

1 VETERANS & CONSUMER AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
2
3 OF THE
4
5 SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
6
7 **MINUTES**
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10 A meeting of the Veterans & Consumer Affairs Committee of the
11 Suffolk County Legislature was held hybrid via Zoom
12 video-conferencing/in-person in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative
13 Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725
14 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on June 13, 2022.
15

16 **Members Present:**

17 Legislator Nick Caracappa - Chairperson
18 Legislator Anthony Piccirillo - Vice Chair
19 Legislator Sarah Anker
20 Legislator Bridget Fleming
21 Legislator Leslie Kennedy
22 Legislator Al Krupski
23 Legislator Robert Trotta
24

25 **Also in Attendance:**

26 Brett Robinson - Chief Deputy Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature
27 Bill Duffy - Counsel/Suffolk County Legislature
28 Bob Martinez - Aide to Legislator Caracappa
29 Chris DeLuca - Aide to the Presiding Officer
30 Elizabeth Stroehlein - Budget Review Office
31 All Other Interested Parties
32

33 **Minutes Taken By:**

34 Gabrielle Severs - Court Stenographer
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(*The meeting was called to order at 1:01 p.m.*)

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the Veterans and Consumer Affairs committee meeting. I would ask that everybody please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Piccirillo and remain standing for a moment of silence.

(Pledge of Allegiance)

Take a moment of silence to recognize all those who have lost their lives in not only protecting and defending our country and to the mass shootings, we recognize them, we pray for them, and we hope that we grant their families peace.

(Moment of Silence Observed)

Thank you. Mr. Clerk, can we have roll call please.

(*Roll Called by Brett Robinson - Chief Deputy Clerk*)

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Present.

LEG. PICCIRILLO:

Present.

LEG. KRUPSKI:

Here.

LEG. FLEMING:

Here.

LEG. ANKER:

Here.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Here.

LEG. TROTТА:

Here.

CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK ROBINSON:

Six.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Thank you. Do we have any correspondence, Mr. Clerk?

CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK ROBINSON:

All correspondence has been distributed accordingly, Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Thank you. Public Portion. Do we have any public speakers?

MR. DELUCA:

We have no speakers, Mr. Chairman.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

3 We have no speakers. Seeing none, we are going to move on to the
4 agenda. We have no appointments, no presentations. We'll move on
5 to Tabled Resolution.

6
7 That will be **1397, Bond Resolution of the County of Suffolk, New**
8 **York, authorizing the issuance of \$470,000 Bonds to finance the**
9 **cost of the Countywide Licensing Program for the Department of**
01:03PM 10 **Labor, Licensing and Consumer Affairs (CP 1819.113 and .512). Do I**
11 **have a motion?**

12
13 **LEG. PICCIRILLO:**
14 Motion to approve.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

17 I'll second. And on the motion, I'll just state that I want to
18 thank James Andrews, Consumer Affairs, for redrafting the bill so
19 we have the appropriate language in there that moved the precise
01:04PM 20 language from "planning" to "implementation" of said funds so we
21 appreciate that correction, James Andrews. Anybody have any
22 questions while James is here? Legislator Thorne, the floor is
23 yours.

24
25 **LEG. THORNE:**
26 Can you hear me okay, Mr. Chairman?

27
28 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**
29 We can.

01:04PM 30
31 **LEG. THORNE:**

32 Great. Thank you. Is any of these plans -- is there a plan to
33 help implement to make sure folks are licensed properly? And also
34 will this program help to eliminate maybe some of the out-of-state
35 contractors to come in and work without licensing and things like
36 that? Is that part of this? And I just simply don't know so maybe
37 someone can answer that. That would be awesome.

