

## **Long Island Regional Planning Council**

### **LIRPC Meeting – February 15, 2023 Zoom Virtual Meeting Summary Minutes**

#### **LIPRC Members Present**

John D. Cameron, Jr., Chair  
Michael White, Vice Chair  
Jeff Kraut, Treasurer  
Theresa Sanders, Secretary  
Supervisor Don Clavin  
Mayor Barbara Donno  
Nancy Engelhardt  
Jeff Guillot  
Mayor Robert Kennedy  
Supervisor Ed Wehrheim

#### **Staff and Guests Present**

Richard V. Guardino, Jr., Executive Director  
Elizabeth Cole, Deputy Executive Director  
Missy Leder, Executive Assistant  
Rachel Titus, Program Coordinator

Carter Strickland  
Alan Belniak

Kendra Armstead  
Anthony Basile  
Randy Bauer  
Tim Bolger  
Brian Cohen  
Sarah Devine  
Jodi Giglio  
Kara Hahn  
Katherine Heaviside  
Linda Henninger  
Heather Johnson  
Jonathan Keyes  
Jim McCaffrey  
James McComb  
Christine Oddo  
Daniel Segal  
Nancy Shahverdi  
Mark Smith  
Ed Smith  
Wesley Sternberg  
Mallory Wilson  
Ryan Wolf

**Meeting Commenced:**

John D. Cameron, Jr., opened the meeting at approximately 10am.

**John Cameron:**

Good morning and welcome to our initial meeting of 2023 of the Long Island Regional Planning Council. Thank you for joining. Our Executive Director, Rich Guardino, will now conduct a roll call.

**Rich Guardino:**

Welcome, everyone. Thank you all for being with us this morning.

**Roll Call**

John Cameron  
Supervisor Don Clavin  
Mayor Barbara Donno  
Nancy Engelhardt  
Jeff Guillot  
Mayor Robert Kennedy  
Jeff Kraut  
Theresa Sanders  
Supervisor Ed Wehrheim  
Michael White

Pledge of Allegiance

**Alan Belniak:**

Thank you for joining us this morning. By now this technology is likely old hat, but just to make sure we run a smooth meeting, this is how we will run today's session. After some opening remarks and some orders of business, we'll have a presentation. After that, the comment and question opportunity are given to members of the LIRPC. After the members of the LIRPC, we will turn to the public to ask questions and share comments in one of two ways. You can use the Q&A function below. If you move your mouse to the lower section of zoom, the Q&A button will pop up and you can type in your comment, and I will read it aloud. Alternatively, you can use the raise hand feature, which is also below. That sends a signal to us that you'd like to speak or comment. I'll call out your name, send a command for you to unmute your mic and you'll then have a couple of seconds to share your comment or question. Please note, this meeting is being recorded. With that, I'll turn it back over to John.

**John Cameron:**

Thank you, Alan. Rich, would you please begin the business portion of the meeting.

**Adoption of the Minutes from the September 14, 2022 Meeting and the November 16, 2022 Meeting.  
All in favor.**

**All in Favor: So moved.**

**Election of Officers for the 2023 LIRPC**

**Motion to Accept John Cameron as Chair of the Long Island Regional Planning Council: Michael White**

**Seconded: Jeff Kraut**

**John Cameron abstained**

**All in Favor: So moved.**

**Motion to Accept Michael White as Vice Chair of the Long Island Regional Planning Council: John Cameron**

**Seconded: Barbara Donno**

**Michael White abstained**

**All in Favor: So moved.**

**Motion to Accept Jeff Kraut as Treasurer of the Long Island Regional Planning Council: John Cameron**

**Seconded: Barbara Donno**

**Jeff Kraut abstained**

**All in Favor: So moved.**

**Motion to Accept Theresa Sanders as Secretary of the Long Island Regional Planning Council: John Cameron**

**Seconded: Barbara Donno**

**Theresa Sanders abstained**

**All in Favor: So moved.**

**Rich Guardino:**

Resolution 2023-101 authorizes an agreement with Anthony Basile CPA, P.C. to perform an audit of the LIRPC for the year 2022. The LIRPC issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to engage a CPA to complete an audit of the Council for 2022. The LIRPC received three proposals. A Selection Committee of John Cameron, Jeff Kraut, Rich Guardino and Liz Cole reviewed the three proposals and recommended Anthony Basile, CPA, P.C. as the best value proposal. The Executive Committee consisting of Officers of the Council agreed with the recommendation of the Selection Committee. The Resolution authorizes an agreement with the not to exceed cost of \$13,500 and an option to renew the contract at the sole discretion of the LIRPC for two additional one-year periods.

