budget Review Office
36 Roz Gazes - Budget Review Office
37 Thomas Corcoran - Budget Review Office
38 Benny Pernice - Budget Review Office
39 John Kennedy - Suffolk County Comptroller
40 Rosalie Drago - Commissioner/Department of Labor
41 All Other Interested Parties
42

43 **Minutes Taken By:**

44 Gabrielle Severs - Court Stenographer
45

46 **Minutes Transcribed By:**

47 Kim Castiglione - Legislative Secretary
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(*The meeting was called to order at 9:40 a.m.*)

CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Suffolk County Legislature. We have special meetings of our committees today throughout the day for the Operating Budget, beginning with the Ways and Means Committee. So we are beginning now with Ways and Means. We'll start the meeting with a Pledge to the flag led by Legislator Berland.

Salutation

Good morning. Thank you and we have our Budget Review staff here with us today. This morning's session will be Way and Means and then I'll turn it over to Chairman Richberg for the Budget and Finance Committee and we'll move on from there.

First, I wanted to just welcome everyone. We are under the Governor's order we are doing a hybrid approach once again to our meetings and so folks are welcome to come into the meeting in Public Portion either in person or on the Zoom screen. The link is available on the website. If you are coming into the auditorium we will require that you wear masks whether or not you are vaccinated. But anyone is welcome to come, three-minutes at the podium, the regular Public Portion. I don't have any cards. Amy, is that correct?

So we don't have any cards so we'll move right into our agenda, which is only one item. We are talking today about the Operating Budget. We've received the proposed Operating Budget from the County Executive and now we, the Legislature, are debating and examining what is in the budget and how it serves the taxpayers.

So we have Lance Reinheimer, who is the Director of our Budget Review, with us. Lance, I think you mentioned it might be nice if you give us a quick overview here at the beginning of the day. Thank you for your very hard work.

DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:

And thank you, thank you very much. First of all, I want to say yesterday I e-mailed out all of the Legislators a narrative copy of the presentation that we made yesterday, which I'll give you a similar summary today because not all Legislators were in that meeting yesterday.

The 2022 recommended budget is \$3.9 billion. It's structurally balanced and provides the opportunity to reduce future cost and to provide significant reserves for the future. Two factors contributed to this situation. First of all, the receipt of stimulus funds from the American Rescue Plan and also unanticipated growth in sales tax, and I'll address each of those factors separately.

American Rescue Plan. American Rescue Plan is providing Suffolk County with \$286 million over the two-year period. We received the first half of 143 million this year and we anticipate in May

1 receiving the second 143 million. In 2021 we appropriated -- we
2 had two resolutions that appropriated \$113 million of the ARP
3 money. Resolution 204, if you recall, earlier this year we
4 appropriated 71.3 million to support governmental services that
5 were not included in the 2021 Operating Budget. And the 2021, of
6 course, Operating Budget anticipated or was looking to have funds
7 to restore those government services. Just recently at the last
8 Legislature meeting you passed Resolution 826, which appropriates
9 41.9 million for Suffolk County Coastal Resiliency Initiative at
10 Forge River.

11
12 The 2022 recommended budget appropriates the balance of the ARP
13 funds, which is 173 million. Thirty-four point nine million is for
14 a new program called Main Street Recovery Program in economic
15 development; 124.9 million is for Water Infrastructure Program in
16 Public Works; and 13.6 million is used for revenue loss in the
17 General Fund. We have until the end of 2026 to spend these funds
18 and we don't anticipate that all of the water infrastructure funds
19 or the economic recovery funds would all be spent during this year,
20 but they are appropriated in 2022. So we anticipate that some of
21 those funds will be carried over into 2023 and beyond.

22
23 Sales tax. Earlier this morning I e-mailed you the chart for sales
24 tax. It's a little hard to follow and I thought the chart would
25 help you. If you check it, it is in your e-mail. The 2021
26 recommended budget projects that we'll have a \$360 million surplus
27 in sales tax this year. That's 19.82 percent over the 2020 actual.

28
29 So in 2021 the adopted budget included \$1.4 billion in sales tax.
30 The estimated 2021 budget is projecting 1.76 billion. That's a 19
31 percent increase. The 2022 budget is projecting a three percent
32 increase and increasing sales tax to 1.8 billion.

33
34 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

35 Lance, can I interrupt you for just a second?

36
37 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

38 Sure.

39
40 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

41 Did you e-mail separately the document that you're referencing?

42
43 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

44 Yes, I e-mailed it this morning. If you didn't get it -- let me
45 just put it up on the screen.

46
47 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

48 I didn't receive it. I don't know if some of my colleagues didn't
49 either.

50
51 **LEG. CILMI:**

52 I got it.

53
54 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

55 I don't recall. I might have --

1 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

2 I just want to make sure all Legislators get a copy. So it's
3 called Table 1, Suffolk County Sales Tax Revenue?

4
5 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

6 Yes.

7
8 **LEG. BERLAND:**

9 It's on page 13.

10
11 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

12 Yes. I'm going to put up 13.

13
14 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

15 So just to clarify. The document that you're referring to that you
16 e-mailed is a part of your budget review?

17
18 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

19 That's correct.

20
21 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

22 Okay, great.

23
24 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

25 I'm putting it up on the screen now. I'm not sure, I don't think I
26 did e-mail it to you by mistake, I'm sorry. But I'll put it up on
27 the screen and I will e-mail you that chart after the meeting.

28
29 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

30 Thank you. I just wanted to be concerned that we're all on the
31 same page and all Legislators have it, but it's good to know that
32 it's page 13 of the Budget Review Office summary of your
33 recommended Operating Budget Review that was dated October 8th.
34 Thank you.

35
36 **LEG. ANKER:**

37 Bridget, I just sent it over to you. Check your e-mail.

38
39 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

40 Thank you.

41
42 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

43 Thank you. So as you can see here, the 2020 actual sales tax was
44 1.4 billion. We were very conservative during 2021, which is the
45 proper way to budget, and that's why we're ending up with such a
46 surplus. We didn't anticipate that the economy would heat up as
47 much as it did and we weren't sure if there would be additional
48 stimulus funds in 2021, which, of course, winds its way through the
49 economy. In 2021 estimate you see it increased right here, 19.82
50 percent, and then the recommended budget is projecting at \$1.8
51 billion, three percent increase.

52
53 Our projections for sales tax are a little bit more optimistic in
54 2021. We're projecting almost a 23 percent increase in sales tax.
55 However, in 2022 we believe the economy will slow down. Expiration
56 of Federal Enhanced Unemployment Benefits, the prospect that there

1 will be no additional stimulus funds for individuals winding its
2 way through the economy, and we also believe that the combination
3 of supply chain shortages of durable goods, including automobiles
4 and appliances, will somewhat be a drag on the economy. Our sales
5 tax projection is a little bit negative, almost one percent
6 negative in 2022.

7
8 The important thing is to look at the two years when we're looking
9 at budgets. So on almost \$3.6 billion, our estimate and the County
10 Executive's estimate is a difference of \$26 million, so we're
11 within one percent of the County Executive's projections. We feel
12 to be conservative we're comfortable with the County Executive's
13 projections. We believe they're reasonable and expectations with
14 the economy, we feel that that's a good number. Even though we're
15 \$26 million higher over the two years, we feel that we didn't make
16 any recommendations because there's so many unknowns next year in
17 the economy that we just feel we're more comfortable going with the
18 lower number. Does anyone have any questions on sales tax? I know
19 that's a little --

20
21 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

22 Yes, I do, and probably others do as well. I do have a concern.
23 There are several of our colleagues who are on the committee who
24 have had an issue with getting their Zoom credentials correct. So
25 if we could just take a little pause --

26
27 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

28 Sure.

29
30 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

31 -- and make sure that we have participation by everyone.

32
33 **LEG. TROTТА:**

34 I think Legislator Piccirillo is trying to get on also.

35
36 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

37 Is that you, Rob Trotta?

38
39 **LEG. TROTТА:**

40 Yes.

41
42 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

43 Oh, so you make it on. Okay, you were one of the missing members.
44 Sorry about that. So let's just take a five-minute break and make
45 sure that everybody's in the meeting.

46
47 **LEG. TROTТА:**

48 Can we ask some questions during the break maybe?

49
50 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

51 No, no, no. No, no. I want to wait five-minutes so that --
52 because the questions are important. Lance just reviewed what he
53 went over yesterday and what we've gotten in writing. So just to
54 ensure that everybody's on the same page I want to be fair to these
55 three Legislators who had, by no fault of their own, incorrect Zoom
56 credentials. So we're going to start in five-minutes, okay? Let's

1 just take a five-minute break. Thank you.

2
3 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

4 Just so folks know, the e-mail came last Friday. It's the Friday
5 e-mail in case people are looking for the Zoom information.

6
7 *(The meeting was recessed from 9:51 a.m. to 9:56 a.m.)*

8
9 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

10 Okay. Thank you all for your patience. We're going back on the
11 record and I'm waiting for the livestream to come up. We're good?
12 Thank you. And welcome, Legislator Kennedy and Legislator Trotta.
13 The technicalities are sometimes a challenge and so I understand
14 that some Legislators weren't able to log on initially, but I hope
15 everybody who needs to be is.

16
17 And we just heard from Director Reinheimer an overview which was
18 given yesterday as well. You have in your e-mail inboxes 2022
19 Operating Budget summary that was done yesterday, the 12th, and
20 arrived today, in your inbox. I'm sorry, yesterday in your inbox,
21 and then also just now we've been discussing something called Table
22 One, Suffolk County Sales Tax Revenue, which is also found on page
23 13 of the review of the 2022 Recommended Operating Budget by the
24 BRO, which was distributed to Legislators on October the 8th. So
25 now we're all on the same page. Thank you all for your patience.

26
27 Lance, you were talking about sales tax and I have a number of
28 Legislators who would like to be heard. I do have a question with
29 regard to the caution that both you and the County Executive are
30 approaching next year's sales tax with. I appreciate that sense of
31 conservative budgeting, and I just wonder, you know, we're hearing
32 news, not only about the durable goods supply chain, but generally
33 speaking the supply chains, whether it's computer chips or, you
34 know, gasoline or whatever it is that's clogging things up in ports
35 in Los Angeles and the Midwest and prices rising. Is that also
36 something that you feel has been adequately accounted for in the
37 County Executive's projections with regard to sales tax in 2022?

38
39 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

40 Yeah, I think the County Executive was, over the two-year period,
41 was obviously more conservative than we are. You know, recent
42 information, the U.S. Consumer Price Index increased by 5.3 percent
43 this past year. Last month was one of the largest increases in
44 30 years. Inflation, we're all aware now of possible inflation,
45 like you mentioned, supply chain shortages. Some people will
46 substitute products and will continue to purchase, other people
47 will postpone products because they're not available. So there's a
48 lot of unknowns next year. More so than usual and, you know, all
49 of us looking into a crystal ball of what the economy is going to
50 do, it's your best estimate given the information you have today.

51
52 But I'm a little hesitant about the economy going into 2022. I
53 think that when you don't have the stimulus funds going through
54 there's still quite a few people unemployed. As I mentioned
55 yesterday, you have the impact on people with schools, are schools
56 going to be able to remain in session, will children have to be

1 sent home. That impacts a lot of people when their child care
2 arrangements fall through. They have to leave their jobs, they cut
3 back on hours. So there's a lot of things that's going to impact
4 the economy next year that I think are more on the downside than on
5 the upside. I don't think it's time to panic, but I just think
6 that we're just going to have a correction or a slow down.

7
8 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

9 And with regard to the approach that we're seeing in the proposed
10 budget in terms of shoring up reserves in many different funds,
11 retiring some debt so that we're reducing debt service costs, how
12 do you think or do you think that those steps impact our ability to
13 absorb any kind of miscalculation when it comes to sales tax. I
14 mean, one would hope there's a belt and suspenders here, that (a),
15 you conservatively budget, and then (b), you have what you need to
16 correct if an adjustment needs to be made because the budgeting was
17 somehow incorrect. And I just -- I note that in this Operating
18 Budget we're fortunate to see, you know, really very good movement
19 in terms of responsible budgeting with regard to building of
20 reserves and retiring debt costs. So I'm wondering if you could
21 comment on that.

22
23 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

24 Sure. Well, the budget provides for significant reserve funds and
25 contingency funds that actually reverses a lot of the one-shots and
26 budgetary one-shots that we had to do during poor or downturns in
27 the economy where the County was forced to make decisions that you
28 had to do to get through the year. This budget corrects or pays
29 off those past one-shots. And if I can continue, I'll address
30 reserve funds and contingency funds. The recommended budget
31 provides \$155 million to pay off the entire balance of the
32 retirement amortization.

33
34 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

35 I'm sorry, Lance. Can I stop you for just a second?

36
37 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

38 Sure.

39
40 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

41 You were talking about sales tax when we took our little pause --

42
43 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

44 Right. Okay, I thought we --

45
46 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

47 -- and Legislator Trotta had a question about sales tax.

48
49 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

50 Sure.

51
52 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

53 I think it might be better if we just chunk it out and --

54
55 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

56 Sure. Yes, I'm sorry.

1
2 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

3 Or maybe not, because now I see Mr. Trotta is not at his desk.
4 Rob, you're up. Would you like to put some questions to Lance?

5
6 **LEG. TROTТА:**

7 Yeah. Historically, when we've ever had an increase of 19 percent,
8 what happens after that? Any kind of -- if you're looking back
9 over time, you know, this is a weird time, but what usually happens
10 in the years after a huge increase like this?

11
12 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

13 Well, this is an increase that's twofold. One is the economy
14 locally here did better than we anticipated and, two, because we
15 were so conservative compared to budget, because we were so
16 conservative last year in budgeting sales tax, we ended up with a
17 \$361 million surplus. Going forward into 2022 you can see from the
18 chart that's up the County Executive based on his estimate of where
19 we'll end 2021, is only looking at a three percent increase. So,
20 yes, sales tax should start, if we budget exactly where we expect
21 sales tax to be and it grows, we're not going to see a 19 percent
22 increase in 2023.

23
24 **LEG. TROTТА:**

25 My question is historically when you go back over the years, I
26 think when was the last time it was, you know, increased
27 significantly and then there was a corresponding decrease. I mean,
28 it's sort of like the stock market in some extent. You might have
29 a 30 percent -- I mean, is it possible you have a 30 percent
30 decrease in sales tax next year? And I'm basing this on a friend
31 of mine who owns like seven car dealerships. And you know what she
32 says? She'd have to lay off the salespeople because there's no
33 cars, and there's no cars for the foreseeable future, even a year
34 out.

35
36 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

37 So, okay. Yeah, in the past, in -- well, yeah, that impacts.
38 Aside from accounting for increases in the sales tax rate, we have
39 had periods of increases in sales tax and then it moderates. It
40 does go up and down. It does reflect the economy.

41
42 **LEG. TROTТА:**

43 Looking at the chart you're looking at, what's the biggest decrease
44 we've ever seen? What percentage? It's probably in 2009.

45
46 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

47 Yeah, in 2009, right, we went down eight and a half percent. Eight
48 and a half percent in 2009.

49
50 **LEG. TROTТА:**

51 What was the corresponding two years prior to that? It was up what
52 and what?

53
54 **MR. CORCORAN:**

55 Okay. So as Lance said, that was in 2009 we went down by eight and
56 a half percent. The two years before that, so 2008, the end of the

1 year there that would have been the start of the great recession.
2 So that year was also down one percent. But then prior to that you
3 would be in 2007 and that was an increase of three percent over the
4 year prior.

5
6 **LEG. TROTТА:**
7 And what about 2006?

8
9 **MR. CORCORAN:**
10 2006 was up by about two and a half percent.

11
12 **LEG. TROTТА:**
13 Okay. So this is like -- we're in unprecedented, unlooked at
14 territory. Is it safe to say that we've never had a 19 percent
15 increase?

16
17 **MR. CORCORAN:**
18 That is correct. Not in at least the last 20 years or so as far
19 back as we know.

20
21 **LEG. TROTТА:**
22 Okay. So now we're looking back 20 years. Now we got a 19 percent
23 increase. We have basically \$600 million in stimulus money, not to
24 mention \$600 unemployment which is now half and we have a supply
25 chain. I would think your estimate is not conservative enough. We
26 could conceivably go down 20 percent or 15 percent. Is that
27 possible?

28
29 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
30 Looking forward anything is possible. You know, this is
31 projections that we have based on data and programs that we have
32 projecting forward. So if there's unforeseen circumstances or
33 events that we're not, you know, aware of, sure, you know, anything
34 is possible. It can go upside, too.

35
36 **LEG. TROTТА:**
37 Well, what are other municipalities saying? You know, what is the
38 New York State saying? What's Nassau County saying? I mean, it
39 can't, you know, it's the old thing; what goes up must come down.
40 And it's not going to sustain at this rate. I know people that,
41 you know, got all this money and now it's stopping. I mean, the
42 County of Suffolk, I don't think they are going to come through
43 with another \$300 million in 2022. I mean, they you have whole
44 inflation fears that go into all of this.

45
46 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
47 So if you look at our projection, this year we're projecting that
48 sales tax in 2021 will come in a little bit higher. We're \$45
49 million higher than the County Executive for 2021. We anticipate a
50 negative growth in 2022. Because we have a higher base in 2021,
51 our negative growth in 2022 puts us about where the County
52 Executive is. We come in \$19 million less. So over the two-year
53 period we're a little bit higher than the County Executive by 26
54 million, and that's because we're more optimistic about the last
55 quarter in 2021. However, we do feel the last quarter, and we see,
56 is slowing down compared to the previous three quarters. We are

1 projecting a negative growth of .68 percent in 2022 in our model,
2 our sales tax model.

3
4 **LEG. TROTТА:**

5 You know what I'm leading at here. You've already seen a slow down
6 and you're only doing a whatever, less than a one percent
7 projection for next year. I mean, it literally could be 10 percent
8 less next year. And where does that put us if it is?

9
10 **CHAIRWOMAN FLEMING:**

11 Okay. Rob, I think the questions -- that's a question -- you're
12 making your point. I think you've had your opportunity to make
13 your point. I don't know that Lance can look in a crystal ball any
14 more than anyone else. He's talking about numbers and projections
15 that are based data, not individual anecdotal discussions with
16 individuals in the community, but data that he and his office have
17 been carefully crunching, and he has projected negative growth in
18 the sales tax for '22. So thank you for your questions, but I
19 think they've been addressed by Lance's responses.

20
21 **LEG. TROTТА:**

22 I want to just go down another path here. Let's take 2020. And if
23 you were to go up -- forget about 2021. What percent would have to
24 go up at 10 percent a year for 2022? Do you understand what I'm
25 saying? If in 2020 we went up 10 percent now and 10 percent then.
26 I mean, look, I'm just trying to clear off your crystal ball
27 because I don't think it's going to be nearly as good as you think
28 it's going to be. I think that we have problems coming ahead. So,
29 I'll leave it at that.

30
31 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

32 Okay. Thank you.

33
34 **LEG. BERLAND:**

35 Madam Chair. Can I ask a question, Madam Chair?

36
37 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

38 Just one second. So, Rob, that's it, you're done with your
39 questions?

40
41 **LEG. TROTТА:**

42 Yes.

43
44 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

45 Okay, Legislator Berland.

46
47 **LEG. BERLAND:**

48 I just want to say this is a Ways and Means Committee meeting, so I
49 just didn't know why we're going into the weeds of some of the
50 stuff which was just not what I thought we were here to do, so.

51
52 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

53 Okay. Thank you. Does anyone else have any questions for Lance?
54 Okay, good. Seeing none, we're going --

55
56

1 **LEG. ANKER:**

2 Bridget.

3

4 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

5 Yeah? Oh, sorry, Sarah.

6

7 **LEG. ANKER:**

8 No, that's okay. I don't think he was finished just doing the
9 quick review. I think there's just like another couple of --

10

11 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

12 You're absolutely right. Thank you, Sarah. Yeah, Lance, you
13 wanted to talk about the reserves and the other funds. Thank you.

14

15 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

16 Okay, thank you very much. So the recommended budget does provide
17 for the future by resourcing several reserve funds and it has
18 contingency funds to pay off past one-shots that are costing future
19 budgets money. The recommended budget includes \$155 million to pay
20 off retirement amortization. The average annual savings of that is
21 about \$1.3 million and total savings is 14 million from paying off
22 the amortization. The recommended budget also includes an
23 additional \$96.3 million for the Debt Reserve Fund, and that
24 includes when the bonds for the H. Lee Dennison Building and North
25 Complex are callable, which is in 2023, \$46 million. The plan is
26 to use the \$46 million of that, those funds, to satisfy those
27 bonds.

28

29 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

30 Can I stop you for a second on the Dennison Building? So the
31 budget accounts for the debt service, for the reduction in the debt
32 service after the bond is called. But what about the lease
33 payments? Aren't there also lease payments attached to that
34 transaction and will we see savings there as well?

