

Minutes of a Public Hearing held by the Town Board of the Town of Riverhead at the Town Hall, Riverhead, New York, on Monday, August 26, 1996, at 2:00 p.m.

Present:

James R. Stark,	Supervisor
Victor Prusinowski,	Councilman
Mark A. Kwasna,	Councilman
James B. Lull,	Councilman
Otto Wittmeier,	Councilman

Also Present:

Barbara Grattan,	Town Clerk
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Absent:

Robert Kozakiewicz,	Town Attorney
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Supervisor Stark called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Supervisor Stark: "Thank you. Let the record show that the time of 2:05 has arrived. Would the Clerk please read the notice of Public Hearing."

Public Hearing opened: 2:05 p.m.

Barbara Grattan: "I have affidavits of publishing and posting of a Public Hearing to be held at Riverhead Town Hall, Riverhead, New York, at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, August 26, 1996, to hear all interested persons who wish to be heard regarding the consideration of a proposed local law entitled A Local Law Requesting the New York State Legislature to Approve Legislation Permitting a Binding Referendum on the Creation of Peconic County in the Towns of East Hampton, Riverhead, Shelter Island, Southampton, and Southold and requiring a four-fifths vote of the Town Board of the Town of Riverhead."

Supervisor Stark: "I would request anybody who would like to speak at today's Public Hearing, please to register outside and I will start to call up the speakers who have already registered so

that we have your name and address. Without objection of the Board, Dr. Grantham, you're the first one on the list."

Dr. Caryl Grantham: "I'm Dr. Caryl Grantham and I live at 4146 Sound Avenue, Riverhead. I know in this day of growing complexity and the vast duties imposed as times change our whole area of government, I welcome any review and hopefully reform of the structures of government we face. I would submit, however, that we have looked at this whole question of county-- efficient county government. I was involved when this effort was made back in the late fifties and sixties. We had just come back from California, my husband and I, and we were in New York but we had already built a weekend home here and first thing I knew, I was involved in the question of the revision or updating of so called county government.

At that day, comprised of a Board of Supervisors and a Secretary or whatever his title is, I don't remember because I don't-- at this point I don't have it. But, anyway, this was the (inaudible) among other things, very helpful. I was involved with this, I did not serve on the charter commission which was appointed and had a cross section of many interests and many organizations. It was also a major decision time for me because I had reached a point of selecting a title for my doctorate in history, local history, and political science and at that point there had been nine efforts and four years spent in trying to come to some solution of the problem of what to do about Suffolk County. And in, normally I don't like to read a speech but I would like to read you just the beginning of this study because it says it in very succinct language what was the conditions of the day.

Suffolk County voters adopted a new form of government for their county of November 4, 1958. The need for change had been widely discussed for four years. After World War II a great wave of new population (inaudible) which soon became the fastest growing county in the State of New York. The US census listed 197,355 inhabitants in 1940. Lilco's estimate for January 1, 1960 was 635,217.

Guiding this enormous growth created serious problems for county government. Not only did it have to serve more people, but the state and federal governments required the county to perform many new functions in such fields as health, welfare, public works, transportation, county planning. Suffolk's antiquated administered

setup was simply not equal to the task. They had no (inaudible) leadership and responsibility for the entire county to focus. It was governed by a Board of Supervisors, with one Supervisor elected from each of the 10 towns. They were responsible for administering the county affairs but they also had to run their own governments at the same time.

All counties were originally created by the legislature as (inaudible) subdivisions of the state and the approval of the legislature was required for any change in the form of government in the county within its jurisdiction.

In 1954, the Board of Supervisors appointed a committee to study alternative forms of government available to the charter-- to this county under existing law. None of these appeared to be entirely satisfactory and in the following year efforts were made to write a charter, i.e., a state law setting forth in broad outline a new form of county government, especially for this county, Suffolk. In all, nine different versions of the proposed new charter were prepared in 1956 and 1957 and all failed for one reason or another.

