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6 NASSAU COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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8 RICHARD NICOLELLO

9 PRESIDING OFFICER

10

11 HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

12 COMMITTEE

13

14 LEGISLATOR ROSE MARIE WALKER

15 CHAIR

16

17

18 Theodore Roosevelt Building

19 1550 Franklin Avenue

20 Mineola, New York

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22

23 May 10, 2021

24 2:47 P.M.

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

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4 LEGISLATOR ROSE MARIE WALKER

5 Chair

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7 LEGISLATOR JAMES KENNEDY

8 Vice Chair

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10 LEGISLATOR LAURA SCHAEFER

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12 LEGISLATOR C. WILLIAM GAYLOR

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14 LEGISLATOR DELIA DERIGGI-WHITTON

15 Ranking member

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17 LEGISLATOR ARNOLD DRUCKER

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19 LEGISLATOR JOSHUA LAFAZAN

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2 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Call the
3 meeting to order and please ask the clerk to
4 call the roll.

5 MR. PULITZER: Health and Social
6 Services Committee roll call. Legislator
7 Joshua Lafazan.

8 LEGISLATOR LAFAZAN: Here.

9 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Arnold
10 Drucker.

11 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Here.

12 MR. PULITZER: Ranking member
13 Delia DeRiggi-Whitton.

14 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON:
15 Here.

16 MR. PULITZER: Legislator C.
17 William Gaylor the third. Come back to that.
18 Legislator Laura Schaefer.

19 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Here.

20 MR. PULITZER: Vice Chairman
21 James Kennedy.

22 LEGISLATOR KENNEDY: Here.

23 MR. PULITZER: Legislator C.
24 William Gaylor are you present?

25 LEGISLATOR GAYLOR: I am

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2 present. Thank you.

3 MR. PULITZER: Chairwoman Rose
4 Marie Walker.

5 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Here.

6 MR. PULITZER: We have a quorum
7 ma'am.

8 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Thank you so
9 much. There are three items on the agenda
10 today. I will call the first clerk item which
11 is clerk item 151-21, which is a local law to
12 amend Article 10 of the Nassau County
13 Administrative Code to require written
14 notification to towns, villages, cities and
15 school districts of agreements proposed to be
16 entered into by Nassau County for the
17 operation of multi-unit shelters to be located
18 within such jurisdictions.

19 May I have a motion please. By
20 Legislator Schaefer. Seconded by Legislator
21 Drucker.

22 This item is a local law that would
23 require the Department of Social Services to
24 at least ten days prior into entering into a
25 contract or agreement for shelter facilities

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2 in Nassau County to provide written notice to
3 legislators representing the district as well
4 as the town, village, city and school district
5 where the proposed shelter will be located.

6 This item comes in response to an
7 action taken by the Department of Social
8 Services to enter into a contract for the
9 operation of a multi-unit homeless shelter
10 located in a converted hotel located in
11 Jericho. No legislator was notified of this
12 action. I learned of it at a press
13 conference. That's how we all learned of it.
14 Nor were Jericho residents or other elected
15 officials representing the area.

16 As such, there was a great number
17 of questions raised by the community and
18 elected officials that would have been
19 addressed before the administration signed any
20 agreement.

21 Any legislators have any comments
22 or -- Legislator Drucker.

23 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Thank you
24 Madam Chairwoman. I appreciate it. As you
25 aptly noted, this bill was generated from the

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2 outcry that was necessitated by the
3 unfortunate situation in Jericho in which this
4 development of this refurbished hotel was
5 being planned and contemplated without letting
6 any of the elected officials know. Like
7 yourself, I found out through a phone call
8 from somebody on the school district who the
9 community found out from a school board
10 meeting.

11 So, I support this bill in the
12 respect that transparency is of utmost concern
13 when it comes to this body being informed and
14 being able to consult and confer and advise
15 our constituents on what's happening in their
16 community. In that respect I do support the
17 bill.

18 However, I feel that the bill
19 thought is incomplete. It needs further
20 context and I have filed an amendment today
21 with the clerk to deal with that. Because,
22 although, again, as I said, transparency is
23 important and we need to always ensure that
24 that takes place, but we cannot lose sight of
25 the county's paramount obligation to provide

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2 assistance to those people who are lacking in
3 basic human sustenance, food and shelter.