35

36 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

37 Yeah, it's all wrapped up into one, the bond debt service. It's a
38 lease buyback. The bonds were issued for that particular -- I
39 think it provided \$71 million. We're paying about \$8.7 million a
40 year, so going forward -- I'm sorry, 5.5 we're paying per year.
41 The savings from that would be 8.7 million over the ten years.

42

43 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

44 So that includes both the debt service and the lease payments.

45

46 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

47 That's correct.

48

49 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

50 Okay. Thank you. Sorry to interrupt.

51

52 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

53 That's okay. The recommended budget also includes 48.2 million to
54 pay off deferred employee salaries from prior years. We had a
55 little discussion about that yesterday during the Working Group,
56 how employees will be paid, when they will be paid, how that's

1 going to be done, is -- that would be negotiated with the
2 individual collective bargaining units. So this provides the funds
3 to do that, if and when that comes to be.

4
5 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

6 Can you just say where that fund is located, the contingency fund
7 that allows for the lag pay?

8
9 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

10 Yeah. I believe there's two contingency funds. There's one in the
11 General Fund and there's one in the Police District.

12
13 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

14 Thank you.

15
16 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

17 And then I think there's also some funds in individual salary lines
18 for that, but the bulk of the money is in two contingency funds.

19
20 The recommended budget also includes a contingency of \$10 million
21 for snow and ice removal and the repair of County roads. The
22 budget also increases reserve funds. The budget provides for the
23 Tax Stabilization Reserve Fund to bring that up to an ending of 254
24 million, which is just about the maximum allowed under General
25 Municipal Law.

26
27 The recommended budget also transfers \$42 million to Insurance
28 Reserve Fund to eliminate borrowing for settlements -- eliminate
29 some borrowing for settlements, which could save the County as much
30 as \$4 million over the coming years.

31
32 The recommended budget also resources pay-as-you-go for capital
33 projects. As you know, we just adopted the Capital Program for
34 22-24 and there was \$21 million in there in pay-as-you-go funds.
35 The recommended budget is consistent with that and provides 24.2
36 million for pay-as-you-go projects in 2022 capital programs.

37
38 The recommended budget also includes a new multi-year fund for the
39 Opioid Abatement, Recovery and Support Fund for monies obtained
40 from the eight settlements and future settlements of litigation.
41 What this fund does, it's a multi-year fund. It appropriates all
42 of those funds in 2022, and the idea of that is to provide
43 flexibility as programs are developed or funded that the County can
44 fund those programs to the extent they need to be funded. In 2022
45 we don't anticipate the whole 24 million would be spent in 2022.
46 This is a multi-year program, so those funds would carry over into
47 future years. But by appropriating all of those funds next year,
48 it gives the County the flexibility to fund programs to the fullest
49 extent that they need to be funded.

50
51 Property tax revenue. You know, earlier we talked about the
52 economy and the impact on sales tax and stimulus funds and enhanced
53 unemployment benefits. A lot of people did okay during this
54 economy, but there are many people that had hardships. And as I
55 said earlier, they had to leave jobs, jobs were eliminated or they
56 left jobs for child care. There's a number of reasons people just

1 -- a lot of people didn't do well. Our property tax collections
2 were down by \$109 million, and this represents a delinquency rate
3 on the tax warrant. There's two components that impact property
4 tax shortfalls; the ability of the public to pay the property tax
5 and the growth of the Tax Warrant to \$6.39 billion. The larger the
6 Tax Warrant gets, the more likelihood is that the County will have
7 to subsidize the payment, and this year it was 109 million. Last
8 year it was around 62 million. We anticipate the trend will
9 moderate a little bit in 2022, but we continued -- it looks like it
10 will continue to be a cost to the County. And this is something
11 that we discussed many years in Budget Review, is that as you hold
12 the Tax Warrant to \$49, 50 million in the General Fund, as the Tax
13 Warrant for the whole County goes up into the billions,
14 six-and-a-half billion, a small default results in a large
15 increase, and the County, of course, has to make all those taxing
16 jurisdictions whole. So it's a potential drain on the County.

17
18 The 2022 budget assumes a \$15 million property tax shortfall and we
19 believe that that's understated based on recent history.

20
21 **LEG. BERLAND:**

22 Can I -- Madam Chair, just a point of personal privilege.

23
24 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

25 Sure, Legislator Berland.

26
27 **LEG. BERLAND:**

28 Can I ask a question? You're giving the same review you gave
29 yesterday, right?

30
31 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

32 That's correct.

33
34 **LEG. BERLAND:**

35 Okay. So if we don't have any questions on the review, is there a
36 reason that we're doing it all over again?

37
38 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

39 Putting it on the record and there were several Legislators that
40 weren't present yesterday.

41
42 **LEG. BERLAND:**

43 Is this the plan for every meeting?

44
45 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

46 No, I think --

47
48 **LEG. BERLAND:**

49 For every --

50
51 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

52 No, I think -- well, this is --

53
54 **LEG. BERLAND:**

55 Because there are different Legislators in different committees.
56 Is it your intention to put the same on every single committee?

1
2 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

3 Legislator Berland, if I may. The Director asked to review this
4 this morning at the beginning of these committee meetings.

5
6 **LEG. BERLAND:**

7 Right.

8
9 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

10 This is the first time we're on the record. Yesterday was a
11 Working Group. The Legislators are not all part of the Working
12 Group and it was not on the record, there were no minutes. The
13 Director asked to give this brief presentation this morning. I'm
14 the Chair of the committee, I welcome that.

15
16 **LEG. BERLAND:**

17 Correct.

18
19 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

20 We had another Legislator ask him to review it. So if you would,
21 respectfully I would ask that we allow Mr. Reinheimer to finish his
22 presentation, which is not going to take a lot of time, and we have
23 a clear record of the budget review as the Director requested here
24 at the beginning of the meeting.

25
26 **LEG. BERLAND:**

27 If I may finish my question. My committee starts at 1:30. I Chair
28 the Veterans Committee, so I was asking is it your intention to
29 repeat this at every committee, because I'd just like to know if
30 that's the case, or are you just planning on doing this one,
31 because we do take a break and then we come back at 1:30. So there
32 may be other Legislators who are not here now who will be on for
33 the 1:30 committee, which I Chair. That's what I was asking.

34
35 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

36 Can I just step in just to say that we do have a reporter here now
37 and so the record of the beginning of these committee meetings will
38 be complete. Of course you can put your --

39
40 **LEG. BERLAND:**

41 So it will be used for all of the committees. I just want to
42 clarify that, that that's --

43
44 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

45 I don't know, it seems to be a little -- I don't know. I welcome,
46 Lance, your response to this. I feel that I don't want to be
47 responsible for making you feel awkward --

48
49 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

50 No.

51
52 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

53 -- because I thought it was a good idea what you asked to do. So
54 let's just clarify that.

1 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

2 If I --

3
4 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

5 One second, Jason. Just let Lance answer the question. I don't
6 think there's an intention to go through this at the beginning of
7 every committee meeting. Maybe I'm mistaken, but generally
8 speaking we then move into committees and every committee member
9 has the opportunity to address questions specific to the budget in
10 their departments that are overseen by those committees. But this
11 is the beginning of the committee process and so I believe this is
12 an overview that Lance wanted to give at the beginning so that it's
13 clean and it's on the record. But go ahead, Lance.

14
15 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

16 Yes, and thank you for the question because it's a good question.
17 Historically, Budget and Finance we do an overview of whether it's
18 the Capital or the Operating. So, no, I'm not planning, unless I'm
19 asked, to do this at every committee meeting. I think when you
20 look at the joint -- this is a joint committee meeting. If you
21 look at all the Legislators that are on today and the Legislators
22 that were on yesterday, it pretty much covers everyone. So, no, my
23 intent is not to do this at the beginning of Veterans. This is
24 relevant to Budget and Finance, Way and Means, and that's why I'm
25 doing this. And I did ask the Chair if she would like me to do the
26 presentation and -- to get it on the record and so that it's open
27 for future -- it's in the minutes, it's part of the minutes.

28
29 **LEG. BERLAND:**

30 Completely fine. I just wanted to clarify that --

31
32 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

33 Yeah. And I --

34
35 **LEG. BERLAND:**

36 -- so that I would know what your expectation was at 1:30.
37 So, thank you so much.

38
39 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

40 Am I allowed to ask questions now? Thank you.

41
42 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

43 Of course.

44
45 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

46 So, if I may. I just -- if I may. Director, I think it's
47 important that we put this to move forward, and I know some folks
48 will have questions in each committee. So what I was going to say
49 is if we can just make sure we focus on especially the hardest hit
50 areas that we didn't really cover yesterday. I think that would be
51 perfect as well. So thank you.

52
53 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

54 Okay. I'm almost done with this. I just have property tax,
55 which I just want to bring to your attention going forward is going
56 to be a problem for the County as the Tax Warrant increases. The

1 General Fund, at \$50 million, may not be sufficient to cover the
2 shortfall and the Property Tax Warrant to make everyone whole.
3 Now, a lot of this will come back to us in the future through
4 delinquent taxes and interest and penalties. This year we had a
5 surplus of 15 million. So that brings us -- we're still short
6 \$92 million in property tax. And I think it's --

7
8 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

9 How do we address that? What's the -- where does the policy
10 reside?

11
12 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

13 That's in the Suffolk County Tax Law and Charter. We have to make
14 all taxing jurisdictions whole.

15
16 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

17 I liked it when I was on a town board.

18
19 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

20 Right.

21
22 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

23 But do we -- is it our representatives in Albany? How would we
24 make a change on that? I mean, I think it was originally designed
25 when the County was in better fiscal shape than maybe some of the
26 smaller municipalities. Now it's upside down.

27
28 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

29 Yeah, it's part of the Suffolk County Tax Act, which, I guess,
30 that's a legal question how you would go about to change that.

31
32 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

33 Thank you for highlighting that.

34
35 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

36 And then I just want to mention, too, property tax, the General
37 Fund and Police District remain, and also District Court, remain
38 unchanged for 2022.

39
40 Staffing, the recommended budget provides sufficient funds to fill
41 a lot of the 2400 vacant positions. It also provides, between now
42 and the end of 2022, appropriations for 340 police, new police
43 recruits, 60 new Deputy Sheriffs, and 100 new Correction Officers.
44 The budget includes 51 new positions and abolishes two vacant
45 positions, for a net increase of 49 positions. The budget includes
46 11,014 positions.

47
48 There's 12 positions or titles that are added to the Salary
49 Classification Plan, or at least this budget has requested -- the
50 County Executive's recommended budget is requesting to add 12
51 titles to the Salary and Classification Plan. There's positions
52 for all of those except for three positions; Assistant Director of
53 Accounting Services, Associate Chief Procurement Officer and
54 Interpreter.

1 In general, we found the expenditures and the revenues in the
2 recommended budget to be reasonable. That concludes my overview of
3 the 2022 Recommended Operating Budget.

4
5 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

6 Thank you. That's very helpful.

7
8 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

9 Thank you.

10
11 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

12 Director, if I --

13
14 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

15 And we'll be -- just a second, thank you. I think we really
16 benefit from your hard work and I appreciate it. I hope that is
17 clear for everybody who asked for the presentation. And I guess I
18 did want to ask you with regard to -- one second. Jason, did you
19 have a question with regard to the overview or were moving into the
20 Ways and Means portion? You had a question?

21
22 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

23 I will wait until the Budget Committee, but it's fine.

24
25 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

26 Okay. So how about anyone on the video screen? Does anybody have
27 any questions for Lance about the overview? Okay, thank you.

28
29 So now we're moving into individual committees. This is the Ways
30 and Means Committee, so I did want to ask you about the Board of
31 Elections. We've had the Comptroller come in previous years. I
32 don't know that he's here to give a presentation or ask for any
33 questions, but I would -- I think Legislator Kennedy is on. If
34 John wanted to come on and put questions, you know, we'd welcome
35 that as well.

36
37 With regard to the Board of Elections. So we do have some changes
38 in the Board of Elections, including, of course, the early voting
39 reforms. Can you just speak to budget impacts and what your
40 analysis is of the Operating Budget with regard to the voting
41 reforms.

42
43 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

44 Sure. As you know, part of the Capital Program adoption, the
45 Omnibus Resolution included \$3 million to purchase 440 voting
46 machines to assist with early voting this year and next year in
47 2022. The Board of Elections will be required to have 26 early
48 voting sites which is based on the number of enrolled voters.
49 There is an impact on overtime and costs associated with that.
50 The recommended budget does provide for those additional costs.

51
52 There was also another grant that was accepted by the County that's
53 in the Operating Budget of \$1 million in 2020 -- in the 2021 budget
54 as the grant, and the \$3 million was the County match for those
55 machines.

1 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**
2 I'm sorry. Can I interrupt you for a second?

3
4 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
5 Sure.

6
7 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**
8 The million dollar grant, we got a million dollar capital grant and
9 then we -- we amended the Capital Budget.

10
11 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
12 No, we received a million dollar operating -- it's a grant that
13 winds through the Operating Budget.

14
15 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**
16 Okay.

17
18 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
19 The Capital Omnibus Resolution was the County match as a capital
20 cost of three million. So it's \$4 million to buy 440 accessible
21 voting machines. So these machines are used not only for early
22 voting, because you can program all the election districts in these
23 machines, but it also allows the County to -- Board of Elections to
24 update their accessible voting machines that are no longer
25 supported, they're old. And so the plan is to put one of these
26 accessible voting machines in each voting polling place during the
27 general election, too, so dual purpose for those machines.

28
29 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**
30 And what about the additional staff time for early voting?
31 There are -- the budget, I think, does increase salary lines.

32
33 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
34 It increases overtime for that.

35
36 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**
37 Okay.

38
39 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
40 For that purpose, right. There's no increase in the number of
41 employees. The budget pretty much provides for all their positions
42 to be filled and so there's no additional employees being brought
43 on for this, but there will be additional costs in overtime to
44 staff early voting.

45
46 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**
47 Thank you. Does anyone else have any questions with regard to Way
48 and Means on the committee -- I mean Way and Means Committee issues
49 on the Operating Budget.

50
51 **LEG. MCCAFFREY:**
52 Madam Chair.

53
54 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**
55 Yes, Kevin.

56

1 **LEG. MCCAFFREY:**

2 Yes, I just wanted to ask something related to the Board of
3 Elections. Is that relevant right now or?

4
5 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

6 Yes, absolutely.

7
8 **LEG. MCCAFFREY:**

9 Okay. So my question was there was an issue that came up. We had
10 a last minute request from the Board of Elections for increasing
11 salaries, and I just don't have my budget in front of me. Is there
12 an increase in the salary, because they're having trouble staffing
13 those and they wanted to raise the rates, the hourly rate, for the
14 Inspectors. Lance, is there something in there for that as well
15 besides just the expansion of the early voting? There's a proposal
16 to raise the hourly wage over time.

17
18 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

19 We did have the Commissioner at our committee last cycle and they,
20 you know, talking about the capital funding for the increased
21 machines. They didn't mention an increase in hourly rates.

22
23 **LEG. MCCAFFREY:**

24 Because that was for the Operating Budget. They made a last minute
25 request to the County Executive's Office over that. And they're
26 going to have to try and figure out -- they don't have right now
27 enough people to staff the early voting and/or the -- you know, for
28 this year because they can't get enough Inspectors to come back and
29 they were looking for beyond this year I know, but we're talking
30 about '22, but that's a different issue, but they know that they
31 have to increase the salary lines for the Inspectors because they
32 can't get them anymore. A lot of them are elderly and they lost
33 some. They didn't want to come back because of COVID and they're
34 not coming back, and so they're going to need to increase the
35 salary lines. And I was just wondering if there was something in
36 that Operating Budget that reflected the request from the Board of
37 Elections.

38
39 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

40 Yeah. Those costs would be included in temporary salaries.
41 Generally when you --

42
43 **MS. GAZES:**

44 No, no, no.

45
46 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

47 Okay, I'm sorry. It's in a separate line, 4510, for contracted
48 employees, but they're not -- those are over and above. They're
49 not your normal, or I should say regular, Board of Election
50 employees.

51
52 **LEG. MCCAFFREY:**

53 Correct, it's the Inspectors.

54
55 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

56 Right. And if there is a desire to increase those hourly rates, in

1 the past it's done by resolution.

2

3 **LEG. MCCAFFREY:**

4 Okay, we can do that by resolution?

5

6 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

7 Yeah, they would have to request that by resolution. In the past

8 --

9

10 **LEG. MCCAFFREY:**

11 Very good. Thank you, Madam Chair.

12

13 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

14 -- that's been done that way.

15

16 **LEG. MCCAFFREY:**

17 Thank you for the questions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

18

19 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

20 Thank you. Does anyone have any further questions for Lance or the
21 Administration on the Operating Budget?

22

23 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

24 There is an increase of \$600,000 over last year. Now, we're not --
25 we don't know the detail if that's incorporated the higher rate or
26 just having more Inspectors this year coming here.

27

28 **LEG. MCCAFFREY:**

29 Okay. I think it may be a combination of both. Okay, thank you.

30

31 **CHAIRPERSON FLEMING:**

32 Okay, thank you. Anything further? Okay, so I don't see anything
33 further on Way and Means.

34

35 Next on the joint committee is Budget and Finance, so I will -- we
36 don't need to take a vote. I'll just turn it over to Legislator
37 Richberg.

38

39 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

40 Thank you very much, Legislator Fleming. So thank you, Budget
41 Review Director Reinheimer and thank you to your staff. I know you
42 guys have been spending late nights and early mornings here, so I
43 want to thank you all for your work and thank you for your
44 comprehensive review, especially at the beginning of your review
45 packet. It's actually really helpful to go through that because it
46 sort of highlights all of the main areas where we need to focus.

47

48 So I guess the first set of questions, and I know some of my fellow
49 committee members might have some questions as well, do you have
50 anything on -- I know the County Executive's Office put more funds
51 into different reserve funds. Do you guys have a chart on that in
52 particular or could we just go through each one?

53

54 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

55 Yeah, we don't have a specific chart that lists them all. In the
56 beginning there a summary.

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CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:

Yeah, I'm looking at the summary.

DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:

Benny -- we can put something together. I'm not sure exactly --

CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:

Because I guess the first question is how much -- before we put any money or propose to put money, how much money was in the Tax Stabilization Reserve?

DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:

Currently there's \$50 million in Tax Reserve Funds.

CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:

Okay.

DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:

So this is bringing it up almost -- it's going to end at \$254 million. So it's a \$204 million increase in Tax Stabilization Reserve that this budget provides for.

CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:

Thank you. And so -- and so from that, I think if there's any, and I know this is more of a question for Counsel and I apologize, but if there is any surpluses in our budget, 25 percent of that has to go into the Reserve Fund?

DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:

That's 25 percent of the discretionary.

CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:

Of the discretionary. Thank you.

DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:

Yes. This budget far exceeds that 25 percent.

CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:

Thank you. And do you have a ballpark percentage of how much that is?

DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:

Do you mean how much it would have been if --

CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:

Yes.

DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:

You mean the minimum for 2022?

CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:

Yes.

DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:

I have to look that up. I don't have that on the top of my head.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

3 Thank you.

4
5 **MR. PERNICE:**

6 Legislator Richberg, just to go back to your former question, as
7 far as what is being transferred into reserves. So there is four
8 reserve funds that primarily the County is putting funding in for
9 the future. It's tax stabilization, it's retirement contribution
10 and debt service reserve and the insurance reserve. So in 2021,
11 the recommended budget and the estimate include the transfer of 146
12 million to tax stabilization, 25 million to retirement
13 contribution, 50 million to debt service and 31 million to
14 insurance reserve.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

17 So you said 100 and then --

18
19 **MR. PERNICE:**

20 A hundred and forty-six.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

23 A hundred forty-six.

24
25 **MR. PERNICE:**

26 Twenty-five.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

29 Twenty-five.

30
31 **MR. PERNICE:**

32 Fifty.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

35 Fifty.

36
37 **MR. PERNICE:**

38 And 31. And that's a total of \$252 million in 2021.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

41 And some of those funds obviously we talked about yesterday were
42 created, right?

43
44 **MR. PERNICE:**

45 We've had them for a while and we've used them in the past, but
46 obviously with some of the conditions that we've had, we haven't
47 been able to fund them the way we have. And that's just in 2021.
48 There's additional funds being placed in those same reserve funds
49 in 2022 and I can go over that if you want.

50
51 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

52 That would be perfect, Bennie. Thank you.

53
54 **MR. PERNICE:**

55 Okay. So 57 million to Tax Stabilization in 2022; 10 million to
56 retirement contribution in 2022; 46 million to Debt Service Reserve

1 in 2022; and \$11 million to Insurance Reserve in 2022.