**Motion to Accept Resolution 2023-101: Jeff Kraut**

**Seconded: Michael White**

**All in Favor: So moved.**

**Rich Guardino:**

Resolution 2023-102 authorizes an accounting consulting extension agreement with Straus CPA, PLLC. Straus CPA, PLLC provided accounting services for the LIRPC in 2021 in a timely and professional manner. The Executive Committee recommends extending the contract with Straus CPA, PLLC through December 31, 2023 at \$175 per hour with the same not to exceed amount as last year at \$9,750.

**Motion to Accept Resolution 2023-102: Jeff Kraut**

**Seconded: Michael White**

**All in Favor: So moved.**

**Rich Guardino:**

Resolution 2023-103 authorizes a renewal of an agreement with Epoch 5 Marketing, Inc. for consulting services including public relations, social media, education, and marketing strategies for the LIRPC and the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan. The LIRPC entered into an agreement with Epoch 5 Marketing, Inc. a NYS Certified Woman Owned Business Enterprise on November 13, 2018. The agreement has been

renewed annually since then as all the services rendered have been performed in a professional manner. This resolution would authorize an agreement through December 31, 2023 for an annual sum of \$42,000.

**Motion to Accept Resolution 2023-103: Michael White**

**Seconded: Jeff Kraut**

**All in Favor: So moved.**

**Rich Guardino:**

Resolution 2023-104 approves the Financial Summary for 2022 and the Projected Budget for 2023. The Executive Committee and the Executive Director met and reviewed and recommend approval of the documents.

**Motion to Accept Resolution 2023-104: Michael White**

**Seconded: Jeff Kraut**

**All in Favor: So moved.**

**Rich Guardino:**

Resolution 2023-105 authorizes an agreement with PFM Group Consulting LLC to provide a tax burden analysis for Nassau and Suffolk County residents and businesses to focus on taxes and revenue contributed versus expenditures provided by the New York State and U.S. Federal governments. This balance of payments analysis was last conducted for the year 2013 by the Long Island Association Research Institute. The PFM project team would conduct two related analyses, the balance of payments for Long Island related to New York State and the same for Long Island and the federal government. The analysis will examine the balance of payments differentials that exist on both the state and federal level. The cost of the analysis is not to exceed \$150,000 with a \$3,000 cap on expenses.

**John Cameron:**

We've discussed this in the past. Long Island pays a lot more in taxes to Washington and Albany than it receives back. I think it's important for our elected officials to have that information when they're negotiating funding for Long Island for projects, services, etc. This analysis hasn't been done in 10 years when it was done by the LI EA. I think understanding this balance of payments is critical. Long Island is second to New York City in terms of funding state budgets. I think it is critical that those numbers be made public. PFM has done outstanding work for us in the past and this is a continuum of the services they provide.

**Rich Guardino:**

John, I would add, we're going into a post-COVID new budgetary baseline. We must create the new baseline from which we can advocate for ourselves. I think it's a timely and useful analysis to have to equip our elected officials.

**Motion to Accept Resolution 2023-105: Michael White**

**Seconded: Jeff Kraut**

**All in Favor: So moved.**

**Rich Guardino:**

Resolution 2023-106 renews the contracts and extends the terms of the Personnel Services contracts for Richard Guardino, Executive Director, Elizabeth Cole, Deputy Executive Director, and Missy Leder, part-

time Executive Assistant. This resolution is recommended by the Executive Committee of the Council. The Personnel Services contracts and extensions for Richard Guardino, Elizabeth Cole, and Missy Leder expired on December 31, 2022.

**Motion to Accept Resolution 2023-106: Theresa Sanders**

**Seconded: Jeff Kraut**

**All in Favor: So moved.**

**PRESENTATION**

**Rich Guardino:**

Today we are absolutely delighted to have with us, Carter Strickland. Carter has served as the New York State Director of the Trust for Public Lands since 2017. He leads a team that protects open space and builds parks and playgrounds around New York. He has worked on passing conservation funding measures on the local and state level, launched the Long Island Greenway and other greenways and protected landscapes along the Appalachian Trail, the Delaware River and Hudson Valley. He also teaches graduate courses on sustainability and infrastructure, both at NYU and Colombia. Carter, great to have you with us.