4 My amendment is attempting to -- by
5 the way, my amendment is cosponsored by
6 Legislator Mule. I filed this amendment to
7 codify in the clearest way possible our shared
8 sense of morality and decency and legality by
9 reminding our residents of our responsibility
10 to provide for our most vulnerable population
11 and not use this enhanced notice provision to
12 distort or exploit it for underlying feelings
13 of NIMBYism, or worse, giving passive support
14 for racial, for class bias, prejudice and
15 discrimination. Because we don't want this
16 bill, this law to be used as an opportunity to
17 garner opposition to something as noble as
18 providing shelter to people who are homeless
19 or people who are victims of domestic violence
20 and the like kind.

21 This pandemic has wreaked havoc on
22 the lives of millions of people. The federal
23 moratorium that's in place against evictions
24 is going to run out, perhaps right now in
25 August, and then we're going to be faced with

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2 an explosive amount of homeless people.

3 So we need to make sure we adhere
4 to our obligation as a county, as a
5 government, to support and help those people
6 in need. And I always maintain my support for
7 a belief that good government is always
8 measured by how good it supports and provides
9 for its most vulnerable population. To those
10 people less fortunate, most disadvantageous.
11 Those are the people that we measure our
12 government and how good we're doing. I don't
13 want to lose sight of that.

14 My amendment is designed to codify
15 that obligation that the county always has.
16 We must always keep that in mind. We want
17 notice, we want transparency, but we can't use
18 it to support lip service to supporting and
19 providing homelessness by saying oh, we love
20 that idea but just not in my backyard.

21 Shelters that provide this
22 wonderful service to those in need should be
23 designed to place where it's appropriate and
24 where it's safe and secure. Not designed to
25 just go into certain neighborhoods. That's

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2 horrible. We must prevent that from taking
3 place.

4 Again, I urge the entire
5 legislature and the Majority to support my
6 amendment to this bill because I think it's a
7 good bill but it needs amplification. It
8 needs context. And it needs to remind
9 everyone what our fundamental obligation as a
10 county government is. Thank you very much
11 madam chairwoman.

12 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Thank you
13 Legislator Drucker. I have to say that I
14 think what's in front of us is very
15 important. I'm glad that you feel that you
16 would definitely support this. But I also
17 feel that the item before us sets notification
18 requirements before the county agrees to
19 contracts for multi-unit shelters in Nassau
20 County with the goal of enhancing transparency
21 by providing notices to legislators and other
22 municipal representatives.

23 Nassau County is already required
24 to comply with applicable federal and state
25 confidentiality requirements and it does not

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2 require the identification of domestic
3 violence victims nor could it. It will not
4 identify any individual inhabitant.

5 When it comes to making decisions,
6 the Department of Social Services is already
7 obligated to follow every law and every rule.

8 The issue with the proposal in
9 Jericho is that the department did not notify
10 municipal representatives of its action and as
11 such, residents with questions never had an
12 opportunity to have their questions
13 addressed. Now the county is being sued by
14 the Town of Oyster Bay for its failure to
15 abide by existing zoning and safety
16 requirements. Those issues could have been
17 dealt with proactively and were not.

18 This law forces transparency into
19 the department's action and in doing so
20 ensures that residents are fully aware of the
21 actions that are proposed in their community.

22 Just personally, I think the whole
23 plan that was before us for that shelter, I
24 think in the future would be very good. I
25 think it offered many things to our homeless

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2 families that aren't in other places. But
3 unfortunately because it wasn't vetted
4 beforehand at all, no one had notification,
5 and I could see how certainly -- and I'm sure
6 there are some people who are opposed to it is
7 because they don't want it in their backyard.
8 But I also think it wasn't gone through the
9 proper channels.

10 We sat here at a hearing and we
11 were told by counsel for DSS that if the
12 gentleman that had been with the commissioner
13 he would have told her not to even let the
14 school district know. And I questioned him at
15 that time, we were in the throes of COVID,
16 every parent in every one of our schools had
17 to sign would your child be coming to school
18 in a hybrid program if it was offered or would
19 they be totally remote. Were they taking a
20 bus if they were eligible for a bus or would
21 they not be taking that bus.

22 All that was done months before
23 school started and here could be a district
24 that was suddenly faced with having students
25 in school that they didn't even know were

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2 coming.