Convinced that these failures were due primarily to a lack of public interest and participation, a group of public spirited citizens got together in the summer of 1957 and formed the Suffolk County Citizens Charter Committee. With expert assistance and the full cooperation of the press and a large number of citizens organizations they drafted a charter which with some modifications, among them being an elected executive head, received the approval of the Board of Supervisors, the legislature, the governor, and, most of all, the majority of the voters in Suffolk County.

I, then, also chose as my topic-- a history, a political history of Suffolk County and it was 1683 to 1958, and the reason for doing that was that you have to in selecting the kind of (inaudible) you have to make a contribution-- an original contribution, to the body (inaudible). It may be a pinhead, as some people say, but I felt very strongly that perhaps here was an opening to (inaudible) this new (inaudible) of better government for Suffolk was not answered after nine tries, and it did not pass that final 1959 election that we could redraft this thesis perhaps for a public educational program and so it was done.

I, through the years, have had no reason-- facing most of the problems we face-- to think we did not do a good job. I want to point out to you some of the major issues that I have been involved with, most of all the nuclear issue. For 10 years of my life, I was the only citizen in this town that sat on that administrative board, the State board. If it hadn't been for the resources of Suffolk County-- if it hadn't been for them, with all the intimidation that we face and all the power that we faced and all the money that was involved, I doubt if we could have won it.

I only submit to you today, one of the facts that we made evident at that time when there were four nuclear plants in Connecticut, all of which this very day are off line, that were also within the 20 mile range for us and it posed a very vital question for the residents of Suffolk County and certainly the east end. I would like to hope that whatever changes come, we still have a short -- we still have access to such (inaudible). I gave you another incident where eastern Suffolk was brought in screaming and yelling about the community college. One of your esteemed Supervisors, I can't name him but he was on the east end, said at one of the hearings I attended, by the way my husband and I are very active in that effort, said look, if you build a foundation, you sooner or later have to put a structure on it. He is now gone, there are all kinds of accolades to him but the Suffolk County Community College has become one of the great jewels of the Suffolk County government.

I also bring to you another issue, the need for fresh water, the need for better planning. If it hadn't been for the resources of the county when we needed it, I very fairly think that we could not have done the things that we try to do in the public interest. Right now I sounded a number of people in important places and I think Mr. Stark will confirm this. We need some long range planning on traffic. In this complex society where narrow boundaries and small jurisdictions are not enough, I hope this proposal-- I know we're facing (inaudible) but they say in this rather (inaudible) little piece that-- all right-- the Peconic County means a smaller more efficient government. East enders are presently supporting-- thank you so much-- are presently supporting a county of 10,000 employees. Peconic County will be much smaller, 840-- require less services. Deliver the services as it needs more efficiently and so forth and so on.

Well, I pay as much taxes as anyone. I'm not convinced to go back to a board appointed by this-- Board of Supervisors with their own-- whatever your title wants to be-- is necessarily the answer. I'm very leery of a referendum where there is so little information now available outside of a few selective services. At this point I would not be prepared to vote for it. I to hope that such a profound decision which this is and I again tell you that if we don't face an answer, an overall answer, an area wide answer to transportation-- there's only one example, we're in for big trouble.

Thank you very much."

Supervisor Stark: "Thank you, Caryl. Bobby? Former Councilman of the Town of Riverhead, Robert Pike." Author and many other things."

Robert Pike: "Members of the Board, members of the public. My name is Robert Pike, and I live at 138 Ostrander Avenue, Riverhead. But most of you who know me, know I really live on the bay known as Peconic. And the question that arises today is about the lands and governments that surround that body of water that I love so much.

And so in recent weeks when this question came to a head and the debate began, I took it upon myself to read the entire financial study that I just put into the record with Barbara and I did that for a couple of reasons. I agree with Dr. Grantham that something as huge and momentous and as important as this is the sort of thing that ought to be done with very, very deep analysis with time to think it through and with the availability of something as sophisticated as that analysis.

