

NASSAU COUNTY LEGISLATURE

PETER J. SCHMITT,
PRESIDING OFFICER

GOVERNMENT SERVICES &
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

HOWARD KOPEL,
CHAIRMAN

1550 Franklin Avenue
Mineola, New York

June 4, 2012
2:47 p.m.

REGAL REPORTING SERVICES
516-747-7353

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

HOWARD KOPEL
Chair

DENISE FORD
Vice-Chair

FRANCIS BECKER

DENNIS DUNNE (Not Present)

RICHARD NICOLELLO (Sitting in for Dennis Dunne)

WAYNE WINK
Ranking

DAVID DENENBERG

ROBERT TROIANO

LIST OF SPEAKERS

DONALD ASTRAB. 5

CHAIRMAN KOPEL: I will call the roll.
I'm here.

Legislator Ford?

LEGISLATOR FORD: Here.

CHAIRMAN KOPEL: Legislator Becker?

LEGISLATOR BECKER: Present.

CHAIRMAN KOPEL: Legislator Nicoletto is
substituting for Legislator Dunne.

LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Here.

CHAIRMAN KOPEL: Legislator Wink?

LEGISLATOR WINK: Here.

CHAIRMAN KOPEL: Legislator Denenberg?

LEGISLATOR DENENBERG: Here.

CHAIRMAN KOPEL: Legislator Troiano?

LEGISLATOR TROIANO: Here.

CHAIRMAN KOPEL: We have a quorum.

We have one item here today and that is
an ordinance to adopt the Nassau County budget
for Nassau Community College for the fiscal year
commencing September 1, 2012, ending August 31,
2013, and to appropriate revenues and the total
amount of monies to be raised by taxation within
the County of Nassau for the purposes of Nassau
Community College for such fiscal year, pursuant

2 to the provisions of the Education Law, the
3 County Law, the General Municipal Law, the County
4 Government Law of Nassau County and the Nassau
5 County Administrative Code.

6 May I have a motion, please?

7 LEGISLATOR BECKER: So moved.

8 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Second.

9 CHAIRMAN KOPEL: Moved by Legislator
10 Becker, seconded by Legislator Nicoletto.

11 DR. ASTRAB: Yes. Good afternoon.

12 Donald Astrab, President, Nassau Community
13 College. I want to thank the members of the
14 Government Services Committee. Thank you for
15 providing me this opportunity to present to you
16 Nassau Community College's budget for fiscal year
17 2012-2013, and I also want to thank you for your
18 expeditious consideration.

19 The NCC budget for 2012-2013 is a no
20 tuition increase/no fee increase/no tax increase
21 budget.

22 It is my understanding that the public
23 hearing on the College's budget has been set for
24 June 18, so I will keep my remarks today on the
25 brief side. However, I do want to highlight

2 those areas that have been if focus in the past.

3 First, for the fourth year in a row, this
4 budget does not assume or ask for any increase in
5 County property taxes supporting the College. We
6 are very grateful for the level of support Nassau
7 County has given to the College in the past, and
8 that level of support has enabled the County's
9 contribution, as a percentage of the overall
10 College budget, to stay pretty close to the level
11 envisioned by state law. Although we recognize
12 that maintaining the County's commitment on
13 behalf of the College's operating budget will
14 require additional revenues at some point in the
15 future, we also recognize the reality that such
16 additional revenues would not be forthcoming this
17 year.

18 Second, this budget does not include any
19 increase in tuition or fees. Currently, students
20 are bearing more than 40 percent of the cost of
21 the College's operating budget. This already
22 high percentage would have been even higher if it
23 had not been for a significant increase in state
24 aid this year, which amounted in NCC's case to be
25 almost \$3 million. However, to put this increase

1 in context, the level of state aid to all
2 community colleges, including NCC, even with this
3 increase, is less than what was available in
4 2003. All elements of the College --
5 administration, faculty, and students -- expended
6 considerable efforts this past year in advocating
7 for an even larger increase in state aid. We are
8 grateful to our state representatives for this
9 increase, but I assure you that our efforts will
10 continue at the state level, to see that the
11 state ultimately can provide the level of aid
12 envisioned in state law. By providing for no
13 increase in tuition or fees, we have been able to
14 keep the tuition at \$3,990 annually, which is the
15 same level as Suffolk Community College charges.
16 In addition to being mindful of maintaining our
17 competitive position with respect to other
18 community colleges, the level of tuition in this
19 budget recognizes that substantial tuition
20 increases put at risk our ability to fulfill our
21 mission of offering affordable, high quality
22 higher education.

