

VOICE

October
2008

JOHN J. FOLEY
SKILLED NURSING
FACILITY SPECIAL
EDITION

SPEAKING OUT FOR THE 8,000 WORKING MEN AND WOMEN WHO PROUDLY SERVE SUFFOLK COUNTY



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Chris Ogno, JJF Vice President
Appeals to Members

Dear Fellow Labor Leaders, Veterans and Seniors:

County Executive Levy has gone too far for his September 4, 2008 OP-ED “Reduce Costs”, that appeared Thursday, September 4, 2008 in the Long Island Advance, which once again utilizes his favorite technique – scare tactics and half-truths against working people. However, he should be excoriated for his “D-Day” reference! D-Day, June 6, “The day that will live in infamy”, was the date of the Normandy invasion during WWII. It is a day of sober reverence, a day in which thousands of American and Allied soldiers lost their lives in order that we, today, here in America, maintain the freedoms that we do. It was a day carried out by those called “the greatest generation” – our fathers, grandfathers and yes, women too. It is a day that should not be used as callously as a comparison to a tax cut, especially a tax cut policy that if Levy had the foresight that he claims, could have been mitigated by utilizing the services of those he treads upon, those same veterans and proud union workers!

While Mr. Levy begins his article with a comparison to our veterans – let my article finish it. AME, in conjunction with Congressman Tim Bishop, 1st Congressional District, has been working toward securing the necessary funding and operating permits to allow our Long Island disabled veterans who suffer from traumatic brain injury to return home to the John J. Foley Skilled Nursing Facility. You see, the Nursing Facility, **the same facility that Mr. Levy proposes to eliminate from the budget by January 1, 2009**, has a recognized trauma unit and can accommodate their special needs, which is something not many nursing homes can do. These same veterans have been living at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington D.C., far from their families; but through the efforts of the Suffolk County Association of Municipal Employees (AME), and Congressman Bishop, will soon be able to come back home, and dedicated labor union worker will keep their jobs!

Sadly, Mr. Levy’s message was released during the week of Labor Day and the anniversary of September 11th. Had Mr. Levy ever considered utilizing his employees as a resource, rather than an expense to be cut, he may have (and our veterans too) benefited sooner. Levy must learn that the function of government is “by the people and for the people”, and not scare the people and abandon the people. On behalf of our 8,500 active and retired members of AME, we ask that your union support us in saying “**No**” to Steve Levy’s anti-labor agenda and help us save the John J. Foley Skilled Nursing Facility!



Members of John J. Foley Skilled Nursing Facility at a Union strategy meeting.

Thank you and God bless union workers!

Cheryl A. Felice
Cheryl A. Felice
President



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

County Executive Steve Levy
Dennison Bldg., 12th Floor
Hauppauge, New York 11788

August 30, 2008

Dear County Executive Levy:

We, the undersigned are writing regarding the John J Foley Nursing Center (JJF) to request that you refrain from selling or closing the facility.

After evaluating your consultant's report and understanding that several others have been completed (all going toward the deficit of the JJF Center), we realize that the reports should have assessed how to make the facility run more efficiently and should have made recommendations to change the way the facility has been mismanaged. In addition, **recommendations that have been made by the consultants have been ignored and have never been implemented.**

JJF has treated patients for a vast array of diverse and complicated diagnoses which most nursing homes do not admit or treat. Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) patients are agitated, depressed and behaviorally challenged and are difficult to manage. Many are young men and women. Patients are treated for psychological and psychiatric illnesses, substance abuse, Alzheimer's, behavioral and personality disorders and issues, APS referrals, severe physical and mentally handicaps, dementia, Multiple Sclerosis, AIDS, and many other diagnoses, all of which need specialized and compassionate care. Many Suffolk County residents cannot find beds in nursing homes that are not far away from their loved ones.

Rather than ignore the shortcomings of the management of the facility, we would suggest that the large amount of uncollected monies that are due to the facility be aggressively sought after. Medicaid, Social Security, Veterans benefits, and pensions are ignored. The Suffolk County Attorneys are aware of this but have failed to pursue the collection of monies due to Suffolk County.

It is our understanding that per diem nurses are hired from an outside agency at a costly salary rather than placing our own Suffolk County nursing staff in the facility. A change in this policy would save enormous amounts of money by reducing the payroll of an outside private agency.