Now in my current-- one of my current jobs, I get to look at proposals and business plans all the time and this is basically a fairly sophisticated look at it. And anytime you go into a new enterprise or look at something on a business basis, you basically are not only looking at the end result, the numbers, and the numbers here are quite impressive, they are quite important. But you will always have to look at and challenge the assumptions on which they are based, because when you are speculating about the future, you necessarily make a series of very important and very profound assumptions. And I have tried-- I'm a fairly skeptical person, I have tried very hard to say, to challenge what is in that financial feasibility study and find one thing that I think is absolutely

profoundly wrong, and I don't. And I would like to encourage everybody who wants to talk about this, who wants to debate this, to take this not as the bible, but as the beginning. Not as the way it will be but one way of looking at it. And the most important thing that comes out of that is that that's not the result. But it does indicate that it is definitely possible to structure a new county, Peconic County, at a substantial savings with enough headroom in the finances to structure it exactly the way we would like to have it structured with the particular things that you want to see in it and still save money.

For me personally, even if it costs the same amount, the result you come out with is instead of having 12% of the (inaudible) of county affairs, the people of the county of Peconic would have 100% of the voice of county affairs. And if you can do that at the same cost, that's a bargain to me. If you can do it for less, it's a substantial win-win situation that deserves serious analysis.

I would encourage everybody who is interested about (inaudible) this thing, to read it and to lend their own ideas and their own challenges to the analysis-- to the premise it's based on.

Today we are faced with a relatively simple question, which is whether that debate should continue with a deadline, with a focus, with the ability to have everybody who has an opinion about this, bring it (inaudible) a day in which the people speak in a way that everybody understands in a democracy, probably the most important way the people of a democracy understand that is at the ballot box.

In a final analysis, the question is simple. Does the County of Suffolk have the absolute essential requirement for government here? The consent of the governed. Does it? It's a very simple question. And if not, how then will we break today from the political bonds that have attached us to this government in the past?

I, therefore, think it's a worthy question. I think it is the essential question in a democracy and I would ask the Town Board to today support this with your positive vote today that when you pull this to a head, you do what a much derided King of England had neither the guts nor the wisdom nor the foresight to do, to simply ask the question, do I have the consent of the governed? And I hope you will ask the question and you will get an answer."

Supervisor Stark: "Ladies and gentlemen, I would ask you to refrain from applause. We are here for a specific reason. The next speaker will be Bill Roberts. Bill, I thought I saw you out there."

Bill Roberts: "My name is Bill Roberts, Cliff Way, Baiting Hollow. Suffolk County is too big. It does not serve the needs of all of its residents. The western portion is devoted to industry and being a bedroom community for the city of New York. The eastern portion which prides itself on independence, is leaning more towards tourism, fishing, agriculture. Suffolk County saw fit not to place the county government in Riverhead, which was the seat of Suffolk County. Instead they have made it Hauppauge, the seat of western Suffolk County."

They do not serve us. We pay taxes but we are not represented by them. Another thing I would like to point out, too, that if we were separated from Suffolk County, we would not have methadone clinics being dumped in our midst, we would not have homeless people, we would not have people being put into single occupancy quarters (inaudible) Suffolk County might want to put these facilities into Eaton's Neck, Brightwaters, Blue Point or Old Field. They will not be able to do it in Riverhead or anyplace else of the four towns comprising Peconic County."

Supervisor Stark: "Thank you, Bill. Sherry?"

Sherry Patterson: "Good afternoon. Sherry Patterson, 3 Water-view Court, Riverhead, New York."

Supervisor Stark: "If you just pay attention to that one on the left, that's the one that everybody can hear you."

Sherry Patterson: "This one here? Okay. Thank you. The question here is not whether or not you agree with the concept of Peconic County. I'm hard pressed to find why anyone would be opposed to it. Riverhead is supposed to be the county seat of Suffolk and what does our beloved county give us? We have jails, criminal courts, methadone clinics, social service and sewage. In other words, we get despair and human waste."