2
3 **LEG. BERLAND:**

4 I'm sorry, Benny. A little slower. Can you just do that one more
5 time?

6
7 **MR. PERNICE:**

8 You know what? I will send an e-mail later just because I think
9 you'd be served by a chart, but it's --

10
11 **LEG. BERLAND:**

12 A chart would be great.

13
14 **MR. PERNICE:**

15 -- 57 million to Tax Stabilization, 10 million to retirement, 46
16 million to debt service and 11 million to insurance, and that's a
17 total of 124. So over two years that's --

18
19 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

20 Three-hundred and seventy-six million.

21
22 **MR. PERNICE:**

23 Yes.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

26 I can't work in Budget Review, but maybe I could Chair the Budget
27 Committee. So I want to -- and that's, you know, I don't know, it
28 seems like an exponential increase over the last year, especially
29 since we've been taking out money for a long period of time. Do
30 you remember when was the last time we had money in -- just the Tax
31 Stabilization Reserve. That was probably 2010, roughly?

32
33 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

34 Yeah, in 2008 was --

35
36 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

37 2008.

38
39 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

40 -- was the highest amount which was 126 million. That was the high
41 water mark and it dropped from that point on and it was at 50
42 million for several years, which is what it's currently at as now,
43 50 million.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

46 So 2008 was 126 and then it was at 50 million now, right?

47
48 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

49 That's correct. And it's been 50 million for the past several
50 years.

51
52 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

53 Several years, thank you. So we were almost doubling the amount
54 that was -- we are doubling what was in there in just about in
55 2008.

1 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

2 That's correct.

3

4 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

5 That's amazing. So we talked a little bit about the, and I know if
6 my colleagues have questions, please don't hesitate to raise your
7 hand at any point in time. So we talked a little bit about our
8 tax, the General Fund tax. We're at \$49 million and you said
9 yesterday you're expecting us to pay about 90 -- I'm sorry, 100
10 million more?

11

12 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

13 Well, in 2021 in order to make all the other taxing jurisdictions
14 whole, the County had to pay out 109 million. Now, we did receive
15 an additional 15 million over budget on delinquent taxes, so we're
16 somewhere around the net is 92 million outflow.

17

18 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

19 So there's a \$92 million shortfall.

20

21 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

22 And we expect that to continue, maybe not at this rate, because
23 last year was at 62 million. We expect it to drop, but we still
24 think it's going to be a significant number, way more than the
25 \$15 million that the recommended budget assumes.

26

27 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

28 So you're saying in the future we should be budgeting at least a
29 \$92 million difference, if not more?

30

31 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

32 No, 92 I'm hoping is high.

33

34 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

35 Okay.

36

37 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

38 In time we will recover these funds through delinquent property
39 taxes and penalties and interest, but that's over the long period.
40 So the short period we foresee that we're still going to have a
41 negative outflow in property tax. If you look at the recommended
42 budget, the 2021 estimate for property tax, you know, we budgeted
43 the 49 million, which is our Tax Warrant. The estimated revenue
44 from that Tax Warrant is zero, so we had to use additional
45 appropriations to make the rest of the taxing jurisdictions whole,
46 which ended up with a net outflow of 109 million.

47

48 **CHAIRPERSON RICHBERG:**

49 Do you have a question? Go ahead.

50

51 **LEG. BERLAND:**

52 Thank you, Mr. Chair. But this is, even though the number is
53 higher this year as we're assuming because of COVID and people had
54 problems and whatever, I mean, there's always a shortfall. We
55 never get 100 percent of the taxes paid, right?

56

1 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
2 It's been a while, but we have in the past, and in theory --

3
4 **LEG. BERLAND:**
5 Well, in the past when? How many years ago?

6
7 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
8 We'll have to look that up. You're right --

9
10 **LEG. BERLAND:**
11 In more than ten probably? I guess because what I'm concerned
12 about, I agree --

13
14 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
15 Right, in the last ten years it's been unlikely, maybe once,
16 because the Tax Warrant is larger now. Our property tax has been
17 49 million in the General Fund for many, many years. So as that
18 stays constant the Tax Warrant for the whole County has increased.

19
20 **LEG. BERLAND:**
21 Correct.

22
23 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
24 It's going to be probably closer to 6.5 billion in 2022 and we have
25 to cover that shortfall. And that's the point I'm making, if you
26 have just one percent or a little over one percent default, that's
27 going to way exceed the \$50 million we have in General Fund
28 property tax.

29
30 **LEG. BERLAND:**
31 Right.

32
33 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
34 That's correct.

35
36 **LEG. BERLAND:**
37 Yes, but the point being that this year's number is more of an
38 anomaly because it's a lot more than usual, but the amount that
39 we've been in shortfall over the past number of years has been
40 pretty consistent. You know, I mean, it might go up and down a
41 little bit, but, you know, hopefully when the -- if the economy
42 picks up and we get through COVID and people are able to pay their
43 taxes in their homes then this number is not going to be that
44 large. I agree that we have to put money aside for it, but I just,
45 you know, the impression that, you know, this is, you know,
46 something that's greater than it is I think is unfair because I
47 think this year is more of an anomaly. Do you not agree with that?

48
49 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
50 No, I absolutely agree with that.

51
52 **LEG. BERLAND:**
53 Oh, okay. All right.

54
55 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
56 Yeah. It's higher than it would have been normally, I'd hope in

1 normal --

2

3 **LEG. BERLAND:**

4 Right. You know, when you look at it --

5

6 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

7 But it's still going to --

8

9 **LEG. BERLAND:**

10 Yeah, I mean, I don't mean to interrupt, but the sales tax number
11 was crazy high because, you know, people who had money who weren't
12 going anywhere were buying stuff. And at the same time the, you
13 know, amount of taxes people are able to pay on their homes went,
14 you know, it went down the amount they were able to pay because the
15 people who couldn't pay, people who had less, now have less.
16 People who had more, spent it because they couldn't go anywhere.
17 So it just shows how, you know, skewed our society is. You know,
18 the top people are still able to spend and go and do, and the
19 bottom people, who are the ones we really have to help, can't
20 afford to pay their mortgages.

21

22 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

23 You're absolutely right. There's a wide gap between the haves and
24 the have-nots, absolutely.

25

26 **LEG. BERLAND:**

27 Absolutely, yeah. So, you know, I can only hope, and I think we
28 all need to work together to, you know, help our residents, you
29 know, close that anomaly and hopefully people will be able to pay,
30 you know, their mortgages. So that's why I just think that there
31 has to be enough in there but not crazy, because hopefully that
32 number will come down significantly going forward. I just want to
33 make sure we're on the same page with that, wonderful. Thank you.
34 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

35

36 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

37 No problem. So, I guess, you know, there's no magic solution in
38 this budget right now, but I guess it's one of those things where
39 we need to keep taking the temperature and see where we're going as
40 we move forward.

41

42 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

43 Yeah. We didn't make any recommendations on mitigating this
44 potential shortfall. And like Legislator Berland said, you know,
45 this is an anomaly. You know, we haven't had shortfalls of this
46 magnitude, except for last year of 60 million and change, and we
47 hope it comes back to an equilibrium, but it's going to take a few
48 years we think.

49

50 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

51 And now to, I guess, the next bullet point. Maybe you mentioned it
52 in your overview, OTB, Off-Track Betting Corporation.

53

54 **MR. PERNICE:**

55 Is there a specific question?

56

1 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**
2 We're budgeting \$25 million more than last year?

3
4 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
5 Oh, okay. So we've checked with --

6
7 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**
8 I'm not going to throw you any grenades, I promise.

9
10 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
11 No, no, no. We checked with OTB and believe --

12
13 **MR. PERNICE:**
14 The reason why we're budgeting so much more is because we expected
15 the casino to be closed and it was closed, so obviously it's open
16 and we're expecting it to be open. That being said, we did make a
17 recommendation to reduce the revenue projection in 2021 just
18 because I talked to OTB and they were more -- they had a more
19 conservative projection as to what they provide. So we recommended
20 decreasing the 2021 estimate by five million.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**
23 Okay. Thank you very much. Out of County tuition. This is
24 something that's another one of those things that are important to
25 all of us.

26
27 **MR. PERNICE:**
28 There's nothing really to say about that this year. The budget,
29 actually they got the -- they used the actual information from
30 Audit and Control. We don't need to make any adjustments to the
31 budget this year for that.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**
34 Benny, you already knew what I was going to ask you. It's all
35 those times walking by you in the hallway. I think that is it for
36 my questions. Does anybody else have any questions? Any other
37 comments? Director, is there anything else you want to say or
38 state?

39
40 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**
41 No, I think we covered the areas in the overview and answered your
42 questions and, you know, we're here if you have questions in the
43 future, too, of course.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**
46 Thank you. To my colleagues, any other questions? All right,
47 seeing none, again to your staff, to your team, I know you guys
48 worked a lot of late hours and long nights. I know you guys are
49 one of the unsung heroes in this building so I want to thank you
50 all for the work that you guys are doing. I want to thank you,
51 Director, for your leadership in this and putting out not only the
52 Operating Budget Review but also our Capital Budget in, you know,
53 back-to-back fashion. So, you know, I want to thank you all
54 because it's really, really important to all of us. And so thank
55 you, Director.

56

1 And with that, I see our Comptroller is in. I think he had
2 something that he wanted to say. I wanted to thank you. I know
3 you -- I don't want you to have your whole team here if they don't
4 have to, Director. Mr. Comptroller.

5
6 **COMPTROLLER KENNEDY:**

7 Yes, good morning. Thank you and sorry about the delay in time
8 here. I'll put it to you pretty straightforward and pretty simple.
9 I have a letter that I'm compiling. You should, all 18, have it,
10 Mr. Presiding Officer, as we had discussed, either later on today
11 or certainly by tomorrow morning at the latest, in which I'm
12 requesting that the Legislature add three Auditor Trainee positions
13 to the Audit and Control budget line. The justification will be in
14 there and it will point to a significant increase in a variety of
15 our areas of operation.

16
17 The Audit Division, as we all know, has taken on significant
18 additional ongoing responsibilities. The asset forfeiture audits,
19 which you have seen, have taken -- they require a tremendous amount
20 of work. The Police Department, which we undertook even before I
21 worked with Deputy Presiding Officer Hahn to adopt the legislation
22 that requires the biannual audit, that took three-and-a-half years
23 in order to go ahead and to reconcile what had been account
24 activity that had gone unoverseen or unreconciled in some cases for
25 almost ten years. I'm almost embarrassed to stand here before you
26 and to identify that, but nevertheless, I think the Legislature was
27 wise. On my own, as a matter of fact, I knew that the process that
28 had been adopted by the previous Administration and the prior
29 District Attorney, frankly, just were not working. So that process
30 continues on now. We are turning out those asset forfeiture
31 audits.

32
33 The regulations from Department of Justice and Department of
34 Treasury continue to change and to become more complex. We work
35 with the District Attorney and the Sheriff, Commissioner Cameron
36 and our Probation Department in order to collaborate with them. I
37 have now actually been identified right in the Federal regulations
38 as the Chief Fiscal Officer, so heretofore I did not play a central
39 role. Actually, now I'm the primary point of communication. None
40 of the disbursement activity is done out of my office. The
41 claiming activity originates out of the DA and then the
42 subsidiaries into the departments. But as far as the actual
43 oversight, the expenditure, all the aggregation, that's all coming
44 through our department.

45
46 The quarterly reporting continues to be a challenge and we have
47 identified that, or you have identified that previously as a
48 significant component so that we do not wind up in a situation
49 where we have multiple years that have elapsed without confronting
50 what may be underlying financial issues.

51
52 Homeless housing. Homeless housing, I am sorry to come before you
53 and say continues, in my opinion, to be woefully and seriously
54 flawed and dysfunctional. I have turned out a number of audits to
55 you. Several of them, as a matter of fact, have gone unaddressed.
56 Now, this is not a criticism of Commissioner Pierre. I have worked

1 exhaustively with her and, as a matter of fact, we are on the verge
2 of shutting down a third homeless housing operator because of the
3 egregious, egregious misspending of taxpayer funds and County
4 funds.

5
6 Most troubling and most concerning, and I brought this to the
7 Commissioner's attention, she agrees, and I applaud her that she's
8 moved to this, were several homeless housing providers who had
9 Section 438 violations. For those of you unfamiliar with it --
10 actually I was on the Leg when that section of the Administrative
11 Code was adopted that requires any operator to go ahead and make
12 sure direct care employees has a fingerprint check and a criminal
13 background check. Candidly, to have an operator who does not have
14 that in place, in my opinion, is like us juggling with
15 nitroglycerin. It is just unacceptable and I believe that we need
16 to be very, very vigilant with it.

17
18 I have six staff that are dedicated exclusively to homeless housing
19 oversight and operations; two senior staff and four line folks.
20 There are multiple millions of dollars that wind up running through
21 them and it runs the gamut. HELP Suffolk we just turned out. We
22 see there's a \$1.7 million disallowance there.

23
24 So it is impossible for me to continue to sustain the oversight in
25 critical areas. We have several departmental audits that you know
26 that are underway now. I'll simply point to the work that we did
27 in the Parks Department with the concessions, with Beach Hut, and
28 what went on over at West Hills. Hundreds of thousands of dollars
29 of capital improvements that were never undertaken and never made
30 that are the obligations of the contract vendees.

31
32 I have four senior staff who will be separating within the next
33 60 days. Over 100 years of audit experience going out the door.
34 I have to, I have to be able to bring in some new folks, new grads,
35 train them up. And the average training curve on a brand new
36 Auditor Trainee, they undergo a 12-month period of time through
37 Civil Service, but, in fact, it's more along the lines of about 24
38 months before they're able to be out and to begin the elemental
39 process with the auditing activity. Senior auditors, in one case
40 25 years with us, 40-years in the audit world. My senior SCAT
41 auditor, Colleen, a sweetheart, and SCAT is blowing us out of the
42 water because with the AME adoption of the 457 plan that the
43 uniforms have previously had, every separation now up through
44 November 15th must, in fact, be audited and paid out by December
45 31st in order to be in compliance with the IRS. So we are getting
46 slammed on every side as far as additional obligations to hit and
47 timelines to turn out.

48
49 The Workday process has consumed tremendous amounts of time on my
50 staff's part. I'm going to tell you all, I think the jury is still
51 out there. I am no fan of that piece of software. You are 14 to
52 15 million into that initiative at this point and it's going awry.

53
54 There's also been -- we're having a little bit of discussion with
55 the Administration. I agreed to collaborate with them on
56 e-procurement, but that is getting to be a bit of a challenge.

1
2 The cash management. Cash management is where I need to bring in
3 the other individual. We now have, it's ironic, I think,
4 Legislator Berland, I thought I just heard you talking about we are
5 in unprecedented times. No doubt about it. One point one billion
6 on deposit right now in ten depositories. Remember, over the
7 course of the last 30 months or as we run into April of '22, we
8 will have realized 550 million in Federal funding that has actually
9 come through directly into the County of Suffolk. We have
10 increased our interest income across the board. Over the last 20
11 months we've realized an additional four million, not only in
12 increased interest, but we have also successfully negotiated down
13 with our two transactional entities, Capital One and JPMorgan
14 Chase, realizing a \$500,000 savings collectively with the two of
15 them.

16
17 So my point to you all is, is that it's an investment in a critical
18 function. Right now we are 111 staff and we are servicing a \$3.2,
19 3.3 billion budget that you're about to adopt, \$150 to 160 million
20 Capital Program, all the interaction that we do with the Community
21 College, the Vanderbilt. I think the case is there and we
22 absolutely, positively need to be able to bring on board some
23 additional staff. I'll have the letter for you by the end of the
24 day, but I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

27 Thank you. And I think Director Reinheimer will tell you 3.9
28 billion, right?

29
30 **COMPTROLLER KENNEDY:**

31 There you go. I've been reading it fast, Lance.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

34 So you're asking for four more positions?

35
36 **COMPTROLLER KENNEDY:**

37 I'm asking for three Auditor Trainees. Auditor Trainees are -- I'd
38 take four if you'd give them to me. They are grade 17's.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

41 Everybody else would take it, too.

42
43 **COMPTROLLER KENNEDY:**

44 They would, they would. Mr. Chair, let me say to you that I do
45 believe, and look, you know, I'm ministerial. I don't set policy.
46 I used to be in that chair over there. There are many, many, many
47 areas of County government that continue to struggle. And so I
48 think requests like this, I don't know how many of you entertained
49 are really a reflection of what it actually is taking to do and to
50 implement what are tremendous amounts of money. I applaud you. I
51 see the Carlls River project. A contractor was finally settled on,
52 225, 230 million. All that funding is going to run through us, it
53 will be subject to audit, and you're going to have field engineers
54 and people that have to make sure that that work is being done in
55 compliance and with contract. You know, nobody's a Houdini.
56 You've got to have bodies to do that.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

3 I know. No crystal ball.

4
5 **COMPTROLLER KENNEDY:**

6 No.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

9 Legislator Anker has a question, followed by Legislator Kennedy.

10
11 **COMPTROLLER:**

12 Certainly.

13
14 **LEG. ANKER:**

15 Hi, John. You mentioned audits at DSS involving I think it was
16 nine specific locations. Can you just describe a brief description
17 of what the problem actually was with Audit?

18
19 **COMPTROLLER KENNEDY:**

20 There's multiple issues that occur with the homeless housing
21 providers, Legislator. The most common theme that we see is that
22 contract operators, they pay employees at a rate in excess of what
23 the adopted contract and approved contract is for the Department of
24 Social Service. And in doing so, what happens is there's excess
25 salary that's paid and then typically there's also benefits, a
26 benefit package that's tied to that as well. Whether it's health
27 insurance, pension contribution, whatever it is. So there's excess
28 expenditure in both those categories without Department of Social
29 Services approval in a first instance.

30
31 Now, many of the operators tell us, well, they submitted budgets
32 looking for increases and they thought that they had them, so they
33 upped the salary. And, you know, it can be either, I don't know, a
34 person that works in a shelter that's doing housekeeping or cooking
35 or, you know, maybe care with residents to help them with parenting
36 or child care or job assistance. But there is an adopted budget
37 that each one of these providers has that they negotiate with the
38 Department of Social Services in the first instance, and then
39 subsequently we find that they just -- they increase salary and
40 they just start paying additional amounts of money, and in some
41 cases significantly additional amounts of money.

42
43 We also see sometimes the Capital Budget offset. They have the
44 ability to go ahead and to segregate a certain amount of money each
45 year if they have a surplus that they indicate will be put towards
46 subsequent capital improvements, but they only have 48-months to do
47 that. So if you look at a surplus from five, six, seven years ago
48 and they're still pointing out *well, no, no, no, that's in our*
49 *Capital Fund*, no actually it's not in your Capital Fund because you
50 only had 48-months, you know, to put in new windows, upgrade the
51 heating system, do the roof, do whatever else you were going to do,
52 and yet here it is, it's still sitting there. Every year the
53 vendors have an obligation, an affirmative obligation to remit back
54 to the County any surplus off of what their budgeted operations are
55 over the course of the calendar year.

1 The other thing that we find is, is consistently that they
2 underreport or misreport when you do the actual comparison with the
3 BIC system. The BIC system is the State system that actually
4 remits directly regarding the operations on the behalf of the
5 recipients, the clients. So those are some of the things we see.

6
7 And then as I pointed out to you, the 438 violations. I've got to
8 be honest with you. To me, that's like waving the red cape in
9 front of the bull. Under no circumstances should we ever, ever,
10 ever see any kind of employees -- and see, I don't agree with the
11 interpretation of the department. I know and I recall our
12 discussion and this body was very concerned that anybody that would
13 be in a shelter, whether it was a steady employee or even an
14 intermittent repair person, anybody that was going to be in
15 proximity to women and children and those most at risk better not
16 have any kind of felony history or any other kind of criminal
17 history. That was my recollection.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**
20 Mr. Comptroller.

21
22 **COMPTROLLER KENNEDY:**
23 Yeah.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**
26 I know Legislator Kennedy has a question. I just want to remind
27 folks that we have another committee that starts at 11.

28
29 **COMPTROLLER KENNEDY:**
30 That's me, you know that. I blow time everywhere.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**
33 It's okay. If you can get your answers to be as succinct as
34 possible. I know that's a stretch.

35
36 **COMPTROLLER KENNEDY:**
37 Yes.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**
40 If you can do that, it would be greatly appreciated. Legislator
41 Kennedy.

42
43 **LEG. KENNEDY:**
44 Another reclarification. For the Comptroller part of the job you
45 asked for three Auditor Trainees, but you did say one person for
46 the Treasurer part of the job for cash management, didn't you?

47
48 **COMPTROLLER KENNEDY:**
49 I did.

50
51 **LEG. KENNEDY:**
52 Okay.

53
54 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**
55 I thought I was going crazy, Legislator Kennedy.

1 **LEG. KENNEDY:**

2 Yeah, so did I, but that's okay. So what do you want, three or
3 four?

4
5 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

6 You need four titles. I'm going to help you out. Ready? One,
7 two, three, you need four titles.

8
9 **COMPTROLLER KENNEDY:**

10 I'm going for four.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

13 Legislator, let me know if there's any other arguments I can help
14 with.

15
16 **LEG. BERLAND:**

17 The wife is always right.

18
19 **LEG. KENNEDY:**

20 Correct.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

23 You need four, four titles. Okay. Let the record show he's
24 holding up four fingers just in case to the stenographer. Are
25 there any other questions?