In addition, there are pharmaceutical savings that can be utilized if the county really wants to solve the issues and problems to help the facility run in a more cost-effective and efficient manner, rather than walk away from making it operate properly.

A recommendation of hiring a new Administrator with integrity, experience and management capabilities would be a step in the right direction to maintain the facility and its workers. That Administrator should be watching receivables, managing beds to make certain that he or she is working with other facilities, and marketing the JJF Nursing Home to utilize the beds in the best and most efficient manner possible.

As representatives of New York State, we are keenly aware of our aging constituent population. Nursing Homes have been closed throughout the state, yet our residents are getting older in large numbers. Rather than closing down nursing homes, we should be preparing for our future by preserving places that we can put the many baby-boomers that will come of age in the next decade for placement in facilities such as one that we own and operate. As elected officials, let's work together to solve the problems rather than abandon the facility. We believe that Suffolk County residents will benefit from keeping John J Foley Nursing Center open and thriving. We implore you to move assertively by maintaining the facility with an appropriate and competent management team.

Sincerely,
Members of the Assembly
Ginny Fields, 5th District
Marc S. Alessi, 1st District
James D. Conte, 10th District
Patricia A. Eddington, 3rd District
Steve Englebright, 4th District

Andrew P. Raia, 9th district
Phil Ramos, 6th District
Robert K. Sweeney, 11th District
Fred W. Thiele Jr., 2nd District

Suffolk County Surplus Pegged at \$177 Million

Rick Brand - Newsday, April 4, 2008

Suffolk County ended 2007 with a \$177.2-million general fund surplus, Suffolk Comptroller Joseph Sawicki said yesterday, but other county fiscal officials say virtually all that money has been factored into the county's \$150-million shortfall estimates for this year and next year combined.

While that final figure is higher than the \$144.5 million estimate in November when the 2008 budget was adopted, legislative and county executive analysts say they had already raised their estimates of the year-end surplus, based on more recent information.

"I don't want to give anyone any false hope that this is newfound money, Sawicki said. "The county is facing a serious fiscal problem next year. "He said the bigger surplus resulted from lower-than-expected home relief costs for single adults and expenses for educating handicapped children.

"It's better that it went up rather than down," said county Executive Steve Levy." but it's really a tiny fraction of the overall picture." Legislative budget analysts say that the general fund surplus numbers were about \$5 million less than they had anticipated.

The projected year-end surplus, which will be confirmed by outside auditors in June, beat last year's, which was \$169 million. The county tries to keep the amount stable, because it is essentially a one-shot revenue, so that there is no need to replace it with higher taxes.



September 17, 2008

The Honorable Sheldon Silver, Assembly Speaker
New York State Assembly
LOB 932
Albany, New York 12248

Dear Majority Leader Silver:

On behalf of the members of the Suffolk County Association of Municipal Employees and the residents of John J. Foley Skilled Nursing Facility, we would like to thank you for the letter of support received by the Long Island NYS Assembly delegation.

The letter written by Assemblymembers Alessi, Conte, Eddington, Englebright, Fields, Raia, Ramos, Sweeney, and Thiele and sent to Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy, covered all the reasons why this facility should be saved for the residents of Suffolk County. Your support is appreciated.

Please pass on our sincerest gratitude for supporting our efforts to keep this wonderful facility open for all residents of Suffolk County.

Sincerely,

Cheryl A. Felice

Cheryl A. Felice
President

CAF/jas

cc: All AME Members

Suffolk Should Get Out of Nursing Home Business

Anonymous Writer, Opinion Section--Newsday, April 20, 2008

Whatever else it may be, the struggle over what to do with Suffolk's nursing home is not new. Steve Levy is the third consecutive county executive in less than 20 years to wrestle with this issue. On its substance, he is correct: It's time for the county to get out of the nursing home business.

The options are to close down the John J. Foley Skilled Nursing Facility in Yaphank or to sell it, for example, to a hospital. Stony Brook University Medical Center is one possibility. Hospital affiliation makes sense. Closing it, even though the law would ensure that all its patients find new homes, should be the very last resort.

Levy wants to make this change now, because he faces a difficult budget for 2009, and the nursing home is costing the county more than \$12 million a year. But fiscal pressure doesn't mean Levy can be insensitive to the needs of the facility's nearly 240 patients or its 300 employees, even if he has had his problems with their union.