**Carter Strickland:**

Thank you very much Rich, and I want to extend my thanks to you and to the Long Island Regional Planning Council for inviting me to walk through our vision for the Long Island Greenway. It's been an absolute honor and pleasure to work on this. I've met with some of the folks here on a one-on-one basis. We hope to get people excited to bring some of that federal and state money home. I think it's really a good time for this project.

You should now all be seeing my presentation. We're talking about the Long Island Greenway. Today we are going to talk about Trust for Public Land so you can understand what we're all about and explain our track record. We will also discuss the Empire State Trail and Utility Lines line trails. We want to talk about the overall vision and some details Phase 1 (Long Island Greenway Central) and Phase 2 (Long Island Greenway East End) of the plan. This slide shows a preview of the current conditions of the trail. Great stretches of it are on the LIPA right of way and you can see it tends to be a little overgrown, but it's already used as an informal path. Part of our effort here is to formalize it.

A little bit about Trust for Public Lands. We're all about creating tangible impacts in New York. We are a national nonprofit. We do some policy work generally around environmental funding, as was mentioned in my bio, but really our bread and butter is building projects, working hand in hand with the government at all levels (federal, state, local) to build parks and trails. Our mission is to connect people with nature for the many benefits including public health, environment, water quality. We've been active in New York for 44 years. We've worked largely with the state, but sometimes the federal government to protect 124,000 acres. Hallock State Park is one of our projects for example. Across 225 projects, we work to protect community gardens and build parks. We've done a lot of park construction as you can see by the lighter green dots focused in the New York metro area. We have worked to create \$6+ billion in public funding, including the Environmental Protection Fund. I was just testifying yesterday in Albany. We are part of a broad coalition that supported the Bond Act, which was about green jobs and brought over 5 million people within a 10-minute walk of one of our parks. This is one of the metrics we use to measure success. We signed up 15 cities across the state to participate in our 10-minute walk campaign. We're all about action.

I think our launching point is the Empire State Trail. This is a trail that came about very quickly. Former Governor Cuomo announced it in his 2017 State of the State Address and by the end of the year 2020 it was built which is kind of amazing. It was built on 400 miles of existing trails, a lot of which were along the Erie Canal. You can see here that it goes from Buffalo to Albany and down to New York City. The yellow you see is on road routes (they choose low traffic areas when possible) and the green is off road, which is exciting for bikers and safer. They built 350 miles of trails within three years, which is incredible. I think they had 50 contracts at one time working on New York state parks. The vision for the Empire State Trail was to be the spine of a trail network. In fact, we are seeing that State Park grants get additional points if you're connecting to the Empire State Trail. This will be the spine of not only recreational resource, but an alternative transportation resource or as we like to say a "zero carbon transportation resource." Peeling cars off the road is critical for congestion and can get people healthy.

This is not a small industry. We've done studies at the Trust for Public Land examining the impact of the Environmental Protection Fund. This year the governor's proposal for this fund was \$400 million. That's quite a lot of money and includes a lot of different programs. The payback is seven to one. So, for every \$1 invested in that program, there is a \$7 return in benefits. One key is that the outdoor recreation industry alone in New York is a \$40 billion industry with over 300,000 jobs. This is substantial. The problem is, as you can see here circled in red, is Long Island. For our purposes this includes Brooklyn and Queens. The Empire State Trail doesn't extend here so you can't really call it a true statewide resource. We work hand in hand with the state and we said, "Look, you have 50-60 contracts to oversee over three years and that's a lot to do. We'll help you get a jump on planning the extension of the Empire State Trail across Long Island." They agreed and that's what we have been working on.

The last part of the background is that our inspiration was the great work done by Suffolk County. Suffolk used a pot of federal money to build the North Shore Rail Trail. Here's a picture of it. I was riding it before it was open and it really is beautiful. It makes use of existing developed corridors for transmission lines. There's precedent all around the country. In fact, 30 miles of the Empire State Trail between Albany and Hudson are long electric trails with lower wattage lines, so shorter towers. There are plenty of examples around the country. This is one of those things that just make sense particularly in well developed areas where this might be the only linear corridor available.