26
27 **COMPTROLLER KENNEDY:**

28 All good?

29
30 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

31 Seeing none, thank you very much, Mr. Comptroller.

32
33 **COMPTROLLER KENNEDY:**

34 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, everybody. Have a great day
35 and good luck with your deliberations. Thank you.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

38 Thank you. I'll give folks another maybe ten minutes before -- can
39 we do ten, five, Mr. Presiding Officer? I thought we had Education
40 and Labor at 11. Oh, sorry.

41
42 And now we're going to start with -- all right, this is my fault.

43 And now we're going to start with Education and Labor. I see
44 Commissioner Drago is here. Commissioner, good to see you.

45
46 **COMMISSIONER DRAGO:**

47 Good morning. Is it morning? Yes.

48
49 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

50 It still is morning. Madam Clerk, do we have any cards?

51
52 **CLERK ELLIS:**

53 No, sir.

54
55 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

56 Okay, thank you. And I know I didn't ask you that for Budget.

1 Just to double check, there's no cards? No one wants to speak for
2 Budget?

3
4 **CLERK ELLIS:**
5 That's correct.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**
8 I think we all spoke enough for Budget.

9
10 Commissioner Drago, do you have a presentation?

11
12 **COMMISSIONER DRAGO:**
13 I don't have a presentation. My only comments are that I'm in
14 alignment with the County Executive's budget and I'm here to answer
15 questions if anyone has any.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**
18 So to my colleagues, does anybody have any questions? So,
19 Commissioner --

20
21 **LEG. ANKER:**
22 I do.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**
25 Legislator Anker, you beat me to the punch. Go ahead.

26
27 **LEG. ANKER:**
28 Okay. So I know there was some discussion about focusing on small
29 businesses. I know we're working together on the website, again,
30 to provide additional information. But in the budget is there
31 money set aside to address issues regarding small business?

32
33 **COMMISSIONER DRAGO:**
34 So on the Labor, Licensing and Consumer Affairs side the work that
35 we do, both on the Federal funded side for business support, it is
36 included in the budget and Consumer Affairs support, too. So it is
37 part of the budget. We work with Economic Development and Planning
38 on those initiatives, but our side of the house in terms of
39 business support and recruitment training is covered inside of our
40 Federal funding.

41
42 **LEG. ANKER:**
43 Good, because, again, what we all heard, I'm sure my colleagues
44 would agree, is that, you know, while the corporations and the
45 industrial parks were able to receive a lot of the grant funding
46 and the loan funding, a lot of the small mom and pop shops were not
47 able to acquire that and it has put them, you know, in a very
48 cautious place. A lot of folks, a lot of the shops just went out
49 of business. And I think it would be advantageous for the County
50 to, you know, not only do a website, I know we talked about maybe
51 even creating an office for small businesses just so they'll have
52 the ability to have those -- to have that information at a phone
53 call. You know, a phone call away, where can I get a grant, I need
54 some more PPE, I need help, I can't employees. Of course we're
55 hearing that across the board, whether it's a restaurant or
56 whatever shop. Even in the large big-box stores it's an issue.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

3 Legislator Anker, I want to let you know that in Economic
4 Development in the budget there's about \$35 million for business
5 grants and business help, so I know while Commissioner Drago might
6 have some information on that, that might be a great question for
7 our Economic Development folks.

8
9 **LEG. ANKER:**

10 Absolutely. Thank you. Okay. I'm good. Thanks.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

13 Commissioner Drago, I know that a majority of your budget or your
14 office, your department, is based in Federal funding, Federal and
15 State funding. So while we usually don't have a lot of questions
16 for that, a lot of times when we invest into your department, it
17 really is two and threefold, and I'm sure Budget Review will
18 correct me if it's not threefold. Is there anything that you want
19 to -- you could tell us about some of that information, some of the
20 money that you're getting, some of the innovative programs that
21 you're doing?

22
23 **COMMISSIONER DRAGO:**

24 Absolutely. I just, you know, I think it's important to know that
25 all the funding that we get has us serving all of the unemployed
26 residents in Suffolk County. So we have regular outreach to
27 everyone receiving unemployment in Suffolk County. As well
28 residents can reach out to us that may be underemployed or
29 transitioning for full services including resume, understanding
30 what industries are hiring and where there's training for those
31 things.

32
33 So, you know, for the record so you know, there's approximately
34 39,000 unemployed right now in Suffolk County, 27,000 job openings
35 and we're hosting regular job fairs, you know, to address that for
36 employers.

37
38 I do want to, you know, address what you asked Legislator Anker.
39 We are working with the Chambers and the Alliance of Chambers on
40 providing support, for training and also we're going to be doing
41 some workshops in education on how to do hiring with the State for
42 youth employment.

43
44 So just to let you -- thank you, Legislator Richberg, to let you
45 know that we are providing services to all of the residents in
46 Suffolk County that are unemployed or underemployed, hosting
47 regular sessions with industry to understand those sector issues
48 specifically, job fairs. And we are also required by Federal
49 legislation to give priority service to folks that are most in need
50 or most vulnerable, which includes veterans, people with
51 disabilities, economically underserved, youth that are at risk and
52 minority areas. So those are our priorities based on Federal
53 legislation. And we are also connecting what we're doing on the
54 Consumer Affairs and Licensing side, making sure that we're
55 offering everyone who gets a license, you know, the ability to
56 hire. So if it's a veteran-owned business on the licensing side,

1 maybe they want to hire veterans that are looking for work on the
2 job sector side.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

5 Thank you. I know I have some questions, but I see Legislator
6 Cilmi. So Legislator Cilmi, you're up.

7
8 **LEG. CILMI:**

9 Thanks, Mr. Chairman. So I have two lines of questioning, one with
10 respect to licensing. Can you talk to us about over the last two
11 or three, four years, what has been the trajectory with respect to
12 licensing revenues and the number of licenses that are being
13 applied for and that we're giving out.

14
15 **COMMISSIONER DRAGO:**

16 So I've, you know, I've been here since 2020. We -- when I arrived
17 we licensed approximately 17,000 businesses in Suffolk County, and
18 I can get specific lists of those categories because they're pretty
19 broad. A large portion of those are contractor related. There's
20 also, of course, there's different -- dry cleaners and pet
21 grooming. That depends on legislation so I can get that list to
22 you. We are focused for the upcoming years. You know, COVID made
23 it difficult. We extended license times for people during COVID
24 that if they weren't able to operate they didn't have to pay their
25 license fee, so we are spending a lot of time going back and trying
26 to, you know, help those businesses, make sure everybody's license
27 is current and doing a lot of work that is a result of catch up
28 from COVID-19.

29
30 In addition, we are focusing on greater enrollment. So we, you
31 know, as an initiative of the County Executive have worked with
32 community resource centers in the community. We're going to start
33 having folks reach out to get more people to get a license in those
34 industries. So we know from running analysis there's many
35 businesses that, you know, don't even know that there's licensing
36 available, they don't understand the benefit, and so we're going to
37 be looking on increasing enrollment as a revenue source.

38
39 **LEG. CILMI:**

40 So has licensure revenue increased, decreased? Has the change been
41 substantial?

42
43 **COMMISSIONER DRAGO:**

44 I can get you the details. I don't have all the details line by
45 line ready to share today. I had more of an overview available to
46 you, but we have remained steady. There have been ups and downs
47 and COVID had a lot to do with that, but we're looking to increase
48 revenue as a result of enrolling more people.

49
50 **LEG. CILMI:**

51 Okay. The other question is also sort of in the weeds and perhaps
52 you don't have the answer, but if you could get it to me that would
53 be great, with respect to impact assessment fees and what the
54 trajectory of those has been over the past three or four years.

55
56

1 **COMMISSIONER DRAGO:**

2 I will get you those. Thank you for the question, they're
3 important information, and I will get that to you.

4
5 **LEG. CILMI:**

6 Great. Thanks very much.

7
8 **COMMISSIONER DRAGO:**

9 Thank you, Legislator Cilmi.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

12 Thank you. So I guess along the lines of your first set of
13 statements you said there's 39,000 folks who are unemployed and
14 there's 27,000 jobs. So how are we, and I know this is sort of a
15 global question that's happening all over. How are we reaching out
16 to those 39,000 people? Like how are we making that assessment,
17 you know, to figure out what jobs work best for them or, you know,
18 connect them with the opportunities that you have.

19
20 **COMMISSIONER DRAGO:**

21 Thank you for the question. We are a subcontractor to New York
22 State so we have names, address, e-mails, phone numbers. We reach
23 out via e-mail on a regular basis. We make phone calls each week
24 to a set group of folks that are, you know, classified by the State
25 in a more urgent capacity so that we can prioritize and so they're
26 getting e-mails, they're getting phone calls. We also are in the
27 community resource centers in the County so we are doing days in
28 the community for people. You know, there's a transportation
29 challenge to get people to come to Hauppauge, right, if you're
30 already unemployed and having to take two and three buses to get
31 somewhere. So we are in the community centers taking appointments
32 in the community centers.

33
34 We have a variety of training programs. I do not have the list in
35 front of me, but I would be happy to share which programs and how
36 many people have been trained and our placement rates on that in
37 terms of KPI's. I'd be happy to bring that into the future. And
38 then job fairs. For example, we had our first in person
39 manufacturing job fair a couple of weeks ago in partnership with
40 HIA Long Island. The employers that were there represented 500
41 open jobs. One or two of those employers had 200 jobs open. We
42 had five people get interviews on the spot and, you know, I just
43 got word the other day that one of those folks was hired. So --
44 and that person, you know, took --

45
46 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

47 That's excellent.

48
49 **COMMISSIONER DRAGO:**

50 -- advantage of all of our services, resume writing, interview
51 prep, getting work clothing, transportation to and from the job
52 fair and the interview, so that's an example of how the system is
53 working.

54
55 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

56 You know what? I think that's a story that we should hear more

1 often, Commissioner. I know you have so many of those success
2 stories, and it's one of those things, I see Legislator Kennedy
3 shaking her head, because I know she sees the folks coming in and
4 out of your office every day, and so she's probably a witness or a
5 testament to some of the work you guys are doing.

6
7 So, but, you know, I think, you know, one of the things that we
8 always, you know, that's always been my saying is that government
9 does a horrible job telling people what we do. And this is an
10 example, you know, like we just had Comptroller Kennedy up and it's
11 nothing against him, but that's hard to explain to an average
12 person. But saying that you were able to connect a person, saying
13 that you connected a person to a job opportunity and the amount of
14 funding that we put together for that to happen, whether it's State
15 funding or County funding or Federal funding, whatever it is, those
16 things came together and that person got a job and how many other
17 of those people can we, you know, sort of show. It's great.

18
19 To any of my colleagues, are there any other questions? Legislator
20 Kennedy.

21
22 **LEG. KENNEDY:**

23 I just want to make a quick statement to the Commissioner. Last
24 night I got a phone call about how excellent the Department of
25 Labor was connecting up. I was amazed with all that I heard,
26 connecting up. I know don't if I should say it, but a particular
27 industry with the Labor Department, with Suffolk Community College,
28 to get it rolling so that a whole program would come through you.
29 So I think that's excellent, absolutely excellent, and I want to
30 thank you and tell your department to keep doing what they're doing
31 because they're doing it well in economically difficult times.

32
33 **COMMISSIONER DRAGO:**

34 Thank you.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

37 And to BRO, I guess is it most of the positions there are -- if we
38 gave like \$100 it's -- is it threefold, roughly? Is it fourfold?
39 Depending -- I mean, obviously if we're staffing a position it's
40 different.

41
42 **MR. PERNICE:**

43 Well, I mean, most of their positions are reimbursed, but as far as
44 economic impact I don't know what the exponent would be. But, you
45 know, by keeping people employed they're paying their taxes and
46 they're not on government services, so there is obviously a local
47 benefit but I'm not sure what the multiple of that would be.

48
49 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

50 Thank you. Director, did you have something?

51
52 **DIRECTOR REINHEIMER:**

53 No.

54
55 **CHAIRMAN RICHBERG:**

56 Bennie said it best, right? Succinct, that's what we needed.

1 So I want to thank you, Commissioner, for your work and thank you
2 to my colleagues. I don't see any further business. I don't see
3 any further Commissioners here, so seeing that, we are adjourned.
4 Thank you.

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(*The meeting was adjourned at 11:17 a.m.*)

DATE

agreed [1] - 29:55
agrees [1] - 29:7
ahead [7] - 10:28, 15:11, 24:49, 28:23, 29:11, 31:44, 34:25
Albany [1] - 16:21
alignment [1] - 34:14
Alliance [1] - 35:39
allow [1] - 14:20
allowed [2] - 12:23, 15:38
allows [2] - 12:6, 18:20
almost [8] - 4:54, 5:5, 5:9, 15:52, 21:19, 23:52, 28:25
amazed [1] - 38:25
amazing [1] - 24:5
AME [1] - 29:42
amended [1] - 18:6
American [3] - 2:50, 2:54
amortization [3] - 7:32, 11:19, 11:21
amount [8] - 23:39, 23:52, 25:38, 26:13, 26:14, 28:19, 31:44, 38:13
amounts [4] - 29:49, 30:50, 31:40, 31:41
Amy [1] - 1:34
amy [1] - 2:25
analysis [2] - 17:37, 36:34
anecdotal [1] - 10:15
Angeles [1] - 6:35
ANKER [8] - 4:36, 10:56, 11:6, 31:14, 34:21, 34:27, 34:42, 35:9
Anker [5] - 1:28, 31:9, 34:25, 35:3, 35:38
annual [1] - 11:19
anomaly [4] - 25:38, 25:47, 26:29, 26:45
answer [3] - 15:3, 34:14, 36:52
answered [1] - 27:41
answers [1] - 32:33
anticipate [7] - 2:56, 3:18, 3:20, 4:46, 9:49, 12:44, 13:7
anticipated [2] - 3:6, 8:14
apologize [1] - 21:25
appear [1] - 30:24
applaud [2] - 29:7, 30:50
appliances [1] - 5:4
applied [1] - 36:13
appointments [1] - 37:31
appreciate [3] - 6:30, 17:13, 30:24
appreciated [1] - 32:40
approach [2] - 2:19, 7:9
approaching [1] - 6:30
appropriated [4] - 3:1, 3:2, 3:4, 3:20
appropriates [3] - 3:8, 3:12, 12:40
appropriating [1] - 12:46
appropriations [2] - 16:40, 24:45
approval [1] - 31:29
approved [1] - 31:23
April [1] - 30:7
areas [7] - 15:48, 20:44, 27:41, 28:15, 29:25, 30:47, 35:52
arguments [1] - 33:13
ARP [2] - 3:2, 3:12
arrangements [1] - 7:2
arrived [2] - 6:20, 36:16
aside [2] - 25:44, 34:31
Aside [1] - 8:38
assessment [2] - 36:53, 37:16
asset [2] - 28:18, 28:30
assist [1] - 17:43
assistance [1] - 31:36
Assistant [1] - 16:50
Associate [1] - 16:51
associated [1] - 17:46
assumes [2] - 13:17, 24:25
assuming [1] - 24:53
attached [1] - 11:32
Attendance [1] - 1:32
attention [2] - 15:53, 29:7
Attorney [2] - 28:29, 28:35
Audit [4] - 27:30, 28:13, 28:17, 31:17
audit [4] - 28:22, 29:33, 29:40, 30:53
audited [1] - 29:44
auditing [1] - 29:39
Auditor [5] - 28:12, 29:36, 30:37, 32:45
auditor [1] - 29:41
auditorium [1] - 2:22
Auditorium [1] - 1:16
auditors [1] - 29:39
audits [5] - 28:18, 28:31, 28:54, 29:25, 31:15
automobiles [1] - 5:3
available [4] - 2:22, 6:47, 36:36, 36:45
average [3] - 11:19, 29:35, 38:11
aware [2] - 6:44, 9:33
awkward [1] - 14:46
awry [1] - 29:52

B

back-to-back [1] - 27:53
background [1] - 29:13
balance [2] - 3:12, 7:31
balanced [1] - 2:47
ball [4] - 6:49, 10:13, 10:26, 31:3
ballpark [1] - 21:39
bargaining [1] - 12:1
base [1] - 9:50
based [7] - 8:18, 9:31, 10:15, 13:18, 17:45, 35:14, 35:52
basing [1] - 8:30
basis [1] - 37:23
Beach [1] - 29:27
beat [1] - 34:25
become [1] - 28:34
begin [1] - 29:38
beginning [12] - 2:6, 2:7, 2:36, 14:3, 14:23, 14:36, 15:4, 15:9, 15:10, 15:21, 20:42, 20:54
behalf [1] - 32:4
belt [1] - 7:14
benefit [4] - 17:13, 31:26, 36:36, 38:47
benefits [2] - 12:52, 31:25
Benefits [1] - 4:56
Bennie [2] - 22:51, 38:56
Benny [4] - 1:38, 21:5, 23:3, 27:34
BERLAND [28] - 4:8, 10:34, 10:47, 13:20, 13:26, 13:33, 13:41, 13:47, 13:53, 14:5, 14:15, 14:25, 14:39, 15:27, 15:33, 23:2, 23:10, 24:51, 25:4, 25:10, 25:20, 25:30, 25:36, 25:52, 26:3, 26:9, 26:26, 33:16
Berland [7] - 1:26, 2:9, 10:45, 13:24, 14:2, 26:44, 30:4
best [3] - 6:50, 37:17, 38:56
better [4] - 7:53, 8:14, 16:23, 32:15
Betting [1] - 26:52
between [2] - 16:39, 26:23
beyond [2] - 3:21, 19:26
biannual [1] - 28:22
BIC [2] - 32:3
big [1] - 34:56
big-box [1] - 34:56
biggest [1] - 8:43
billion [13] - 2:46, 3:29, 3:30, 3:32, 4:44, 4:51, 5:9, 13:4, 13:13, 25:24, 30:5, 30:19, 30:28
billions [1] - 13:12
bit [10] - 4:53, 5:5, 9:48, 9:53, 13:8, 24:5, 24:7, 25:41, 29:54, 29:56
blow [1] - 32:30
blowing [1] - 29:41
board [4] - 16:15, 30:10, 30:22, 34:55
Board [9] - 17:27, 17:34, 17:35, 17:44, 18:20, 18:55, 19:7, 19:33, 19:46
bodies [1] - 30:56
body [1] - 32:12
bond [2] - 11:31, 11:36
bonds [3] - 11:23, 11:26, 11:37
borrowing [2] - 12:27, 12:28
bottom [1] - 26:19
box [1] - 34:56
brand [1] - 29:35
break [4] - 5:44, 5:48, 6:1, 14:30
bridget [1] - 4:37
Bridget [2] - 1:22, 11:1
brief [2] - 14:12, 31:16
bring [6] - 12:22, 15:53, 29:34, 30:2, 30:22, 37:37
bringing [1] - 21:19
brings [1] - 16:3
BRO [2] - 6:24, 38:37
broad [1] - 36:19
brought [2] - 18:39, 29:6
budget [63] - 2:32, 2:46, 3:12, 3:26, 3:29, 3:30, 3:31, 4:16, 4:45, 4:50, 7:10, 7:15, 7:24, 7:28, 7:30, 8:15, 8:20, 11:15, 11:18, 11:21, 11:30, 11:52, 12:19, 12:21, 12:26, 12:31, 12:34, 12:37, 13:17, 14:22, 15:7, 16:38, 16:42, 16:43, 16:47, 16:48, 16:55, 17:36, 17:47, 17:50, 18:28, 18:38, 19:8, 21:21, 21:26, 21:36, 22:10, 24:15, 24:25, 24:42, 26:38, 27:28, 27:31, 28:13, 30:19, 31:36, 34:14, 34:30, 34:36, 34:37, 35:4, 35:13
BUDGET [1] - 1:4
Budget [46] - 1:11, 1:14, 1:19, 1:23, 1:25, 1:27, 1:36, 1:37, 1:38, 2:6, 2:13, 2:15, 2:30, 2:34, 3:5, 3:6, 4:32, 4:33, 6:19, 6:23, 7:18, 13:10, 15:15, 15:22, 16:56, 17:20, 17:37, 17:50, 18:6, 18:10, 18:46, 19:21, 19:33, 20:19, 20:33, 20:38, 23:25, 27:52, 31:43, 33:56, 34:2, 34:8, 35:17
budgetary [1] - 7:26
budgeted [2] - 24:42, 31:54
budgeting [7] - 6:31, 7:16, 7:19, 8:16, 24:28, 27:2, 27:14
budgets [3] - 5:9, 11:18, 31:31
Building [3] - 1:17, 11:23, 11:29
building [2] - 7:19, 27:49
bulk [1] - 12:17
bull [1] - 32:9