At a hearing before the county legislature's budget and finance committee last Tuesday, there was ample evidence of how hot the issue is. Outside the building, one sign showed Levy dressed as the Tin man (If I Only Had a Heart) from "The Wizard of Oz." Inside, nursing home staffers, members of the Association of Municipal Employees, wore T-shirts urging lawmakers not to turn their backs on the facility.

The issue is so contentious that all mention of the nursing home was removed from a resolution outlining steps to deal with the 2009 budget hold of \$130 million to \$156 million. The steps that remain include borrowing against the county's share of revenue from the 1998 tobacco settlement. The time for that idea, rejected in the past, appears to have come. It makes more sense than an alternate proposal - a complex plan to sell tax-lien revenue to investors. The full legislature is expected to vote on the budget resolution on April 29.

Removal of the nursing home from the legislation - plus a wise promise from Levy's chief deputy, Jim Morgo, to consult with the union on ways to better manage the facility - won applause from its members. But they know that Levy is continuing to focus on a solution for the nursing home. And he should.

The facility suffers from not having a direct relationship with a hospital, which would...



Suffolk Must Keep Unique Foley Facility

By William J. Lindsay, Newsday, August 19, 2008

The unique nursing home is critical to caring for the neediest--but it could be run much more effectively

Suffolk County has a duty to manage the John J. Foley Skilled Nursing Facility effectively and economically so it can continue to provide compassionate care for the old and infirm. Closing or selling this essential county service which has been in operation for more than a century is simply not an option.

The county must not abandon our most vulnerable citizens by jettisoning Foley to plug a one-time budget hole. This unique facility cares for patients whom other nursing homes will not serve--the so-called safety net patients, which include the severely physically and mentally handicapped: HIV/AIDS patients; and younger patients who may need care for decades and therefore are more costly to help. In fact, 42 percent of Foley patients are under 65, by far the highest percentage of any nursing home in the county where the average is just 9 percent.

Foley cares for the neediest of the needy and that is an essential role of government: caring for its most vulnerable citizens.

In addition to caring for today's needy citizens, the county must also look forward. Our population is growing and it is getting older every day. The legislature's Budget Review Office estimates that in just 10 years the number of patients needing nursing home care in Suffolk may increase by 80 percent as the huge baby-boomer population ages. It would be shortsighted to sell our facility when we are on the brink of needing it even more.

We should certainly not accept fiscal losses, but we can pare them down significantly if there's a will to do so. The facility can be run much more efficiently and a measure passed unanimously by the Suffolk County Legislature to identify a management team for the nursing home will do just that.

The Foley facility has been woefully mismanaged for years and because County Executive, Steve Levy is committed to unloading it, by closing or selling it, he has absolutely no incentive to run the facility more efficiently or to cut the deficit plaguing the nursing home.

In 2004 two studies outlined multiple strategies to manage Foley more effectively. Not one of those recommendations was implemented. In 2008 another study was delivered to the county executive. It outlined many of the same suggestions.

There's been no real effort to solve the problems at the nursing facility. Why does Suffolk County refuse to hire additional nurses at \$42 per hour and instead pays \$100 per hour for per diem private nurses to cover staffing shortfalls? Why does the county neglect to bill for services it provides? Why is there no marketing plan to fill beds, when empty beds mean lost revenues? Why aren't we aggressively pursuing Veterans Affairs to plan to house our returning wounded vets here in Suffolk?

Right next door in Nassau County there's an example of what can be done to turn around a municipal nursing home through effective management. The A. Holly Patterson Extended Care Facility is projected to end this year in the black, after running losses for years. As part of the turnaround, Nassau applied for and received New York State grants totaling approximately \$39 million. Instead of applying for such grants, Suffolk only requested assistance in closing its facility.

Government doesn't exist to make money, it exists to protect the health and safety of its residents. Citizens pay taxes for essential governmental protection. When we go into a restaurant, we expect food to be safe; when we drive across bridges we expect them to stay standing; when it snows we expect the roads to be cleared; when a crime is committed we expect the criminal to be caught, convicted and punished. And when we get sick we expect to be cared for. When we grow old we expect to have a decent place to go.

The John J. Foley SNF is a critical component of our effort to protect the health and safety of our residents. We should work to employ a management team that will turn the facility around, maintaining its unmatched compassionate care while substantially cutting the deficit that has arisen through the facility's multiple management failures.