Here's the overall vision. We plotted out a trail starting in Manhattan and ending with a few different options. The whole point of what we're doing over next few years is nailing down the route. Plotting it out, we can get from Manhattan to Montauk which is approximately 175 miles in a mostly off-road area. We use the same color scheme here, green is off-road, yellow is on-road. We started off with a somewhat tentative route although we wanted to build on some great work that had been done largely at the county level already. Nassau County had something called the Long Island Motor Parkway trail, sometimes called the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway, which has a whole storied history. We're building off that. In 2020, Suffolk wrapped up a hike-bike Master Plan. It took a lot of public meetings to figure out what could be done to build up a transportation network that would be a safe place to bike and walk. These are called multipurpose trails. Generally, what we find is that even though they look and feel like bike paths, they are pretty universal. About two thirds of the users are pedestrians. This whole trail links to at least 26 parks, 46 train stations, 60 bus routes, and will serve as the spine of a whole network. This will intersect a lot of north/south trails that already exist in the Counties.

Here are some of the drivers. Long Island, unfortunately, leads the state in terms of pedestrians killed or injured, as well as bicyclists killed and injured. It's a public health crisis and we have to address it. The

state has something called the Prevention Agenda. It's a New York State health agenda. They're very much focused on physical activities. We know that obesity and chronic diseases are problematic. One of the best ways to prevent failing health is to create recreational infrastructure and increase walking or biking physical activities. If we weave it into our lives, we become healthier. Overall, it also reduces healthcare costs. We've done studies in many cities and across the state and that that can be a big driver. There are many benefits here.

What we like about this route is that it intersects and enhances several of the redevelopment areas. It travels right through the Nassau Hub. It also intersects with several the downtown revitalization areas. Hauppauge Innovation Park is an example as they need to get employees in and out every day. Transit connectivity is a priority. The trail is within striking distance of many stations. We are very interested in possible connections to the Brentwood Long Island Railroad Station. The first and last mile can be via biking or walking which would save a lot of traffic jams. There are corporate headquarters that are along the spine, which is roughly parallel to Long Island Railroad and the Long Island Expressway. Another evolution is that of electronic bikes. While some safety and other issues need to be ironed out, they really do make cycling accessible to a lot more people. If you're wearing a suit on a hot day, a three-mile ride might be unappealing or just unworkable, but that changes with an electric bike.

There are a lot of businesses and universities in the area. Students are an easy user base for this.

This is truly a once in a generation opportunity to tap into federal and state funding. We have the Infrastructure Investment JOBS Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the State Bond Act. We must be ready now to receive the funding. I think we benefited from having the outlines of a plan, at least in place, when this funding started to come online. We've been able to tap into it well.

I've mentioned connectivity already. Creating sensible, equitable communities is a priority throughout the whole island. We need to be creating live, work, and play communities. It's an opportunity as we start to grapple with what hybrid work might mean. If it's a long-term trend i creating more recreational amenities as part of a live, work, play, sense of place is critical. The Long Island Greenway can help.

I mentioned public health and safety as important considerations. Here's just a screenshot of the hike/bike Master Plan. It gives you a sense of the space and the potential for trails.

We have received a lot of government support. I must credit our senators and I'll explain why in a minute. We have made the rounds with the Assembly, Senate and the State Parks Department. We have met with county executives and folks from the civic community sector and, of course, hope to receive support from the Long Island Regional Planning Council. There is a lot of public support and enthusiasm.

Here's what we've been up to. We started some of our planning work in 2018 without a lot of money. We started small and it's been snowballing. Our estimate for the whole 175 miles at that time was a little bit north of \$100 million. This compares to the \$200 million commitment that the state put out to support building the 350 miles of the Empire State Trail in 2017. So, in a more crowded area, 175 Miles for \$100 million plus feels about right.

As you get to the design phase, the numbers become more precise. On our website, the Long Island Greenway feasibility study is published, and it estimates that phase one would cost about \$17 million. We used that work to apply for a matching state grant through the REDC process and we got \$600,000 for 30% design. We went to the market, published a competitive RFP and hired a firm to design and

oversee the construction of the Northshore Rail Trail. The next year, we were underway with that design. We went ahead and applied for state grant for 100% design. We received that and then we went to our senators for the match. So, the timing didn't exactly line up, but we were busy. We received a \$2.5 million-dollar federal match from the senators. We just got notice that our grant has been accepted. So, it took them a while to work through it.