DATE

- bullet** [1] - 26:51
buses [1] - 37:30
business [8] - 34:31, 34:35, 34:39, 34:49, 35:4, 35:5, 35:56, 39:2
businesses [5] - 34:29, 34:51, 36:17, 36:26, 36:35
buy [1] - 18:17
buyback [1] - 11:37
buying [1] - 26:12
-
- ### C
-
- Calarco** [1] - 1:33
calendar [1] - 31:55
callable [1] - 11:24
Cameron [1] - 28:35
candidly [1] - 29:13
capacity [1] - 37:25
cape [1] - 32:8
capital [7] - 12:31, 12:35, 18:5, 18:16, 19:17, 29:29, 31:46
Capital [11] - 12:32, 15:16, 17:41, 18:6, 18:16, 27:52, 30:13, 30:20, 31:43, 31:49
car [1] - 8:31
Caracappa [1] - 1:16
cards [4] - 2:25, 2:28, 33:50, 34:1
care [5] - 7:1, 12:55, 29:12, 31:35, 31:36
carefully [1] - 10:17
Carlls [1] - 30:51
carried [1] - 3:21
carry [1] - 12:45
cars [2] - 8:33
case [5] - 6:5, 14:29, 29:39, 30:21, 33:24
cases [2] - 28:24, 31:41
cash [2] - 30:2, 32:46
Cash [1] - 30:2
casino [1] - 27:15
Castiglione [1] - 1:47
catch [1] - 36:27
categories [2] - 31:28, 36:18
caution [1] - 6:29
cautious [1] - 34:48
centers [4] - 36:32, 37:27, 37:31, 37:32
central [1] - 28:38
certain [1] - 31:44
certainly [1] - 28:11
Certainly [1] - 31:12
- chain** [4] - 5:3, 6:32, 6:45, 9:25
chains [1] - 6:33
chair [2] - 24:52, 30:46
Chair [18] - 1:22, 1:23, 1:24, 1:25, 1:26, 10:35, 13:21, 14:13, 14:26, 14:32, 15:23, 18:49, 20:9, 20:15, 23:25, 26:34, 30:44
Chairman [3] - 2:15, 33:34, 36:9
CHAIRMAN [61] - 20:37, 21:1, 21:7, 21:15, 21:23, 21:32, 21:38, 21:45, 21:51, 22:1, 22:15, 22:21, 22:27, 22:33, 22:39, 22:50, 23:18, 23:24, 23:35, 23:44, 23:51, 24:4, 24:18, 24:27, 24:34, 26:36, 26:50, 27:1, 27:7, 27:22, 27:33, 27:45, 30:26, 30:33, 30:40, 31:2, 31:8, 32:19, 32:25, 32:32, 32:39, 32:54, 33:5, 33:12, 33:22, 33:30, 33:37, 33:49, 33:55, 34:7, 34:17, 34:24, 35:2, 35:12, 36:4, 37:11, 37:46, 37:55, 38:36, 38:49, 38:55
CHAIRPERSON [60] - 2:3, 3:34, 3:40, 3:47, 4:1, 4:14, 4:21, 4:29, 4:39, 5:21, 5:30, 5:36, 5:42, 5:50, 6:9, 7:8, 7:34, 7:40, 7:46, 7:52, 8:2, 10:31, 10:37, 10:44, 10:52, 11:3, 11:10, 11:28, 11:42, 11:48, 12:4, 12:12, 13:23, 14:1, 14:8, 14:18, 14:34, 14:43, 14:51, 15:2, 15:40, 16:6, 16:14, 16:20, 16:30, 17:2, 17:11, 17:22, 17:54, 18:4, 18:12, 18:26, 18:33, 18:43, 18:51, 19:2, 19:15, 20:17, 20:29, 24:48
CHAIRWOMAN [1] - 10:10
challenge [4] - 6:13, 28:46, 29:56, 37:29
Chambers [2] - 35:39
- change** [5] - 16:22, 16:28, 26:46, 28:34, 36:40
changes [1] - 17:34
chart [9] - 3:23, 3:24, 4:27, 8:18, 8:43, 20:49, 20:53, 23:8, 23:11
Charter [1] - 16:11
Chase [1] - 30:14
check [5] - 3:25, 4:37, 29:12, 29:13, 34:1
checked [2] - 27:5, 27:11
Chief [2] - 16:51, 28:38
child [3] - 7:1, 12:55, 31:36
children [2] - 6:56, 32:15
chips [1] - 6:33
chunk [1] - 7:53
CILMI [5] - 3:51, 36:8, 36:39, 36:50, 37:5
Cilmi [4] - 1:25, 36:6, 37:9
circumstances [2] - 9:32, 32:9
Civil [1] - 29:37
claiming [1] - 28:41
clarify [4] - 4:15, 14:41, 14:53, 15:28
Classification [2] - 16:47, 16:49
classified [1] - 37:24
clean [1] - 15:11
cleaners [1] - 36:20
clear [3] - 10:26, 14:22, 17:14
Clerk [2] - 1:34, 33:50
CLERK [2] - 33:52, 34:4
clients [1] - 32:5
clogging [1] - 6:34
close [1] - 26:29
closed [2] - 27:15
closer [1] - 25:24
clothing [1] - 37:51
Coastal [1] - 3:9
Code [1] - 29:11
collaborate [2] - 28:36, 29:55
colleagues [8] - 3:48, 5:23, 24:6, 27:46, 34:18, 34:43, 38:19, 39:2
- collections** [1] - 12:56
collective [1] - 12:1
collectively [1] - 30:14
Colleen [1] - 29:41
College [2] - 30:21, 38:27
combination [2] - 5:2, 20:27
comfortable [2] - 5:12, 5:17
coming [7] - 2:22, 10:28, 12:29, 19:31, 20:24, 28:43, 38:3
comment [1] - 7:21
comments [2] - 27:37, 34:13
COMMISSIONER [11] - 33:46, 34:12, 34:33, 35:23, 36:15, 36:43, 37:1, 37:8, 37:20, 37:49, 38:33
Commissioner [11] - 19:16, 28:35, 28:56, 33:44, 34:19, 35:5, 35:13, 38:1, 38:23, 39:1
commissioner [1] - 34:10
Commissioner's [1] - 29:7
Commissioner/Department [1] - 1:40
Commissioners [1] - 39:3
committee [19] - 5:23, 13:55, 14:3, 14:13, 14:26, 14:28, 14:32, 14:36, 15:5, 15:6, 15:9, 15:17, 15:18, 15:46, 18:45, 19:16, 20:33, 20:47, 32:27
Committee [8] - 2:7, 2:16, 10:48, 14:27, 17:20, 17:27, 18:45, 23:26
COMMITTEES [1] - 1:6
committees [6] - 2:5, 13:54, 14:40, 15:6, 15:8, 17:26
Committees [1] - 1:15
common [1] - 31:21
communication [1] - 28:39
Community [2] - 30:20, 38:27
- community** [7] - 10:16, 36:32, 37:27, 37:28, 37:31, 37:32
compared [2] - 8:15, 9:56
comparison [1] - 32:2
compiling [1] - 28:9
complete [1] - 14:37
completely [1] - 15:28
complex [1] - 28:34
Complex [1] - 11:24
compliance [2] - 29:45, 30:55
component [1] - 28:48
components [1] - 13:2
comprehensive [1] - 20:42
comptroller [1] - 32:20
Comptroller [7] - 1:39, 17:28, 28:1, 28:4, 32:44, 33:31, 38:10
COMPROLLER [14] - 28:6, 30:30, 30:36, 30:43, 31:5, 31:11, 31:19, 32:22, 32:29, 32:36, 32:48, 33:9, 33:27, 33:33
computer [1] - 6:33
conceivably [1] - 9:26
concern [1] - 5:22
concerned [3] - 4:30, 25:11, 32:12
concerning [1] - 29:6
concessions [1] - 29:27
concludes [1] - 16:55
conditions [1] - 22:45
conference [1] - 1:19
confronting [1] - 28:49
connect [2] - 37:18, 38:12
connected [1] - 38:13
connecting [3] - 35:53, 38:25, 38:26
conservative [8] - 4:44, 5:12, 6:31, 6:41, 8:15, 8:16, 9:25, 27:19

DATE

- conservatively** [1] - 7:15
- consistent** [2] - 12:34, 25:40
- consistently** [1] - 32:1
- constant** [1] - 25:18
- consumed** [1] - 29:49
- Consumer** [4] - 6:42, 34:34, 34:36, 35:54
- contingency** [7] - 7:25, 7:30, 11:17, 12:5, 12:9, 12:17, 12:19
- continue** [7] - 6:46, 7:29, 13:9, 24:22, 28:34, 29:24, 30:47
- continued** [1] - 13:8
- continues** [3] - 28:30, 28:46, 28:53
- contract** [5] - 29:30, 30:55, 31:22, 31:23
- contracted** [1] - 19:44
- contractor** [2] - 30:51, 36:19
- contributed** [1] - 2:49
- contribution** [4] - 22:8, 22:12, 22:55, 31:27
- Control** [2] - 27:30, 28:13
- cooking** [1] - 31:34
- copy** [2] - 2:41, 4:2
- CORCORAN** [3] - 8:54, 9:9, 9:17
- Corcoran** [1] - 1:37
- Corporation** [1] - 26:52
- corporations** [1] - 34:44
- Correct** [3] - 14:16, 19:50, 25:21
- correct** [13] - 2:26, 4:19, 5:24, 7:16, 9:18, 11:46, 13:31, 23:48, 24:2, 25:34, 33:20, 34:5, 35:18
- correction** [1] - 7:6
- Correction** [1] - 16:41
- corrects** [1] - 7:28
- corresponding** [2] - 8:27, 8:51
- cost** [3] - 2:47, 13:9, 18:17
- costing** [1] - 11:17
- costs** [6] - 7:11, 7:20, 17:46, 17:47, 18:40, 19:37
- Counsel** [1] - 21:25
- COUNTY** [1] - 1:8
- County** [59] - 1:15, 1:39, 2:4, 2:31, 2:55, 3:9, 4:3, 5:9, 5:11, 5:12, 6:22, 6:29, 6:37, 6:40, 7:27, 8:18, 9:38, 9:42, 9:49, 9:51, 9:53, 12:20, 12:28, 12:42, 12:47, 13:5, 13:9, 13:12, 13:14, 13:15, 15:54, 16:11, 16:23, 16:27, 16:48, 17:49, 17:51, 18:16, 18:20, 19:22, 20:48, 22:7, 24:14, 25:18, 27:23, 29:3, 30:9, 30:47, 31:54, 34:14, 34:49, 35:26, 35:27, 35:34, 35:46, 36:17, 36:31, 37:27, 38:15
- couple** [2] - 11:8, 37:39
- course** [11] - 3:6, 4:48, 13:14, 14:37, 15:41, 17:35, 27:43, 30:7, 31:55, 34:54, 36:20
- Court** [2] - 1:44, 16:35
- cover** [3] - 15:48, 15:55, 25:25
- covered** [2] - 27:41, 34:39
- covers** [1] - 15:20
- COVID** [6] - 19:30, 24:53, 25:42, 36:22, 36:23, 36:47
- COVID-19** [1] - 36:28
- crazy** [3] - 26:11, 26:31, 32:55
- created** [1] - 22:41
- creating** [1] - 34:51
- credentials** [2] - 5:24, 5:56
- criminal** [2] - 29:12, 32:16
- critical** [2] - 29:25, 30:17
- criticism** [1] - 28:56
- crunching** [1] - 10:17
- crystal** [4] - 6:49, 10:13, 10:26, 31:3
- current** [1] - 36:27
- curve** [1] - 29:35
- cut** [1] - 7:2
- cycle** [1] - 19:16
- D**
-
- DA** [1] - 28:41
- data** [3] - 9:31, 10:15, 10:16
- dated** [1] - 4:33
- days** [2] - 29:33, 37:27
- dealerships** [1] - 8:31
- debating** [1] - 2:31
- Debt** [2] - 11:22, 22:55
- debt** [10] - 7:11, 7:20, 11:30, 11:36, 11:43, 22:9, 22:12, 23:15
- December** [1] - 29:44
- decisions** [1] - 7:27
- decrease** [3] - 8:27, 8:30, 8:43
- decreased** [1] - 36:40
- decreasing** [1] - 27:20
- dedicated** [1] - 29:18
- default** [2] - 13:13, 25:26
- deferred** [1] - 11:53
- delay** [1] - 28:7
- deliberations** [1] - 33:35
- delinquency** [1] - 13:1
- delinquent** [3] - 16:2, 24:15, 24:38
- Dennison** [2] - 11:23, 11:29
- department** [5] - 28:44, 32:11, 35:14, 35:16, 38:30
- Department** [10] - 28:20, 28:33, 28:36, 29:27, 31:23, 31:28, 31:38, 38:24, 38:27
- departmental** [1] - 29:25
- departments** [2] - 15:8, 28:42
- deposit** [1] - 30:6
- depositories** [1] - 30:6
- Deputy** [2] - 16:41, 28:21
- describe** [1] - 31:16
- description** [1] - 31:16
- designed** [1] - 16:22
- desire** [1] - 19:53
- desk** [1] - 8:3
- detail** [1] - 20:23
- details** [2] - 36:44
- developed** [1] - 12:42
- development** [1] - 3:15
- Development** [3] - 34:37, 35:4, 35:7
- difference** [2] - 5:10, 24:29
- different** [7] - 7:10, 13:54, 19:27, 20:49, 36:20, 38:40
- difficult** [2] - 36:23, 38:31
- direct** [1] - 29:12
- directly** [2] - 30:9, 32:4
- director** [1] - 38:50
- Director** [14] - 2:34, 6:17, 14:2, 14:12, 14:22, 15:44, 16:50, 17:9, 20:39, 27:37, 27:51, 27:55, 28:4, 30:27
- DIRECTOR** [83] - 2:39, 3:37, 3:43, 3:54, 4:5, 4:11, 4:18, 4:24, 4:42, 5:27, 6:39, 7:23, 7:37, 7:43, 7:49, 7:55, 8:12, 8:36, 8:46, 9:29, 9:46, 11:14, 11:35, 11:45, 11:51, 12:8, 12:15, 13:30, 13:37, 13:44, 13:50, 14:48, 15:13, 15:30, 15:51, 16:10, 16:17, 16:26, 16:33, 17:5, 17:40, 18:1, 18:8, 18:15, 18:30, 18:36, 19:36, 19:43, 19:52, 20:4, 20:11, 20:21, 20:52, 21:4, 21:12, 21:18, 21:29, 21:35, 21:42, 21:48, 21:54, 23:32, 23:38, 23:47, 24:1, 24:12, 24:21, 24:31, 24:37, 25:1, 25:7, 25:14, 25:23, 25:33, 25:49, 25:55, 26:6, 26:22, 26:42, 27:4, 27:10, 27:40, 38:52
- Director/Budget** [1] - 1:35
- disabilities** [1] - 35:51
- disallowance** [1] - 29:22
- disbursement** [1] - 28:40
- discretionary** [2] - 21:30, 21:33
- discuss** [1] - 1:19
- discussed** [2] - 13:10, 28:10
- discussing** [1] - 6:21
- discussion** [4] - 11:54, 29:54, 32:12, 34:28
- discussions** [1] - 10:15
- distributed** [1] - 6:24
- District** [6] - 1:33, 12:10, 16:35, 28:29, 28:35
- districts** [1] - 18:19
- Division** [1] - 28:17
- document** [2] - 3:41, 4:15
- dollar** [3] - 18:5, 18:9
- dollars** [2] - 29:20, 29:28
- done** [8] - 6:19, 10:38, 11:56, 15:52, 19:54, 20:12, 28:40, 30:54
- door** [1] - 29:33
- double** [1] - 34:1
- doubling** [2] - 23:52, 23:53
- doubt** [1] - 30:5
- down** [18] - 4:55, 7:6, 8:40, 8:47, 8:55, 9:2, 9:26, 9:39, 9:56, 10:5, 10:22, 13:1, 16:24, 25:40, 26:14, 26:32, 29:2, 30:12
- downs** [1] - 36:46
- downside** [1] - 7:4
- downturns** [1] - 7:26
- drag** [1] - 5:4
- DRAGO** [11] - 33:46, 34:12, 34:33, 35:23, 36:15, 36:43, 37:1, 37:8, 37:20, 37:49, 38:33
- Drago** [5] - 1:40, 33:44, 34:10, 35:5, 35:13
- drain** [1] - 13:15
- drop** [1] - 24:23
- dropped** [1] - 23:40
- dry** [1] - 36:20
- DSS** [1] - 31:15
- dual** [1] - 18:24
- durable** [2] - 5:3, 6:32
- during** [8] - 3:19, 4:44, 5:48, 7:26, 11:54, 12:52, 18:23,

DATE

36:23
dysfunctional [1] -
 28:54

E

e-mail [10] - 3:25,
 3:41, 4:26, 4:27, 4:37,
 6:4, 6:5, 6:18, 23:7,
 37:23
e-mailed [4] - 2:41,
 3:23, 3:44, 4:16
e-mails [2] - 37:22,
 37:26
e-procurement [1] -
 29:56
early [9] - 17:35,
 17:43, 17:44, 18:18,
 18:27, 18:41, 19:12,
 19:24, 20:40
Economic [3] -
 34:37, 35:3, 35:7
economic [3] - 3:14,
 3:19, 38:44
economically [2] -
 35:51, 38:31
economy [16] - 4:46,
 4:49, 4:55, 5:2, 5:4,
 5:14, 5:17, 6:49, 6:52,
 7:4, 7:27, 8:13, 8:40,
 12:51, 12:53, 25:41
EDUCATION [1] - 1:6
education [1] - 35:41
Education [5] - 1:14,
 1:24, 1:27, 33:39,
 33:43
egregious [2] - 29:3
eight [3] - 8:47, 8:55,
 12:39
Eight [1] - 8:47
either [4] - 2:21,
 3:49, 28:10, 31:33
elapsed [1] - 28:49
elderly [1] - 19:29
election [2] - 18:19,
 18:24
Election [1] - 19:46
Elections [8] - 17:28,
 17:34, 17:35, 17:44,
 18:20, 18:56, 19:7,
 19:34
elemental [1] - 29:38
eliminate [2] - 12:27
eliminated [1] -
 12:54
ELLIS [2] - 33:52,
 34:4
Ellis [1] - 1:34
embarrassed [1] -
 28:25

employed [1] - 38:45
employee [2] -
 11:53, 32:13
employees [9] -
 11:55, 18:38, 18:39,
 19:45, 19:47, 29:12,
 31:22, 32:10, 34:54
employers [3] -
 35:36, 37:40, 37:41
employment [1] -
 35:42
end [6] - 3:17, 8:19,
 8:56, 16:40, 21:19,
 30:23
ended [2] - 8:16,
 24:46
ending [2] - 4:45,
 12:22
engineers [1] - 30:53
enhanced [1] - 12:51
Enhanced [1] - 4:56
enrolled [1] - 17:45
enrolling [1] - 36:48
enrollment [2] -
 36:30, 36:37
ensure [1] - 5:54
entertained [1] -
 30:48
entire [1] - 7:31
entities [1] - 30:13
equilibrium [1] -
 26:47
especially [3] -
 15:47, 20:42, 23:27
estimate [9] - 4:49,
 5:9, 5:10, 6:50, 8:18,
 9:25, 22:10, 24:42,
 27:20
estimated [2] - 3:30,
 24:43
events [1] - 9:33
everywhere [1] -
 32:30
exactly [2] - 8:20,
 21:5
examining [1] - 2:32
example [3] - 37:38,
 37:52, 38:10
exceed [1] - 25:27
exceeds [1] - 21:36
excellent [4] - 37:47,
 38:24, 38:29
except [2] - 16:50,
 26:46
excess [3] - 31:22,
 31:24, 31:27
exclusively [1] -
 29:18
Executive [8] - 2:31,
 6:29, 6:40, 8:18, 9:49,

9:52, 9:53, 36:31
Executive's [8] -
 5:10, 5:11, 5:12, 6:37,
 16:48, 19:22, 20:48,
 34:14
exhaustively [1] -
 29:1
expansion [1] -
 19:12
expect [3] - 8:20,
 24:22, 24:23
expectation [1] -
 15:34
expectations [1] -
 5:13
expected [1] - 27:14
expecting [2] - 24:9,
 27:16
expenditure [2] -
 28:43, 31:28
expenditures [1] -
 16:54
experience [1] -
 29:33
Expiration [1] - 4:55
explain [1] - 38:11
exponent [1] - 38:44
exponential [1] -
 23:27
extended [1] - 36:23
extent [3] - 8:28,
 12:43, 12:48

