

NASSAU COUNTY LEGISLATURE

RICHARD NICOLELLO

PRESIDING OFFICER

MINORITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

LEGISLATOR STEPHEN RHOADS

CHAIR

Theodore Roosevelt Building

1550 Franklin Avenue

Mineola, New York

August 3, 2020

10:15 A.M.

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2 A P P E A R A N C E S:

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4 LEGISLATOR STEPHEN RHOADS

5 Chair

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7 LEGISLATOR ROSE WALKER

8 Vice Chair

9

10 LEGISLATOR JAMES KENNEDY

11

12 LEGISLATOR DENISE FORD

13

14 LEGISLATOR CARRIE SOLAGES

15 Ranking member

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17 LEGISLATOR KEVAN ABRAHAMS

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19 LEGISLATOR DEBRA MULE

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2 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: At this time
3 we will call the hearing to order. I will ask
4 the clerk to call the roll.

5 MR. PULITZER: Thank you
6 legislator. Minority Affairs Committee roll
7 call. Debra Mule.

8 LEGISLATOR MULE: Here.

9 MR. PULITZER: Kevan Abrahams.

10 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Here.

11 MR. PULITZER: Ranking member
12 Carrie Solages.

13 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Here.

14 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Denise
15 Ford.

16 LEGISLATOR FORD: Here.

17 MR. PULITZER: Legislator James
18 Kennedy.

19 LEGISLATOR KENNEDY: Here.

20 MR. PULITZER: Vice Chairwoman
21 Rose Marie Walker.

22 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Here.

23 MR. PULITZER: Chairman Stephen
24 Rhoads.

25 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Present.

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2 MR. PULITZER: We have a quorum
3 sir.

4 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Thank you Mr.
5 Clerk. I do want to welcome Lionel Chitty,
6 who is the executive director of the Office of
7 Minority Affairs, Bishop Lionel Harvey who is
8 the deputy director, as well as Dr. Regina
9 Williams, also a deputy director. Thank you
10 so much for being here and I appreciate your
11 time. Again I apologize in the delay in
12 getting started this morning. I'm aware you
13 have a power point presentation to make.

14 Just to give some brief remarks
15 regarding the purpose of today's hearing.
16 Obviously last year prior to your appointment,
17 Mr. Chitty, we did conduct a hearing of
18 Minority Affairs to try and get into some
19 information about the Office of Minority
20 Affairs, what the vision for the office was.
21 It was clear from those hearings, even though
22 we did receive some information, it was clear
23 that the lack of an executive director, a
24 permanent director, really did impact the
25 operations of the office.

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2 And your executive director
3 position, at that point we were a year and a
4 half into the administration, your executive
5 director position and your appointment a
6 little less than a year ago was the last
7 appointment of any major office within the
8 county. I really feel as though that hindered
9 to a certain extent the operations of the
10 office. But now that you are there and now
11 that you have been there for a while we had
12 wanted to have these hearings earlier but then
13 we were hit with COVID.

14 So, first off, I want to welcome
15 everyone back. This is actually the first
16 public hearing that the county legislature is
17 having since the COVID pandemic. This is the
18 first hearing that's actually open to the
19 public. At least in some limited way since
20 the COVID pandemic. And in light of
21 everything that's been going on, it really
22 underscores from a business standpoint and
23 from a personal standpoint, it really
24 underscores the importance of the Office of
25 Minority Affairs.

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2 The purpose of today's hearing,
3 sort of like the last one, is to get your
4 vision for the operations of the office. Now
5 that you've been there for a while you've had
6 an opportunity to evaluate your staff,
7 evaluate the department's needs. Your office
8 is vitally important in that it breathes life
9 into the promises that Nassau County
10 government has made to make county government
11 more inclusive, to make county government more
12 accessible to every minority community.

13 I want to make sure, this committee
14 wants to make sure that you have all the
15 resources that you need to be able to get that
16 done. And now that you've had the opportunity
17 to be in that office for awhile, we wanted to
18 hear about your vision, your goals, what you
19 think the strengths and weaknesses are within
20 that office. How your office is interacting
21 with other divisions within county
22 government. Whether you are getting the
23 information that you need in order to be able
24 to fullfil your mission under the charter and
25 in what ways we as a legislature can assist in

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2 that process.

3 Because we want to make sure that
4 the Office the Minority Affairs is not just an
5 office that exists on paper to make everybody
6 feel good. We want to make sure that the
7 Office of Minority Affairs exists to fulfil
8 the very broad and very important mandate that
9 was set forth in its charter. Our
10 responsibility is to make sure that that takes
11 place and you have the tools and resources
12 that you need to be able to do that.

13 So that, to me, is the most
14 important reason that we are having the
15 hearing today is to get that perspective and
16 see how we can move forward together to make
17 sure that we are fulfilling the promise of the
18 Office of Minority Affairs and the promise
19 that we've made to all the constituents at
20 Nassau County to make Nassau County accessible
21 and reachable to everyone. Again, I thank you
22 for being here.

23 Carrie, did you have a statement?

24 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Thank you
25 Chair. Good morning to everyone and good

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2 morning to this highly esteemed panel
3 established here today. Bishop, director
4 doctor. It's my pleasure to have you here.
5 Thank you for calling this hearing and it is
6 very symbolic and important that this is the
7 first hearing being held in post-COVID times.
8 I would like to welcome everyone to the new
9 legislature. Although it may look like the
10 DMV it is not the DMV. I want to thank the
11 administration and DPW for installing this for
12 our safety.

13 And although my colleague here,
14 Legislator Bynoe is here this morning, she
15 will not be allowed to speak because she is
16 not on the committee as per the chair,
17 Mr. Rhoads. Yet, she has been very helpful on
18 these issues.

19 And furthermore, I would like you
20 to please take advantage of this opportunity
21 here today to provide information to us so
22 that we can learn how to help further your
23 department.

24 In addition, I guess your role
25 today is a quite difficult role. At the same

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2 time you're here to talk about the great work
3 you're doing, it's very difficult to mention
4 the lack of support that you don't have from
5 the administration. The same administration
6 that is supposed to support you. We are
7 walking a very fine line here today.

8 But I would ask you please to be as
9 candid as possible. I have a copy of the
10 transcript from the last hearing. I going to
11 be asking some questions from the transcript.
12 If you would like to share a copy of this
13 transcript I would love to pass it over to
14 you.

15 In addition, and I mention that
16 because on the transcript of the last hearing
17 I pointed out that this office has a very
18 important regulatory role with respect to
19 Title 6 and Affirmative Action. These
20 important laws are meant to help to diversify
21 our government and our community to make sure
22 that our government reflects our community.
23 We're not asking for much here. Just asking
24 for diversity. Right?

25 So, one important thing in this

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2 transcript that I noticed is that there was a
3 need for an attorney in this office to help
4 accomplish and fullfil some of the regulatory
5 roles. I don't know whether or not we have an
6 attorney in the office or someone in that
7 capacity that can help understand the
8 compliance when it comes to Title 6 and
9 Affirmative Action. But we're going to
10 hopefully help to establish that here today.

11 I want to thank all my colleagues
12 for being here today and let's get started.

13 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Thank you
14 Legislator Solages.

15 Mr. Chitty, I understand you have a
16 presentation. The floor is yours.

17 MR. CHITTY: Thank you everybody
18 for this opportunity to come before you today,
19 all the legislators. Especially thanks to my
20 team here. Dr. Regina Williams, Bishop Harvey
21 and my entire staff. Thank you very much for
22 attending. We do have a presentation and we
23 entitled this presentation as Building a New
24 Foundation.

25 OMA 2020 Strategic Plan primary

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2 objectives. Assist County efforts to ensure
3 access to services, employment and housing
4 opportunities and address economic
5 disparities. Enhance diversity and inclusion
6 awareness throughout Nassau County. Increase
7 participation of MWBEs, DBEs and SDVOBs in
8 county procurements, other governmental and
9 private sector opportunities.

10 Next we have our entire staff
11 myself as executive director. Bishop Lionel
12 Harvey, deputy director. Dr. Regina Williams
13 also deputy director. We have Lynne Poole,
14 special assistant. Dexter Hedgepeth, program
15 coordinator. Michelle Crosley, program
16 coordinator. Also Victoria Roberts, program
17 supervisor.

18 Objective one, enhancing
19 opportunities for minority residents and
20 addressing disparities.

21 During COVID-19 our response.
22 Urging community members to stay safe, get
23 tested at county's free community sites.
24 Assisting residents with securing county
25 services. Supporting residents in applying

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2 for unemployment insurance benefits.

3 Assisting with community food distributions.

4 Celebrating the strength of our community

5 through challenging times.

6 COVID-19 response, second portion,
7 minority health equity.

8 On April 17 myself, deputy
9 executive director Amy Flores from the Office
10 of Hispanic Affairs and also Andrea
11 Ault-Brutus, director of health equity for the
12 Nassau County Department of Health, we
13 recorded a Zoom conference and that conference
14 was created out of the facts that we realized
15 and it was proven that communities of color
16 were hit extremely hard with COVID. This
17 video has about 3900 views already on Facebook
18 and we went about 20, 30 minutes just to
19 discuss why communities of color were hit,
20 what are the resources available to them, how
21 to be able to prepare yourself and protect
22 yourself during COVID specifically for those
23 communities.

24 Supporting minority businesses.

25 Assisting MWBEs with the Boost Nassau loan

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2 applications, the federal Paycheck Protection
3 Program and the SBA's emergency industry
4 disaster loan process. Promoting and
5 assisting county's personal protection kit
6 giveaway. Advising businesses on New York
7 State closure rules and reopening guidelines.
8 Participating in the county executive's
9 COVID-19 Economic Advisory Counsel with the
10 Long Island African-American Chamber of
11 Commerce, the Long Island Hispanic Chamber of
12 Commerce and the Nassau Counsel of Chambers of
13 Commerce.

14 Reopening safely. Supporting our
15 MWBEs. Our OMA team has been out and about
16 visiting our MWBEs throughout this crisis and
17 reopening of their businesses. We will
18 continue to connect with our constituents in
19 order to assist them in navigating through
20 these challenging times. Our small businesses
21 are the economic engines of our communities.

22 Objective two, increasing diversity
23 and inclusion. To foster inclusion and
24 diversity in collaboration with our other
25 outreach offices, Office of Hispanic Affairs,

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2 Office of Asian-American Affairs and the Human
3 Rights Commission and other agencies.

4 Working collaboratively on known
5 shared interest areas such as Census 2020,
6 civil service opportunities, minority mental
7 health and workforce development.

8 Identify and engage key
9 stakeholders, community leaders, faith-based
10 and nonprofit partners. Create and support
11 community cultural events and encourage
12 participation amongst diverse groups.

13 Continuation of increasing
14 diversity and inclusion. OMA collaborates
15 with other county departments to prioritize
16 language access. Throughout the pandemic OMA
17 ensured translation of important documents for
18 the Haitian-Creole community. An example of
19 those documents included Know Your Rights.
20 COVID-19 testing locations, coronavirus fact
21 sheet, messages from the Nassau County
22 Department of Health and community resources
23 booklet. Also working with the county we
24 notified residents that they can also receive
25 the county's text updates in multiple

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2 languages. Text COVID Nassau one to 888-777
3 specifically for Haitian-Creole. Those will
4 give you updates continuously as they come
5 across.

6 A voice in important
7 conversations. Unified Long Island is a
8 bi-county task force intended to empower
9 communities to stand united against all acts
10 of hate and bias that are based on
11 anti-Semitism, race, ethnicity, national
12 origin, religion, gender, gender identity,
13 disability or sexual orientation.

14 The task force partners with
15 existing stakeholders, leaders and residents
16 as well as law enforcement agencies, human
17 rights advocates, community organizations,
18 religious institutions, government offices and
19 education platforms to advocate for unity,
20 acceptance and diversity.

21 The task force is working to
22 develop and implement an action plan to
23 identify and document hate and bias incidents
24 while working towards strengthening the bonds
25 of friendship and respect within and amongst

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2 the communities across Long Island. OMA's
3 deputy director, Bishop Lionel Harvey, is the
4 Nassau County chair for this endeavor.