3 I just think if anyone had known
4 beforehand you work out your problems. When
5 we permits that come before us we discuss
6 them, we see what problems they have. Go
7 back. Make this work. Make it work in the
8 community. So everybody's on the same page.
9 So, I just feel we have all those in place and
10 so I'm going to ask -- did we have a second on
11 your possibility of amending? Do we need
12 that?

13 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: It's an
14 amendment to the item.

15 LEGISLATOR WALKER: The amendment
16 isn't actually before us?

17 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: No.

18 LEGISLATOR WALKER: All those in
19 favor of the item.

20 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Just one
21 more thing Madam Chairwoman. I just wanted to
22 say one thing. The amendment that I'm
23 offering that has been filed it also -- one of
24 the mandates in it is that although, again, as
25 I said transparency and notice is important

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2 but it prohibits any county office or agency
3 from declining to enter into a homeless
4 shelter contract based on any perceived
5 hostility or animus towards homeless status of
6 proposed residents.

7 I think that's important because
8 the Jericho situation was entirely different.
9 Again, I'd like to think that the objection
10 was based on the process of notice but I have
11 to tell you I have opinions that it was based
12 more on the NIMBYism aspect of it than
13 anything else.

14 Again, I'm hoping that with the
15 context that my amendment provides it will
16 ensure that these decisions are made at the
17 county level in a full, transparent, open and
18 honest way.

19 LEGISLATOR WALKER: I guess it's
20 my interpretation that that is already
21 required by the Department of Social
22 Services. I don't know if anyone else has any
23 comments on that. Legislator Schaefer.

24 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: I
25 disagree. I think that you can't base

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2 contracts on people -- there being some people
3 that are not in favor of it. It's supposed to
4 be a transparent process. If the process is
5 transparent I believe you will work through
6 whatever issues some people may have and some
7 people will not have any issues all the time
8 as well. That's all.

9 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Madam
10 Chairwoman, I would like to make a motion at
11 this point in time to amend the item in the
12 form of a substitution to conform the item to
13 the amendment that has been filed.

14 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: I
15 will second that.

16 LEGISLATOR WALKER: We have a
17 second on that motion. All in favor of the
18 amendment signify by saying aye. All
19 opposed? So, the amendment does not go
20 forward Legislator Drucker.

21 On the item, all in favor of the
22 item signify by saying aye. Any opposed? The
23 item passes unanimously.

24 There are two additional items.
25 Item 152-21 is an ordinance supplemental to

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2 the annual appropriation ordinance in
3 connection with the Department of Human
4 Services.

5 May I have a motion please. By
6 Legislator Schaefer. Seconded by Legislator
7 DeRiggi-Whitton.

8 MR. HALL: Good afternoon. Brian
9 Hall from Human Services. This is some extra
10 stimulus money that we're getting in from New
11 York State Office of the Aging. That's from
12 2-20 to 9-30-22 that we can spend the money
13 and it's for COVID-related items. It's mostly
14 for helping out with the meal situation with
15 the home delivered meals and the new
16 drive-through programs and grab and go. And
17 it's 100 percent from New York State.

18 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Could I ask
19 you, now we received money in the first go
20 round to go to this program too. How did we
21 utilize that?

22 MR. HALL: We're in the process
23 of utilizing it now because we have until I
24 think it's either the end of September or
25 December to spend that first batch of money.

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2 We started out by having some intense
3 cleanings in all the centers before they
4 opened due to COVID. We're also experiencing,
5 we're short on money -- we're not short on
6 money but the Meals on Wheels has grown so big
7 that we're using some of this money to take
8 care of Meals on Wheels and anything some of
9 these agencies might need. For instance,
10 because of so much Meals on Wheels being
11 delivered they might need a new refrigerated
12 van or whatever it is. We're right now
13 starting to use it and we just want to make
14 sure we got the proper okays from the state
15 that they're going to allow us to use it for
16 items that we requested.

17 LEGISLATOR WALKER: When you said
18 you used it for tent cleanings, I thought the
19 purpose of that money was to provide meals and
20 help those, I mean, we have many seniors who
21 were shut-ins, seniors couldn't go to senior
22 centers because they weren't open, whatever.
23 Did we provide them with meals?

24 MR. HALL: Yes, we did. We took
25 care of everybody on it. I'm only bringing up

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2 the cleanings because they're slowly opening
3 up the senior centers again now. So we wanted
4 to make sure they were ready for when the
5 seniors return.