F

fact [5] - 28:27,
 28:55, 29:1, 29:37,
 29:44
factors [2] - 2:48,
 2:51
fair [3] - 5:54, 37:39,
 37:52
fairs [3] - 35:35,
 35:48, 37:38
fall [1] - 7:2
fan [1] - 29:51
far [6] - 9:18, 21:36,
 22:6, 28:42, 29:46,
 38:43
fashion [1] - 27:53
fast [1] - 30:31
fault [2] - 5:55, 33:42
fears [1] - 9:44
Federal [10] - 4:56,
 28:37, 30:8, 34:35,
 34:40, 35:14, 35:48,
 35:52, 38:15
fee [1] - 36:25
fees [1] - 36:53
fellow [1] - 20:46

felony [1] - 32:16
few [2] - 6:54, 26:47
field [1] - 30:53
fifty [2] - 22:31,
 22:34
figure [2] - 19:23,
 37:17
fill [1] - 16:38
filled [1] - 18:39
finally [1] - 30:51
FINANCE [1] - 1:4
Finance [9] - 1:14,
 1:23, 1:25, 1:27, 1:28,
 2:16, 15:15, 15:22,
 20:33
financial [1] - 28:50
fine [2] - 15:28,
 17:20
fingerprint [1] -
 29:12
fingers [1] - 33:24
finish [2] - 14:20,
 14:26
finished [1] - 11:7
first [11] - 2:18, 2:40,
 2:49, 2:56, 14:9,
 20:46, 21:8, 31:29,
 31:38, 37:12, 37:38
Fiscal [1] - 28:38
fiscal [1] - 16:23
five [10] - 5:44, 5:51,
 5:56, 6:1, 22:25,
 22:28, 27:20, 31:47,
 33:39, 37:42
five-minute [2] -
 5:44, 6:1
five-minutes [2] -
 5:51, 5:56
flag [1] - 2:8
flawed [1] - 28:54
FLEMING [60] - 2:3,
 3:34, 3:40, 3:47, 4:1,
 4:14, 4:21, 4:29, 4:39,
 5:21, 5:30, 5:36, 5:42,
 5:50, 6:9, 7:8, 7:34,
 7:40, 7:46, 7:52, 8:2,
 10:10, 10:31, 10:37,
 10:44, 10:52, 11:3,
 11:10, 11:28, 11:42,
 11:48, 12:4, 12:12,
 13:23, 14:1, 14:8,
 14:18, 14:34, 14:43,
 14:51, 15:2, 15:40,
 16:6, 16:14, 16:20,
 16:30, 17:2, 17:11,
 17:22, 17:54, 18:4,
 18:12, 18:26, 18:33,
 18:43, 18:51, 19:2,
 19:15, 20:17, 20:29
Fleming [2] - 1:22,

20:38
flexibility [2] - 12:42,
 12:47
focus [2] - 15:47,
 20:44
focused [1] - 36:22
focusing [2] - 34:28,
 36:30
folks [15] - 2:20, 6:4,
 15:45, 29:19, 29:34,
 32:27, 33:38, 34:48,
 35:7, 35:49, 36:33,
 37:13, 37:24, 37:43,
 38:3
follow [1] - 3:24
followed [1] - 31:9
forced [1] - 7:27
foresee [1] - 24:40
foreseeable [1] -
 8:33
forfeiture [2] - 28:18,
 28:30
Forge [1] - 3:10
forget [1] - 10:23
former [1] - 22:5
fortunate [1] - 7:18
forty [2] - 22:19,
 22:22
forty-six [2] - 22:19,
 22:22
forward [8] - 8:17,
 9:30, 9:32, 11:39,
 15:45, 15:53, 26:32,
 26:40
four [16] - 3:13, 22:6,
 29:19, 29:32, 30:11,
 30:34, 30:38, 33:3,
 33:6, 33:7, 33:10,
 33:23, 33:24, 36:11,
 36:54
fourfold [1] - 38:38
frankly [1] - 28:29
Friday [2] - 6:4
friend [1] - 8:30
front [3] - 19:8, 32:9,
 37:35
full [1] - 35:29
fullest [1] - 12:47
function [1] - 30:18
fund [8] - 12:5,
 12:37, 12:40, 12:43,
 12:47, 22:46
Fund [15] - 3:17,
 11:22, 12:10, 12:22,
 12:27, 12:38, 13:11,
 15:55, 16:35, 21:27,
 24:8, 25:17, 25:27,
 31:49
funded [4] - 12:42,
 12:43, 12:48, 34:35

DATE

funding [14] - 19:17, 22:7, 30:8, 30:52, 34:40, 34:45, 34:46, 35:14, 35:15, 35:25, 38:14, 38:15
funds [39] - 2:50, 3:6, 3:13, 3:17, 3:18, 3:19, 3:21, 4:48, 5:1, 6:53, 7:10, 7:24, 7:25, 7:30, 11:12, 11:16, 11:17, 11:25, 12:1, 12:9, 12:16, 12:17, 12:21, 12:33, 12:41, 12:45, 12:46, 12:51, 16:38, 20:48, 20:49, 22:7, 22:40, 22:47, 24:38, 29:3, 29:4
Funds [1] - 21:13
future [13] - 2:47, 2:48, 8:33, 11:16, 11:17, 12:39, 12:46, 15:25, 16:1, 22:8, 24:28, 27:43, 37:37

G

Gabrielle [1] - 1:44
gamut [1] - 29:21
gap [1] - 26:23
gasoline [1] - 6:34
Gazes [1] - 1:36
GAZES [1] - 19:40
general [2] - 16:54, 18:24
General [9] - 3:17, 12:10, 12:23, 13:11, 15:55, 16:34, 24:8, 25:17, 25:27
generally [2] - 6:32, 15:5
Generally [1] - 19:38
given [2] - 6:18, 6:50
global [1] - 37:15
goods [2] - 5:3, 6:32
government [4] - 3:7, 30:47, 38:8, 38:46
governmental [1] - 3:4
Governor's [1] - 2:19
grade [1] - 30:38
grads [1] - 29:34
grant [7] - 17:49, 17:51, 18:5, 18:9, 34:45, 34:53
grants [1] - 35:5
Great [1] - 37:6
great [7] - 4:22, 9:1, 23:11, 33:34, 35:6, 36:53, 38:17

greater [2] - 25:46, 36:30
greatly [1] - 32:40
grenades [1] - 27:8
grooming [1] - 36:21
group [1] - 37:24
Group [3] - 11:54, 14:10, 14:11
grows [1] - 8:21
growth [6] - 2:51, 9:50, 9:51, 10:1, 10:17, 13:4
guess [10] - 16:27, 17:14, 20:46, 21:8, 25:11, 26:37, 26:38, 26:51, 37:12, 38:37
guys [6] - 20:40, 20:49, 27:47, 27:48, 27:50, 38:5

H

Hahn [1] - 28:21
half [8] - 2:56, 8:47, 8:48, 8:56, 9:10, 9:24, 13:13, 28:22
hallway [1] - 27:35
hand [1] - 24:7
happy [2] - 37:35, 37:37
hard [4] - 2:37, 3:24, 17:13, 38:11
hardest [1] - 15:47
hardships [1] - 12:53
Hauppauge [1] - 37:29
have-nots [1] - 26:24
haves [1] - 26:23
head [2] - 21:55, 38:3
health [1] - 31:26
hear [1] - 37:56
heard [5] - 6:17, 6:28, 30:4, 34:43, 38:25
hearing [2] - 6:31, 34:55
heat [1] - 4:46
heating [1] - 31:51
held [1] - 1:15
help [10] - 3:25, 26:19, 26:28, 29:21, 31:35, 33:6, 33:13, 34:54, 35:5, 36:26
helpful [2] - 17:3, 20:43
heretofore [1] - 28:38
heroes [1] - 27:49
hesitant [1] - 6:52

hesitate [1] - 24:6
hi [1] - 31:15
HIA [1] - 37:40
high [3] - 23:39, 24:32, 26:11
higher [8] - 5:15, 9:48, 9:49, 9:50, 9:53, 20:23, 24:53, 25:56
highest [1] - 23:39
highlighting [1] - 16:31
highlights [1] - 20:44
Highway [1] - 1:17
Hills [1] - 29:28
hire [2] - 35:56, 36:1
hired [1] - 37:43
hiring [2] - 35:30, 35:41
historically [3] - 8:7, 8:25, 15:15
history [3] - 13:18, 32:16, 32:17
hit [2] - 15:47, 29:46
hold [1] - 13:10
holding [1] - 33:24
home [1] - 7:1
homeless [5] - 28:52, 29:2, 29:8, 29:18, 31:20
Homeless [1] - 28:52
homes [2] - 25:43, 26:13
honest [1] - 32:8
hope [6] - 6:14, 7:14, 17:13, 25:56, 26:27, 26:47
hopefully [3] - 25:41, 26:29, 26:31
hoping [1] - 24:32
horrible [1] - 38:9
hosting [2] - 35:35, 35:46
Houdini [1] - 30:55
hourly [4] - 19:10, 19:13, 19:18, 19:53
hours [2] - 7:3, 27:48
house [1] - 34:38
housekeeping [1] - 31:34
housing [6] - 28:52, 29:2, 29:8, 29:18, 31:20
huge [1] - 8:10
hundred [3] - 22:19, 22:22, 23:19
hundreds [1] - 29:28
Hut [1] - 29:27
hybrid [1] - 2:19

I

ice [1] - 12:20
idea [2] - 12:41, 14:52
identified [3] - 28:37, 28:47
identify [1] - 28:26
impact [8] - 6:55, 7:3, 7:12, 12:51, 13:2, 17:46, 36:53, 38:44
impacts [3] - 7:1, 8:37, 17:36
implement [1] - 30:50
important [7] - 5:8, 5:52, 15:45, 27:24, 27:54, 35:24, 37:3
impossible [1] - 29:24
impression [1] - 25:45
improvements [2] - 29:29, 31:46
in-person [1] - 1:18
inbox [2] - 6:20
inboxes [1] - 6:18
include [1] - 22:10
included [5] - 3:5, 3:29, 17:42, 19:37, 34:36
includes [10] - 11:18, 11:21, 11:23, 11:43, 11:52, 12:19, 12:37, 16:42, 16:43, 35:50
including [3] - 5:3, 17:35, 35:29
income [1] - 30:10
incorporated [1] - 20:23
incorrect [2] - 5:55, 7:17
increase [27] - 3:31, 3:32, 4:51, 4:54, 8:7, 8:10, 8:13, 8:19, 8:22, 9:3, 9:15, 9:23, 13:14, 16:43, 18:28, 18:37, 19:9, 19:18, 19:28, 19:31, 19:53, 20:22, 21:20, 23:27, 28:14, 31:39, 36:47
increased [8] - 4:49, 6:42, 8:26, 19:17, 25:18, 30:10, 30:12, 36:40
increases [7] - 6:43, 8:38, 8:39, 12:21, 15:54, 18:31, 31:32
increasing [3] - 3:32, 19:7, 36:37

Index [1] - 6:42
indicate [1] - 31:45
individual [5] - 10:15, 12:1, 12:16, 17:26, 30:3
individuals [2] - 5:1, 10:16
industrial [1] - 34:45
industries [2] - 35:30, 36:34
industry [2] - 35:47, 38:27
inflation [3] - 6:44, 9:44
information [9] - 6:5, 6:42, 6:50, 27:29, 34:30, 34:52, 35:6, 35:19, 37:3
Infrastructure [1] - 3:15
infrastructure [1] - 3:18
initiative [2] - 29:52, 36:31
Initiative [1] - 3:9
initiatives [1] - 34:38
innovative [1] - 35:20
inside [1] - 34:39
Inspectors [5] - 19:11, 19:25, 19:28, 19:50, 20:24
instance [2] - 31:29, 31:38
insurance [4] - 22:9, 22:13, 23:15, 31:27
Insurance [2] - 12:26, 22:56
intent [1] - 15:21
intention [3] - 13:55, 14:27, 15:4
interaction [1] - 30:20
interest [4] - 16:2, 24:39, 30:10, 30:12
Interested [1] - 1:41
intermittent [1] - 32:14
interpretation [1] - 32:11
Interpreter [1] - 16:52
interrupt [4] - 3:35, 11:49, 17:55, 26:10
interview [2] - 37:50, 37:52
interviews [1] - 37:42
invest [1] - 35:16
investment [1] -

DATE

30:17
involving [1] - 31:15
ironic [1] - 30:3
IRS [1] - 29:45
Island [1] - 37:40
issue [4] - 5:24, 19:6,
 19:27, 34:56
issued [1] - 11:37
issues [5] - 18:45,
 28:50, 31:20, 34:31,
 35:47
item [1] - 2:29

J

Jason [3] - 1:23,
 15:3, 17:15
job [13] - 31:36,
 32:44, 32:46, 35:34,
 35:35, 35:48, 36:2,
 37:38, 37:39, 37:51,
 38:9, 38:13, 38:16
jobs [8] - 7:2, 12:54,
 12:55, 37:14, 37:17,
 37:41
John [3] - 1:39,
 17:31, 31:15
joint [4] - 1:14,
 15:18, 20:33
JPMorgan [1] -
 30:13
juggling [1] - 29:14
jurisdictions [4] -
 13:15, 16:12, 24:13,
 24:45
jury [1] - 29:50
Justice [1] - 28:33
justification [1] -
 28:13

K

keep [2] - 26:39,
 38:30
keeping [1] - 38:45
Kennedy [11] - 1:30,
 1:39, 6:12, 17:30,
 31:9, 32:26, 32:41,
 32:55, 38:2, 38:10,
 38:20
KENNEDY [18] -
 28:6, 30:30, 30:36,
 30:43, 31:5, 31:19,
 32:22, 32:29, 32:36,
 32:43, 32:48, 32:51,
 33:1, 33:9, 33:19,
 33:27, 33:33, 38:22
Kevin [2] - 1:24,
 18:52
Kim [1] - 1:47

kind [5] - 7:13, 8:8,
 32:10, 32:16
KPI's [1] - 37:37

L

LABOR [1] - 1:6
Labor [10] - 1:15,
 1:24, 1:27, 1:30, 1:40,
 33:40, 33:43, 34:34,
 38:25, 38:27
lag [1] - 12:6
Lance [15] - 1:35,
 2:34, 7:35, 8:4, 8:55,
 10:13, 10:53, 11:11,
 14:45, 15:3, 15:10,
 15:11, 17:24, 20:18,
 30:31
lance [5] - 2:35, 3:35,
 5:52, 6:27, 19:11
Lance's [1] - 10:19
large [4] - 13:13,
 25:44, 34:56, 36:19
larger [2] - 13:4,
 25:16
largest [1] - 6:43
last [23] - 3:7, 6:4,
 6:43, 8:16, 8:26, 9:18,
 9:54, 9:55, 13:6, 19:7,
 19:16, 19:21, 20:22,
 23:27, 23:29, 24:23,
 25:15, 26:46, 27:2,
 30:7, 30:10, 36:10,
 38:23
late [2] - 20:40, 27:48
latest [1] - 28:11
Law [2] - 12:24,
 16:11
lay [1] - 8:32
leadership [1] -
 27:51
leading [1] - 10:5
lease [4] - 11:31,
 11:32, 11:37, 11:43
least [3] - 9:18,
 16:47, 24:28
leave [3] - 7:2, 10:29,
 12:54
led [1] - 2:8
lee [1] - 11:23
left [1] - 12:55
LEG [75] - 3:51, 4:8,
 4:36, 5:33, 5:39, 5:47,
 6:3, 8:6, 8:24, 8:42,
 8:50, 9:6, 9:12, 9:21,
 9:36, 10:4, 10:21,
 10:34, 10:41, 10:47,
 10:56, 11:6, 13:20,
 13:26, 13:33, 13:41,
 13:47, 13:53, 14:5,

14:15, 14:25, 14:39,
 14:55, 15:27, 15:33,
 15:37, 15:43, 17:8,
 17:19, 18:48, 18:54,
 19:5, 19:20, 19:49,
 20:1, 20:8, 20:14,
 20:26, 23:2, 23:10,
 24:51, 25:4, 25:10,
 25:20, 25:30, 25:36,
 25:52, 26:3, 26:9,
 26:26, 31:14, 32:43,
 32:51, 33:1, 33:16,
 33:19, 34:21, 34:27,
 34:42, 35:9, 36:8,
 36:39, 36:50, 37:5,
 38:22
Leg [1] - 29:10
legal [1] - 16:28
legislation [4] -
 28:21, 35:49, 35:53,
 36:21
Legislative [2] -
 1:16, 1:47
Legislator [35] -
 1:22, 1:23, 1:24, 1:26,
 1:28, 1:29, 1:30, 2:9,
 5:34, 6:12, 7:47,
 10:45, 13:24, 14:19,
 17:30, 20:34, 20:38,
 22:5, 26:44, 30:4,
 31:9, 31:21, 32:26,
 32:40, 32:55, 34:25,
 35:3, 35:38, 35:44,
 36:5, 36:6, 37:9, 38:2,
 38:19
legislator [4] - 1:25,
 14:2, 31:9, 33:13
Legislators [14] -
 2:41, 2:43, 4:2, 4:31,
 5:55, 6:14, 6:24, 6:28,
 13:38, 13:54, 14:10,
 14:31, 15:19
LEGISLATURE [1] -
 1:8
Legislature [8] -
 1:15, 1:17, 1:34, 2:5,
 2:31, 3:8, 28:12,
 28:26
Leslie [1] - 1:30
less [5] - 9:52, 10:6,
 10:8, 26:15
letter [2] - 28:9,
 30:23
license [5] - 35:55,
 36:23, 36:25, 36:26,
 36:33
licensed [1] - 36:17
licenses [1] - 36:12
Licensing [2] -
 34:34, 35:54

licensing [4] - 35:56,
 36:10, 36:12, 36:35
licensure [1] - 36:40
likelihood [1] - 13:5
line [5] - 19:44,
 28:13, 29:19, 36:44,
 36:45
lines [7] - 12:16,
 18:28, 19:28, 19:32,
 29:37, 36:9, 37:12
link [1] - 2:21
list [2] - 36:21, 37:34
lists [2] - 20:53,
 36:18
literally [1] - 10:7
litigation [1] - 12:39
livestream [1] - 6:11
loan [1] - 34:46
local [1] - 38:46
locally [1] - 8:14
located [1] - 12:5
locations [1] - 31:16
log [1] - 6:14
look [12] - 5:8, 9:47,
 10:13, 10:26, 15:18,
 15:19, 21:55, 24:41,
 25:8, 26:4, 30:45,
 31:47
looking [16] - 3:6,
 5:8, 6:5, 6:49, 8:8,
 8:19, 8:43, 9:22, 9:30,
 19:26, 21:2, 31:32,
 36:1, 36:37, 36:47
looks [1] - 13:8
Los [1] - 6:35
loss [1] - 3:16
lost [1] - 19:29
lower [1] - 5:18
luck [1] - 33:35

M

machines [9] -
 17:43, 17:52, 18:18,
 18:20, 18:21, 18:23,
 18:24, 19:18
Madam [6] - 10:35,
 13:21, 18:49, 20:9,
 20:15
madam [1] - 33:50
magic [1] - 26:37
magnitude [1] -
 26:46
mail [10] - 3:25, 3:41,
 4:26, 4:27, 4:37, 6:4,
 6:5, 6:18, 23:7, 37:23
mailed [4] - 2:41,
 3:23, 3:44, 4:16
mails [2] - 37:22,
 37:26

Main [1] - 3:14
main [1] - 20:44
majority [1] - 35:13
management [3] -
 30:2, 32:46
manufacturing [1] -
 37:39
mark [1] - 23:40
market [1] - 8:28
masks [1] - 2:23
match [2] - 17:51,
 18:16
matter [4] - 1:19,
 28:27, 28:55, 29:1
maximum [1] - 12:23
McCaffrey [1] - 1:24
MCCAFFREY [9] -
 18:48, 18:54, 19:5,
 19:20, 19:49, 20:1,
 20:8, 20:14, 20:26
mean [18] - 7:14,
 8:27, 8:29, 9:38, 9:41,
 9:43, 10:7, 10:26,
 16:22, 18:45, 21:43,
 21:49, 24:54, 25:40,
 26:10, 38:39, 38:43
MEANS [1] - 1:4
Means [13] - 1:14,
 1:22, 1:29, 2:7, 2:8,
 2:14, 10:48, 15:22,
 17:17, 17:27, 18:45,
 20:31
Means/Education
 [1] - 1:30
Means/Member [1] -
 1:26
meeting [16] - 1:14,
 2:1, 2:8, 2:20, 2:44,
 3:8, 4:27, 5:45, 6:7,
 10:48, 13:42, 14:23,
 15:5, 15:17, 15:18,
 39:6
meetings [4] - 2:5,
 2:20, 14:3, 14:36
member [1] - 15:6
Member/Budget [1] -
 1:28
Member/Ways [2] -
 1:29, 1:30
members [3] - 1:21,
 5:43, 20:47
Memorial [1] - 1:17
mention [3] - 9:24,
 16:34, 19:18
mentioned [5] - 2:35,
 6:45, 6:54, 26:51,
 31:15
Midwest [1] - 6:35
might [8] - 2:35,
 3:55, 7:53, 8:28,