5 A voice in important
6 conversations. The Police and Community Trust
7 or PACT. On June 17th, County Executive
8 Curran announced the creation of PACT, a new
9 initiative aimed at building trust,
10 transparency and a working dialogue between
11 community activists and Nassau County police.
12 Cochaired by County Executive Curran and South
13 Floral Park mayor Jeffrey Prime, PACT
14 membership includes Police Commissioner Ryder,
15 community leaders, activists and police
16 officers. Ongoing meetings engage additional
17 participation from law enforcement and the
18 community. OMA's program supervisor, Victoria
19 Roberts, is our liaison for this important
20 effort.

21 Objective three, increasing
22 minority participation in county contracting.
23 Curran administration is committed to
24 maximizing participation by MWBE, DBE and
25 SDVOB vendors in county contracting

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2 opportunities. It's good for business, good
3 for the county. It's an essential element of
4 effective public procurement, ensures greater
5 competition at lower cost and higher service
6 levels. Strengthens the local and small
7 business communities. Encourages greater
8 entrepreneurship in the county. Promotes
9 open, fair and transparent process for county
10 contracts.

11 Curran administration building
12 blocks to increase MWBE participation.

13 County vendor portal. Elimination
14 of the \$125 vendor registration fee for that
15 portal. Comprehensive tracking system for
16 MWBE, DBE and SDVOBs. A new certification app
17 and next up our disparity study.

18 OMA's new MWBE certification app.
19 OMA has endeavored to further streamline MWBE
20 participation by combining the registration
21 and certification processes in a new
22 electronic filing system. The new online
23 filing system launched during COVID and fully
24 functional on June 12, 2020 will tremendously
25 aid OMA in serving MWBEs.

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2 Allows for easy upload of documents
3 and speeds up OMA's staff review. Includes a
4 step-by-step tutorial to assist constituents
5 with registration in county's vendor portal,
6 how-to for uploading MWBE documents for
7 certification and a training tutorial for
8 staff instructional purposes.

9 OMA's deputy director, Dr. Regina
10 Williams, created this concept and oversees
11 the MWBE program, while program coordinator,
12 Michelle Crosley, functions as the
13 certification analyst for MWBEs.

14 OMA thanks Commissioner Stanton and
15 the IT team for a successful collaboration.

16 Continuation of OMA's new county
17 certification app. Fully automated process
18 for county certification. Captures info from
19 the vendor portal. Step-by-step tutorials for
20 business owners and OMA staff.

21 Database encompasses all pre-2020
22 files plus all new certifications. Conducts
23 surveys, contacts vendors and more.

24 Here we have the new certification
25 app. Here's a screen shot of the application

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2 itself. This is our total directory that
3 lists all the MWBEs.

4 Next we have a detailed display in
5 bold which it was extracted from our vendor
6 portal which shows a sample of contact
7 information.

8 Next we have a tab here that shows
9 all the certifications, lists all the
10 businesses that are currently certified with
11 Nassau County.

12 OMA's new MWBE app also allows us
13 to send email notifications. We can send out
14 certification information, community
15 functions, county solicitations, events,
16 forums that are being held, precertification
17 notifications and also registrations.

18 We also have the ability to utilize
19 that system to inform businesses that already
20 have been certified with OMA yet never
21 registered with the county. Be able to get
22 them recertification reminders for businesses
23 once their certification has expired.
24 Community functions, events. Certification
25 forms including the long form application, the

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2 short form application and recertification
3 application. Site visit questionnaire. We
4 can also inform them of county solicitation,
5 prebid forms and also surveys. Which is
6 important that we conduct surveys to ensure
7 that we're meeting the needs of our MWBEs.

8 Next you see a sample of an email
9 that is sent to those who have gained
10 certification once it's been approved
11 congratulating them and welcoming them and
12 also including our contact information moving
13 forward.

14 Next we have a copy of the
15 certification letter that is emailed to them
16 once they are approved.

17 Next we have the certification
18 itself. Here is a sample certification
19 automatically emailed once they are approved.

20 Next we have the Nassau County
21 Office of Minority Affairs' MWBE online filing
22 tutorial for 2020. We have a QR code here.
23 If you scan that code it will take you to
24 directly to a Youtube video that will walk you
25 through the entire process.

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2 Next we have the numbers. Our MWBE
3 vendor registration numbers. We will start
4 with January. From January 2019 to April
5 2019. Total number of minority-owned
6 businesses 197. Woman-owned businesses 262.
7 Minority women-owned businesses 58. Veteran,
8 service disabled veteran-owned businesses 29.

9 As of July 31, 2020 we now have
10 minority-owned 770. Women-owned 875.
11 Minority women-owned 267. Veteran, service
12 disabled veteran-owned businesses 96.

13 Our certification process going
14 back to January 2019 to December 2019. Total
15 MWBEs certified by the Office of Minority
16 Affairs 132. As of July 31, 2020 total MWBEs
17 certified by the Office of Minority Affairs
18 year to date 77. This is from the app which
19 was fully functional as of July 12th. What we
20 did was we focused on completing that
21 application and automate the certification
22 process and we moved forward from there.

23 Total MWBEs pending certification.
24 This includes new businesses and
25 recertifications. We had a large influx

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2 during COVID. That total number is 990.

3 Next up, the MWBE-SDVOB disparity
4 study. The disparity study is a critical
5 component to setting meaningful goals of MWBE
6 participation in county procurement. Funding
7 was authorized by the Nassau County
8 Legislature and included in county's capital
9 budget. RFP number MA 1216-1965 for the study
10 was issued December 2019. It includes
11 consultant services as well as study to
12 maximize impact.

13 Nassau-Suffolk Selection Committee
14 review of proposals nearing completion.
15 Notice of award expected soon. Stay tuned.

16 OMA's summer youth 2020.
17 Participants in the Nassau County Summer Youth
18 program have been assisting OMA with the
19 enormous amount of MWBE work by updating
20 records in the MWBE app. They have started
21 the process of scanning our paper files
22 totaling 1,136 as of December 31, 2019. Our
23 goal is to scan the documents for each MWBE
24 filed into our automated system to have
25 everything accessible online.

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2 We have ten summer youth that are
3 participating this year in helping us. Moesha
4 Castma from Westbury High School. Essencia
5 Bermudez, SUNY Canton. Major: Criminal
6 investigations. Elisha Kelley Becker,
7 Worchester Mass. Major: Computer gaming
8 design. Sendy Veillard, Queensboro Community
9 College. Major: Counselor. Rashawn Simon,
10 Lincoln University. Major: Liberal arts.
11 Johnathan Turcios, Queensborough Community
12 College. Major: Computer science. Monica
13 Facile, Nassau Community College. Major:
14 Nursing. Asante Meeks, SUNY Buffalo. Major:
15 Pre-med and political science. Xavier
16 Bermudez, SUNY Canton. Major: Criminal
17 investigations and he also worked with our
18 human rights department. And also Jahree
19 Bryant, Freeport High School, who also worked
20 with out human rights commissioner.

21 OMA's vision moving forward. To
22 establish and implement processes that are
23 productive, sustainable and focused on the
24 overall mission of the department. Items
25 designated for improvement include RFP bid

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2 solicitation receipt and distribution,
3 mandated reporting, EFC, which is the
4 Environmental Facilities Corporation, FTA,
5 Federal Transportation Administration, MWBE,
6 SDVOB and internal, external communication.

7 Create and implement meaningful
8 ongoing workshops and forums to educate
9 potential MWBE, SDVOB bidders. Event types
10 include procurement forms, preconstruction and
11 technical assistance in collaboration with the
12 county agencies, New York State Empire State
13 Development Corp., the Port Authority and
14 other organizations with expertise in needed
15 areas.

16 Continue to increase community
17 connectivity, expand upon relationships and
18 participation while working collaboratively
19 with the Office of Hispanic Affairs, Office of
20 Asian-American Affairs and county departments
21 to increase the base of resources available
22 and awareness for constituents.

23 Next two pages we have snapshots of
24 events we participated in starting from 2019.
25 And again, this is just a snapshot not

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2 everything. Woman Small Business Award
3 Celebration with LIAACC, the Long Island
4 African-American Chamber of Commerce. We
5 attended the MLK 51st anniversary of the
6 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

7 We co-hosted Port Authority of New
8 York New Jersey certification form at Nassau
9 Community College. We attended the Diversity
10 in Business Awards for the Long Island
11 Business News. Presented citations at the
12 Long Island African-American Chamber of
13 Commerce. OMA attends prebid forums which are
14 very key for MWBEs. We attended the 24th
15 annual Nassau County Bar Association mentoring
16 ceremony luncheon. Hosted the mental health
17 forum at the African-American Museum of Nassau
18 County. Attended NCBW 100 Long Island annual
19 event. Hosted the Juneteenth celebration, the
20 first ever, where there was an official
21 proclamation signed by the county executive.

22 Census collaboration event with our
23 other outreach offices. Attended the New York
24 SUNY-CUCF diversity at work annual MWBE-SDVOB
25 conference. The 2019 ACCA conference in San

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2 Antonio, Texas. MWBE event at Caribbean
3 business connection monthly networking event.
4 The Long Island Railroad expansion track
5 tour. Citations for the Vladimir Ukranian
6 Orthodox Church. Citations at Christ's First
7 Presbyterian Church in Hempstead. Their 375
8 year anniversary celebration.

9 Caribbean business connections
10 monthly business networking event. OMA and
11 OHA attends MWBE empowerment event. End of
12 last year OMA hosted our Kwanzaa celebration
13 at Roosevelt Field. January 2020 OMA attends
14 Nassau County's annual Dr. Martin Luther King
15 Jr. Ecumenical Service and Scholarship
16 luncheon. OMA attends Nassau County Police
17 Department's black history community forum.
18 OMA hosted the Millenial Chat at the Yes We
19 Can Center in Westbury. Attended a Black
20 History celebration Amistad Case in
21 collaboration with youth services. We hosted
22 a Black History celebration at the Nassau
23 County Legislature. Also attended the Black
24 History breakfast with the village of
25 Hempstead. Attended the Black History

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2 celebration at Islamic Center of Long Island.

3 Attended the project restoration
4 Terrace Avenue press conference. OMA hosts
5 minority breakfast in conjunction with the
6 Nassau County IDA and the Long Island
7 African-American Chamber of Commerce. And
8 then we also host a faith-based security grant
9 seminar. Then we were in the midst of COVID.

10 During COVID we hosted the minority
11 health presentation with Office of Hispanic
12 Affairs and the Office of Diversity and Health
13 Inclusion. Office of Diversity Health with
14 the Department of Health. OMA we did
15 interviews with the county executive on Ire
16 Jam radio. We attended the ABBA Mother's Day
17 celebration. We joined the county executive
18 for a Juneteenth kickoff in Manhasset. We
19 also hosted a virtual Juneteenth celebration
20 via Zoom. Interviews with Tower Talk business
21 with Nassau Community College. And just
22 recently attended the Uniondale Community
23 Counsel via Zoom.

24 Again, these were snapshots not
25 everything. I think we'd be here a lot longer

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2 if we did list everything.

3 Next we just have OMA out in the
4 community. These are pictures of some of the
5 events that we did attend where we gave
6 citations, where we have seminars, working
7 with our MWBEs. And additional outreach of
8 events that we went to including the mental
9 health forum and also our Juneteenth
10 celebration. That concludes my presentation.

11 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Thank you
12 executive director. Dr. Williams or Bishop
13 Harvey did you have any statements to make?

14 MR. HARVEY: I certainly want to
15 thank this esteemed legislature for having us
16 here today and for your great leadership. I
17 just want to commend the great leadership that
18 Lionel Chitty is providing to this office. He
19 has taken the bull by the horn so to speak and
20 we have been following his lead as a great
21 team that has been engineered, that is
22 actually out here doing the work.