38
39 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

01:04PM 40 So what the two phases are of this project would be -- it's
41 actually a two-piece project. We will be bringing our Weights &
42 Measures Division onboard. They monitor every scale, pump, and
43 meter in this County. They also monitor package control among
44 other things. Gasoline has been very popular lately. The other
45 piece of this will be the implementation of the living wage unit.
46 That will be a coordination between the Department of Labor,
47 Licensing, and Consumer Affairs, and DPW because Consumer Affairs
48 is responsible for the living wage law and the lawful hiring law
49 that fall under every County contract. So what will be happening
01:05PM 50 is we will have more coordination with DPW. They will be looking
51 at more to ensure that contractors that the County is hiring do
52 comply with our licensing laws, as we found a hiccup once in a
53 while. But there will be direct coordination with DPW. We'll
54 hopefully be making it a easier and better process for all those
55 businesses that do try and contract with our County in terms of
56 making it a little bit easier for them.

1
2 The other part that you were speaking to already occurs in our
3 division under the licensing and trade enforcement complaints where
4 we are out looking at contractors to make sure they're all
5 licensed, and any consumer complaints that do come in, we field
6 them immediately and try to get a good resolve to those complaints.

7
8 **LEG. THORNE:**

9 Awesome, and I appreciate that. And just for the record, one of my
01:06PM 10 concerns is when we have out-of-state contractors coming into our
11 district or into our County and they certainly don't meet the
12 requirements of our local skilled labor here in the County, I'm
13 concerned. I want to make sure everyone is on an equal playing
14 field and we protect Long Island labor force, so I appreciate your
15 answers, sir; very thorough answer, I might add. Thank you so much
16 for that. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

19 Thank you, Legislator Thorne. Just happy to know that Director
01:06PM 20 Andrews and I and our office have been on the phone quite
21 regularly, and I appreciate the efforts of his department going out
22 and monitoring the gas stations. He has 5 to 6 of his people out
23 there doing anywhere between 20 and 25 stations randomly a day, so
24 we're covering about 100, 125 per day so I think that's -- that's
25 keeping up to par with keeping everybody accountable and not
26 ripping off the public, so I appreciate your department and your
27 efforts keeping the residents of Suffolk County protected.

28
29 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

01:07PM 30 I would just like to say to Legislator Thorne's question too, if it
31 is a situation where these out-of-state contractors are performing
32 electrical work, HVAC work, plumbing work, or liquid waste work,
33 there is a requirement for them to have a County license. Those
34 fields, we do regulate commercial, residential, and industrial.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

37 Excellent. Any other questions?

38
39 **LEG. THORNE:**

01:07PM 40 If I may say, Mr. Chairman, just as an add, I wasn't -- I just want
41 to certainly thank him for his hard work and dedication. I just
42 was addressing a few other concerns while he was there, but thank
43 you for your hard work for protecting our consumers, and now I
44 yield back again, Mr. Chairman.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

47 I appreciate that. You can also contact Mr. Andrews if you have
48 any further questions, Legislator. He's a great resource to the
49 County. The floor recognizes Legislator Krupski.

01:08PM 50
51 **LEG. KRUPSKI:**

52 Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Andrews, how are you? Thanks for
53 coming.

54
55 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

56 Good, Legislator. How are you?

1
2 **LEG. KRUPSKI:**

3 How has it been going? Because we got -- a constituent was
4 concerned about the gas tax and how it is being -- and I think
5 we forwarded it to you on Friday and you answered us. Has it been
6 a consistent compliance?
7

8 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

9 We have not seen any businesses, other than the one business that
01:08PM 10 was visited that was on News 12, that have even been questionable
11 as in terms of compliance. We've probably fielded almost a hundred
12 complaints, and every time we go out, the businesses are complying.
13 What the public doesn't understand, and it's hard for them to
14 understand, but it's the fluctuation that you see in gasoline
15 prices because gas prices can fluctuate anywhere from one to two
16 times a day. You know, so they're not seeing -- they think when
17 there's a 16 cent reduction in the price and then the County is
18 another seven cents that I'm going to automatically see that
19 deduction at the pump and why am I not seeing that, but then they
01:09PM 20 don't understand that gasoline prices turned around and went up 16
21 cents a gallon overnight. It's been a trial to explain to people
22 how it works.
23