This year, we're hoping to complete our conceptual design. - We're going to apply in two weeks for a Federal RAISE grant to do Phase two design, which is towards the East End. We're also applying for some state money. We're hoping to wrap up the final design in 2024, and be construction ready in 2025. That's when we'll have to seek some construction funding.

Just give you a sense of what's out there now and what could be built. These are some of the existing conditions. You can see the informal pathways that are well used by residents along the LIPA right of way. It's pretty flat between Eisenhower County Park and Bethpage. That image shows what was a railroad long ago but is no longer used by the Long Island Rail Road. It's now LIPA power lines. As a sidenote, this is all going to be very critical for offshore wind development in the future which is important to keep in the back of our minds. On the right, is an actual picture of the North Shore Rail Trail and you can see it's well used.

Road crossings are always a concern. Flashing lights are used where roads are not super busy and traffic lights are installed when appropriate on a very busy road. Information kiosks are also installed at some intersections which also act as a car block. This can be a major cost driver, but these additions keep cars off the paths and keep people safe. They also look nice and it's a nice community amenity.

This shows the area where we are furthest along. You can see that we start off on the west side of Eisenhower County Park. This ten mile stretch is beautiful and connects to Bethpage. In 2025 the Ryder Cup is coming to Bethpage Black and we are hoping to complete more of this project before that, but it might be pushing it. When the Ryder Cup packs up, we'll be ready to build this area and then continue it off road through some beautiful parks. Some of these parks have mountain bike trails already. We would end in Brentwood State Park. The benefits of beginning and ending at a nice existing park is that they have bathrooms and parking areas we can minimize that need to build anything new. We continue to try to make the most of our existing assets. That's the whole vision.

Here you see what the 30% design phase looks like. You can see some of the road crossings. Red being bigger roads, like Route 135. We are working with the towns and counties. There are so many benefits. The trail is within a mile of 130,000 residents. We cross 13 parks, and 36 schools and universities are within a mile. This is going to bring the benefits of a park to a lot of people.

We're now laying out a very high-level conceptual route on the east end and we're calling this Phase 2. Nothing's set in stone by any means. It would be 50 miles from Riverhead to Montauk point. There are many details to work out through the design process, but the idea is that the trail would hit a lot of the busy areas where traffic is a concern. This would be traffic mitigation for local residents and prove to be a nice amenity. We're trying to get money for design from the federal government. As an example, one option is that it could go right through the Village of Southampton. It could also provide some connections with parks and communities and some of the downtown areas or Long Island Rail Road stops.

Our next steps for Phase 2 involve working with the County to be an applicant for a USDOT grant. We're looking at matching items in the state budget, which of course must be adopted by April 1st. We are going to hear back on our RAISE grant applications at the end of June. We are hoping for good news. This will be competitive though, so if we do not receive that federal grant in this round, we certainly are going to apply for a State REDC grant which we should learn about by the end of July.

Just to bring us back to the all-important funding. These things snowball. We started in the planning stage with some private money that Trusts for Public Land raised, and we had some Conservation Partnership Programs, which is state money through the Land Trust Alliance. We leveraged that to get some state funding and big federal funding. That's in the design phase. We are teeing ourselves up for the construction phase, which requires more money than the design phase, and will be the next push. There are many different sources including the State Environmental Protection Fund, which can be either direct money to state agencies or to the state and municipal grant program, the State Bond Act, and the American Recovery Plan. Some of these programs have unspent money and it certainly behooves local governments to spend it rather than get it clawed back. Sometimes we are able to tap into transportation money and federal infrastructure money. We've also been very successful in getting funds from USDOT, HUD, NEA, National Park Service as well as Legislative allocations. So, there are lots of different pots out there and fortune favors the prepared. That's what we're hoping to do is be prepared.

I'll leave you with this picture of the North Shore Rail Trail. This is 10 miles of beautiful trail. It's an incredible amenity for the residents who live around it as well as for folks who want to visit and get to know Long Island.

**John Camerson:**

Thank you, Carter. We have questions from the Council.

**Michael White:**

I think this is a terrific program and certainly worthwhile supporting. My questions regard safety. My first concern is the safety of the people who are looking to take the trail, much of which goes over roadways as I don't know of one safe roadway on Long Island for a bicyclist or a walker. I am also concerned about the walkers on the trails which might also have enclosed vehicles like bicycles, scooters, or unicycles. Are there rules? How do you provide those protections?