23 There are so many different
24 components to this and we have been arduously
25 taking it step by step. I think you can see

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2 by the comprehensive report that has been
3 displayed today that we are keeping in line
4 with the vision of the charter. We're on our
5 way to doing some very great things. We're
6 making some systemic change right off the top
7 and we're excited about what we're able to do
8 and what we have been able to accomplish thus
9 far.

10 We are automating some things that
11 should have been done a long time ago. But
12 there's no reason to make excuses. We're
13 moving forward and doing it with a mind set
14 that there is so much work out here to be
15 done. Just the very fact that we've gone
16 through devastating times and we've all been
17 confronted with things that we never thought
18 we would be confronted with.

19 Through all of that, we continue to
20 keep grinding and keep doing the things that
21 were necessary to make sure that our
22 constituents and our stakeholders got the
23 necessary information so that they can endure
24 this pandemic that we are going through.

25 Also when we're talking about what

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2 happened with George Floyd and the things that
3 are happening with the racial disparities
4 we've been engaging extensively with
5 Commissioner Ryder and the police department
6 in terms of moving forward.

7 The county executive has been
8 giving us great leadership and we thank all
9 who have been partnering with us to make sure
10 that this county becomes a county that we can
11 all be proud of. Madelyne Tsimis has been
12 wonderful as deputy county executive who has
13 been leading up and this team is just
14 fantastic. The Millennial Chat was something
15 that was just unbelievable engaging our
16 youth.

17 I just think that the work that Dr.
18 Regina Williams is doing in terms of
19 automating our system is moving us in the
20 right direction. We're excited. I'm just
21 excited to be a part of the team. We commend
22 you for wanting to hear from us and we thank
23 you for your support. Thank you.

24 DR. WILLIAMS: I really should
25 have went before Bishop because he speaks so

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2 eloquently. But I want to also thank this
3 legislative body. My coming into the Office
4 of Minority Affairs now almost a year and a
5 half there were a lot of things that were not
6 be attended to upon my entrance and I did not
7 have a lot of knowledge as to the
8 functionality of the office. So it was quite
9 cumbersome trying to navigate things.

10 Upon Lionel Chitty's entrance into
11 the office, one thing I can say about Chitty,
12 affectionately call him Chitty, he's an
13 extremely hard worker. He 24-7, sometimes
14 late at night we're on the phone and
15 discussing things and trying to get a handle
16 on what the office should be doing or can do.
17 We go back and forth. We're a brother-sister
18 team here and it's made us appreciate not only
19 exactly where we're at but an understanding of
20 what the community really needs. Especially
21 when it comes to this period of time that
22 we're in in this pandemic.

23 It's been very difficult. It
24 started off when we were initially assigned to
25 work from home. It was very difficult for the

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2 staff at large because all of our workings
3 were something that was in the office. All
4 the paperwork was in the office. Because of
5 the fact that we had already started a process
6 of automating our certifications and it just
7 came about because of the fact that there were
8 a minimal number of persons working in the
9 office last year. This is something that I
10 had knowledge of doing in my prior job. So we
11 were going to start off small and do it in
12 phases.

13 Then when the pandemic hit we
14 realized we needed to move fast and get
15 everything on board so that the staff could
16 have what they need to keep things going. We
17 did not anticipate the influx of minority
18 businesses that would be coming on board. But
19 it pushed us to really make sure we had a tool
20 in place that would aid our constituents as
21 well as give our staff what they needed to be
22 able to handle this job.

23 The numbers, the 77 number, is
24 something that seems small to us because the
25 app is equipped to be able to handle more.

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2 The biggest difficulty that we have is our
3 constituents trying to ascertain exactly what
4 to do and not really having enough staff to
5 reach them to be able to explain the process.
6 Once they go through the tutorial it makes it
7 quite easy and smooth.

8 There are some that are able to
9 read the tutorial and submit all the
10 documentation that's required. Then there are
11 others that because of the functionality of
12 their business they may not have a staff, an
13 admin back in the office that can adequately
14 take them through the process. And that's
15 where our program coordinator Michelle Crosley
16 really comes in.

17 It's something that's helped up.
18 And again, it's a tool that we wanted to put
19 together to outlive us. One of the things I
20 believe in is succession planning. We wanted
21 to make sure that the office, when Lionel came
22 in, was building a new foundation so that the
23 office would have something that could
24 continue and outlive us. But it's not limited
25 just to the functionality that it has right

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2 now. We do want to add on additional pieces.

3 We've talked about adding on a
4 piece where we can track the different bids
5 that our MWBEs put in for our contracts. We
6 want to be able to track -- if we had an
7 automated process when it came to all of the
8 contracts. We also started the conversation
9 with commissioner Ken Arnold of DPW in
10 relation to trying to get a handle on all the
11 contracts. We do realize that they're in
12 different segments and we get information
13 different ways.

14 Our goal is to really streamline
15 all of these processes so that we can handle
16 it effectively and then be able to present
17 these things to our constituents to train
18 them, bring them up to speed so they will be
19 able to not only bid but to be awarded these
20 contracts. At the end of the day it's all
21 about our economic growth and our economic
22 development.

23 So we thank you for the support
24 that the legislative body has given the office
25 even in increase the numbers to bring on board

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2 additional staffing. But I do believe
3 together we will be able to accomplish the
4 goal at hand. Thank you.

5 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Thank you. I
6 appreciate it. I'm just going to get started
7 with a couple of quick questions and then
8 obviously we'll turn it over to members of the
9 committee. I'm sure there are many questions
10 from the members of the committee.

11 You spoke about staffing Dr.
12 Williams and Mr. Executive Director Chitty. I
13 see that budgeted you have room for a full
14 time staff of 12 and two part timers. Right
15 now you are operating I believe with a staff
16 of seven based on what I see in your power
17 point presentation.

18 Is there a reason that we haven't
19 been able to come up to full speed in terms of
20 hiring? Because it sounds as though you are
21 trying to accomplish a tremendous amount with
22 a very small number of people. We've provided
23 as a legislature the financial tools to be
24 able to get you up to speed but for some
25 reason that hasn't happened. We've been at

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2 the same number of staff now since before you
3 came on Mr. Chitty. I think you may have
4 hired one additional person if I'm not
5 mistaken. What are the impediments to your
6 being able to hire separate and apart from the
7 existence of a freeze now? I understand that
8 there's a blanket hiring freeze. But prior to
9 COVID what were the limitations in your
10 ability to hire?

11 MR. CHITTY: Just to go back and
12 I appreciate that. That's a very good
13 question. We're currently at seven. Our
14 total would have been 12. The additional two
15 basically they fall underneath the intern
16 portion. Looking at the specific needs of the
17 office, again working with the team that we
18 had, we had to do a full assessment. Dr.
19 Williams was there as an interim and she did a
20 lot of work and we had numerous conversations
21 as to exactly what the office needs.

22 We were at the point of hiring
23 somebody just to start looking at the contract
24 portion who was already skilled in that. Then
25 COVID hit. So we got kind of stuck in a

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2 little bit of a weird place right then and
3 there. If it wasn't for COVID we would have
4 able to bring that specific skill on board.
5 But for right now we do have some basic
6 knowledge as to taking a look at some of these
7 contracts, putting the pieces together. But
8 again, the overall goal, just like Dr.
9 Williams mentioned, is to have a succinct
10 process in place.

11 Things come in different ways to
12 the office as far as contracts are concerned
13 and we want to make sure we have a solidified
14 process so that we can wrap our hands around
15 that and know exactly what's going on and
16 automation would be the key.

17 As far as any additional staffing,
18 we are in a hiring freeze right now and our
19 assessments are always continuous working with
20 the exact staff that we have in order to get
21 through this. A good example right now is we
22 have Victor Roberts on board. She's working
23 with Dexter Hedgepeth, one of our program
24 coordinators, to start taking a look at
25 workforce development. As things change we

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2 need to be able to adapt and adapt quickly.

3 We're looking at a series of different

4 webinars to try to get people prepared for

5 coming off of unemployment. The changes in

6 work space.

7 So again, just an overall trying to

8 continuously assess and make sure that we are

9 making the right decisions moving forward.

10 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Separate and

11 apart from the COVID pandemic and the freeze

12 that came into place, did you as executive

13 director, because it seems clear from the

14 charter that essentially as long as there is a

15 budget line for it you have the ability to act

16 independently in terms of bringing on staff.

17 In your experience has that been how it's

18 worked?

19 MR. CHITTY: As far as staffing,

20 we've worked directly with HR and also our

21 executive director Tsimis and the

22 administration to make sure we bring on the

23 proper staff that is needed moving forward.

24 Again, it is a process and we continuously

25 assess things. We received a ton of resumes

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2 that we continue to go through repeatedly and
3 again just to make sure that we find the
4 proper, qualified staffing.

5 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Let's say the
6 hiring freeze were lifted today. How long do
7 you anticipate it taking until your department
8 is up to full staff?

9 MR. CHITTY: Up to full staff,
10 depending on the needs, I'd probably say,
11 again, things continuously change, I'd
12 probably say -- we also have a backup of
13 working with our other offices, the Office of
14 Asian Affairs and the Office of Hispanic
15 Affairs to work with them directly as to what
16 some of our specific needs. We do have the
17 bear of the certification process specifically
18 for the businesses.

19 To ramp fully up we would have to
20 get through COVID, do another assessment.
21 Reassess. Take a look to see if our needs
22 have changed and go from there.

23 I will say that one of the biggest
24 things that I would like to have sooner rather
25 than later is specifically somebody for

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2 contracts. That's a key portion. Myself and
3 Dr. Williams she'll be taking on that part of
4 our process in our mandate right now. But
5 again, we're not versed in that 100 percent.
6 We're just not and we want to make sure we do
7 it right. I believe there are 5,000 contracts
8 that come across, if not more, every year and
9 trying to wrap your hands around that it's a
10 challenge. But it's not anything we can't do
11 but we want to make sure we get up to speed as
12 quickly as possible and get it done right.

13 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Since we got
14 into the topics of contracts, how exactly are
15 contracts being handled today? In other
16 words, do you receive advanced notice of every
17 one of the 5,000 contracts that the county is
18 engaging in?

19 MR. CHITTY: I could not tell you
20 if there was advanced notice for every one of
21 them. There is a policy in place that we get
22 a 30-day notification prior to bid
23 solicitations going out. But when we take a
24 look at that policy we can't give out the
25 entire bid. It's basically the RFP number,

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2 when it's expected to go out and what the item
3 is. We cannot talk about quantities, we can't
4 talk about specifics, we can't talk about any
5 details of that specific product. It's just
6 basically a heads up.

7 After we go through that we have to
8 determine whether or not the funding is just
9 Nassau County, which are aspirational goals
10 depending on the dollar amount, whether they
11 are state funding or federal funding. With
12 state funding it's MWBE or SDVOBs. And with
13 federal funding it's DBEs, disadvantage
14 business enterprises, and a lot of those
15 higher items are through DPW and they are
16 required to make sure that they meet their
17 numbers. We get those reports back in. We go
18 through as best as we can. Most of them have
19 been making their numbers. But to say I have
20 an eye on every single contract I couldn't say
21 that right now.

22 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: It sounds as
23 though you don't have the staff to be able to
24 do that even if you wanted to, which I'm sure
25 you do.

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2 MR. CHITTY: We're doing the best
3 we can.

4 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Of course you
5 are. Just in terms of -- I know you said you
6 don't receive every contract. You can't say
7 that you receive every single contract in
8 advance. That 30-day notification, do you
9 know what percentage of the total contracts
10 you receive in that 30-day notification before
11 things go out to bid?

12 MR. CHITTY: Everyone we receive
13 we do a notification. The challenge is --

14 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Do you know
15 how many you receive on a yearly basis?

16 MR. CHITTY: Total no, I do not.

17 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Do you know
18 if it's in the thousands?

19 MR. CHITTY: It would probably
20 close to the thousands. Again, we just get an
21 email notification. We also need to be
22 leery. We have MWBEs out there for a 30-day
23 notification. And it's my been experience if
24 you start out sending out every single one of
25 them over and over and over again people

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2 become numb to taking a look at it. We've had
3 this problem across the board even in my past
4 life. Sometimes it's too much information.