6 LEGISLATOR WALKER: How did we
7 notify seniors to be able to know that there
8 was food availability to them?

9 MR. HALL: There's always -- we
10 have case managers and several contracts that
11 go out and they monitor the situation and they
12 review who would qualify for the Meals on
13 Wheels let's say as part of their review. At
14 this point now the numbers have tripled
15 because they're not going to the centers. So
16 these same people are getting home delivered
17 meals now. So this extra money that's been
18 coming in is to help us get through this
19 without having a waiting list and without
20 having to turn anybody down.

21 LEGISLATOR WALKER: During the
22 height of COVID if we had homebound seniors
23 who couldn't get out to the stores or they
24 were -- I mean, was there any way to -- I
25 mean, only from lists you have that's the only

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2 way you reached out to all of those seniors?

3 MR. HALL: I'm sure they reached
4 out other ways, you know, through advertising,
5 maybe church bulletins and all about what was
6 going on. But they have a pretty good list
7 and, you know, it was a waiting list that we
8 started with on the Meals on Wheels. Now
9 we've gotten rid of the waiting list. Anybody
10 who applied for Meals on Wheels is basically
11 getting it at this point now.

12 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Do we know
13 how much money we used from the first amount?
14 You said we're using some of that now. I feel
15 like we went through such a horrible, horrible
16 time. We have many, many seniors that were
17 shut in, that were frightened, that felt
18 alone. I know many that didn't know of any
19 kind of a program.

20 MR. HALL: What happened was,
21 from when this started, when they told us we
22 were getting the money and when we finally got
23 the money it was like late last year when they
24 finally decided what we can and can't do with
25 the funds. They basically gave us carte

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2 blanche what we wanted to use and as long as
3 it was for the COVID-19. And the majority of
4 it is going to the Meals on Wheels being
5 delivered.

6 At this point now we had about
7 three and a half million the first time around
8 and now we got this \$500,000 and there's even
9 talk of another one coming. So, we're working
10 closely with the state because as time goes on
11 the state is kind of changing what's good and
12 what's not good anymore on spending it. So
13 we're being very careful what we do so we'll
14 get reimbursed for it.

15 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Any other
16 legislators have any comments or questions?
17 Legislator DeRiggi-Whitton.

18 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON:
19 Thank you. Do you have any idea when the
20 centers will be able to cook food again?
21 Right now they can't, correct?

22 MR. HALL: This is all within the
23 last month or so that they started opening
24 again. Right now I believe they're doing a
25 box lunch or a grab and go and there's staple

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2 meals that they give like a week's worth or so
3 to them. I don't think they're cooking yet on
4 the thing. They can't.

5 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON:

6 That's what I wondering. Do you have any idea
7 of when they're going to be able to cook a hot
8 meal again?

9 MR. HALL: No. I can find out
10 for you.

11 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Yeah
12 because I've been asked a few times. Thank
13 you.

14 MR. HALL: They're taking baby
15 steps to get everything going.

16 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: What
17 Legislator Walker said is true. So many of
18 these seniors that's their only meal per day.

19 MR. HALL: That's why they're
20 kind of trying to push the openings more so
21 seniors at least will be able to go get out of
22 the house and do that. In the meanwhile
23 they're doing a lot of these Zoom calls and
24 checking on the people.

25 LEGISLATOR WALKER: I do think

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2 too it's so important. Obviously feeding them
3 is very, very important. But for many of them
4 they've been shut in and so alone for so
5 long. That's difficult for everybody. But
6 for our seniors it really takes a toll on
7 them. Emotionally, mentally, physically to be
8 isolated for so long that it will be wonderful
9 to get them back and being more involved.

10 Any other legislators? Legislator
11 Schaefer.

12 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Just a
13 couple of quick questions. You said you were
14 waiting for I guess the okay from the state
15 earlier. When did you get that? I apologize
16 if I didn't hear it.

17 MR. HALL: When did I what?

18 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Get the
19 okay from the state. You said you were
20 waiting for that.