**Carter Strickland:**

I understand your concern and will happily address them. The short answer is that the design standards are focused very much on safety. There's a whole design manual including all sorts of rules including many things like signage, roadway width, and construction type. These trails need to be accessible and low maintenance. On the roadways, the lowest intervention is a shared road with striping, but we are aiming to have them separated by jersey barriers or create an expanded sidewalk. It's not quite as scenic, but it achieves the safety elements. One of the terms used in our trade is "user conflict". In some cases you may have a horse, bike, and a pedestrian. We have to figure that out and then post rules of the road. From a design point of view, we try to deal with it by just having a wide road or path, so that there's an ability to pass around people who might be slower. I encourage everyone to visit the North Shore Rail Trail which has managed so many uses in a safe way. There are also design standards that may not be obvious to users. There are "safeties" like when you're approaching a road, we design little bends in the trails to make sure that people slow down. There are also different signages to make sure that cars and bikes know to yield or stop.

**Michael White:**

Is there a speed limit on a bike on the trail?

**Carter Strickland:**

That is an interesting topic, especially in light of the electronic bikes that I mentioned. I'm not aware of speed limits. Speed limits could be posted but enforcement is the critical thing. We always get a lot of questions about usage. In our experience the more positive uses tend to displace the negative uses. One issue, for instance, is ATV usage on trails and in parks. Informal trails are created. Interestingly, the best answer for cutting down ATV use is to increase the number of pedestrians and cyclists using an area. There are certain safety standards on most of the trails we build. In addition to our engineers working out details, we hold public hearings and receive good feedback which can also be folded into our design plan.

**Michael White:**

Just one more specific question. On the Upstate trails, are people permitted to use snowmobiles and ATVs?

**Carter Strickland:**

I don't have a definitive answer. I know there is a separate snowmobile trail system and I know they keep it separate from cross country ski trails. That's very seasonal and I think they have experience managing those user conflicts. I haven't heard of it being an issue.

**John Cameron:**

Is there signage on the trails prohibiting any motorized vehicles including motorized bikes?

**Carter Strickland:**

Yes, there is signage and typically only authorized vehicles access the trails. Some of the trails do double duty also. For example, some are designed so LIPA can get in there and maintain the poles. The signage is pretty standard and part of the design manual.

**John Cameron:**

Michael brought up speed limits. On the Long Beach Boardwalk, there are areas where bikes travel down the center lane and pedestrians are off to the side which is important because walking you may not hear a bicycle coming up on you. Call boxes have become more prevalent on university and college campuses. Safety wise, I think people would want to see them on trails also. I'm sure that it is part of the design process.

Anything else from the Council?

One of the principal attributes we always pride ourselves on here is our environment. We have the best beaches in the world and we are working on this park system. Our trails, woodlands and wetlands are beautiful, but they may be underappreciated. I think connecting our natural assets is a tremendous incentive and opportunity and an attribute for Long Island. As you mentioned earlier, the Empire State Trail doesn't branch onto Long Island. We like to say that Long Island is the best kept secret. It makes sense to connect to the state system. If there's something we can do to support that, I think the Council would be very interested.

**Carter Strickland:**

Thank you, John. I think there's an immediate grant opportunity. I'll talk to the key person for Suffolk County, Jonathan Keyes, because the East End Section is all only in Suffolk County. We may request a letter of support for that grant. When we go for state monies, support is important.

**John Cameron:**

I think the Council will be supportive of that. I would like to get a sense of the Council's thoughts.

**Nancy Englehardt:**

I'm very, very interested in this Empire State Trail and the connectivity. As a part of a family who has hiked and biked from Nassau County out East, my concern is always safety. You already addressed many of the safety issues and I appreciate that. I'm sure there will be more vetting as we continue with this process. I, as a Council member, will do anything to support this project. I think it's really exciting, leveraging our natural beauty and making it more accessible. I think this is wonderful. Thank you.

**Carter Strickland:**

Great. Thank you.

**Supervisor Wehrheim:**

I think it's very interesting as well. We've had a large initiative here in Smithtown because we are on the North Shore, bordering Long Island Sound. We have overlay zones that we have put in place for live, work and play. This is a big part of our initiative with Hauppauge Industrial Agency to come in with some type of trails so people could actually rent these apartments and then bike or walk to some of these high-tech businesses. I think it's a great initiative to keep our eye on as we move forward.