24 Third, with respect to spending in the
25 budget, spending will be increased by less than

2 one percent compared to the adopted College
3 budget for the fiscal year 2011-2012. To put
4 this in further context, the College budget for
5 2011-2012 itself called for less spending than
6 the College budget had in the adopted of 2009-
7 2010 in spite of the fact that the baseline
8 growth in the budget each year is approximately
9 \$10 million. In other words, the budget before
10 you today for you continues a pattern of the last
11 few years of significant spending restraint.

12 Finally, this budget spending will call
13 for \$1.5 million to come from fund balance.
14 Spending down fund balance is something that must
15 be done carefully and judiciously. But at a time
16 when other sources of revenue have been increased
17 to their practical limits and when spending, as I
18 indicated a moment ago, has already been
19 significantly restrained, tapping into fund
20 balance is not inappropriate. However, even with
21 this expenditure of fund balance, the level of
22 our fund balance is still within the Board of
23 Trustees' policy of what should be on hand to
24 deal with emergency spending needs.

25 With this brief description of what is

2 within the budget, I want to again thank the
3 committee for rescheduling the consideration of
4 this budget so expeditiously, and I also will be
5 available here for any questions.

6 But I want to make you aware of, on
7 Friday, the College took over operations for the
8 new life sciences building. It's now in our
9 possession. We will actually start moving this
10 week. And over the next few weeks we will be
11 extending an invitation to all the members of the
12 legislature to come tour the facility. And we
13 look forward to a grand opening early in the fall
14 when all the students are back.

15 Thank you. And if you have any
16 questions, I'm certainly here.

17 CHAIRMAN KOPEL: Any questions from the
18 legislators? Legislator Becker.

19 LEGISLATOR BECKER: Mr. Astrab, good
20 morning. What time is it? It's three o'clock.
21 Wow.

22 First of all, I have to compliment you
23 and thank you for the amazing work you're doing
24 over at the College there. You know it's one of
25 the shining stars in this County. It's one of

2 the things that, despite the difficulties we've
3 had in this County, at least since I've been on
4 this board, that we can always claim to be doing
5 very well and, as I said, a shining star.

6 To present a budget as you have and to
7 work as hard as you've done to not have any tax
8 increase or fee increase or even a tuition
9 increase is something that I can only say is
10 phenomenal. It, of course, recognizes the many
11 difficulties that the country is experiencing and
12 that we are experiencing in Nassau County.

13 But you're at the helm of the College.
14 You're doing an amazing job. I've gotten to know
15 you personally. I've seen you and met you at
16 other functions. You promote the College in a
17 fantastic way.

18 The only thing that I am amazed at, of
19 course, is did you say the tuition is 3,000 -

20 DR. ASTRAB: 990 per year.

21 LEGISLATOR BECKER: That's like a fire
22 sale. My kids went to various different schools
23 and I think that the tuition was in the 30 to
24 \$35,000 range. That's pretty amazing, that you
25 can get the quality of education that you're

2 getting, the foundation to go to a four-year
3 school and even, in some cases, begin a career,
4 because of the training you get at Nassau
5 Community College is amazing. And I have to
6 compliment you.

7 You've been at this job not too long, and
8 I of course sometimes wonder if you thought it
9 was a great idea to come from Florida to here. I
10 hope that you at least feel that it is
11 worthwhile. We certainly appreciate your
12 expertise and the amazing work you're doing. My
13 heartfelt thanks for your efforts and that of the
14 Board of Trustees. Of course, I've been a strong
15 supporter of the College all along and always
16 felt that we should keep a hands-off approach to
17 the College, even more so now when you take into
18 account the difficult finances that I know are
19 going on at the College. You continue to do an
20 amazing -- this, to me, is an amazing budget.
21 And I know you're not sacrificing the education
22 and the quality of education the students are
23 going to get there.

24 You mentioned something about the life
25 science building. That's finally being built,

2 right? When you say take over.