5 So as we start to automate things
6 we want to be able to pull out, okay, if
7 there's a bid going out for widgets we want to
8 be able to send that bid out or that
9 notification out to whoever is making
10 widgets. But one of the issues that we have
11 is a that lot of people who are certified in
12 our system they're listed as, quote unquote,
13 professional services. So we need to dig a
14 little bit more into that to extrapolate
15 exactly what they do.

16 I will say that with the vendor
17 portal businesses do put in their NIX codes
18 and when a bid does go out that the system, on
19 through procurement, automatically sends them
20 an email specific to their NIX codes.

21 Again, the problems we have seen
22 people's jobs change, people's products
23 change. Sometimes those codes don't always
24 match. So part of what we are going to be
25 trying to do moving forward is to educate them

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2 that they need to go into that system and also
3 take a look for themselves. See what bids are
4 there what they can bid. Even speaking with
5 procurement, if you say you sell widgets you
6 can bid on bottles of water or whatever the
7 case may be. It doesn't have to be specific.
8 That's part of our ongoing education process.

9 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: You'd only
10 provide that information to MWBE businesses if
11 you have that information, correct?

12 MR. CHITTY: Correct.

13 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: I'm just a
14 little concerned about the fact that out of
15 the 5,000 county contracts there's no level of
16 confidence that you're receiving, certainly
17 not receiving all of them. You may be
18 receiving only a fraction of those contracts
19 which means that you can't communicate that
20 information to MWBEs.

21 MR. CHITTY: Possible, yes.

22 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: I know
23 Dr. Williams' mentioned that there's been
24 conversations with Ken Arnold with the
25 Department of Public Works and obviously the

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2 Department of Public Works has many of the
3 major contracts for the county. Is there any
4 exchange of information with other
5 departments? Other than the Department of
6 Public Works or are you only receiving public
7 works contracts?

8 MR. CHITTY: We do get them from
9 other departments. Police department, health
10 and human services. Even treasurer's
11 department. Items here and there. But again,
12 I couldn't tell you exactly how many
13 departments are sending in everything. Some
14 departments order very sporadically some
15 people have reached regarding that specific
16 policy because they don't order that often. I
17 could tell you exactly if everybody is getting
18 but we have gotten it from different
19 departments. I wouldn't just say it's
20 Department of Public Works.

21 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: You only know
22 about what you receive?

23 MR. CHITTY: Correct.

24 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: I imagine we
25 can get that information out of the

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2 administration as to what percentage of the
3 total contracts are actually being
4 communicated to the Office of Minority
5 Affairs.

6 MR. CHITTY: Yes. If we could
7 work like that and also have a process to be
8 automated. That's why we are specifically --
9 the larger departments we started off with the
10 Department of Public Works. We work out a
11 process from there. The majority of the
12 notifications I get are from them because they
13 are the biggest purchaser and also from the
14 police department. We've gotten quite a few
15 from them also.

16 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: In terms of
17 evaluating, I know you mentioned that many of
18 the departments are meeting their numbers,
19 their targeted numbers for minority women
20 business participation, how do we know that
21 they are meeting the numbers? Is the Office
22 of Minority Affairs doing an independent
23 investigation or are we simply looking at what
24 the numbers are that are reported?

25 MR. CHITTY: For those specific

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2 departments it would basically be the
3 Department of Public Works. For example, the
4 Bay Park sewage plant project. They are
5 mandated to have monthly reporting and I am to
6 submit a quarterly report to EFC, which is the
7 Environmental Facilities Corporation. I would
8 say out of the, I'll just pick a number, out
9 of the ten or 15 contracts that were there
10 they've met their numbers nine out of ten.
11 The majority of those numbers.

12 We did have a situation because if
13 they don't meet those numbers they need to
14 notified me and request a waiver. I'm not in
15 the habit of giving waivers. Unless it's an
16 emergency or a specific job or specific skill
17 that is not readily available. We have that
18 conversation. We did have a recent incident
19 where they were off by two points. I think
20 they were mandated to meet 20 percent. But we
21 had a conversation and we gave them some
22 additional information and they were actually
23 able to exceed that minimum quota. But the
24 majority of those reporting capabilities are
25 through DPW or any other specific funding that

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2 is state or federal.

3 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: So we at
4 least have the ability within the contracts
5 that the county awards to attempt to solicit
6 MWBE participation, but some of the challenges
7 are obviously that we have to go with the
8 lowest qualified bidder. What assistance does
9 your office provide to the MWBEs to try and
10 educate them as to how to prepare a bid as to
11 make sure that they are competitive in that
12 bid process?

13 MR. CHITTY: We in the past did
14 have seminars including Robert Cleary, chief
15 procurement officer, to explain this process.
16 Again, it is daunting. I have done work with
17 the county many, many years ago and if you're
18 doing a bid package you get a package of like
19 40 or 50 sheets of paper. You're like wow,
20 this is a lot. I can't do this. But once you
21 go through it the majority of the information
22 there is documentation that's necessary just
23 to do business. Disclaimer forms. EEO
24 information. All that pertinent information.

25 So we try to educate people exactly

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2 what the entire process is, to continue to
3 look into the system, make sure you're
4 registered to do business, make sure you're
5 sending in the disclosure forms, make sure you
6 do your footwork. Take a look at the system,
7 see what bids are coming up and go through
8 that entire process.

9 As you stated, it is still lowest
10 bid and best qualified bidder. That's some of
11 the information we try to relate to people.
12 But then when we really got into it I think we
13 had one or two of them. Then COVID hit. We
14 also had procurement forum with the SBDC at
15 Farmingdale State University where we actually
16 had departments people purchasing from
17 specific departments within the county at
18 these forums with a table so that these MWBEs
19 could talk directly with these purchasers to
20 find out what type of products and services
21 they could meet and just to start building
22 that relationship.

23 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: I didn't mean
24 to turn this into kind of a budget hearing.
25 It almost sounds like that with me asking

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2 staffing questions and the like. But in terms
3 of -- do you feel as though your office at its
4 current staffing has enough people to fulfill
5 its standards?

6 MR. CHITTY: Again, we can work
7 with the other outreach offices to try to get
8 up to snuff as much as possible. But again,
9 some of these specific items, specifically
10 some of the contract compliance it's a
11 full-time job. It literally is a full-time
12 job. You got thousands of contracts.
13 Regina's done a very good job in the past and
14 continues to do so and we work together as a
15 team to make sure that we can understand
16 what's going on. But it's a lot.

17 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Has there
18 been any progress in attempting, and
19 Legislator Solages is quite correct in a
20 previous hearing mentioning the need for
21 counsel. Has there been any progress in
22 attempting to retain counsel?

23 MR. CHITTY: When I initially
24 came in I didn't feel that it was exactly
25 necessary but that's turned a little bit.

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2 We'd to get more in depth with exactly what is
3 required. I can read a contract but I'm not
4 an attorney and I'm not going to pretend to
5 say I am. But some of us have work with law
6 in the past. Again, it goes back to that full
7 understanding of the contracting process and
8 we are not 100 percent there yet.

9 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Obviously
10 since part of the mandate obviously is the
11 contracting and procurement process and
12 ensuring minority participation obviously that
13 would be a problem not to have someone who is
14 an expert in assisting you in doing that,
15 right?

16 MR. CHITTY: It would be
17 challenging.

18 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: So now if you
19 were to have the ability to hire the
20 additional five full time staff and two I
21 guess intern positions that you would have
22 what would they do? In other words, what
23 could your department do better if you had the
24 full staff that you were budgeted for?

25 MR. CHITTY: We would definitely

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2 focus on the contract portion. We would also
3 beef up our outreach initiatives. We do have
4 program coordinators right now. We have two
5 on staff. One does communication. The other
6 one is Michelle Crosley, who focuses on our
7 certification process. Dexter Hedgepeth
8 focuses a lot on the communications, the
9 social media and some outreach portions. But
10 we definitely need to increase our outreach
11 efforts. Being there on-site, talking to
12 people one-on-one, being able to have them
13 gain that specific trust to call into the
14 office. To be able to educate them. Walk
15 them through their specific processes whether
16 it's MWBE or any social issues. And also try
17 to be that resource for them. So we would
18 expand upon that.

19 We would also work, if we had
20 increases, to be able to wrap our hands around
21 some of the larger departments. Health and
22 human services is massive. We have had
23 conversations with them to talk about their
24 different services and we want to be that
25 resource so that when people reach out to us

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2 we can point them in the right direction.

3 We also want to be able to focus on
4 civil service, workforce development. We've
5 had forums with civil service to walk
6 constituents exactly through that entire
7 process. We get them in a room, sit them down
8 with the computers and civil service shows
9 them exactly how to apply for civil service,
10 how to keep on top of the notifications. We
11 would be able to increase our efforts on all
12 those specific factors and look for other
13 opportunities to help our constituents.

14 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: The charter
15 does specifically mention social services,
16 mental health, health services, public works,
17 public safety. Is that something that's
18 happening now or could it simply be happening
19 better if you had additional people?

20 MR. CHITTY: It could be
21 happening better. Our team has specific
22 tasks. For example, Victoria Roberts she
23 brings a lot of skills to the table to talk
24 about recidivism, to talk about mental health
25 initiatives. We have been in touch with the

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2 Department of Social Services. We work
3 collaboratively with them. We've been in
4 touch with Nassau Community College and other
5 organizations throughout Nassau County and
6 even Suffolk County, which is the beauty of
7 Zoom. Working with the Entrepreneurial System
8 Center at Suffolk County's Brentwood campus.
9 The Small Business Development Center at
10 Farmingdale State College. Hofstra's Assent
11 program. And even organizations from the city
12 that focus specifically on MWBEs to be able to
13 reach out to them, connect with them, for
14 funding opportunities and also to be able to
15 talk about technical assistance to help our
16 people.

17 We have Dexter Hedgepeth who also
18 speaks directly with our community members.
19 We'd basically be able to touch more upon
20 those specific items in the charter and do it
21 a lot better.

22 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: I know that
23 you've had -- and I'm going to wrap up because
24 I know you have questions.

25 It seems as though obviously the

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2 vendor registration portal you've created
3 certainly has resulted in a large number of
4 certifications. Certainly more than we had a
5 year ago by a significant percentage and
6 that's wonderful. But I know it's probably
7 still only a fraction of the MWBEs that
8 actually exist. What are our outreach efforts
9 in terms of identifying MWBEs and getting them
10 to participate in the certification process?

11 MR. CHITTY: Right now we cannot
12 go out to solicit those individuals. As we go
13 to events, even as we do Zooms, people have
14 those specific questions and they do call into
15 us or email us with questions. That's why we
16 do things like the Hempstead Chamber of
17 Commerce I just did last week. The Uniondale
18 Community Counsel. People know of what MWBE
19 is but they're not even sure about what it's
20 going to do for them.

21 So we're honest with them and say
22 listen, Nassau County contracting we have no
23 firm goals. But then we start talking about
24 the diversity study. We talk to them about
25 there is no fee to sign up and that you would

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2 take the time to take the process to go look
3 into the system to see if there is something
4 that you could bid on.

5 As far as any other additional
6 outreach not at this moment right now. We do
7 the best that we can with what we have during
8 the current situation with COVID. But when we
9 are able to go back out we do have those
10 conversations with small groups, existing
11 organizations that are out there. Not
12 basically knocking on doors and telling people
13 hey listen, you need to come and get certified
14 with Nassau County and start bidding on some
15 of these items. If that answered your
16 question.

17 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: What ways
18 could outreach improve?

19 DR. WILLIAMS: We talked in terms
20 of we've already started collaborating with
21 the different chambers of commerce as well as
22 one of the larger organizations, Long Island
23 Business News, has a list of MWBEs. I want to
24 say in the thousands. Somewhere close to ten
25 thousand. So we've been in contact with them

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2 to try to ascertain their list so we can reach
3 out to those MWBEs as well.