When you gentlemen were elected, you were elected by the people of Riverhead. You work for us. Not the county officials,

not the state and its representatives. And as our elected officials, the people the right to chose their destiny, whatever it may be.

I think the people of Riverhead are intelligent enough to chose their future, and I hope you do, too. Thank you."

Supervisor Stark: "Thank you. This is part of that process, Cherry. You have to go to a Public Hearing first. Bob DeLuca."

Bob DeLuca: "Good afternoon, Supervisor Stark?"

Supervisor Stark: "Did I pronounce that correctly?"

Bob DeLuca: "Yes, you did."

Supervisor Stark: "Okay."

Bob DeLuca: "My name is Bob DeLuca and I live out on Philips Lane in Aquebogue. I've been in Riverhead town about 10 years. I've owned a home about eight years. And I had the opportunity to serve on one of the citizen advisory committees and so my comments really inasmuch as I personally support the concept of Peconic County, I think what I'm here to do today is to really ask you to simply go forward with the idea of letting more folks than a few of us who worked on this committee decide. And I think that the prior speaker mentioned that also.

When I got involved in this, I was very interested in the issues of (inaudible) and cultural affairs and I've worked on a number of committees and I have to say that if I could speak for that entire group, it is one of the most productive committees that I have worked on. When I got involved in this whole issue-- I got involved in it because I was very concerned about the limited representation the people of Riverhead and the east end really have with respect to Suffolk County government regarding the legislature and as you know we only get two votes out of the 18 that are cast in the legislature and that can made a very difficult decision making in terms of representing the east end.

So when I got involved in this, there were a couple of things that I was looking for and I guess I'm here to tell you that the things that I was looking for anyway really came through in this

study. And one of them was that in order to put together this document that we all sort of waived around and asked people to read, which I hope folks will get to it, there needed to be competent outside fiscal consulting and fiscal management. You know, it wasn't enough for those of us who thought it was a good idea to sit down and come up with a bunch of numbers and ask everybody to go along with that. And the folks who were involved in this committee did a good job of actually getting competent outside fiscal consultants who would be able to provide us with detailed analysis that the public now has access to and I think that was goal number one.

The second goal that I was really interested in was the level to which those folks who were interested in this idea would actually come to participate in the process. In other words, how much activity would the citizens have in putting together this document and I can speak as living proof of somebody who was given pretty much the amount of energy and the influence into the process that I wanted. I ended up co-chairing the committee. The folks on my committee had a lot of input with the financial consultants. There were nine citizens advisory committees, with 100 participants. There was a technical advisory committee and there was a steering committee which contained elected representatives as well as people from industry, vineyards, farmers, and so forth.

And so the issue of public participation was really brought forward in this process. We had outside consultants, we had citizen participation. And the next thing that I think everybody should be looking for is if a wider circle of folks could get a look at this document and sort of weight in on what their point of view is. And that's really what folks are asking for who are asking you to support this referendum is when all else fails, give democracy a shot and let people just go into that and have the opportunity to go. I very much support that.

And just briefly in closing, a couple of things. One of them came about seven years ago when we were working on an issue trying to preserve Robbins Island, which isn't in the Town of Riverhead but certainly is an eastern Long Island concern. And I was involved in a discussion with a Suffolk County legislator and during this discussion on a local cable program, a legislator said to me, listen, there are plenty of islands out there. Why don't you just go buy one of the other ones? And I realized at that moment that it was

about time to start thinking about how much the west end really knows about who we are out here and if the vote count is 16 to 2, that's something that certainly we should be concerned about. It may turn out that nobody thinks that's an issue or after reading this they don't agree. But the bottom line is with all the work that's gone into this, the amount of public support that's gone into it, and the amount of governmental support for this document, I think it only makes sense for us to take the next logical step and to put this on a ballot referendum and just let folks decide.