21 MR. HALL: When we get the okay
22 from the state on the amount of money it is
23 and what we can do with it and what we can use
24 it for. But we still sent in a wish list so
25 to speak to make sure that everything on there

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2 is good. It's kind of a give and take, back
3 and forth because the state is trying to
4 figure out whether or not all these items
5 qualify or not and we don't want to use the
6 money on something that's not going to
7 qualified. We're right now in the process of
8 using up that original money with basically
9 extra contracts given the agencies more money
10 to do work with the seniors at this point.

11 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: How much
12 was that previous amount that you just
13 referred to?

14 MR. HALL: I think it's about
15 three and a half million dollars.

16 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: This
17 funding was given to be utilized between like
18 December of 2020 through September of 2022; is
19 that right?

20 MR. HALL: Yeah. It's good
21 because it's not, you know.

22 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: So, you
23 said you started with some of the meal
24 programs, grab and go. When did you start
25 that or start using some of the money for

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2 that?

3 MR. HALL: They were using --
4 some of the centers were doing that already.
5 They were having that. We had enough money
6 because in the beginning we were okay because
7 the money that would have gone to congregate
8 meals spent they just used that money instead
9 for Meals on Wheels because there was nobody
10 coming to the center. But of course we
11 started running out of money towards the end
12 of last year without having it and we've so
13 far put through a number of amendments for
14 extra money to take care of the extra Meals on
15 Wheels we didn't have.

16 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Do you have
17 any sense of how many people have participated
18 in the program so far? Like for this year.

19 MR. HALL: I'd have to get back
20 to you on that. That's the program end of
21 it. I'm not really sure. I just know that
22 that's the topic of conversation almost every
23 day when I walk in to work about making sure
24 there's enough meals out there for everybody.

25 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Do you feel

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2 that you have been able to provide enough
3 meals?

4 MR. HALL: I have been in the
5 department for 25 years and I personally think
6 they're handling it well and I think we have
7 enough money and it looks like with something
8 talking this and now they might even be
9 talking about more, we should be good for a
10 couple of years with handling this and then by
11 then hopefully everything is back to normal.
12 But that being said, they're even talking
13 about increasing our funding every year, the
14 state, with the Office of the Aging.

15 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Thank you.

16 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Any other
17 legislators? Any legislators on remote on the
18 committee? All those in favor of clerk item
19 152-21 signify by saying aye. Any opposed?
20 Then this will move on to Finance also.

21 MR. HALL: Thank you.

22 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Thank you
23 Mr. Hall.

24 The final item is clerk item 153-21
25 which is an ordinance supplemental to the

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2 annual appropriation ordinance in connection
3 with the Department of Health. A motion
4 please. Legislator Schaefer. Seconded by
5 Legislator Drucker.

6 MS. LAURAIN: Good afternoon.
7 Mary Ellen Laurain, Department of Health.
8 Item 153-21 is a supplemental appropriation.
9 It's in the amount of \$155,000. It's for our
10 standard partner services grant. This is
11 funded through New York State Department of
12 Health and its purpose is to facilitate those
13 with HIV AIDS who may not be in care.

14 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Any questions
15 from the legislators? Legislator
16 DeRiggi-Whitton.

17 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Mary
18 Ellen I just want to offer my deepest
19 condolences to the loss of your father. I had
20 to call you about something and you answered
21 the phone on the day that he passed, which
22 just goes to show how dedicated of a worker
23 you are. Again, I'm very, very sorry and
24 you're here today, it's only a couple of days
25 later, and we appreciate your incredible

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2 work. But I feel so terrible for your loss.

3 MS. LAURAIN: Thank you.

4 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Mary Ellen I
5 apologize. I did not even know that your dad
6 had passed and I'm very sorry. You know that
7 we're all here for you and we'll keep you in
8 our thoughts and prayers.

9 Anyone have any other questions for
10 Mary Ellen? None? All in favor of clerk item
11 153-21 signify by saying aye. Any opposed?
12 Then this will move on to Finance.

13 There are no other items before
14 us. May I have a motion to adjourn. By
15 Legislator Kennedy. Seconded by Legislator
16 DeRiggi-Whitton. All in favor of adjourning
17 signify by saying aye. It is adjourned and we
18 move on to Finance.

19 (Committee adjourned at 3:50 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATION

I, FRANK GRAY, a Notary
Public in and for the State of New
York, do hereby certify:

THAT the foregoing is a true and
accurate transcript of my stenographic
notes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have
hereunto set my hand this 17th day of
May, 2021.

FRANK GRAY