Suffolk County must retain its nursing home instead of making a snap decision with long-term consequences to fill a budget hole.

Reduce Costs

By Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy--Long Island Advance, September 4, 2008

D-Day is upon us. In this case the D stands for "difficult decisions."

Recently, New York's governor appeared on statewide television to announce a fiscal crisis. Our towns are losing 40 percent of their mortgage tax revenues. The county's sales tax growth may be in negative territory for the first time in twenty years. Now is the time for legislators to stand up and make the difficult votes, in spite of the opposition of special interests in order to protect our over-leaguered taxpayers.

The budget shortfall we face in 2009 is alarming, but fortunately, this county administration acted quicker than just about any other. We started taking measures as early as February of this year to prepare for the economic downturn that we are experiencing. Earlier in the year, we put together a \$70 million budget restructuring package that helped erase a large part of the budget shortfall. Even with these initial measures having passed, there are still tens of millions of dollars in savings that must be effectuated.

There are no easy outs for legislators. I have identified areas where we can create structural changes to our budget to continue on our path of tax stability into the foreseeable future. But this will occur only if the Legislature has the courage to withstand the onslaught of special interests, such as the police and municipal unions.

Two changes alone to our county budget can bring us savings amounting to over \$27 million a year and help avoid major tax increases.

First is the privatization of the county's nursing home. A special interest of 200 employees is fighting vociferously to stop the privatization of this entity so that they may continue with their contract that independent analysts have termed extraordinarily excessive. This overly generous contract has made the nursing home enormously unprofitable. In fact, it is estimated that the county will lose

approximately \$50 million over the next three years with the continued operation of the nursing home.

I have called for a private entity to take over the nursing home, thereby erasing this \$50 million deficit from the county's books and helping to avoid a tax increase. All of the patients in the nursing home will be protected, as will our taxpayers if this privatization plan progresses. If it does not, the county will have to unnecessarily tax the people of Suffolk County an extra \$15 million a year.

Secondly, I continue to pressure the state to take over patrols of its highways here in Suffolk County.

In July, I began gradually redeploying county police who have been assigned to these state roads. It will be up to the state to determine if they will reimburse the county to continue to patrol their roads or to replace these county police officers with their own state troopers.

But I have been amazed that many legislators have kowtowed to the powerful police union and are opposing these common sense efforts to have the state patrol its own highways. The PBA's mission is not to protect the taxpayers' interests, but rather to maximize its membership, its salary and its benefits. It has been disappointing that some legislators are siding blindly with the union in this turf war, rather than with the taxpayers.

The way to ensure tax stability is to enact structured budget savings that recur every year. Redeploying our highway patrol officers back into local communities and privatizing the nursing home can save us \$86 million over the next three years alone; enough to greatly mitigate the need for large tax increases.

There are no shortcuts, no copouts and no decisions that come easy. However it is time for the Legislature to choose—the taxpayers, or the special interests.

Unions, Legislators Impede Privatization

--Newsday, August 31, 2008

Suffolk County can provide the same service to its 238 nursing home patients and save taxpayers \$15 million annually but only if the legislature would allow for a local hospital to assume ownership. There is only one reason this proposal has been stalled – resistance from the union and the legislators who kowtow to them.

Presiding Officer, William Lindsay is floating myths popped up by the union that has stopped three prior privatization attempt [Suffolk must keep Foley facility Opinion, Aug. 19].

In 1880, when the county opened an infirmary, there were no private facilities and no Medicaid.

Today there are 43 private nursing homes in Suffolk with more that 500 empty beds that would aggressively compete for our Medicaid-eligible patients.

Lindsay claims the nursing home would be profitable if better managed. He cites Nassau's nursing home as an example, yet failed to mention that Nassau's bottom line changed only because of a \$14 million state grant to close more than 300 beds. Incredibly, Lindsay wrote to the state imploring them not to give a similar grant to Suffolk.

All 44 county-owned nursing homes in New York lose money. They are so obsolete that the state is offering incentives to counties to privatize. Four have recently done so. Moreover, the state will not approve closure unless every patient is guaranteed continuity of care.

A recent report concluded that even if a new manager was hired, all beds were filled and to employees were laid off, our nursing home would still lose \$10 million plus annually, because the public sector employee contract is much more lucrative that the private sector's.