That's really where I'm coming from on this. I want to thank you very much for your time."

Supervisor Stark: "Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, please. I'm going to insist. I will insist. Helga. I thought I saw Helga around somewhere. There she is."

Helga Guthy: "I'm Helga Guthy from Wading River. I would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to vote for the formation of Peconic County. Even though (inaudible) what is equally or more important to me is the big difference in the outlook from the quality of life between us and the people west of William Floyd Parkway.

Being part of Suffolk County, our concerns are not being heard, are totally ignored. Towns to our west have built up their (inaudible). Now western Suffolk dumps on us the things they don't want or don't have room for any more. Economic growth is important but to a lot of people on the east end, what that growth entails and how fast or slow that growth is takes priority.

We seem to be much more concerned with clean water, preserving our natural resources, fresh air, and peace and quiet. They just take our money and run and don't want to hear from us again until the next election or tax time. We have the opportunity for home rule now and I hope that after careful study of all the issues involved, Peconic County becomes a reality. Please do all that you can to fulfill your oath of office to us, to Riverhead residents, and give us the chance to do better than our neighbors to the west.

And I would just like to ask-- I'm very interested in a copy of this report. Is there any way that I would be able to get one or how

to go about it?"

Supervisor Stark: "If you promise to give it back. See me after the meeting and I will arrange for it, Helga. I think we have some extras around."

Councilman Prusinowski: "You should mention to the public that we actually pay for this report because they sound like we're on the outside of this."

Supervisor Stark: "Nancy Swett. Did I pronounce that one correctly?"

Nancy Swett: "No, you didn't."

Supervisor Stark: "I didn't think so."

Nancy Swett: "Nancy Swett. My husband and I own a home in Gamesport. Thank you for having this hearing this afternoon. There are a lot of people who have put a lot of time and money and effort into the Peconic County issue. I'm one of them. And I'm very interested in seeing the referendum go this November. And to allow the people in Riverhead the chance to talk about this, and for their opinions to culminate in a vote this November. I think we want to let our state legislature know that there is support for Peconic County."

And I want to remind the Board of the benefits that Peconic County promises which were very well summarized in a mailing that many of us got who have been involved. One, there are five major reasons to create Peconic County. One, Peconic County will give the five east end towns control over their future. Two, Peconic County will save the east end rural quality of life and traditional economy. Three, Peconic County will reduce county property taxes by more than 50%. Four, Peconic County means smaller more efficient government. And finally, five, the separation of the east end from Suffolk County will be fair to both counties.

And these are all reasons that are worth standing up for and looking into and I hope the Town of Riverhead will do the same. Thank you."

Supervisor Stark: "Thank you. I apologize for the pronunciation. The glasses aren't working too well today. Michael Kent."

Michael Kent: "Good afternoon. Most people here or a lot of people here know that I don't live in Riverhead. But they also know that for the last 12 to 14 years I have been deeply involved in Riverhead. I've served and continue to serve as a member of the Board of Directors with the Riverhead Chamber of Commerce. I served as President of the Chamber for two years. I was also one of the original 19 members back in the eighties of the Peconic County (inaudible) Committee. And I don't want to repeat all the things that have already been said, but Sherry Patterson mentioned the Social Services aspect. This is really a situation. We pay taxes to Suffolk County for the privilege of having them bring what they don't want out here to the east end. And to Riverhead particularly.

It is also my impression that Riverhead Town-- that the taxes that Riverhead pays to Suffolk County are the highest on the east end based on what is in Riverhead. So if Riverhead voters choose to continue to pay the taxes that they don't have to pay if Peconic County becomes a fact, then that's up to them. But at least I think they deserve the opportunity to have a chance to change the situation. And as everyone else has said in a different way perhaps, I think it's a long standing practice known fact that the best government is that government closest to the people. And if we can govern ourselves out here, I think we can do a heck of a lot better job without a county legislature and their two million dollar a year-- whatever their budget is and the Social Services Department and the county police force that we pay for but get nothing from. Thank you."