4 Connecting with the other
5 municipalities is something that we do on a
6 regular basis to try to stretch our hands a
7 little further and reach the MWBEs that aren't
8 already registered in the vendor portals. So
9 those are some of the things that we've
10 already started doing.

11 As well as building different
12 committees, different primes that are out
13 there, MWBE primes, as well as some of the
14 SDVOB primes. They can aid us in being able
15 to stretch our hands a little further and
16 reach out to those smaller businesses.
17 Outside of going door to door those are the
18 things we try to do. Look at all the
19 different processes. And businesses that
20 already have lists out there and collaborate
21 with them to try to get that information.

22 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Last thing.
23 Famous last words. I know that Legislator
24 Solages is going to ask about Title 6 and I'm
25 assuming HUD Section 3. Just out of

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2 curiosity, obviously part of the Office of
3 Minority Affairs is making sure we are
4 implementing the county's own affirmative
5 action program. Do we know presently how many
6 women and minorities we have employed within
7 Nassau County?

8 MR. CHITTY: I do not have that
9 information. I can reach out to see if I can
10 obtain that. Speak with human resources or
11 whatever the administration has obtained that
12 information for you and get back to you.

13 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Since the
14 department is supposed to be tracking
15 obviously our affirmative action program isn't
16 that something that should be reported to you
17 on a regular basis in terms of hiring?

18 MR. CHITTY: I feel that should
19 be. What we have done is, again looking at
20 Affirmative Action, is to have collaborative
21 meetings -- I'm sorry, collaborative events
22 with other two outreach offices again with
23 civil service to bring more awareness to
24 constituents as to where do you apply. How do
25 you apply and how did that system work.

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2 I think that's a good opportunity
3 to try to get more people interested in these
4 civil service positions that eventually will
5 spread out into the county, into the
6 libraries, into the school districts and all
7 the other different departments that fall
8 within civil services realm.

9 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Doesn't each
10 individual department have its own affirmative
11 action plan in terms of hiring?

12 MR. CHITTY: I'm not 100 percent
13 sure. I do know that the corrections facility
14 does but I can take a look at get back to you
15 with that information.

16 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: I appreciate
17 that. I'm going to turn over the questioning
18 at this time. I have more follow up later.

19 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: We can't do
20 that because of civil service but with
21 ordinance jobs is there a plan that would
22 could address that that would promote,
23 increase more minority and women in the
24 various county departments?

25 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Sounds like

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2 we can.

3 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: If I can
4 piggyback off of that question. Do you have
5 any information as to how much minorities are
6 in the police department?

7 MR. CHITTY: No, I do not.

8 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Do you have
9 information as to how many minorities are in
10 the Legal Aid Society?

11 MR. CHITTY: No, I do not but I
12 can reach out to see if I can ascertain that
13 information.

14 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: In previous
15 years at budget hearings when Mr. Scott Banks,
16 who heads the Legal Aid Society, stood here,
17 sat here in the same chair that you're sitting
18 in, I asked him if there were any black or
19 brown female attorneys or male attorneys in
20 the Legal Aid Society and he testified that
21 there were not any. And that could be very
22 concerning that there are no minority
23 attorneys in the Legal Aid Society.

24 So, I've also been talking to
25 various county employees and there is a belief

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2 that there is an overabundance of minorities
3 in the parks department. Is that correct?

4 MR. CHITTY: I would have to take
5 a look to see if I can ascertain those
6 specific numbers for you but I do not know
7 right now.

8 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Are you
9 aware of any plan by the administration to
10 increase the participation of minorities in
11 county government?

12 MR. CHITTY: I do know that the
13 administration has been working directly with
14 us again to go through that civil service
15 process to bring more awareness to communities
16 of color as to the process of signing up for
17 civil service, going through the entire
18 process, taking the testing and keeping an eye
19 on any opportunities that do become available.

20 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Based on
21 your analysis, is it a case that minorities
22 are not applying or is it a case that we need
23 to do a better job of looking for more
24 qualified applicants?

25 MR. CHITTY: Having a real

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2 conversation with civil service and the
3 administration what I have ascertained is that
4 civil service if you take a test you're not
5 going to get a callback the next day. It's
6 going to take a while. You have specific
7 lists and rules and regulations. Even in my
8 past experience civil service takes a long
9 time. They have to abide by the rules and
10 regulations of the state. You might have
11 somebody that takes a test today and they
12 might not get an opportunity to actually get a
13 call back a year or more from now. At that
14 point somebody's life changed. If they really
15 needed a job maybe they took something else.
16 Maybe they found a better opportunity and that
17 civil service was no longer attractive for
18 them. That's what I've been able to
19 ascertain.

20 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: But if it
21 was a priority for the administration they
22 could accomplish these goals?

23 MR. CHITTY: It would still be a
24 challenge and that's why we work with civil
25 service to bring more awareness to minorities

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2 and communities of color to start that process
3 to make sure that they understand it. Because
4 when we started holding our forums I think we
5 had about five or six forums, each one of them
6 was packed.

7 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Isn't the
8 county saying that like they do not tolerate
9 racism and discrimination but is there any
10 actual plan of oversight and accountability
11 that can help check or identify or control the
12 rampant racism that's going on?

13 MR. CHITTY: Again, it goes back
14 to that initial conversation as looking back
15 at our civil service processes and again,
16 reaching out to people having them
17 participate.

18 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: But there's
19 no plan by the county to address that?

20 MR. CHITTY: Not that I'm aware
21 of. There could be. I'm not aware of that.

22 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Is someone
23 here from the administration that can speak on
24 behalf of the IG's office? I mean, is the
25 IG's office getting all these contracts and

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2 why aren't they forwarding them to the OMA,
3 Office of Minority Affairs? Is someone here
4 from the administration? Can't just the IG's
5 office just forward the contracts to OMA?

6 MS. HORST: Katy Horst from the
7 administration. It's my understanding that
8 the IG's has the ability to see every
9 contract. Whether she reviews it or not is up
10 to her.

11 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: And is the
12 IG's office forwarding these contracts to the
13 Office of Minority Affairs?

14 MS. HORST: The IG is an arm of
15 your office. I would ask you to speak with
16 her.

17 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Furthermore,
18 the county charter states in Section 211 the
19 Office of Minority Affairs shall have the
20 following powers and duties. And part F, as
21 in Frank, it says provide assistance in the
22 implementation of affirmative action programs
23 in county government employment, housing and
24 development of an annual affirmative action
25 report required by the county for certain of

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2 its state and federal sources. Has the county
3 accomplished this report?

4 MR. CHITTY: Not that I'm aware
5 of. Again, when we have these discussions
6 when we talk about workforce, we go through
7 that process of educating people on how to
8 apply for civil service.

9 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: So the
10 county is not fulfilling its mission in
11 producing this affirmative action report?

12 MR. CHITTY: I'm not aware of an
13 affirmative action report that has been
14 prepared. I can reach out and try to
15 ascertain that information for you.

16 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Furthermore,
17 the county also says in Section E, as in
18 Edgar, produce and publish any research papers
19 or studies on issues affecting the minority
20 community. Has the Office of Minority Affairs
21 helped to accomplish this goal?

22 MR. CHITTY: Right now the
23 closest we can come to is the awarding of the
24 disparity study so we can have a comprehensive
25 look as far as the utilization and

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2 availability of MWBEs and SVDObS. We should
3 be very close to awarding that contract very
4 soon and then we can begin that process of
5 trying to flush out those numbers to make sure
6 that we can have full utilization of those
7 that are available.

8 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Going back
9 to the IG's office, we just need to find out
10 how the Office of Minority Affairs is granted
11 for the access and we need to push that more.

12 Going back to this issue. My
13 question now pertains to hiring. I mean, this
14 is important because we had this last hearing
15 on April 23, 2019 and that was for the
16 administration and this administration was in
17 power probably 16 months. And now on this
18 date, the administration has been in office
19 for over 32 months. Almost three years. And
20 it's a concern that we just don't see -- and
21 you can say that coronavirus or COVID affected
22 this but it is concerning that after 32 months
23 we don't have a plan, an actual plan. As they
24 say, if you fail to plan you are planning to
25 fail.

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2 Is there any plan to help with more
3 diversity? I'm looking at the comptroller's
4 report that he issued last year, even before
5 Black Lives Matter was a popular slogan, and
6 he talked about in that report that we're just
7 ten years away from the minority in Nassau
8 County to be the majority. Just ten years
9 away. But if that's the case then why are all
10 these important government agencies in the
11 county such as the police department lacking
12 real diversity?

13 We had a community forum with the
14 police department, and I thank Nassau County
15 Police Department for the great work, but we
16 had a forum with them, with the community,
17 right after George Floyd's death and one of
18 the heads of the police department mentioned
19 the numbers of black and brown faces in the
20 police department and, my apologies, I don't
21 have the numbers before me now, but the
22 numbers were very low.

23 I'm just concerned. It doesn't
24 make sense to me that we are just ten years
25 away from minorities being the majority in

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2 Nassau County but these government departments
3 don't reflect that diversity and that is a
4 clear red flag for institutional racism. I'm
5 not calling anybody a racist here. Not at
6 all. No one's perfect. Not at all. But we
7 have to step forward and try to do better
8 here.

9 So this office has a very important
10 purpose and it needs an attorney but how can
11 we hire an attorney now with a hiring freeze?
12 How are we going to get around that? Can
13 someone from the administration talk about
14 that? If we can at least establish that there
15 is a need for an attorney in this office. The
16 fact that there is no attorney, what type
17 of -- does that make us vulnerable for
18 litigation the fact that we are not helping to
19 establish or achieve these important laws?
20 Does that make it vulnerable for litigation?

21 MR. CHITTY: I couldn't answer
22 that question sir.

23 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Who can
24 answer that question?

25 MR. CHITTY: You would have to

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2 defer that to the administration. Again, as
3 we've work diligently to wrap our hands around
4 all the different items that the Office of
5 Minority Affairs is tasked with my whole
6 process is that we take things in bits and
7 pieces. We take one item, get a process in
8 place, make sure it's functional, make sure
9 it's sustainable and that it can move forward
10 and be efficient. So as we take different
11 pieces on it will be a continuous process for
12 us to make sure that we can get to meeting all
13 the need of the charter.

14 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Can someone
15 from the county attorney's office come and
16 talk about maybe the number of lawsuits that
17 we've had to settle out due to claims of
18 discrimination and racism? I mean, we're
19 spending a lot of money with litigation, these
20 lawsuits, these settlements. But we can do
21 some pretty simple steps to address these
22 issues. Is there anyone here from the county
23 attorney's office that can talk about that?
24 The average payout in settlements based on
25 claims of racism? Anybody here?

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2 MS. HORST: No one is here from
3 the county attorney's office. Just director
4 Chitty was invited today to present.

5 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Is it
6 possible that you can call someone from the
7 county attorney's office to come down here and
8 speak on that?

9 MS. HORST: I can try.

10 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: I continue.
11 The disparity study. MWBE participation
12 goals. We have an oversized super stadium in
13 Elmont being built as we speak. Are we
14 fulfilling our goals of minority women
15 business participation in that big billion
16 dollar project?

17 MR. CHITTY: That billion dollar
18 project is still being worked on. We have had
19 forums with the MWBEs to educate them on the
20 processes. We've also had forums with Belmont
21 where we had a packed room working directly
22 with ESD to educate the businesses on how to
23 apply. We've connected with them with the
24 contractors. The challenge with that is, as
25 we look at federal and state funding they need

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2 to be certified with that authority.
3 Specifically New York State. If I walked in
4 right now to certify with New York State it's
5 at least two years of a process now. The only
6 way to get past that is if, from what I
7 understand, is that if an MWBE who is not
8 certified and the prime contractor wants that
9 specific MWBE to participate we might have the
10 opportunity to expedite it. But again, it is
11 a process. We need to make sure that MWBE's
12 paperwork is all in order and then we contact
13 the state and it's their final decision.
14 Again, depending on where the funding is --

15 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: In your
16 professional opinion -- sorry to interrupt --
17 are minority communities receiving their fair
18 share of the pie when it comes to these
19 billion dollar projects all across Nassau
20 County?