24 **LEG. KRUPSKI:**

25 Thank you. I appreciate your efforts. You did mention something
26 about enforcing labor laws. Now how far -- how far does the County
27 go versus New York State Department of Labor? Is there overlap on
28 some businesses, or do you have some businesses that you enforce --
29

01:09PM 30 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

31 No. The labor law piece that's in this bill happens to do with the
32 local laws dealing with lawful hiring and living wage that's
33 mandated on County contractors.
34

35 **LEG. KRUPSKI:**

36 Oh. Okay.
37

38 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

39 So County contractors have a requirement when they're paying their
01:10PM 40 employees. That area of the department has been moved under
41 Consumer Affairs. We're trying to coordinate all our efforts.
42

43 **LEG. KRUPSKI:**

44 Okay. Thank you for that. Thanks for that clarification, and
45 thank you, Mr. Chair. Appreciate it.
46

47 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

48 Thank you, Legislator. Any other questions for --
49

01:10PM 50 **LEG. ANKER:**

51 I have a question.
52

53 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

54 I'm sorry. Legislator Anker.
55

56 **LEG. ANKER:**

1 Real quick. It's pertaining to what Legislator Krupski had
2 mentioned. James, again, the difference in gas prices can be
3 dramatic, and I notice there's one in Commack. It's 50 cents. So
4 one is 50 cents higher per gallon, same gas, same comparison than
5 the one across the street. What should consumers be aware of when
6 they're looking at these different gas prices? Is that unusual to
7 have a 50 cent gallon difference?

8
9 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

01:11PM 10 No. Basically it's an an open market. It's a free market, and
11 gasoline prices fluctuate as they will. People should watch what
12 they're paying for when they pull into a gas station. They should
13 look to see if there's different price for credit. They should
14 look to see if the gas station offers like the -- there's one
15 station right now that's offering -- Speedway has their plan where
16 if you give them your debit card, they'll give you 10 cents a
17 gallon off gasoline. So it looks a little confusing when you pull
18 into a Speedway and you see one price and then next to it, it says
19 "with our pay card" for regular and then you see another price
01:11PM 20 that's 10 cents a gallon higher for regular. When you pull up to
21 the pump, you always don't see. Consumers really have to look at,
22 especially in a self-serve station or in a full serve station, what
23 they're paying for.

24
25 **LEG. ANKER:**

26 So who --

27
28 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

29 Because there are no laws to regulate the prices of gasoline.

01:12PM 30
31 **LEG. ANKER:**

32 But what about -- I think the Attorney General's Office actually,
33 or maybe it was us, found some of these gas stations were price
34 gouging. Why does that happen or how do we address that?

35
36 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

37 There was no price gouging, but back in 2012, there was a situation
38 where New York State tried to enforce that gasoline stations could
39 not charge more than a certain percentage for credit card sales.
01:12PM 40 That actually was overturned and found unconstitutional.

41
42 **LEG. ANKER:**

43 So it's really up to the consumer to be aware to not get --

44
45 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

46 They really have to be aware. The consumers of our county really
47 have to be aware of everything they do when they're hiring
48 contractors, when they're going to grocery stores, when they're
49 purchasing gasoline. I mean, we want the word to be out there that
01:12PM 50 consumers, you know -- we have resources available in our
51 department that are available to everybody. You know, we would
52 hope that the consumers would utilize our resources a lot more than
53 they currently do.