Supervisor Stark: "Thank you. James Golden. While Mr. Golden is coming up I want to let it be known that the Riverhead Town Board has and continues to support the theory of letting the voters or the electorate decide whether they want Peconic County or not. This Public Hearing here this afternoon is part of that process. The next process is doing a resolution which we have to have done by September 4th or 5th. So the comments to this point are really that we're not (inaudible) by virtue of having this Public Hearing, we are continuing the process. So, I just want to make that point and this study that I am going to lend to Helga was paid for by a lot of monies from Riverhead-- equally shared by the five towns."

James Golden: "Okay, Jim, thank you."

Supervisor Stark: "Thank you. I didn't want to call you by your nickname."

James Golden: "You said Golding, but you know it's Golden."

Supervisor Stark: "I said Golden."

James Golden: "I'm a life long member of Riverhead which Jim knows and I guess I'm a grass roots supporter of Suffolk County and I think it's wonderful that we are given the opportunity to have this choice of forming our own county. Furthermore-- I'll make it a part-- I've seen and a lot of members here in this organization or meeting have seen the slow withdrawal of the courts from the Town of Riverhead down to the west end in certain areas and the social and economic problems of the whole county are being dumped onto Riverhead and I think it's really more than we should be able to support. It's a part of the ruination of the town actually. Besides the jail being over there, that seems to be part of it, too, but, again, I guess I'm a part of the grass roots and that's how I feel. Thank you, Jim."

Supervisor Stark: "Thank you. Chris. I saw Chris come in before. Son of Michael."

Chris Kent: "Good afternoon. My name is Christopher Kent. I live at 85 Old Stone Road, Calverton, New York, and I work here in town. I have a business. I was going to speak quite a while but I'm glad to hear that you've already decided-- the Town Board has decided that they are in favor of putting the referendum on the ballot. So I don't believe it's necessary to go on too long. I'm sure we all believe here that the right to-- "

Supervisor Stark: "I would only correct you on that. The Board has not made a decision."

Chris Kent: "I thought you just said that."

Supervisor Stark: "No. This Board has always supported the referendum of the question of should there be a Peconic County; should there not be a Peconic County. The referendum that we're discussing here today does not specifically ask that question."

Chris Kent: "I understand that."

Supervisor Stark: "And if that referendum does go on in the five eastern towns, there's going to be a great deal of public relations that's going to have to go on by the Peconic committee so as to not make that referendum confusing to the voter. What they're simply trying to do is to say if you are in favor of Peconic County, then vote for the change of town law within your town."

Chris Kent: "That's correct. I understand that."

Supervisor Stark: "Absolutely correct."

Chris Kent: "I heard you say that you were supporting-- "

Supervisor Stark: "We've always supported-- I can give you several resolutions and I can give you the cancelled checks and I go back as far as Evans Griffing and this question has and will continue to haunt the five eastern towns. And Caryl probably can confirm this better than I can that Evans, who was a Supervisor of the Town of Shelter Island and also Chairman of the Board of Supervisors -- I guess we call them when they went from a supervisor to a legislator started the movement of Peconic County. And I have been in favor for years of let us find out from the electorate. But we will be discussing it. We have until September 5th to get another resolution to continue the process. There will be no official vote this afternoon."

Chris Kent: "I understand that. I think everyone here is glad to hear that the Board has been (inaudible) and we hope that you will continue to be supportive. I think everyone believes that being able to decide and select a form of government that's a fundamental right in this country, one that dates back to the settlement of Jamesport and Plymouth Colony. And there is probably still a lot of descendants that live in the Town of Riverhead and on the north fork and all throughout the east end of Long Island who have families that date back to the times when-- "

Councilman Prusinowski: "And I want to thank the New York State Senate for agreeing with that statement but the New York State Assembly apparently is not allowed to vote on that issue right now and that's why we are here today unfortunately. That should be

noted for the record, too."