21 MR. CHITTY: I couldn't
22 specifically attest to that. I would say no
23 but I will give you one example. For the Bay
24 Park sewage plant out of \$719 million being
25 allocated -- I'm sorry, I'm sorry, \$719

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2 million, \$93.5 million of that was allocated
3 to MWBEs. They have already been paid. As
4 far as SDVOBs 1.4 percent. So that's \$296
5 million. Veteran contract value was
6 \$4,159,000. So there are some successes.
7 Their not as great as some expectations might
8 be. But this specific department, these
9 specific projects have been engaging in order
10 to try to accomplish and meet their numbers
11 overall.

12 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Understood.
13 Thank you. Furthermore, I appreciate
14 everything you've been doing. I truly do.
15 Are there any other roles or duties of this
16 office that, in all candor, are not being met
17 by your office?

18 MR. CHITTY: As far as the
19 overall charter we do have some areas that
20 need more attention. Again, overseeing the
21 office I need to make sure that no matter what
22 happens each process is taken bit by bit. We
23 need to find out what the process is, adapt
24 it, put in specific processes to make sure
25 they are efficient and sustainable in order to

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2 move forward. Because as we've seen over
3 years as things change things fall through the
4 hole. Being 2020, there's no reason why we
5 should not have specific automation like the
6 MWBE app and other systems that are out there
7 to expedite us knowing what's going on and
8 being able to meet the needs of our MWBEs and
9 that's my specific goal.

10 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: I'd just
11 like to report that the IG has advised that
12 the Office of Minority Affairs can arrange
13 with the procurement director, Robert Cleary,
14 to receive information. Just received that
15 message.

16 Furthermore, I really need a
17 deadline from your office and from the
18 administration as to numbers of minorities all
19 throughout the county government. There's an
20 oversaturation of blacks in the parks
21 department and I don't know why that's the
22 case and we need to hopefully understand why
23 that's the case. And furthermore, see how we
24 can help promote diversity in other very
25 important county departments.

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2 Furthermore, I have some more
3 questions but in the interest of time and I
4 really want to hear from some of my colleagues
5 I rest the rest of my time.

6 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Thank you
7 Legislator Solages. Legislator Mule.

8 LEGISLATOR MULE: Thank you
9 Chairman Rhoads. First, I want to thank you
10 for this presentation. It's really great to
11 see that there's been so much progress made in
12 getting the office up and running. I know
13 that there have been significant challenges
14 and now with COVID of course that just
15 compounds the challenges. But I did have some
16 specific questions.

17 You mentioned about, taking from
18 the question from Legislator Solages, with the
19 Belmont project that there they had to be
20 registered also with the state and federal
21 government. Is that correct? MWBE?

22 MR. CHITTY: Right.

23 LEGISLATOR MULE: Is there any
24 way that we as a county can work alongside
25 with the federal and state MWBE department so

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2 that we are asking the same questions and if
3 they are registered for one they could be
4 registered for another?

5 MR. CHITTY: What we try to do
6 is, and I just got this question last week
7 which I answered numerous times from the
8 Hempstead Chamber of Commerce. A young lady
9 asked me should I register with the county or
10 with some other agency? My explanation to
11 them is, the majority of the paperwork is
12 similar to each certification whether it's New
13 York State, New York City, New York-New Jersey
14 Port Authority, New York State Dormitory.
15 It's pretty much the same. If you're going to
16 do one do every single one of them at the same
17 time while you have the information in front
18 of you.

19 The challenge again is, people
20 don't fully understand what's the benefit from
21 it. Over the course of my career, I have seen
22 people who certified and they haven't had a
23 real opportunity. A lot that comes down to
24 education. Again, the bid package. It
25 becomes cumbersome. Are you making the right

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2 connections? We also get prime contractors
3 who reach out to us and say I can't find
4 enough MWBEs. We go into the state system and
5 then we see that some contact information was
6 there. Was erroneous or missing.

7 Again, it's a full process to be
8 able to shine a big spotlight on these huge
9 opportunities. We do have some success
10 stories. Can we do more? Yes, we can. But
11 we are doing our part to make sure that we can
12 increase that.

13 Dr. Williams you wanted to add
14 something?

15 DR. WILLIAMS: Last year Chitty
16 and I we did go to Manhattan and we met with
17 Empire State Development. We began the
18 conversation of possible of our office having
19 someone as a satellite for Empire State
20 Development. So that when they certify with
21 us that we already have someone on staff to
22 handle state certification so that we can
23 better serve our constituents. That
24 conversation already started and I believe we
25 received the MOU.

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2 MR. CHITTY: Yes, we did receive
3 an MOU. The state was looking for additional
4 outlets or offices where people could go more
5 locally to get certified because their process
6 takes extremely long right now. We had that
7 MOU, COVID hit but we do have it and we can
8 share that with the administration to see if
9 there is an opportunity to increase that
10 opportunity for MWBEs.

11 DR. WILLIAMS: In that
12 conversation the state thought it was a great
13 idea for us to have someone within our
14 department to be able to handle state
15 certification. And they also had shared,
16 because of the backlog they have, we would be
17 handling all of the Nassau County constituents
18 that want to be state certified and that it
19 would really aid them a great deal. The
20 conversation already began. We spoke with
21 administration about it but we just haven't
22 gotten to that point yet. But we did begin
23 that conversation.

24 LEGISLATOR MULE: Is that a
25 position that would potentially be funded by

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2 the state?

3 DR. WILLIAMS: It would have to
4 be.

5 LEGISLATOR MULE: Along those
6 lines you obviously have a lot of new
7 applications according to your report. First
8 of all, how long does it take for someone to
9 go from handing in their application to
10 actually being certified?

11 MR. CHITTY: Again, that depends
12 and I going to defer to Dr. Williams because
13 she manages that process.

14 DR. WILLIAMS: Right now, because
15 of the tutorial that we have they can follow,
16 if someone actually files their documents and
17 after our certification analyst, Michelle
18 Crosley, reviews them and if everything is in
19 proper order where there's nothing for us to
20 actually do or contact them it can be done in
21 six hours.

22 LEGISLATOR MULE: Are you finding
23 that that's actually happening?

24 MR. CHITTY: Very rare.

25 DR. WILLIAMS: We've had two

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2 businesses that I will say within three weeks
3 they filed and three weeks later we were able
4 certify them since we started. I say three
5 weeks because of the fact that with COVID we
6 already had paper filings that our clerk
7 analyst was going through. But in all
8 actuality when we timed it it can be done just
9 like that. If they give us what we need.
10 Which is the biggest hurdle is our
11 constituents giving us the documentation
12 that's required. And we're not asking for
13 anything more, it's less than what they would
14 do for New York State, but once they give it
15 to us that's the issue, making sure they give
16 us exactly what we need.

17 MR. CHITTY: It is
18 understandable. Again, over the years as a
19 consultant I've had people who they just don't
20 have that quick access to all their pertinent
21 information. It's tough for some small
22 businesses. They're focusing on making money,
23 producing their product, taking care of their
24 clients. It becomes something tenuous like
25 doing your taxes.

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2 LEGISLATOR MULE: That's always
3 been the complaint that it's just too onerous
4 to do for so little perceived benefit to file.

5 MR. CHITTY: Perceived benefit,
6 correct.

7 LEGISLATOR MULE: Given the large
8 number of applications that you have how will
9 you be addressing that backlog?

10 MR. CHITTY: Right now we have
11 Michelle Crosley, who is our analyst, she
12 focuses 100 percent on those and we're trying
13 to crosstrain as much as we can. It's going
14 to take us some time. We did not expect that
15 we would have that many in the queue to get
16 certified. It's a good thing thank goodness
17 we do have this process but it's going to take
18 time. And if we're looking at us versus New
19 York State it takes them years, we're not in
20 such an awkward position compared to any other
21 municipalities. But we're going to do our
22 best to get through it as quickly as we can.

23 LEGISLATOR MULE: Then going back
24 to the disparity study. How many
25 applications -- you said stay tuned for more

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2 information. I'm going to ask for a little
3 bit more information. How many applications
4 did you receive?

5 MR. CHITTY: I'm not 100 percent
6 sure I can answer that because of the -- can
7 anybody help me out from the administration?
8 Can I even talk about that since -- I'm not
9 100 percent sure I can talk about how many,
10 who or anything like that as far as that
11 process is concerned.

12 LEGISLATOR MULE: Do you know the
13 projected dated of the award?

14 MR. CHITTY: I don't have an
15 exact date. I'm hoping real soon. As soon as
16 we can solidify things. We're at the very
17 last stage.

18 LEGISLATOR MULE: Are you talking
19 one week, one month?

20 MR. CHITTY: To be safe, I would
21 say within the next 30 -- hopefully within the
22 next 30 days.

23 LEGISLATOR MULE: I understand.
24 I'm not going to hold you to that. How long
25 will the study take to complete?

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2 MR. CHITTY: It depends on who
3 the awardee is. What the contracting process
4 is. Negotiations. Then what their process is
5 getting information from us. Again, it's
6 going to be two counties pulling information,
7 historical information, from both counties.
8 Doing a lot of community outreach. I've seen
9 numbers anywhere between nine months up to 14
10 depending. Again, we don't have an exact
11 number for that. From research that we've
12 done, every disparity study is a process unto
13 itself and you can't really can't compare that
14 much one to another. It depends. It will be
15 a process.

16 LEGISLATOR MULE: Our legal
17 counsel has advised that there is no legal
18 reason not to disclose how many.

19 MR. CHITTY: How many applicants
20 we have? We had five people responded to our
21 RFP. Five businesses.

22 LEGISLATOR MULE: I have many,
23 many more questions but I will stop here with
24 the request that we another committee meeting
25 because there are just so many more topics to

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2 talk about. To talk about housing, disparity
3 in housing. Talk about the disparity in
4 health care, which you mentioned. To talk
5 about police reform. We just have so many
6 things we need to talk about. But I will
7 yield back. Thank you.

8 MR. CHITTY: Legislator Rhoads if
9 I could? To a previous question we have been
10 informed by Robert Cleary from our chief
11 procurement office that all of the
12 solicitations that do come into Office of
13 Minority Affairs all of them are coming in.
14 We are made of all of the solicitations from
15 all of the departments. So I can confirm
16 that.

17 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: But you're
18 not confident that every one of them is being
19 reviewed obviously because you don't have the
20 ability to do that, right?

21 MR. CHITTY: We do the best that
22 we can.

23 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Understood.
24 Obviously you are trying to do that but --

25 MR. CHITTY: I'm not a million

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2 percent sure. I would like to say I am but I
3 can't say that I am.

4 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Legislator
5 Walker.

6 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Thank you.
7 First of all, I want to thank you so much for
8 your presentation. It was certainly very,
9 very thorough. I can honestly tell you I feel
10 like you've accomplished more in a very short
11 span of time compared to what this committee
12 had done for years. So I will just leave it
13 at that. To see you working so hard
14 together. You said you really have become a
15 family and taking calls in the middle of the
16 night because you want to succeed and you want
17 to see this go very, very well and I really
18 think you're on the right path. So I want to
19 thank you so much for that.

20 I do understand that we are in a
21 hiring freeze and I do understand finances are
22 very difficult right now. They always are but
23 especially after COVID and the amount of
24 monies that's been spent so on and so forth.
25 But staffing is very, very important for your

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2 department and to you being more successful
3 you really need to be able to get that hiring
4 done. I would love to be able to see someone
5 be able to work on the contracts. And what
6 you've done with IT enables you to be able to,
7 as information comes in and you can notify the
8 different businesses that might pertain to is
9 wonderful because you can do that pretty much
10 instantly but you really need the manpower to
11 be able to do that. To be able to do it with
12 all the contracts. I think that's something
13 we would all be pushing for to see happen.
14 Unfortunately that staffing is needed in many
15 departments but this is very vital to yours.

