

**COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE  
JOINT WITH PUBLIC SAFETY & SECURITY COMMITTEE  
JANUARY 26, 2009**

**Community Services**

**Members**

**In Attendance:** Lois Bronz, Chair, Bill Burton, Ken Jenkins, Vito Pinto, Judy Myers and Tom Abinanti.

**Public Safety & Security**

**Members In**

**Attendance:**

Vito Pinto, Chair, Bill Burton, Ken Jenkins, Peter Harckham, John Nonna, Gordon Burrows, and Judy Myers.

**In Attendance:**

CE: Andrew Neuman, Bill Randolph DES: Tony Sutton DPW: Ralph Butler DSS: John Befus. BOL: Sunday Vanderberg, Rick Pezzullo, Chris Crane and Melanie Montalto Guests: Christine Rohatynsky, Debbie McCarthy, Richard Rakow, Henry Rivera, J.Newsme-Rhodes, Toby Pidgeon, Linda Arpino, Mary Ann Luner, Susan Lenseth, Maureen Brophy Johnson, Janice Walters, Fr. Richard Alejunas, Lorraine Quonocunte, Penny Pepe, Alma Goodsoon, Charlie Knight, Rev. Hilarie Albert, David Leon, Linda Heyward, Michael Brown, Penelope Pope, Hope Corbin.

**Items Discussed:**

Food Storage Warehouse for DES & Food Bank of Westchester

**Minutes**

Chairwoman Bronz called the Community Services Committee meeting to order at 9:17 a.m.

Chairman Pinto called the Public Safety & Security Committee to order at 9:17 a.m.

Andrew Neuman, Assistant to the County Executive, stated that Food Bank will bring in all furniture and equipment needed for the food storage. He stated that the administration would be requesting this project regardless of the Food Bank's current needs.

Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services, Tony Sutton, stated that he needs the space and capacity to break down and coordinate the emergency food supply that is provided by the state in the case of an emergency or natural disaster. He stated that the Federal government will call at any time stating that they have any number of trucks of food and supplies and if we do not have the capacity to accept them at that exact moment, they will send the supply to another county.

Commissioner Sutton stated that with our current technology, we are able to place orders and receive our everyday supplies the next day. While this is great, we have lost the capacity for bulk orders as a result. The warehouse would provide this space that we currently do not have.

Chairman Pinto asked if we will have space available if an emergency comes at a time when the Food Bank warehouse is full. Commissioner of the Department of Public Works, Ralph Butler, said in the state of an emergency the Food Bank will have distributed much of their food by the time the Federal aid arrives. He also stated that we will not be storing the food for long; we need the space to break it down and package it to be distributed as soon as possible.

Commissioner Sutton stated that this is the perfect marriage because the Warehouse will be run fulltime by experts who do this everyday and would be a great help to the Department of Emergency Services at the point of an emergency.

Legislator Myers asked what happens if the emergency happens at the site of the facility, do we have other sites that we can use? Commissioner Sutton stated that the municipalities have to provide the County with a site for distribution, and if the emergency does happen at this site than we can try to use the airport or the County Center but it is not an ideal situation. He stated that this is not the end all to the problems that we face, but this is a good start.

Andrew Neuman stated that he is hopeful that we will be able to get some federal funding to help build the structure.

Legislator Jenkins asked about utilizing and partnering with supermarkets that would also be empty after five days and would have the equipment needed. Commissioner Sutton stated we do have agreements with many of the markets, but these stores have agreements with other entities as well. We do not currently have a partnership with a large warehouse store to use their facility in an emergency.

Legislator Burrows asked about the site itself and the likelihood that it would be hit and how accessible it is. Commissioner Sutton stated that with the Medical Center, Medical College, and Emergency Services offices that are currently there, there are many resources that could work together at the time of an emergency. He stated that it also makes the site attractive for an attack, however it is so large that there is room for error and the land allows for tractors and trailers to get on and off the site in several areas easily.

Deputy Commissioner John Befus of the Department of Social Services discussed the growing need for food and the increase of residents applying for food stamps by 32% in the past year. Public Assistance applications had decreased for ten years has been increasing and is expected to continue increasing, showing that the need for food is growing and the Food Bank is currently turning food away because they do not have the space to store it.

Legislator Nonna stated that he needs an analysis in writing of alternative locations, why the airport is not suitable or other county facilities, why we can not use supermarkets. He would like an analysis of the problems that occurred during the last nor'easter showing the need for this building. He said we need a term sheet of what we are providing and what we are getting in partnering with the Food Bank. He would like to know that there is access to roads that allow commercial vehicles to the site and the outline of costs.

Commissioner Butler stated that the Valhalla site already has so many resources and has 100% back up generation as well as Public Works and Emergency Services staff. He stated that this site is perfect because all of the supports are already there.

Commissioner Sutton said that FEMA and Homeland Security were involved in this study and agree that Valhalla is the best site. He stated that the airport is seen as a transportation hub if an emergence presents the need for one as well as if there were ever a need for biological supplies to be stockpiled.

Legislator Jenkins stated that we see the need but we need a fiscal breakdown as to how this will be more cost effective and asked how DSS could step up and help more.

Deputy Commissioner Befus stated that the Department of Social Services does partner with the Food Bank, and counts on organizations like the Food Bank to fill in the gaps for services that DSS cannot provide directly.

Legislator Nonna asked how the new master plan of the grasslands campus reflects this project. Chairman Pinto asked about the heliport at the hospital and if it is accessible for deliveries, remembers that the County Center has been slated as a housing facility in the case of an emergency and we need to designate facilities for the needs that they can fulfill.

Legislator Abinanti asked about the master plan for the campus. Andrew stated that the current master plan includes this project. Legislator Pinto asked that the most current master plan be given to the Legislators.

Christina Rohatynsky from the Food Bank of Westchester stated the need for the food bank and asked that member agencies speak to their need.

Several leaders of food pantries throughout the county spoke about the growing need in their pantries for food, the increase in the number of families they are serving, and how much they depend on the Food Bank for their supplies.

Chairman Pinto asked that the food pantries submit any reports that they have showing the increase they are seeing. Christine stated that they collect statistics from the pantries monthly and will compile them into one report for the Legislature.

Ms. Rohatynsky stated that the Food Bank is 1 of 200 food banks in the country that belong to Feeding America. This organization will bring continue to bring food to our doorstep until it is no longer needed during an emergency, but they need the facility to store the food and workers who are certified to work under these circumstances in order to provide these services to us.

Moved by Legislator Myers and seconded by Legislator Jenkins the Committee on Community Services adjourned at 10:37 a.m.

Moved by Legislator Harckham and seconded by Legislator Nonna the Committee on Public Safety & Security adjourned at 10:37 a.m.

A complete audio recording of the meeting is available for review upon request.