54
55 **LEG. ANKER:**

56 Okay. All right. Thank you.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

3 So just for clarity, James, because you hear all these reports on
4 the news about price gouging, and then we hear that some of these
5 stations were summonsed and fined. What were these summonses and
6 fines for if they weren't breaking the law?
7

8 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

9 Our gas stations?
10

01:13PM 11 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

12 Yeah.
13

14 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

15 So our gas stations can be fined for if their price signs don't
16 match. If they're posting one price at the road or at the pump and
17 then when the gasoline that's being pumped is another price.
18

19 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

01:13PM 20 So no matter what the price is, as long as it's posted and it's the
21 same at the pump.
22

23 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

24 New York State has a two-tier posting, and you can find that on our
25 website. We're going to get that up to the forefront of our
26 website. We were talking about that the other day. They are
27 allowed to charge a lot higher price for gasoline as long as they
28 post the price. It's a situation where the price isn't posted that
29 they will get themselves in trouble.
30

01:13PM 31 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

32 Right. And again for clarity, you mentioned that consumers should
33 be aware of cash prices versus credit card prices. What you're
34 saying is that's not illegal. What you're saying is you should
35 take a look at the difference in prices and make the assessment.
36

37 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

38 Right. From what research shows, roughly credit card prices charge
39 anywhere from 2 to 4 percent from all my research that I found for
01:14PM 40 the station to be able to have a credit card. So I mean if they're
41 charging you \$2 more a gallon, you might not want to use a credit
42 card and go that station and you might want to drive down the block
43 where the guy is probably charging you 10 cents or 20 cents a
44 gallon more for a credit card.
45

46 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

47 But again, not illegal to charge the \$2 if they wanted to.
48

49 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

01:14PM 50 Nope.
51

52 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

53 Wow. All right. So the power is up to the people, isn't it?
54

55 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

56 Yep.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

3 And do your research and be educated.

4
5 **LEG. ANKER:**

6 On the motion again just to continue this conversation.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

9 Yes, Legislator Anker.

01:14PM

10
11 **LEG. ANKER:**

12 It looks like there's new law coming from Congress. It was
13 2021-2022. It's Gas Price Gouging Prevention Act. Again, it looks
14 like it's in the Senate as of March 2022 this year. So, James, if
15 you can just keep us aware of how that's going and -- who's going
16 to enforce that. Again, I don't have a lot of information but it
17 looks like on federal level, they're looking into it, and it looks
18 like Letita James, our attorney general, is investigating oil
19 gouging for the oil companies. So again if we can do something on
20 a county level to help, I think that would be great, you know, as
21 far as partnering with them. Thank you.

01:15PM

22
23 **DIRECTOR ANDREWS:**

24 Okay.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

27 Okay. We seemed to have made a left turn. All great questions, but
28 we seem to have gotten off subject here, so if there are no further
29 questions, we do have a motion and a second to approve. All in
30 favor? Opposed? Abstentions?

01:15PM

31
32 **CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK ROBINSON:**

33 Seven.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

36 All right. IR 1397 is approved (*VOTE: 7-0-0-0*).

37
38 We have no Introductory Resolutions, no Procedural Motions, no Home
39 Rule Messages, no Tabled Subject to Call resolutions.

01:15PM

40
41 Before I adjourn, I would just like to, because this is the
42 Veterans and Consumer Affairs, I would like to say that we had via
43 Zoom on Friday the Women's Veterans recognition, and I want to
44 thank Kathleen Doherty. I know she's in the hall today, and as
45 many legislators stated, and as most of those female veterans that
46 felt we should always get together on these things, we're
47 definitely going to plan that for next year, but we're looking to
48 get all the veterans who were honored into the legislature during
49 one of our general meetings. It may not be the next one because
50 that one is located in Riverhead, but we're looking for the one
51 after that. I'll be in contact with you, and we'll get it
52 together.

01:16PM

53
54 **CATHIE NORTON-DOHERTY:**

55 Thank you.

1 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

2 Thank you for all your help on that. That was a great occasion.
3 Great celebration of the female veterans of our country especially
4 here in Suffolk County, so thank you.

5
6 **CATHIE NORTON-DOHERTY:**

7 You're welcome.

8
9 (Applause)

01:16PM

10
11 **CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:**

12 And thank you for all my colleagues who participated. It really
13 was wonderful.

14
15 All right. Seeing no other questions or having any other business,
16 we're hereby adjourned. Thank you.

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19 (*The meeting was adjourned at 1:16 p.m.*)
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