

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & SECURITY

MINUTES: October 22, 2007 -- 9:00am

MEMBERS: **Chair:** Burton; **Legislators:** Kaplowitz, Swanson, Jenkins, Pinto

IN ATTENDANCE: **CE's OFFICE:** B. Randolph, Tom Meier (Westchester County Drug Prevention & STOP-DWI); **COUNTY POLICE:** Capt. John Hodges; **DA'S OFFICE:** Bruce Kelly; **GREENBURGH POLICE:** Chief John Kapica; **PUBLIC SAFETY:** Donna Ritucci; **TOWN OF YORKTOWN:** Cathryn Adler (Alliance for Safe Kids), Officer Brian Shanahan (Yorktown PD, SRO)

With a quorum present, the Committee on Public Safety & Security was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

Several recent incidents throughout the County led the Committee to convene a forum on underage drinking. With its charge of public safety and welfare policy for the County, the Committee gathered a panel of officials at the County and municipal levels to assess what is currently being done to address the ongoing conflict between Westchester's youth and the illegal possession of alcohol.

With respect to County action, the Administration runs the Westchester Coalition for Drug & Alcohol-free Youth – in addition to several advisory boards (including the youth advisory board) Bruce Kelly, from the Westchester DA's Office, noted a joint task force set up between the Office of Westchester County District Attorney Janet DiFiore and the County Executive's Office: ACE (Alcohol Compliance Enforcement) Task Force. Through the initiative, DA investigators and County police are assisting communities and their respective public safety outfits. The increased manpower and intensity has resulted in considerable deterrence.

According to municipal officials present, progress is being made on the local level through the securing of grants for drug-free communities and increased training for local police forces in party patrols and compliance checks. The authorities all agreed that alcohol compliance checks have been and are the most effective tool.

In terms of why and how teens are still able to access alcohol with considerable ease, Capt. Hodges of the County Police pointed to the huge number of places that supply it – hundreds of gas stations, convenience stores throughout the county. Capt. Hodges explained that even if a task force patrols its community, and prevents alcohol from being sold to minors in that locality – kids have only to step outside of the area into a nearby neighborhood, where there are many opportunities to obtain alcoholic beverages and where similar patrolling may not be executed. For this reason, added Capt. Hodges, county-wide enforcement is needed.

At 10:00am, on the motion of Legislator Kaplowitz and seconded by Legislator Jenkins, the Committee on Public Safety & Security meeting was adjourned.

Please refer to the audio disk on file for full review of meeting discussion.