16 The other thing and I know it's
17 very difficult because you're still in limited
18 access to each other with COVID, but for some
19 people we find that even with people trying to
20 fill out forms for -- with assessment or
21 different things we have here at work it's
22 almost like impossible for them to do it on
23 their own. They almost need someone there
24 with them to help them. Some of them have
25 very small businesses. Larger business have

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2 the capability of having someone fill out this
3 paperwork for us. Do this. Gather up all the
4 information.

5 But a small business you can't
6 gather their information for you but for some
7 of them you hand them that packet of paper
8 it's overwhelming. Before they even begin
9 it's like I can't do it. It's kind of been
10 like home schooling with four grandchildren in
11 the beginning when it was all on paper before
12 it was on the computer. My little seven year
13 old he'd look at that packet and he was
14 already falling off the chair because I can't
15 do all that. It's overwhelming. Especially
16 when you're not sure what to do.

17 I would hope at some point you
18 would have the staffing and the capability
19 that people could come in and you could sit or
20 go out to that business, somebody could go out
21 to that business, and work with those
22 individuals who really need that help
23 basically on a one-to-one basis even to fill
24 out the forms. Because that could be stopping
25 them right then and there. They don't get any

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2 further than that. So I would love to see us
3 be able to do that.

4 Again, I don't want to go on and on
5 because I know James has questions also. But
6 please, we are here for you and whatever we
7 can help you with. I for one, I'm sure all of
8 us, will really be pushing for the staffing
9 that you need to make this department work the
10 way it should be. Thank you again for
11 everything.

12 MR. CHITTY: Thank you very
13 much. It is a team effort. It's all of us
14 working together because we do have a mission
15 to perform. But again, we are working with
16 our other offices to try to share a little bit
17 of that load. But everything is a process.

18 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Thank you
19 Legislator Walker. Minority Leader Abrahams I
20 understand there is a question.

21 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Thank you
22 Chairman Rhoads. Thank you for accommodating
23 us and are able to do this remotely as well.

24 My question to the Office of
25 Minority Affairs is more tied into what we are

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2 seeing throughout our country and our county
3 in regards to some of the actions as pertains
4 to police reforms. And obviously my question
5 to Mr. Chitty as well as to the entire group,
6 Mr. Harvey and Dr. Williams, is that there
7 have been three bills that are, two bills that
8 have been up for discussion as well as more
9 conceptual reforms that have been put into
10 place.

11 Do you envision the Office of
12 Minority Affairs opining on the hotline or
13 body cameras or the mental health study,
14 mental health unit in the police department
15 study? I think your opinion as well as your
16 ability to understand what is going on
17 throughout not just the minority communities
18 but from what we've seen from the protesters
19 it's coming from all communities, I think it's
20 important that your office demonstrates some
21 level of a position on those particular
22 issues. I just wanted to know what's your
23 level of comfort as well as your ability to be
24 able do that?

25 MR. CHITTY: I thank you very

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2 much Legislator Abrahams. We are engaged in
3 these conversations, whether it's myself or my
4 staff, especially Victoria Roberts who
5 participates in the Police and Community Trust
6 meetings. We've had a couple of those as we
7 move forward into those mental health issues
8 and discussions. We are definitely involved
9 in all of those. We do know that it is needed
10 and we know that the Curran administration is
11 actively engaging individuals, organizations,
12 all stakeholders in order have that initial
13 conversation and come with succinct plans.

14 But the Office of Minority Affairs
15 is 100 percent engaged and will continue to be
16 engaged whether somebody calls and has any
17 questions with those. We have received calls,
18 issues concerning specific things especially
19 with the police department. We forward those
20 over. We track them.

21 But again, I do know that the
22 Curran administration is definitely engaged
23 and the Office of Minority Affairs will
24 continue to stay engaged with all stakeholders
25 regarding such issues.

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2 MR. HARVEY: Can I add some
3 things to it? I'm sorry. Because as the
4 deputy director for diversity and community
5 engagement I have been actively involved on
6 many different levels speaking concerning many
7 of these different issues. Actually with our
8 police commissioner, with the communities, for
9 various stakeholders that have been involved
10 even when they were trying to implement some
11 of the laws that Say My Name.

12 All of these things we have been
13 actively engaged in on a continuous basis.
14 That's one of the efforts we engineer in
15 Minority Affairs. We keep the people
16 informed. We have our finger on the pulse
17 when we're dealing with these issues that are
18 so very important and inform all of our
19 communities.

20 One thing that we are learning it
21 has an impact not just on minority communities
22 but on everybody. We have to really have
23 intelligent conversation but we've also taken
24 steps to make sure that some of these laws
25 will be implemented. I think already the

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2 camera law has already been in place. We do
3 have body cams on some individuals I would
4 imagine when we talked about that. And that's
5 something I think that we agree that we should
6 have. It was just a financial thing.

7 So, when we look at these things
8 going forward all of them are going to make
9 for a better police department. All of them
10 are going to make for a better county. All
11 the things that we need to do will make for a
12 better community and that's what it's really
13 all about.

14 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Bishop, I
15 apologize. My apologies Bishop. I'll
16 probably have to go to confession after this.
17 But it's my understanding that there are no
18 body cameras. Only on Freeport officers. You
19 see what that led to. Nothing. But anyway.
20 There are no body cameras on Nassau County
21 police officers just to be correct here.

22 MR. HARVEY: Freeport does have
23 them.

24 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: And we have
25 been fighting for that since 2014.

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2 MR. HARVEY: From what I would
3 understand I thought it's something that they
4 are working towards. I think that in the
5 conversations that I've had and I've been
6 pretty engaged at the table on some of these
7 things -- no, no, there are no body cameras.
8 But the general feel is that it's something
9 that they should be looking into and it's
10 something that should be done. The law has
11 been passed. Didn't the law pass on the state
12 level?

13 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: My sister
14 passed it, yes.

15 MR. HARVEY: It's been passed on
16 the state level that there should be body cams
17 and that's something that's being discussed.
18 Am I correct?

19 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: That only
20 pertains to state troopers and state officers
21 not county officers. Sorry Kevan.

22 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: I
23 apologize. Whenever you're ready.

24 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Legislator
25 Abrahams.

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2 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: I don't
3 think I heard an answer to the question. I
4 want to make sure it's clear. Is the Office
5 of Minority Affairs, do they plan to present a
6 position very similar to the impact study that
7 they did many years ago in regards to the
8 position of a particular bill or a particular
9 economic item on how it pertains to the
10 minority community? Do they plan to state a
11 position on the various bills that have been
12 drafted and presented to the clerk's office?
13 Do you plan to present a position on the
14 impact of both bills on the minority
15 community? Such as the complaint hotline,
16 such as the mental health study unit and body
17 cameras or whatever other police initiative or
18 police reform as a whole? Does the office
19 plan to present some level of an opinion on
20 where they stand on these issues?

21 MR. CHITTY: To answer that
22 question, when you say an opinion or are you
23 looking towards research that can back that
24 opinion up? I would not feel comfortable with
25 the Office of Minority Affairs giving, quote

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2 unquote, an opinion.

3 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Or
4 position.

5 MR. CHITTY: I'm sorry, a
6 position on that. We are the Office of
7 Minority Affairs. We are here as a resource
8 for basically all constituents. As far as a
9 position, we want to do our best to abide by
10 the rules and regulations set forth for us by
11 law. As far as positions, I leave that up to
12 the administration. We know what we need to
13 do for these communi-- for all constituents
14 and we're going to do what we need to do in
15 order to make sure that people feel
16 comfortable whether it's with the police
17 reaching out to us with more information and
18 directing them along the right way. I don't
19 think that answered your question but that
20 would be my response.

21 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: If I
22 understand the answer to your response, and
23 I'm not trying to put you on the spot, it
24 sounds like you're not going to be able to
25 provide a position. Which is your opinion as

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2 well as your position which is fine. But it
3 sounds like the office will not provide a
4 position as it pertains to legislation that
5 impacts minority communities if I'm
6 understanding you correctly.

7 MR. CHITTY: I'm in a position
8 now where what we can do is take a step back
9 and look at some research and data and provide
10 that to you at a later date and I think that
11 would be appropriate.

12 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Okay. I
13 think Mr. Chitty I think you should go back
14 and take a look and possibly revise your
15 position. People look to the Office of
16 Minority Affairs as it pertains to your
17 mission and I think they would want to hear
18 from the Office of Minority Affairs on bills
19 that very well could impact their lives. I
20 will agree to disagree, but I think you should
21 take a strong look at your position going
22 forward because your office is seen as the
23 leadership office of minority issues.

24 I would present the same question
25 as it pertains to any of the other minority

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2 offices whether it's Asian Affairs or anyone
3 else. But I think it's important that the
4 leadership of those offices do present a
5 position as it pertains to items that impact
6 minority communities. No different than if it
7 was economic issues or contract issues the
8 very same issue that you had specified earlier
9 trying to get that data as well or those
10 contracts as well. Thank you.

11 MR. CHITTY: I appreciate that.
12 I will get back to you. I will also rely
13 administration. But again, we will do our
14 best to make sure that we can fulfill our --
15 did he already leave? Are you still there?

16 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: I'm here.

17 MR. CHITTY: Sorry about that. I
18 will definitely speak with the administration
19 regarding that specific point of a position.
20 But again, we will do the best that we can to
21 meet the needs of all the minorities. But I
22 will get back to you regarding that specific
23 question. I thank you.

24 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Very much
25 appreciate it.

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2 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: We would
3 also, Mr. Chitty, and I know we've spoken
4 about PACT quite a bit today. As you know, if
5 you attended the meeting as did Bishop Harvey,
6 had a meeting back in the beginning of June
7 with the police department, with yourselves
8 and with members of the community trying to
9 begin a discussion. We've kind of taken a
10 step back because the following week PACT
11 started, and my view is that we shouldn't have
12 two competing discussions going on at the same
13 time.

14 As myself as chair, and I'm sure
15 the other members of the committee, other
16 members of the legislature, would want there
17 to be some sort of update as to what progress
18 PACT has been making. What the discussions
19 are. I sent a letter to the county
20 executive's office asking for a list of people
21 that were actually part of PACT because we
22 want to make sure that when you talk about
23 having community stakeholders we want to make
24 sure that we have a fair cross-section of all
25 community stakeholders so that we are

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2 soliciting all opinions in that.

3 And also some kind of timetable for
4 what suggestions and reforms PACT is going to
5 come up. I haven't received that yet but if
6 you could just get word back to the
7 administration and we would definitely be
8 interested in seeing that sooner rather than
9 later. I would appreciate it.

10 Are there any other questions from
11 legislators? Legislator Ford.

12 LEGISLATOR FORD: Good
13 afternoon. Thank you very much for your
14 presentation. It was excellent to be quite
15 honest with you. I do also want to echo the
16 sentiments of many of the legislators up here
17 in regard to the need for you to get more
18 employees. If you have been budgeted for 12
19 and currently you are at seven, just listening
20 to all the initiatives and the projects and
21 all the different areas of everybody's lives
22 that you have to go into. Whether or not it's
23 with -- we spent a lot of time on contracts,
24 when you look at housing, when you look at the
25 issue of health, police reform. I could go on

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2 and on and I think even so I'm sure that you
3 do get involved in the educational aspect to
4 make sure that our students are prepared.

5 As you said that even civil service
6 tests. We want to make sure that many of our
7 young people, especially minority communities,
8 are aware that they can take these tests, that
9 it can provide them a good job with good
10 benefits. It's something they have to be a
11 little bit patient. I know what you mean.
12 Because there are people who've waited like
13 seven years after they took a test they got a
14 call to come for that job and stuff like
15 that. So perhaps maybe we can work with civil
16 service so that maybe perhaps there can be a
17 faster turnaround time for many of these
18 positions.

19 I think that the current climate
20 today and we see everything that's going on
21 has enhanced the importance of your office.
22 And I think that despite the fact that there
23 is a freeze, a hiring freeze, I think in this
24 case an exception must be made by this
25 administration to allow you to bring counsel

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2 in and to allow you to bring in the necessary
3 people that you would need in order to fulfill
4 your duties and your obligations to our
5 community.