**Michael White:**

I think it is a great initiative and even with the questions I posed, I would trust those involved "get" safety. I think this will be done the right way.

**John Cameron:**

If there is an opportunity to support an application for funding for the Empire State Trail extension, can I have a motion that gives us a sense of the Council's support?

Motion: Jeff Guillot

Second: Nancy Engelhardt

Discussion?

All in favor.

So moved.

Carter, you have our support.

**Carter Strickland:**

Thank you very much. We will be following up today with a request to Rich for a letter. Appreciate it. Thanks for the invite.

**Rich Guardino:**

Alan, please see if there are any other questions from the general audience.

**Alan Belniak:**

Just in case anyone joined us late on there's two ways to share a comment or ask a question, you can use the raise hand button down below inside of zoom, or you can use the Q&A button. We don't have anyone at the moment dialing in by telephone, but that would be star nine. So, just an open call for anyone with a question, please let us know now. We'll give that a second or so. I don't see any hands raised or questions in our queue at the moment. I still don't see any questions so with that, I think we can probably continue. Just as I said that a question came into the Q&A queue. It's from Kara Hunt. Kara asks, "Can we better prioritize a connection to SBU?"

**Carter Strickland:**

First of all, I want to thank Legislator Hunt for being one of the key champions for North Shore Rail Trail. I think connections to the universities are going to be great. We tried to maximize the connections to this trail. We do go right through SUNY Farmingdale, and we go right through both Nassau and Suffolk Community Colleges. Stony Brook is a little off the North Shore Rail Trail but there should be local connections. What I would like to say is just like the Empire State Trails which is sort of this statewide system which we are now going to build out to Long Island, the North Shore Trail will eventually have other connections. The level of detail on the Suffolk County hike/bike master plan is extensive but for now, we're going to build out only a portion of it. The priority right now are these major spines, but there are going to be future trails. I do think that the connectivity to universities is a huge opportunity.

I heard in your follow up that Stony Brook is the largest single site employer in Suffolk. The Hauppauge Industrial Park is also a huge employer. Connections to these kinds of locations will be very important. We are at the beginning of what will be a huge project and, to be honest, we are working on many details with the help of the towns for future elements. We're going to have public meetings and collect input that would affect the trail route. We hope to take lots of different information and many ideas into account.

**Jeff Kraut:**

I had to step away so forgive me if this was asked. First, I use the trail the Greenbelt Trail in Plainview and love it. Upstate, I use trails almost every weekend. What I noticed was that there are some corporate sponsorships on portions of the trails? I would wonder if that is something that's attractive? I have to believe the businesses, the universities, the underlying economy here would have pretty active and vibrant support for sponsorship. We see it on the highways, why not the trails?

**Carter Strickland:**

Adopt-a-Trail is a good program and we do see it around the country. I think it's a good idea. Cycling groups in particular (and I mentioned that cyclists are not the dominant users) are very committed. So much so that if you look at the advocacy group called CLIMB, they have built out and maintain something like 20 miles of trails. There is a lot of volunteer willingness.

**Jeff Kraut:**

I can say that I believe for those of us that are that are in the health and wellness business, even the sickness business, this would be very much on brand, because of the State Prevention Agenda that you referenced earlier in your presentation. So that was the only observation.

**John Cameron:**

Thank you, Jeff. Alan, any other comments out there?

**Alan Belniak:**

I don't see any other hands raised or questions into our Q&A. I think we are probably okay to proceed to the next portion of the agenda.

**Michael White:**

Okay. Perhaps Carter could share the presentation for our website and for the Council members?

**Carter Strickland:**

Sure, I'd be happy to do that. Alan has a copy, but I did notice one typo so Alan, I'll send you an email. I'll fix it and shoot it to you right now.