3 DR. ASTRAB: Yes. The construction is
4 complete. We've actually assumed the
5 responsibility for the building from the
6 contractors on Friday, June 1. Weather
7 permitting, we'll start moving the nursing
8 department over there this week. I want to thank
9 everyone, the legislature for your support. And
10 when you talk about affordable education, I've
11 been involved in higher education across the
12 country and I've never seen a county step up and
13 support its community college the way you do.
14 The tuition is at that level because of your
15 support and the work of so many. It continues to
16 be a jewel because of the faculty -- full-time,
17 part-time.

18 We have our challenges ahead, but we're
19 going to make the most of what we do have and
20 continue it to be affordable, high-quality,
21 higher education.

22 LEGISLATOR BECKER: My heartfelt thanks
23 to you as the leader of the College and the Board
24 of Trustees; I wish you would express my
25 sentiments to them, as well. Of course we've got

2 amazing teachers and amazing kids that go to the
3 school.

4 DR. ASTRAB: Yes, we do.

5 LEGISLATOR BECKER: Thank you.

6 DR. ASTRAB: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN KOPEL: Legislator Ford.

8 LEGISLATOR FORD: Thank you. Dr.
9 Astrab, also I think I have to commend you on
10 this budget. I look forward to visiting the life
11 science, the new life science building. I
12 remember taking the tour when it was under
13 construction. Just as an aside on that. Will
14 that allow you to open up the nursing program to
15 more students or would you pretty much stay
16 within the number that you have currently?

17 DR. ASTRAB: Initially we'll stay with
18 that number. The nursing program has its
19 accreditation visit this fall. I think the new
20 facility, with that visit, will lay the
21 groundwork for us being able to expand. But it
22 will all be with their blessing.

23 LEGISLATOR FORD: I'm hoping that maybe
24 you will be able to expand it so that a lot more
25 young people can become nurses in today's world.

1
2 For me -- and I know that you've done,
3 with the parking lots. I know that it always
4 seems, a lot of people would say it's just a
5 parking lot. But I have to say that all of you
6 working at the school have made it a priority,
7 because we know that our students have to travel,
8 have to park, find parking. None of them, or
9 maybe not all of them get to school early, in
10 time for classes, a lot of them are running late,
11 my son having had been one of them. Having taken
12 the tour to see what you've done so far on some
13 of the parking fields -- and I know that one of
14 the plans had also been that you were going to
15 join basically the parking fields so the students
16 wouldn't have to travel back onto Charles
17 Lindbergh Boulevard to go from one section to
18 another. Where are we with that?

19 DR. ASTRAB: The east lot, is pretty
20 much that area right now. It's about three-
21 quarters done, I would say. We've closed that
22 area for the summer so we can speed up and have
23 it done by mid-August and open for the fall. So
24 we are on target, weather permitting here, to
25 have that all complete. And I think we'd all say

2 that this fall, we feel very confident for the
3 first time that parking, you'll be able to pull
4 in and find something somewhere.

5 LEGISLATOR FORD: I have to say that I
6 know that for the parents that did call my office
7 in regards to the situation way back when, I
8 thank you very much for expanding the parking
9 lot, making it safer, and providing that lighting
10 that we so desperately need. Thank you very
11 much.

12 DR. ASTRAB: It looks very good. Thank
13 you again for the support.

14 CHAIRMAN KOPEL: Anyone else?

15 (No verbal response.)

16 Dr. Astrab, thank you.

17 DR. ASTRAB: Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN KOPEL: Any public comment?

19 (No verbal response.)

20 All those in favor please signify by
21 saying aye.

22 (Aye.)

23 Any opposed?

24 (No verbal response.)

25 The item passes unanimously.

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2 That's all we have. I'll take a motion
3 to adjourn.
4 LEGISLATOR BECKER: Motion to adjourn.
5 LEGISLATOR FORD: Second.
6 CHAIRMAN KOPEL: Motion by Legislator
7 Becker, seconded by Legislator Ford.
8 All those in favor of adjournment?
9 (Aye.)
10 Any opposed?
11 (No verbal response.)
12 We're adjourned.
13 (Whereupon, the Government Services &
14 Operations Committee adjourned at 3:00 p.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T E

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

THAT I attended at the time and place above mentioned and took stenographic record of the proceedings in the above-entitled matter;

THAT the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate transcript of the same and the whole thereof, according to the best of my ability and belief.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 25th day of June, 2010.

FRANK GRAY