Chris Kent: "For some of the same reasons that-- "

Supervisor Stark: "I was going to throw a curve in there, but I won't."

Chris Kent: "Go ahead. Don't make a mistake. I'll put it right out of the park."

Supervisor Stark: "No. A low sinking curve."

Chris Kent: "For some of the same reasons that those earlier settlers came here, I think we at this point want to break away from Suffolk County. We, the taxpayers of the five easternmost towns of Suffolk County pay a greater percentage for the county budget than we receive in county services. I think that's a given. It's gone on for a long time. Second, we do not want those western lawmakers and politicians to decide what we should have out here. Their issues are completely different than our issues. We're-- they don't feel that it's as important as we do that our farmlands should be preserved, that our baywaters need to be preserved. They try to tie every decision on preservation, open space preservation, Robbins Island issue. They try to tie that into something that's economically advantageous to them up west. And we just don't need to do that anymore."

We should be making our own decision of how we are going to preserve our land, how we are going to govern our people, how we are going to spend our money. We shouldn't be giving our money to a government that's centralizing itself away from the county seat. We are the county seat of Suffolk still yet all we have here are jails, Criminal Courts, and a Social Service center that serves people from Brookhaven Town. We don't need that anymore. We should be taking care of our own, we shouldn't be paying money to politicians in the west to be making decisions that aren't going to help us but we have to pay for them.

Look at the Southwest Sewer District, the centralized court complex in Islip or the H. Lee Dennison building. Bureaucratic white elephants that we are paying for but are not getting served by. We don't have District Courts out here. We have our Town Courts.

We don't need to be paying into a centralized District Court complex. It's hurt us in just more ways than just paying for it. Because we've also lost a significant amount of financial resources. People don't come out here as much to go to the courts. We've lost a lot of money in our town. So I'm glad to hear that you've been supportive in the past and that we hope that you will give us the opportunity to make the decision in the future that we will form our own county."

Supervisor Stark: "Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, please. Sherry."

Sherry Johnson: "Good afternoon. My name is Sherry Johnson. I reside at Horton's Court in Manorville. And as a life long resident of the east end, I have supported the concept of Peconic County since I first heard about it. And I was very happy that Mr. Thiele reintroduced the idea and that a number of people have been working on it very hard in the past few years. I'm glad to hear that you also support that concept and hopefully you will do whatever you can.

I feel that our own county government will be much more responsive to our needs than the current county government has been. With only two representatives as several people have mentioned, it's really tough when those two representatives have to go against the 16 west end legislators. So I certainly hope that you will also vote to place the referendum on the ballot as you voted to hold this hearing. I think the committee certainly is up to the challenge educating the people on what they will be voting on and I don't think that you should let the Assembly hold us hostage anymore than we should let the current county government hold us hostage as they have over many issues. Thank you very much."

Supervisor Stark: "Thank you, Sherry. Bob."

Bob Wallace: "First of all, let me speak to you as a private citizen of the Town of Riverhead. I've been living in this town almost 30 years-- "

Supervisor Stark: "Bob, could you just point that microphone closer up to you? Yes, that's the one. If you would so they could all hear in the back, please."

Bob Wallace: "I've been living in the Town of Riverhead over

10 years and I've been fighting for Peconic County for over 20 years. We want Peconic County and we want the people to have the opportunity to vote on it whether they want it or not. Okay. Now, let me speak to you as the de facto leader of the Conservative Party for the Town of Riverhead. We have spearheaded this fight as (inaudible) for Peconic County ever since its inception over 20 years ago. We have not changed our philosophy. And all of the so called Conservatives in this town have backed us up and I want you to remember all you people on the Town Board, you plan to be Conservatives, understand Conservative philosophy. We have not changed. And I speak for all the members of the Conservative Party, which are not a whole lot, but over 400, and we're saying let us vote for this Peconic County. Thank you."

Supervisor Stark: "Thank you, Bob."