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

**John Cameron:**

As we all know, 2023 certainly started off with a lot of action on the national and state levels. The economy seems to be tempering its level of inflation. However, increased costs of essential goods and services have impacted all Long Islanders. Major infrastructure funding in Washington and Albany not only has the potential to upgrade our antiquated roads, bridges, and water infrastructure, but hopefully, also provide the public catalysts necessary to stimulate private investment resulting in major economic development and a growth of our commercial tax base. Global issues involving the Ukraine and China seem to dominate the news, even if it only involves some unidentified balloons or other flying objects. In New York State, Governor Hochul has proposed several somewhat controversial initiatives that have much of Long Island up in arms and very concerned. The most controversial proposal is her proposal for increased housing density around transit hubs. The recommended and potentially mandated densities are greatest in areas proximate to the city which means Nassau County, with reductions in density as you move further east. Long Islanders, as we know, historically have reacted negatively to the stick provision, but rather, I think, reacts more favorably to the carrot. We're hoping that cool heads prevail and there will be thorough and constructive dialogue on these issues. We know the state legislation needs to pass these proposed measures for them to become law. We're also waiting to see how the state's funding plays out. As alluded to earlier, there is a \$4.2 billion Environmental Bond Act which will be allocated, and we hope Long Island accesses some of these funds.

Here on Long Island, we're also dealing with trends that plague the rest of the country including escalated costs on goods and services, insufficient applicants for open job positions, and an out migration of high wage earners to lower cost areas. New Yorkers are moving to places like the Carolinas, Tennessee, and Florida. Locally, in our post-COVID environment, we've seen increased road traffic due to reduced Long Island Rail Road usage and the hybrid work schedule, which appears to be the new normal for most companies, in addition to the return to public venues for sports and entertainment events and restaurants.

As the nation's first and oldest suburb, our infrastructure is in serious need of repair. Our roads are in bad shape. I think, to the extent that we can get some renovation work incentivized, I think that would be well worth it. As also mentioned, Long Island has a history of negative cash flow of our tax dollars to both Washington and Albany. Today, the Council took some action in hiring PFM to identify the amounts of those flows. I think that information will be critical for our elected officials as they attempt to negotiate our fair share from Buffalo, Albany, and Washington.

During 2023, the Council will be focused on identifying our challenges, as well as attempting to identify potential solutions. We look forward to an exciting year.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

### **Rich Guardino:**

Thank you, John. Let me just give you a brief update on some of the programs and studies that we have going on right now.

On the Long Island Waterfront Uses and Zoning Study, 85% of the Long Island municipalities have had their waterfront zoning and land use data added to the GIS database. The individual zoning codes have also been added to the database. Once the data is compiled, a final list will be available to be overlaid with the land use. More analysis will help determine areas of opportunity for waterfront uses.

We are now in our 4<sup>th</sup> year of the Long Island Water Quality STEM Challenge which we developed to get middle school and high school students involved in helping find solutions to decrease nitrogen here at home on Long Island. The STEM Challenge connects students, teachers and their communities with issues addressed by the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan. The challenge invites teams of students to develop and design projects for their school grounds which either reduce the use of fertilizer, pesticides, and/or water consumption or devise methods to collect and treat stormwater runoff from the school property. In December, we had an award ceremony at Half Hollow Hills High School, one of last year's top winners. The ceremony was well attended. New York State Regents Board Member, Roger Tillis, was there to assist us in honoring the students and present the grant awards. The 2023 STEM challenge is underway. We have 14 proposals in total, 10 from high schools and 4 middle schools. We'll be announcing the winners in March.

The expanded Homeowners' Rewards Program enables homeowners to be reimbursed for taking small scale water improvement projects on their properties. The program is currently utilized by the Peconic Estuary Partnership. The Council is working with the New England Interstate Water Control Commission to expand the program throughout the entire island. The staff is working with the Commission to set up program documents including the website, application, and eligibility requirements. We expect to launch the program later this year.

Finally, I'd like to give you an update on Nitrogen Smart Communities. The Council and DEC are in the process of developing the Nitrogen Smart Communities Program which is part of the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan initiative. The Nitrogen Smart Communities Program encourages municipalities and Nassau and Suffolk counties to take meaningful and effective actions to reduce, prevent or eliminate nitrogen pollution in our waters through community specific plans of action. The program will involve understanding and analyzing each community's specific sources of nitrogen, and then planning strategic projects that will reduce nitrogen on a local level. We will be approaching two municipalities, one in Nassau and one in Suffolk, to participate in a pilot program. The program has the capability to reduce nitrogen in water bodies and protect areas before impairment occurs.

John, that concludes my report.

### **John Cameron:**

Thank you, Rich.

**John Cameron:**

Do we have any other new business from the Council? Are there any questions or comments from the audience? With that, we will close the meeting for today. Thank you everyone.

Motion to adjourn. So moved. All in favor.