DATE

20:47, 25:40, 35:5, 35:6
million [98] - 2:55, 2:56, 3:1, 3:2, 3:4, 3:9, 3:13, 3:15, 3:16, 3:26, 5:10, 5:15, 7:31, 8:17, 9:23, 9:43, 9:49, 9:52, 9:54, 11:18, 11:20, 11:22, 11:24, 11:25, 11:38, 11:40, 11:52, 12:19, 12:23, 12:26, 12:29, 12:33, 12:35, 12:44, 13:1, 13:6, 13:7, 13:11, 13:17, 15:55, 16:3, 16:4, 17:42, 17:50, 17:51, 18:5, 18:9, 18:17, 21:13, 21:20, 22:11, 22:12, 22:37, 22:54, 22:55, 22:56, 23:14, 23:15, 23:19, 23:39, 23:41, 23:42, 23:45, 23:48, 24:8, 24:10, 24:14, 24:15, 24:16, 24:19, 24:23, 24:25, 24:29, 24:43, 24:46, 25:17, 25:27, 26:46, 27:2, 27:20, 29:22, 29:52, 30:8, 30:11, 30:19, 30:52, 35:4
millions [1] - 29:20
mine [1] - 8:31
minimum [1] - 21:49
ministerial [1] - 30:45
minority [1] - 35:52
minute [4] - 5:44, 6:1, 19:7, 19:21
Minutes [2] - 1:43, 1:46
minutes [7] - 2:24, 5:51, 5:56, 14:11, 15:25, 33:38
miscalculation [1] - 7:13
misreport [1] - 32:2
missing [1] - 5:43
misspending [1] - 29:3
mistake [1] - 4:26
mistaken [1] - 15:5
mitigating [1] - 26:43
model [2] - 10:1, 10:2
moderate [1] - 13:8
moderates [1] - 8:39
mom [1] - 34:46
money [18] - 3:3, 9:23, 9:41, 11:18,

12:17, 21:9, 23:28, 23:29, 25:44, 26:11, 30:50, 31:40, 31:41, 31:44, 34:31, 35:20
monies [1] - 12:38
month [1] - 6:43
months [3] - 29:38, 30:7, 30:11
morning [1] - 2:4, 2:13, 3:23, 3:44, 14:3, 14:12, 28:7, 28:11, 33:47, 33:50
morning's [1] - 2:14
mornings [1] - 20:40
mortgages [2] - 26:20, 26:30
most [8] - 29:6, 31:21, 32:15, 35:49, 35:50, 38:37, 38:43
move [5] - 2:16, 2:28, 15:6, 15:45, 26:40
moved [1] - 29:8
movement [1] - 7:18
moving [2] - 17:16, 17:26
MR [17] - 8:54, 9:9, 9:17, 22:4, 22:18, 22:24, 22:30, 22:36, 22:43, 22:53, 23:6, 23:13, 23:21, 26:54, 27:13, 27:27, 38:42
MS [1] - 19:40
multi [3] - 12:37, 12:40, 12:45
multi-year [3] - 12:37, 12:40, 12:45
multiple [4] - 28:49, 29:20, 31:20, 38:47
Municipal [1] - 12:24
municipalities [2] - 9:37, 16:24
must [2] - 9:39, 29:44

N

names [1] - 37:22
narrative [1] - 2:41
Nassau [1] - 9:38
nearly [1] - 10:27
need [18] - 7:15, 12:43, 12:48, 19:31, 20:34, 20:44, 26:28, 26:39, 27:30, 29:15, 30:2, 30:22, 33:6, 33:7, 33:23, 34:53, 34:54, 35:49
needed [1] - 38:56
needs [2] - 6:15,

7:16
negative [7] - 5:5, 5:6, 9:50, 9:51, 10:1, 10:17, 24:41
negotiated [1] - 31:37
negotiated [2] - 11:56, 30:12
net [3] - 16:43, 24:16, 24:46
never [4] - 9:14, 24:55, 29:29
nevertheless [1] - 28:26
New [3] - 1:18, 9:38, 37:21
new [10] - 3:14, 12:37, 16:40, 16:41, 16:42, 29:34, 29:35, 31:50
news [1] - 6:32
next [12] - 5:16, 6:30, 6:48, 7:4, 8:30, 10:7, 10:8, 12:46, 17:43, 20:33, 26:51, 29:32
nice [1] - 2:35
night [1] - 38:24
nights [2] - 20:40, 27:48
nine [2] - 3:13, 31:16
nitroglycerin [1] - 29:15
nobody's [1] - 30:55
None [1] - 28:39
none [3] - 10:54, 27:47, 33:31
normal [2] - 19:46, 26:1
normally [1] - 25:56
North [1] - 11:23
note [1] - 7:17
nothing [2] - 27:28, 38:11
nots [1] - 26:24
November [1] - 29:44
number [15] - 5:14, 5:18, 6:27, 12:55, 17:45, 18:37, 24:24, 24:52, 25:37, 25:39, 25:43, 26:10, 26:32, 28:54, 36:12
numbers [2] - 10:14, 37:22

O

obligation [2] - 31:53
obligations [2] - 29:30, 29:46
obtained [1] - 12:38

obviously [6] - 6:41, 22:40, 22:45, 27:15, 38:39, 38:46
occur [1] - 31:20
October [3] - 1:18, 4:33, 6:24
OF [1] - 1:8
Off-Track [1] - 26:52
offering [1] - 35:55
office [5] - 10:16, 28:40, 34:51, 35:14, 38:4
Office [7] - 1:35, 1:36, 1:37, 1:38, 4:32, 19:22, 20:48
Officer [6] - 1:33, 16:51, 28:10, 28:21, 28:38, 33:39
Officers [1] - 16:41
offset [1] - 31:43
often [1] - 38:1
old [2] - 9:39, 18:22
Omnibus [2] - 17:42, 18:16
once [2] - 2:19, 25:15
One [4] - 6:22, 30:5, 30:13, 37:41
one [38] - 2:29, 5:5, 5:11, 5:43, 6:43, 7:14, 7:25, 7:26, 7:29, 8:13, 9:2, 10:6, 10:38, 11:17, 11:36, 12:9, 12:10, 14:29, 15:3, 17:15, 18:22, 20:50, 23:3, 25:26, 26:38, 27:24, 27:49, 29:39, 30:5, 31:37, 32:45, 33:6, 34:1, 36:9, 37:43, 38:2, 38:7
one-shots [4] - 7:25, 7:26, 7:29, 11:17
ones [1] - 26:19
ongoing [1] - 28:18
open [5] - 15:24, 27:15, 27:16, 37:41
openings [1] - 35:34
operate [1] - 36:24
operating [1] - 18:9
Operating [2] - 1:11, 1:19, 2:6, 2:29, 2:30, 3:5, 3:6, 4:33, 6:19, 6:23, 7:17, 15:16, 16:56, 17:37, 17:50, 18:10, 18:46, 19:21, 19:33, 20:19, 27:52
operation [1] - 28:15
operations [3] - 29:19, 31:54, 32:4

operator [3] - 29:2, 29:11, 29:13
operators [2] - 31:22, 31:31
opinion [2] - 28:53, 29:14
Opioid [1] - 12:38
opportunities [1] - 37:18
opportunity [5] - 2:47, 10:12, 15:7, 30:24, 38:13
optimistic [2] - 4:53, 9:54
order [6] - 2:1, 2:19, 24:13, 28:23, 28:36, 29:45
originally [1] - 16:22
originates [1] - 28:41
OTB [3] - 26:52, 27:11, 27:18
outflow [3] - 24:16, 24:41, 24:46
outreach [1] - 35:26
overseen [1] - 15:8
oversight [3] - 28:43, 29:19, 29:24
overtime [3] - 17:46, 18:31, 18:40
overview [10] - 2:36, 6:17, 15:10, 15:15, 16:55, 17:16, 17:24, 26:52, 27:41, 36:45
own [2] - 5:55, 28:27
owned [1] - 35:56
owns [1] - 8:31

P

package [1] - 31:26
packet [1] - 20:43
page [7] - 4:9, 4:31, 4:32, 5:54, 6:22, 6:25, 26:33
paid [5] - 11:55, 24:55, 29:44, 31:25
panic [1] - 7:5
parenting [1] - 31:35
Parks [1] - 29:27
parks [1] - 34:45
part [9] - 4:16, 14:10, 15:25, 16:27, 17:41, 29:50, 32:44, 32:46, 34:37
participation [1] - 5:31
particular [3] - 11:37, 20:50, 38:26
Parties [1] - 1:41
partnership [1] -

DATE

37:39
passed [1] - 3:8
past [12] - 6:43, 7:29, 8:37, 11:17, 19:54, 20:5, 22:44, 23:48, 25:2, 25:5, 25:39, 36:54
path [1] - 10:22
patience [2] - 6:10, 6:25
pause [2] - 5:25, 7:41
pay [19] - 7:31, 11:17, 11:18, 11:53, 12:6, 12:31, 12:33, 12:35, 13:3, 24:9, 24:14, 25:42, 26:13, 26:14, 26:15, 26:20, 26:29, 31:22, 36:24
pay-as-you-go [3] - 12:31, 12:33, 12:35
paying [5] - 11:20, 11:38, 11:39, 31:40, 38:45
payment [1] - 13:6
payments [3] - 11:32, 11:43
pays [1] - 7:28
penalties [2] - 16:2, 24:39
pension [1] - 31:27
people [34] - 6:5, 6:45, 6:46, 6:54, 6:55, 7:1, 9:40, 12:52, 12:53, 12:55, 12:56, 19:24, 24:53, 25:42, 26:11, 26:13, 26:15, 26:18, 26:19, 26:29, 30:54, 35:50, 36:23, 36:33, 36:48, 37:16, 37:28, 37:29, 37:36, 37:42, 38:9, 38:17, 38:45
People [1] - 26:16
per [1] - 11:39
percent [37] - 3:27, 3:31, 4:50, 4:51, 4:54, 5:5, 5:11, 6:42, 8:7, 8:19, 8:21, 8:29, 8:47, 8:48, 8:56, 9:2, 9:3, 9:10, 9:14, 9:22, 9:26, 10:1, 10:6, 10:7, 10:23, 10:24, 10:25, 21:26, 21:30, 21:36, 24:55, 25:26
percentage [2] - 8:44, 21:39
perfect [2] - 15:49, 22:51
perhaps [1] - 36:51

period [7] - 2:55, 6:40, 9:53, 23:28, 24:39, 24:40, 29:36
periods [1] - 8:39
PERNICE [14] - 22:4, 22:18, 22:24, 22:30, 22:36, 22:43, 22:53, 23:6, 23:13, 23:21, 26:54, 27:13, 27:27, 38:42
Pernice [1] - 1:38
person [11] - 1:18, 2:21, 31:34, 32:14, 32:45, 37:38, 37:44, 38:12, 38:13, 38:16
personal [1] - 13:21
pet [1] - 36:20
phone [6] - 34:52, 34:53, 37:22, 37:23, 37:26, 38:24
Piccirillo [1] - 5:34
picks [1] - 25:42
piece [1] - 29:51
Pierre [1] - 28:56
place [3] - 18:23, 29:14, 34:48
placed [1] - 22:47
placement [1] - 37:36
plan [4] - 11:24, 13:42, 18:22, 29:42
Plan [5] - 2:50, 2:54, 16:47, 16:49
planning [2] - 14:29, 15:16
Planning [1] - 34:37
play [1] - 28:38
Pledge [1] - 2:8
podium [1] - 2:24
point [15] - 3:13, 10:12, 10:13, 13:21, 23:40, 24:7, 25:25, 25:37, 26:51, 28:14, 28:39, 29:26, 29:52, 30:5, 30:17
pointed [1] - 32:7
pointing [1] - 31:48
Police [3] - 12:10, 16:35, 28:20
police [2] - 16:40
policy [2] - 16:7, 30:45
polling [1] - 18:23
poor [1] - 7:26
pop [1] - 34:46
Portion [2] - 2:21, 2:25
portion [2] - 17:17, 36:19
ports [1] - 6:34

position [1] - 38:39
positions [13] - 16:39, 16:42, 16:43, 16:44, 16:46, 16:49, 16:50, 18:38, 28:12, 30:34, 38:37, 38:43
positively [1] - 30:22
possible [6] - 6:44, 8:29, 9:27, 9:30, 9:34, 32:34
postpone [1] - 6:47
potential [2] - 13:15, 26:44
PPE [1] - 34:54
prep [1] - 37:51
present [1] - 13:39
Present [1] - 1:21
presentation [8] - 2:42, 14:12, 14:21, 15:24, 17:14, 17:29, 34:10, 34:13
Presiding [4] - 1:33, 28:10, 28:21, 33:39
pretty [6] - 15:20, 18:38, 25:40, 28:8, 36:18
previous [3] - 9:56, 17:28, 28:28
previously [2] - 28:47, 29:43
Price [1] - 6:42
prices [1] - 6:35
primarily [1] - 22:7
primary [1] - 28:39
priorities [1] - 35:52
prioritize [1] - 37:25
priority [1] - 35:49
privilege [1] - 13:21
Probation [1] - 28:36
problem [3] - 15:54, 26:37, 31:17
problems [2] - 10:28, 24:54
process [5] - 15:9, 28:27, 28:29, 29:39, 29:49
procurement [1] - 29:56
Procurement [1] - 16:51
products [2] - 6:46, 6:47
program [4] - 3:14, 12:45, 18:19, 38:28
Program [5] - 3:14, 3:15, 12:32, 17:41, 30:20
programs [8] - 9:31, 12:35, 12:42, 12:43, 12:47, 35:20, 37:34,

37:35
project [1] - 30:51
projected [1] - 10:17
projecting [7] - 3:30, 3:31, 4:50, 4:54, 9:32, 9:47, 10:1
projection [5] - 5:5, 9:47, 10:7, 27:17, 27:19
projections [6] - 4:53, 5:11, 5:13, 6:37, 9:31, 10:14
projects [3] - 3:26, 12:32, 12:35
promise [1] - 27:8
proper [1] - 4:45
Property [1] - 15:56
property [13] - 12:50, 12:56, 13:2, 13:3, 13:17, 15:52, 16:4, 16:34, 24:38, 24:41, 24:42, 25:16, 25:28
proposal [1] - 19:12
propose [1] - 21:9
proposed [2] - 2:30, 7:9
prospect [1] - 4:56
provide [6] - 2:48, 11:15, 12:41, 17:47, 27:19, 34:30
provided [1] - 11:38
providers [3] - 29:8, 31:21, 31:37
provides [10] - 2:47, 7:24, 7:31, 12:1, 12:21, 12:34, 16:38, 16:39, 18:38, 21:21
providing [3] - 2:54, 35:40, 35:45
proximity [1] - 32:15
Public [3] - 2:21, 2:25, 3:16
public [1] - 13:3
punch [1] - 34:25
purchase [2] - 6:46, 17:42
purpose [2] - 18:24, 18:37
put [20] - 3:45, 4:12, 4:26, 8:4, 10:8, 13:55, 14:37, 15:45, 17:31, 18:22, 20:48, 21:5, 21:8, 21:9, 25:44, 28:8, 31:45, 31:50, 34:47, 38:14
puts [1] - 9:51
putting [4] - 4:25, 13:38, 22:7, 27:51

Q

quarter [2] - 9:55
quarterly [1] - 28:46
quarters [1] - 9:56
questioning [1] - 36:9
questions [32] - 5:18, 5:48, 5:52, 8:4, 10:11, 10:18, 10:39, 10:53, 13:34, 15:7, 15:38, 15:46, 17:24, 17:30, 17:31, 18:44, 20:15, 20:18, 20:46, 20:47, 24:6, 27:36, 27:42, 27:46, 33:25, 34:15, 34:18, 35:15, 36:5, 38:19
quick [3] - 2:36, 11:8, 38:23
quite [1] - 6:54

R

raise [3] - 19:10, 19:13, 24:6
rate [7] - 8:38, 9:40, 13:1, 19:10, 20:23, 24:22, 31:22
rates [4] - 19:10, 19:18, 19:53, 37:36
reach [3] - 35:28, 36:33, 37:22
reaching [1] - 37:15
reading [1] - 30:31
Ready [1] - 33:6
ready [1] - 36:45
realized [2] - 30:8, 30:11
realizing [1] - 30:14
really [10] - 7:18, 15:48, 17:12, 20:43, 26:19, 27:28, 27:54, 30:49, 35:17
reason [2] - 13:35, 27:14
reasonable [2] - 5:13, 16:55
reasons [1] - 12:55
receipt [1] - 2:49
receive [3] - 3:48, 24:14, 34:45
received [3] - 2:30, 2:55, 18:9
receiving [2] - 3:1, 35:27
recent [2] - 6:41, 13:18
recently [1] - 3:7
recessed [1] - 6:7

DATE

recession [1] - 9:1
recipients [1] - 32:5
reclarification [1] - 32:44
recollection [1] - 32:17
recommendation [1] - 27:17
recommendations [2] - 5:16, 26:43
recommended [23] - 2:46, 3:12, 3:26, 4:33, 4:50, 7:30, 11:15, 11:18, 11:21, 11:52, 12:19, 12:26, 12:31, 12:34, 12:37, 16:38, 16:48, 16:55, 17:47, 22:10, 24:25, 24:41, 27:19
Recommended [2] - 6:23, 16:56
reconcile [1] - 28:23
record [10] - 6:11, 13:38, 14:9, 14:11, 14:22, 14:36, 15:11, 15:24, 33:23, 35:33
recover [1] - 24:38
Recovery [2] - 3:14, 12:38
recovery [1] - 3:19
recruitment [1] - 34:39
recruits [1] - 16:41
red [1] - 32:8
reduce [2] - 2:47, 27:17
reducing [1] - 7:11
reduction [1] - 11:30
referencing [1] - 3:41
referring [1] - 4:15
reflect [1] - 8:40
reflected [1] - 19:33
reflection [1] - 30:49
reforms [2] - 17:36, 17:38
regard [9] - 6:29, 6:37, 7:9, 7:19, 17:15, 17:16, 17:34, 17:37, 18:44
regarding [2] - 32:4, 34:31
regular [6] - 2:25, 19:46, 35:26, 35:35, 35:47, 37:23
regulations [2] - 28:33, 28:37
reimbursed [1] - 38:43
REINHIMER [83] - 2:39, 3:37, 3:43, 3:54, 4:5, 4:11, 4:18, 4:24, 4:42, 5:27, 6:39, 7:23, 7:37, 7:43, 7:49, 7:55, 8:12, 8:36, 8:46, 9:29, 9:46, 11:14, 11:35, 11:45, 11:51, 12:8, 12:15, 13:30, 13:37, 13:44, 13:50, 14:48, 15:13, 15:30, 15:51, 16:10, 16:17, 16:26, 16:33, 17:5, 17:40, 18:1, 18:8, 18:15, 18:30, 18:36, 19:36, 19:43, 19:52, 20:4, 20:11, 20:21, 20:52, 21:4, 21:12, 21:18, 21:29, 21:35, 21:42, 21:48, 21:54, 23:32, 23:38, 23:47, 24:1, 24:12, 24:21, 24:31, 24:37, 25:1, 25:7, 25:14, 25:23, 25:33, 25:49, 25:55, 26:6, 26:22, 26:42, 27:4, 27:10, 27:40, 38:52
Reinheimer [6] - 1:35, 2:34, 6:17, 14:20, 20:39, 30:27
related [2] - 18:55, 36:19
relevant [2] - 15:22, 18:56
remain [3] - 6:56, 16:35
remained [1] - 36:46
remember [1] - 23:29
Remember [1] - 30:6
remind [1] - 32:26
remit [1] - 31:53
remits [1] - 32:4
removal [1] - 12:20
repair [2] - 12:20, 32:14
repeat [1] - 14:28
reporter [1] - 14:35
reporting [1] - 28:46
representatives [1] - 16:21
represented [1] - 37:40
represents [1] - 13:1
request [4] - 19:7, 19:22, 19:33, 20:5
requested [2] - 14:22, 16:47
requesting [2] - 16:48, 28:12
requests [1] - 30:48
require [2] - 2:23, 28:19
required [2] - 17:44, 35:48
requires [2] - 28:22, 29:11
Rescue [3] - 2:50, 2:54
Reserve [10] - 11:22, 12:22, 12:27, 21:10, 21:13, 21:21, 21:27, 22:55, 22:56, 23:30
reserve [10] - 7:24, 7:30, 11:16, 12:21, 20:49, 22:7, 22:9, 22:13, 22:47
reserves [5] - 2:48, 7:10, 7:20, 11:12, 22:6
reside [1] - 16:8
residents [5] - 26:28, 31:35, 35:26, 35:28, 35:45
Resiliency [1] - 3:9
resolution [4] - 3:3, 19:54, 20:2, 20:5
Resolution [3] - 3:8, 17:42, 18:16
resolutions [1] - 3:2
resource [2] - 36:32, 37:27
resources [1] - 12:31
resourcing [1] - 11:16
respect [3] - 36:10, 36:11, 36:53
respectfully [1] - 14:20
response [1] - 14:45
responses [1] - 10:19
responsibilities [1] - 28:18
responsible [2] - 7:19, 14:46
rest [1] - 24:45
restaurant [1] - 34:55
restore [1] - 3:7
result [2] - 36:27, 36:48
results [1] - 13:13
resume [2] - 35:29, 37:50
retirement [6] - 7:32, 11:19, 22:8, 22:11, 22:55, 23:14
retiring [2] - 7:11, 7:20
Revenue [2] - 4:3, 6:22
revenue [7] - 3:16, 12:50, 24:43, 27:17, 36:37, 36:40, 36:48
revenues [2] - 16:54, 36:12
reverses [1] - 7:25
Review [13] - 1:35, 1:36, 1:37, 1:38, 2:13, 2:35, 4:32, 4:33, 13:10, 20:39, 23:25, 27:52, 35:17
review [10] - 4:16, 6:23, 11:8, 13:27, 13:34, 14:2, 14:19, 14:22, 20:42
reviewed [1] - 5:52
Richberg [5] - 1:23, 2:15, 20:35, 22:5, 35:44
RICHBERG [68] - 6:3, 14:55, 15:37, 15:43, 17:8, 17:19, 20:37, 21:1, 21:7, 21:15, 21:23, 21:32, 21:38, 21:45, 21:51, 22:1, 22:15, 22:21, 22:27, 22:33, 22:39, 22:50, 23:18, 23:24, 23:35, 23:44, 23:51, 24:4, 24:18, 24:27, 24:34, 24:48, 26:36, 26:50, 27:1, 27:7, 27:22, 27:33, 27:45, 30:26, 30:33, 30:40, 31:2, 31:8, 32:19, 32:25, 32:32, 32:39, 32:54, 33:5, 33:12, 33:22, 33:30, 33:37, 33:49, 33:55, 34:7, 34:17, 34:24, 35:2, 35:12, 36:4, 37:11, 37:46, 37:55, 38:36, 38:49, 38:55
rising [1] - 6:35
risk [2] - 32:15, 35:51
River [2] - 3:10, 30:51
roads [1] - 12:20
Rob [5] - 1:29, 5:37, 8:4, 10:11, 10:38
Robert [1] - 1:33
Rogers [1] - 1:17
role [1] - 28:39
rolling [1] - 38:28
roof [1] - 31:51
Rosalie [1] - 1:40
Rose [1] - 1:16
roughly [2] - 23:30, 38:38
Roz [1] - 1:36
run [2] - 30:7, 30:52
running [2] - 29:20, 36:34
runs [1] - 29:21