Supervisor Stark: "Do I have to excuse myself from this testimony? The Honorable Thomas M. Stark, cousin of mine. I guess public comment is not conflict of interest. Tom is a retired Supreme Court Justice."

Thomas Stark: "And a member of this Board 30 years ago."

Supervisor Stark: "That's right."

Thomas Stark: "Forty years ago."

Supervisor Stark: "Forty years ago."

Thomas Stark: "I am not necessarily against the concept of Peconic County, however, I have certain questions as to matters that (inaudible), and I'd like if possible to obtain a little more information. I think the-- now it states in here that Peconic County will make a one time payment to Suffolk County of \$76,000,000 at the time of separation for Peconic's share of Suffolk's liabilities. Now what I'm concerned with is that \$76,000,000 to pay off a complete bonded indebtedness? Who has that information?"

Supervisor Stark: "I don't know that we have that information or we would supply it specifically at this Public Hearing. But those people who are-- been on the Peconic Committee will certainly see the Judge after and supply you with that. You can name the questions and

then we can go from there. Or we can call one of them up to the microphone after you and he can make comment-- or she."

Thomas Stark: "All of Peconic County still with the subject (inaudible) share of the payment of county indebtedness if this takes 10, 20, 30 years. The bonds now have 20, 30 years to run and the (inaudible) including what would become Peconic County backs up those bonds and if they were to be collected in county taxes, would it be based on population or assessed valuation because Peconic County would have a lot more assessed valuation in certain aspects.

Also, the brochure mentions that there would be sharing of the 15 county facilities. Some of the things I can see sharing for example the county parks I think could be very easily shared. Something like the Shinnecock Canal, I'm not sure. The bridges in Quogue and Westhampton. The county facilities right here in Riverhead. The County Center, the jail, the two major court buildings right here in Riverhead. I assume this would have to be worked out on a sharing basis, all of these facilities.

The county highways to me would be a big stumbling block, how Peconic County will take over, purchase all those county highways. That's something that would have to be answered to everyone's satisfaction.

Also, a new county, of course, by law would have to set up a number of new different departments. They would have to have a clerk, a treasurer, a comptroller, district attorney, a Board of Health, a Board of Social Welfare, at least court facilities for six or seven judges, facilities for a Public Works Department, a Board of Elections. All of these would have to be set up and I assume you're talking about sharing with (inaudible).

I'd like to (inaudible) that someone mentioned a few minutes ago about the courts leaving Riverhead. That is not taking place. Six years ago we added 13 brand new courtrooms to Riverhead over in the Criminal Courts building. We are also renovating Griffing Avenue to handle up to eight more judges there. So there has not been any movement of courts from Riverhead. If anything, it's been the other way around. We've had judges who were sitting in the Dennison building come out and sit here now. So I would like to clarify that. Thank you."

Supervisor Stark: "Thank you. We also are slated for 16 new Supreme Court courtrooms by the year 2001. I think that's a state law, a mandate. That completes the people who wanted to speak officially. Is there anybody else who would like to make comment at this particular time? If not, I have polled my Board. We will leave the Public Hearing open to the close of business hours Friday, August 30th, at close of business hours for written comment by anybody who was unable to attend this afternoon's public hearing. I would also like to submit a letter I received from Dr. Koppelman-- I guess we call him. I don't know whether he's a doctor or not. I think he is a doctor. You can submit to the record. Barbara has other letters that have been submitted because of the inability to make an appearance. Those letters will be available at the Town Clerk's office later on this afternoon or during the balance of this period.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank you for coming here today. This Board will-- over the next two or three days, start discussing the question in front of us and we are on schedule, we're not behind. We've done what was requested of us and we will now take up the next step to this question.

So without any further comment, I will adjourn the vocal portion of this and leave comment open to closing of business hours Friday, August 30th. Thank you very much."

Public Hearing adjourned: 2:55 p.m.

Barbara Stutton
Town Clerk