6 I urge the administration to heed
7 all of us because I think we are all in
8 agreement that at this point now is the time.
9 You have a lot on your plate. You're doing an
10 excellent job right now.

11 I agree with Rose. We have seen a
12 lot more out of this committee, this
13 department, then we had in many, many years.
14 I want you to keep going full steam ahead
15 because I think that next year I want us to
16 have a bit of a better tone in saying -- so
17 that we have all the initiatives that many of
18 us are looking for and that we see more and
19 more minorities coming into county work and to
20 be able to get the contracts that they need.

21 Just one little question. I know
22 that when we look at these businesses and
23 helping them get the contracts, unfortunately
24 I find that some of our small businesses are
25 going under. I think it's -- and the

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2 governor's reluctance to allow certain small
3 businesses to reopen. Like gyms, spas, yoga
4 studios. It's been my experiences that many
5 of these business are owned by women.

6 Is there anything that you can do
7 or maybe advocate on behalf of them -- I don't
8 know if this goes beyond your purview -- in
9 trying to help us try to keep these businesses
10 open? Nothing is sadder then finally getting
11 these people to invest to make a go of it and
12 then all of a sudden have the rug pulled right
13 from under their feet. I would ask you that
14 if that's the case then maybe you can add your
15 voice in trying to get maybe some help for
16 these people and allow them to reopen. Keep
17 up with the good work.

18 MR. CHITTY: Thank you.

19 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Are there any
20 other questions or comments from the
21 legislators? Legislator Kennedy.

22 LEGISLATOR KENNEDY: Thank you
23 Legislator Rhoads. I just want to say I'm
24 just impressed and so thankful for everything
25 that you've done executive director Chitty,

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2 Dr. Williams and Bishop Harvey and the whole
3 staff. Like it was said before, it's obvious
4 that you need more help and five more people
5 would make a tremendous difference. As far as
6 contracts, outreach, that can make a
7 tremendous difference and ease your work load
8 and get you all that are in a different
9 position maybe that could be working toward
10 different things and like give off some of the
11 load that you are carrying so that maybe you
12 can be doing other things that is better for
13 your focus.

14 And I think that, like it was said
15 before, really have to make sure that the
16 hiring and in this specific case five people
17 and it was budgeted, so it's five people who
18 will make a tremendous difference. I just
19 want to say I, along with everybody else, am
20 pushing for that. I want to thank all of you
21 for everything you've done. It's obvious to
22 see you've done a lot of work here and made
23 some great progress and thank you so much.

24 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Thank you
25 Legislator Kennedy. I know that there are

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2 many other questions that legislators have and
3 we will endeavor to set up another hearing.
4 We will invite you back. Obviously there was
5 some information that you didn't have today.
6 If we can endeavor to get that information
7 specifically with respect to the county's
8 affirmative action program and a variety of
9 other topics which we will exchange by
10 letter. If you can have that information when
11 we come back that would be helpful as well and
12 we can finish up.

13 Two things. Housekeeping. We are
14 told we have to vacate the chamber at noon
15 which we are at now. However, I know that I
16 don't have any speaker forms but I know we
17 have some members of the public that are
18 here. I don't know if any intended to speak
19 today. Mr. Guilty. If we only have one
20 speaker we'll have Mr. Guilty speak. And was
21 there anyone else? Anybody can submit
22 comments in writing as well which will be
23 incorporated as part of the record. Obviously
24 we will have more than sufficient time for
25 public comment when we have our next hearing

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2 which I assure you will be soon. In the mean
3 time Mr. Guilty. State your name and address
4 for the record.

5 MR. GUILTY: Andre Guilty, 1122
6 Van Buren Street, Uniondale, New York. I'm
7 going to be try to be as brief as possible.
8 It came to our attention in November 2019 that
9 the African-American community was being
10 robbed at a disproportionate amount of tax
11 dollars for the money they pay into the police
12 department. What we found, because I have a
13 TV program called the African-American News
14 for 28 years and I have been here many times.

15 What we found was some of the most
16 unbelievable accounts of police misconduct for
17 people who pay taxes. Consequently, I was
18 going to do an undercover operation and expose
19 these rogue police officers in the First
20 Precinct. I contacted our legislator, Kevan
21 Abrahams, and he said don't go out there
22 undercover and do that because the things that
23 you're telling me are too outrageous for you
24 to risk yourself at doing that.

25 So, we sent it through the line,

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2 sent it through the chain of command and it
3 made it to you in February. What I would like
4 to say is that we're not here today to talk
5 about good cops. We are here to talk about
6 the bad ones. I would love to speak to you in
7 the language that they speak to the citizens
8 but I can't say those words because I've grown
9 past that and I'm not doing a comedy routine
10 today.

11 But my notes here I have a lot of
12 buzz words. Nassau County prides itself on
13 being a sanctuary but it's not a sanctuary for
14 people who are victims of police terror and
15 racial profiling under the guise of stop and
16 frisk. Stop and frisk has been alive and well
17 out here and it has been found
18 unconstitutional in New York City but there's
19 nothing about it. I have sent videotapes. We
20 have testimony of people who have been
21 victimized by this behavior. It's almost like
22 the past laws in the South Africa where police
23 hide their ID, they hide their badges. Then
24 they demand your ID.

25 And this is not happening in a

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2 bubble. This is not happening to people who
3 are just in the wrong neighborhood. This is
4 happening to the same targeted people on a
5 daily basis whether they're on a skateboard,
6 bicycle, a car or walking they are constantly
7 accosted by police who have a certain racial
8 hatred for the people they are paid to protect
9 and serve.

10 So they came to me because of my
11 program and because I'm not afraid to speak
12 out on their behalf. So some of them were
13 here today but they had to leave. I'm going
14 to say their names. Archie Stallings. His
15 mother is a nurse. She bought him a Mercedes
16 Benz, a BMW. He gets profiled weekly because
17 he's not allowed to have that kind of a car.

18 Marcy Brando. She was stopped and
19 frisked and that was almost like a strip
20 search. So she was sexually harassed by
21 officers. You had one officer holding
22 someone's underwear up. He's been reprimanded
23 for that.

24 You have Cassina Atkinson. She
25 helped police find a dog. They cursed her out

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2 and threatened to beat her up after this.

3 We have Sara Whitehouse who was the
4 police said she sold them a kilo of cocaine
5 and they gave her \$60,000. She lost her
6 business. She was found innocent. It never
7 happened but she spent \$30,000.

8 We have Ronald Spalling who was
9 profiled. We have a veteran, Charles Oliver,
10 who was profiled.

11 So, we don't want to whitewash
12 what's going on right now. People want
13 justice and a lot of them want vengeance.
14 What I can say to you today is that the people
15 I have seen, those people who started
16 protesting after George Floyd, those weren't
17 the church people. Those were the
18 millenials. Those weren't people that you can
19 give a job to and come here and whitewash it.
20 Those were people who don't believe in the
21 Koran, the Torah or the Bible. They're not
22 forgiving. They don't turn the other cheek.
23 You have a different generation. They want
24 justice and they want vengeance.

25 Now, you can equate this to their

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2 behavior is a lot of innocent people over in
3 Iraq. They were arrested and they were taken
4 to Abu Ghraib and they were tortured in a lot
5 of instances but they became radicalized by
6 that behavior. Then you formed Isis.

7 So we see these types of
8 similarities here for people who are
9 innocent. Nobody ever stopped the police from
10 doing good work in getting the criminal. But
11 when you lump people in as all blacks are to
12 the police you guys got to get your heads out
13 of the sand because you are on a powder keg
14 whether you want to believe it or not because
15 people are not looking for support anymore.

16 You see what's going on in the
17 country. But we were here first back in
18 January telling you that there's something
19 going on here weird with the police. They're
20 not policing. They're abusing their
21 authority. They are operating with white
22 supremacy that keeps white skin privilege
23 letting them know that they can kill people
24 mistakenly without any accountability with
25 impunity.

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2 People are not going to tolerate
3 that. People spend their lives investing in
4 their children. Growing them up. To have
5 them taken away by a mistake and then no
6 charges. These people are not going to be as
7 forgiving as our grandparents were.

8 So you guys are ahead of the curve
9 so to speak. We need to be able to take these
10 police officers, we need to take their
11 pensions away. We need to lock them up. You
12 also need to have the ability to test them
13 randomly for steroids, alcohol, cocaine and
14 marijuana. Because I have videotape of 30
15 years that I've caught officers doing things
16 that weren't something that I would destroy
17 their careers for. But what's going on today
18 it has to end.

19 You are representatives of the
20 state. The police are a state body. Whatever
21 they do you're sanctioning it. You've got to
22 give people another reason to believe in
23 police again. People can't consciously tell
24 their children if you have a problem call the
25 police. So they can mistakenly kill

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2 somebody?

3 Then when COVID came now you're
4 telling the people who are being victimized
5 with trauma and post traumatic stress disorder
6 for watching black people continually getting
7 murdered on TV. And you want me to tell our
8 children call a cop?

9 You guys are at a point of
10 singularity. There's no turning back. This
11 is all happening on your guard. You guys have
12 been here for years. I have been on TV for
13 years. You all knew this day was coming. I
14 have to speak for the people who are afraid to
15 come to you and afraid of the police. Why are
16 they afraid of the police? You got to ask
17 yourselves these questions.

18 The Office of Minority Affairs is a
19 policing body for making sure the proper
20 redistribution of our tax dollar. They have a
21 policing body, which was there attorney, to go
22 to the different divisions and make sure that
23 we are being properly compensated for our tax
24 dollars. We not asking for no welfare. We
25 are paying a disproportionate amount of tax

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2 dollars for bad service.

3 And you guys know what is going
4 on. We don't got to play semantics here.
5 Because when I got to get up out of my bed and
6 leave my 11 month year old baby because
7 somebody is at a gas station getting gas and
8 the police pull up to wait for them to give
9 them a ticket again this is a failed state.
10 This is a failed state.

11 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Thank you
12 Mr. Guilty. I'm just going to ask you to
13 please wrap up and there will be an
14 opportunity for public comment at the full
15 legislature.

16 MR. GUILTY: What you need to do
17 is hold these people accountable. Because all
18 lives do matter but nobody's killing police by
19 mistake. Nobody's running up in their house
20 killing their wife by mistake. Nobody's
21 shooting an eight year old kid by mistake.
22 Nobody's murdering police by mistake. So you
23 guys have to act.

24 There is a way going on and I'm a
25 harbinger of bad news. I don't have no good

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2 news to tell you. It's going to get worse if
3 you fail to act. Protect your citizens.
4 These are American citizens. How the hell can
5 you have a sanctuary city and you can't
6 protect the citizens? Come on. This is the
7 worst witnessing of taxation with no
8 representation. That's what this Office of
9 Minority Affairs was created for because we
10 were being robbed of contracts, robbed of our
11 rights.

12 So, you guys have a position here
13 because it's going to get to a point where
14 there's nothing you're going to be able to do
15 to fix this. I just want you to understand,
16 this is no disrespect to religion, people are
17 not turning the other cheek anymore. They're
18 not calling for the Lord. They're going to do
19 something they're going to do themselves.
20 They're not going to wait for you.

21 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Thank you
22 Mr. Guilty. At this time we are past the
23 deadline that we were given to vacate the
24 chambers. So at this time we will close the
25 hearing with the understanding that we will be

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2 revisiting these issues very shortly as soon
3 as we can work out a new date. Again, thank
4 you for participation.

5 I should have mentioned at the
6 start the last time that we were here we were
7 able to be joined by both Bishop Gates and
8 Bishop Watson who are pioneers in their own
9 right. Unfortunately their absence today due
10 to their untimely passing certainly it is
11 noted by all of us, recognized by all of us
12 and we wish that they were here. Thank you.

13 (Hearing was concluded at 12:14
14 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATION

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I, FRANK GRAY, a Notary

5

Public in and for the State of New

6

York, do hereby certify:

7

THAT the foregoing is a true and

8

accurate transcript of my stenographic

9

notes.

10

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have

11

hereunto set my hand this seventh day of

12

August 2020

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FRANK GRAY

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