S

safe [1] - 9:14
salaries [3] - 11:53, 19:8, 19:37
Salary [2] - 16:46, 16:49
salary [8] - 12:16, 18:28, 19:9, 19:28, 19:32, 31:25, 31:33, 31:39
Sales [2] - 4:3, 6:22
sales [28] - 2:51, 3:23, 3:27, 3:29, 3:32, 4:43, 4:53, 4:54, 5:4, 5:18, 6:27, 6:30, 6:37, 7:13, 7:41, 7:47, 8:16, 8:20, 8:21, 8:30, 8:38, 8:39, 9:48, 10:2, 10:18, 12:51, 26:10
salespeople [1] - 8:32
Salutation [1] - 2:11
Sarah [3] - 1:28, 11:4, 11:11
satisfy [1] - 11:25
save [1] - 12:28
savings [5] - 11:19, 11:20, 11:33, 11:40, 30:14
SCAT [2] - 29:40, 29:41
schools [2] - 6:55
screen [5] - 2:21, 3:45, 4:25, 4:27, 17:23
second [9] - 3:1, 3:35, 7:35, 10:38, 11:29, 15:3, 17:12, 17:15, 17:55
Secretary [1] - 1:47
Section [1] - 29:9
section [1] - 29:10
sector [2] - 35:47, 36:2
see [24] - 4:43, 4:49, 7:18, 8:3, 8:17, 8:21, 9:55, 11:33, 20:30, 26:39, 28:1, 29:22, 30:51, 31:21, 31:43, 32:5, 32:10, 33:43, 33:44, 36:5, 38:2, 39:2
seeing [5] - 7:9,

DATE

- 10:54, 27:47, 33:31, 39:3
sees [1] - 38:3
segregate [1] - 31:44
send [1] - 23:7
senior [4] - 29:19, 29:32, 29:39, 29:40
sense [1] - 6:30
sent [2] - 4:37, 7:1
separate [1] - 19:44
separately [2] - 2:52, 3:41
separating [1] - 29:32
separation [1] - 29:43
seriously [1] - 28:53
served [1] - 23:8
serves [1] - 2:32
service [9] - 7:11, 11:30, 11:31, 11:36, 11:43, 22:9, 22:12, 23:15, 35:49
Service [3] - 22:55, 29:37, 31:24
services [6] - 3:4, 3:7, 35:29, 35:45, 37:50, 38:46
Services [3] - 16:51, 31:29, 31:38
servicing [1] - 30:18
servicing [1] - 35:25
session [2] - 2:14, 6:56
sessions [1] - 35:47
set [5] - 20:46, 30:45, 34:31, 37:12, 37:24
settled [1] - 30:51
settlements [4] - 12:27, 12:28, 12:39
seven [2] - 8:31, 31:47
seventy [1] - 23:19
seventy-six [1] - 23:19
several [7] - 5:23, 11:16, 13:38, 23:41, 23:48, 29:8, 29:25
Several [2] - 23:52, 28:55
Severs [1] - 1:44
shaking [1] - 38:3
shape [1] - 16:23
share [2] - 36:45, 37:35
shelter [2] - 31:34, 32:13
Sheriff [1] - 28:35
Sheriffs [1] - 16:41
shop [1] - 34:56
shops [2] - 34:46, 34:48
shoring [1] - 7:10
short [2] - 16:3, 24:40
shortages [2] - 5:3, 6:45
shortfall [7] - 13:17, 15:56, 24:19, 24:54, 25:25, 25:39, 26:44
shortfalls [2] - 13:3, 26:45
shots [4] - 7:25, 7:26, 7:29, 11:17
show [2] - 33:23, 38:17
shows [1] - 26:17
shutting [1] - 29:2
side [7] - 29:46, 34:34, 34:35, 34:38, 35:54, 35:56, 36:2
significant [6] - 2:48, 7:24, 24:24, 28:14, 28:17, 28:48
significantly [3] - 8:27, 26:32, 31:41
similar [1] - 2:43
simple [1] - 28:8
simply [1] - 29:26
single [1] - 13:55
sites [1] - 17:45
sitting [1] - 31:52
situation [2] - 2:49, 28:48
six [6] - 13:13, 22:19, 22:22, 23:19, 29:18, 31:47
six-and-a-half [1] - 13:13
skewed [1] - 26:17
slammed [1] - 29:46
slow [3] - 4:55, 7:6, 10:5
slower [1] - 23:3
slowing [1] - 9:56
small [5] - 13:13, 34:28, 34:31, 34:46, 34:51
smaller [1] - 16:24
Smithtown [1] - 1:18
snow [1] - 12:20
Social [3] - 31:24, 31:28, 31:38
society [1] - 26:17
software [1] - 29:51
solution [1] - 26:37
sometimes [2] - 6:13, 31:43
somewhat [1] - 5:4
somewhere [2] - 24:16, 37:31
sorry [15] - 4:26, 5:44, 6:20, 7:35, 7:56, 11:4, 11:39, 11:49, 17:55, 19:44, 23:3, 24:9, 28:7, 28:52, 33:40
sort [5] - 8:28, 20:44, 36:51, 37:14, 38:17
source [1] - 36:37
speaking [2] - 6:33, 15:6
special [1] - 2:5
specific [5] - 15:7, 20:53, 26:55, 31:16, 36:18
specifically [1] - 35:48
spend [2] - 3:17, 26:18
spending [2] - 20:40, 36:25
spent [3] - 3:19, 12:44, 26:16
spot [1] - 37:42
Stabilization [6] - 12:22, 21:10, 21:20, 22:54, 23:14, 23:30
stabilization [2] - 22:8, 22:11
staff [11] - 2:13, 18:27, 18:41, 19:24, 20:39, 27:47, 29:18, 29:19, 29:32, 30:18, 30:23
staff's [1] - 29:50
staffing [3] - 16:38, 19:9, 38:39
stand [1] - 28:25
start [8] - 2:8, 5:56, 8:20, 9:1, 31:40, 33:42, 33:43, 36:32
starts [2] - 14:26, 32:27
State [7] - 9:38, 32:3, 35:15, 35:41, 37:22, 37:24, 38:14
state [1] - 27:38
statement [1] - 38:23
statements [1] - 37:13
stays [1] - 25:18
steady [2] - 32:13, 36:46
Stenographer [1] - 1:44
stenographer [1] - 33:24
step [1] - 14:35
steps [1] - 7:12
still [10] - 6:54, 16:3, 24:23, 24:40, 26:7, 26:18, 29:50, 31:48, 31:52, 33:50
stimulus [6] - 2:50, 4:48, 5:1, 6:53, 9:23, 12:51
stock [1] - 8:28
stop [2] - 7:35, 11:29
stopping [1] - 9:41
stores [1] - 34:56
stories [1] - 38:2
story [1] - 37:56
straightforward [1] - 28:8
Street [1] - 3:14
stretch [1] - 32:34
structurally [1] - 2:46
struggle [1] - 30:47
stuff [2] - 10:50, 26:12
subcontractor [1] - 37:21
subject [1] - 30:53
submitted [1] - 31:31
subsequent [1] - 31:46
subsequently [1] - 31:39
subsidiaries [1] - 28:42
subsidize [1] - 13:6
substantial [1] - 36:41
substitute [1] - 6:46
success [1] - 38:1
successfully [1] - 30:12
succinct [1] - 32:33
Succinct [1] - 38:56
sufficient [2] - 15:55, 16:38
SUFFOLK [1] - 1:8
Suffolk [18] - 1:15, 1:39, 2:4, 2:54, 3:9, 4:3, 6:22, 9:42, 16:11, 16:27, 29:21, 30:9, 35:26, 35:27, 35:34, 35:46, 36:17, 38:27
summary [5] - 2:43, 4:32, 6:19, 20:54, 21:2
supply [5] - 5:3, 6:32, 6:33, 6:45, 9:24
support [5] - 3:4, 34:35, 34:36, 34:39, 35:40
Support [1] - 12:38
supported [1] - 18:22
surplus [7] - 3:26, 4:46, 8:17, 16:3, 31:45, 31:47, 31:54
surpluses [1] - 21:26
Susan [1] - 1:26
suspenders [1] - 7:14
sustain [2] - 9:40, 29:24
sweetheart [1] - 29:41
system [5] - 31:51, 32:3, 37:52
-
- ## T
-
- Table** [2] - 4:3, 6:21
tax [45] - 2:51, 3:23, 3:24, 3:27, 3:29, 3:32, 4:43, 4:53, 4:54, 5:5, 5:18, 6:27, 6:30, 6:37, 7:13, 7:41, 7:47, 8:16, 8:20, 8:21, 8:30, 8:38, 8:39, 9:48, 10:2, 10:18, 12:50, 12:51, 12:56, 13:2, 13:3, 13:17, 15:52, 16:4, 16:34, 22:8, 22:11, 24:8, 24:41, 24:42, 25:16, 25:28, 26:10
Tax [21] - 4:3, 6:22, 12:22, 13:4, 13:5, 13:11, 15:54, 15:56, 16:11, 16:27, 21:9, 21:13, 21:20, 22:54, 23:14, 23:29, 24:43, 24:44, 25:16, 25:18
taxes [7] - 16:2, 24:15, 24:39, 24:55, 25:43, 26:13, 38:45
taxing [4] - 13:14, 16:12, 24:13, 24:45
taxpayer [1] - 29:3
taxpayers [1] - 2:32
team [2] - 27:47, 28:3
technicalities [1] - 6:13
temperature [1] - 26:39
temporary [1] - 19:37
ten [7] - 11:40, 25:11, 25:15, 28:25, 30:6, 33:38, 33:39
terms [4] - 7:10, 7:19, 34:38, 37:37
territory [1] - 9:14
testament [1] - 38:5

DATE

THE [1] - 1:8
theme [1] - 31:21
theory [1] - 25:2
they've [1] - 10:19
third [1] - 29:2
Thirty [1] - 3:13
Thirty-four [1] - 3:13
Thomas [1] - 1:37
thousands [1] - 29:28
three [18] - 2:24, 3:31, 4:51, 5:55, 8:19, 9:3, 9:56, 16:50, 18:17, 28:12, 28:22, 30:37, 32:45, 33:2, 33:7, 36:11, 36:54, 37:30
Three [1] - 23:19
three-and-a-half [1] - 28:22
Three-hundred [1] - 23:19
three-minutes [1] - 2:24
threefold [3] - 35:17, 35:18, 38:38
throughout [1] - 2:6
throw [1] - 27:8
tied [1] - 31:26
timelines [1] - 29:47
titles [5] - 16:46, 16:49, 33:6, 33:7, 33:23
today [9] - 2:5, 2:14, 2:29, 2:43, 6:20, 6:50, 15:19, 28:10, 36:45
together [5] - 21:5, 26:28, 34:29, 38:14, 38:16
Tom [1] - 1:25
tomorrow [1] - 28:11
took [3] - 7:41, 28:22, 37:44
top [2] - 21:55, 26:18
total [3] - 11:20, 22:37, 23:16
towards [1] - 31:45
town [1] - 16:15
Track [1] - 26:52
train [1] - 29:35
trained [1] - 37:36
Trainee [2] - 28:12, 29:36
Trainees [3] - 30:37, 32:45
training [5] - 29:35, 34:39, 35:30, 35:40, 37:34
trajectory [2] - 36:11, 36:54

transaction [1] - 11:33
transactional [1] - 30:13
Transcribed [1] - 1:46
transfer [1] - 22:10
transferred [1] - 22:6
transfers [1] - 12:26
transitioning [1] - 35:29
transportation [2] - 37:28, 37:51
Treasurer [1] - 32:46
Treasury [1] - 28:34
tremendous [3] - 28:19, 29:49, 30:50
trend [1] - 13:7
TROTТА [14] - 5:33, 5:39, 5:47, 8:6, 8:24, 8:42, 8:50, 9:6, 9:12, 9:21, 9:36, 10:4, 10:21, 10:41
Trotta [5] - 1:29, 5:37, 6:12, 7:47, 8:3
trouble [1] - 19:9
troubling [1] - 29:6
try [1] - 19:23
trying [3] - 5:34, 10:26, 36:25
tuition [1] - 27:23
turn [3] - 2:15, 20:34, 29:47
turned [2] - 28:54, 29:21
turning [1] - 28:30
Twenty [2] - 22:25, 22:28
Twenty-five [2] - 22:25, 22:28
two [25] - 2:48, 2:55, 3:2, 5:8, 5:15, 6:40, 8:14, 8:51, 8:56, 9:10, 9:52, 12:9, 12:17, 13:2, 16:42, 23:16, 29:19, 30:13, 30:14, 33:7, 35:17, 36:9, 36:10, 37:30, 37:41
two-year [3] - 2:55, 6:40, 9:52
twofold [1] - 8:13
typically [1] - 31:25

U

U.S [1] - 6:42
unacceptable [1] - 29:15
unaddressed [1] - 28:55

unanticipated [1] - 2:50
unchanged [1] - 16:36
under [3] - 2:18, 12:23, 32:9
underemployed [2] - 35:28, 35:46
undergo [1] - 29:36
underlying [1] - 28:50
underreport [1] - 32:2
underserved [1] - 35:51
understated [1] - 13:18
understood [1] - 35:47
undertaken [1] - 29:29
undertook [1] - 28:20
underway [1] - 29:26
unemployed [6] - 6:54, 35:25, 35:34, 35:46, 37:13, 37:30
unemployment [3] - 9:24, 12:52, 35:27
Unemployment [1] - 4:56
unfair [1] - 25:46
unfamiliar [1] - 29:9
unforeseen [1] - 9:32
uniforms [1] - 29:43
units [1] - 12:1
unknowns [2] - 5:16, 6:48
unless [1] - 15:16
unlikely [1] - 25:15
unlooked [1] - 9:13
unoverseen [1] - 28:24
unprecedented [2] - 9:13, 30:5
unreconciled [1] - 28:24
unsung [1] - 27:49
up [39] - 3:45, 4:12, 4:25, 4:26, 4:45, 4:46, 6:11, 6:34, 7:10, 8:4, 8:16, 8:18, 8:40, 8:51, 9:10, 9:39, 10:23, 10:24, 10:25, 11:36, 12:22, 13:12, 19:6, 21:19, 21:55, 24:46, 25:8, 25:40, 25:42, 28:48, 29:20, 29:35, 29:43, 33:24, 36:6,

36:27, 38:10, 38:25, 38:26
upcoming [1] - 36:22
update [1] - 18:21
upgrade [1] - 31:50
upped [1] - 31:33
ups [1] - 36:46
upside [3] - 7:5, 9:34, 16:24
urgent [1] - 37:25
usual [2] - 6:48, 25:38

V

vacant [2] - 16:39, 16:42
vaccinated [1] - 2:23
Vanderbilt [1] - 30:21
variety [2] - 28:14, 37:34
vendees [1] - 29:30
vendors [1] - 31:53
verge [1] - 29:1
veteran [1] - 35:56
veteran-owned [1] - 35:56
Veterans [3] - 1:17, 14:27, 15:21
veterans [2] - 35:50, 36:1
via [2] - 1:18, 37:23
Vice [2] - 1:25, 1:26
video [1] - 17:23
vigilant [1] - 29:16
violations [2] - 29:9, 32:7
vote [1] - 20:34
voters [1] - 17:45
voting [14] - 17:35, 17:37, 17:42, 17:43, 17:45, 18:18, 18:19, 18:21, 18:23, 18:27, 18:41, 19:12, 19:24
vulnerable [1] - 35:50

W

wage [1] - 19:13
wait [2] - 5:51, 17:20
waiting [1] - 6:11
walking [1] - 27:35
wants [1] - 34:1
warrant [1] - 13:2
Warrant [10] - 13:4, 13:5, 13:11, 13:12, 15:54, 15:56, 24:43, 24:44, 25:16, 25:18

Water [1] - 3:15
water [3] - 3:18, 23:40, 29:42
waving [1] - 32:8
WAYS [1] - 1:4
Ways [8] - 1:14, 1:22, 1:26, 2:7, 10:48, 17:17, 17:26
wear [1] - 2:23
website [3] - 2:22, 34:29, 34:50
weeds [2] - 10:49, 36:51
week [1] - 37:23
weeks [1] - 37:39
weird [1] - 8:9
welcome [8] - 2:4, 2:18, 2:20, 2:24, 6:12, 14:13, 14:44, 17:31
West [1] - 29:28
whole [11] - 9:43, 12:44, 13:12, 13:15, 15:56, 16:12, 24:14, 24:45, 25:18, 28:3, 38:28
wide [1] - 26:23
wife [1] - 33:17
William [1] - 1:16
wind [2] - 28:48, 29:20
winding [1] - 5:1
windows [1] - 31:50
winds [2] - 4:48, 18:10
wise [1] - 28:27
witness [1] - 38:4
woefully [1] - 28:53
women [1] - 32:15
wonder [1] - 6:31
wonderful [1] - 26:33
wondering [2] - 7:20, 19:32
word [1] - 37:43
Workday [1] - 29:49
works [1] - 31:34
Works [1] - 3:16
workshops [1] - 35:41
world [1] - 29:40
wrapped [1] - 11:36
writing [2] - 5:53, 37:50

Y

year [48] - 2:55, 2:56, 3:3, 3:19, 3:27, 5:16, 6:40, 6:43, 6:48, 7:4, 7:28, 8:16, 8:30, 8:33, 9:1, 9:2, 9:4, 9:47,

DATE

9:52, 10:7, 10:8,
10:24, 11:39, 12:37,
12:40, 12:45, 12:46,
13:6, 13:7, 16:2,
17:43, 19:25, 19:26,
20:22, 20:24, 23:27,
24:23, 24:53, 25:47,
26:46, 27:2, 27:28,
27:31, 31:45, 31:52,
31:55
year's ^[2] - 6:30,
25:37
years ^[33] - 5:8, 5:15,
6:44, 8:10, 8:25, 8:51,
8:56, 9:18, 9:22,
11:40, 11:53, 12:29,
12:46, 13:10, 17:28,
23:16, 23:41, 23:49,
23:52, 25:5, 25:15,
25:17, 25:39, 26:48,
28:22, 28:25, 28:49,
29:33, 29:40, 31:47,
36:11, 36:22, 36:54
yesterday ^[16] - 2:41,
2:42, 2:44, 5:53, 6:18,
6:19, 6:20, 6:55,
11:54, 13:28, 13:39,
14:9, 15:20, 15:48,
22:40, 24:9
York ^[3] - 1:18, 9:38,
37:21
youth ^[2] - 35:42,
35:51

Z

zero ^[1] - 24:44
Zoom ^[5] - 1:18,
2:21, 5:24, 5:55, 6:5