This pattern has Suffolk on course to lose up to \$50 million over the next three years and will be devastating to our ability to preserve prenatal care units, cancer screenings, and preventative health, bus routes and many other services.

Lindsay is incorrect to suggest the sale of the nursing home is designed to fix a one time budget hole. These are real and recurring savings. The decision to privatize should be a no-brainer.

Editor's note: The writer is Suffolk County executive.

Safety Is Not a Bargaining Tool

By William Lindsay--Long Island Advance, September 4, 2008

In his call for fiscal prudence in these difficult economic times, Suffolk County Executive Levy in his op-ed piece last week called for the county Legislature to make the "difficult decisions" that are required to insure the county's fiscal stability. The Legislature has been working hand-in-hand with the county executive all year to make those difficult decisions, and will continue to work to effectively represent our hard-pressed taxpayers.

The \$70 million budget restructuring plan mentioned by the county executive was a joint effort of the county Legislature and the county executive, and was a prime example of how we have worked together to address the serious economic issues facing the county and protect the taxpayer. We in the Legislature will continue to work with the county executive toward crafting a county budget that protects taxpayers and insures the safety of our residents.

I must object to the county executive's allegations that the Legislature is

kowtowing to unions in the case of the John J. Foley Skilled Nursing Facility and police patrols of our state highways. There is room for people of good faith to disagree on how to handle these two issues without trying to muddy the issue by saying the Legislature is bowing to union pressure. That is simply not the case.

The Suffolk County Legislature believes the county has a duty to manage the John J. Foley Skilled Nursing Facility effectively and economically so that it can continue to provide compassionate care for the old and infirm. Closing or selling this essential county service is simply not an option at this point. Saving millions of dollars through more efficient management is an achievable goal that we are actively pursuing. The facility can be run much more efficiently, and legislation passed unanimously by the Legislature seeks to identify a management team to do just that.

The county must not abandon our most vulnerable citizens by jettisoning John J. Foley to plug a one-time budget hole. Government has a duty to care for its most vulnerable citizens, a duty that cannot be abandoned. The reason that the Legislature believes the facility

should remain open is to serve our most vulnerable residents, not to protect the union jobs there.

Similarly, the dispute between the state and the county over who has the responsibility to patrol our state roads has nothing to do with the police union and everything to do with public safety. We support Levy's efforts to force the state of New York to accept its responsibility to patrol our state roads, or else pay our police to do their job. But pulling the police off those roadways just before the July Fourth Weekend, as Levy threatened to do, is brinkmanship pushed too far.

Public safety cannot be used as a bargaining tool in a fiscal dispute. We must fight with the state to meet its responsibilities, but we cannot endanger the lives of our citizens in that battle.

Taxpayers can rest assured that we in the Legislature will continue to work cooperatively with the county executive to make the difficult decisions necessary in these dire economic times.

Editor's note: William J. Lindsay (D-Holbrook) is presiding officer of the Suffolk County Legislature.

The Nursing Home Controversy

Opinion, --Newsday, April 25, 2008

Newsday's masthead says: "Where there is no vision the people perish." the paper's editorial board says "Suffolk should get out of the nursing home business" [Editorial, April 10].

But that is the point here - we are not in a business. The poor will perish if we do not keep our commitment to deliver quality of care via the John J. foley Skilled Nursing Facility at Yaphank; not a business, but a commitment to deliver quality of care to the poor.

Let us preserve our vision, our commitment to the poor. Let us also realize that the county executive's game plan is to take Suffolk out of health services, and, by so doing, penalize the poor.

John J. Foley

Editor's note; The writer is a retired Suffolk legislator who fought earlier efforts to privatize the facility
Blue Point

Opinion, --Newsday, April 25, 2008

County Executive Steve Levy's administration has pledged that the placement of every nursing facility resident will be ensured no matter which course of action is taken regarding the John J. foley Skilled Nursing Facility. In fact, state law prevents the sale, lease or closing of any nursing home if any individual were to be left without care.

Suffolk's skilled nursing facility has operated in the red since it opened and costs \$12 million a year to keep it afloat - a taxpayer subsidy of approximately \$50,000 per bed, per year.

All 35 publicly operated nursing homes in New York are losing money. The state is encouraging counties to close their homes through financial incentives. Why should Suffolk Taxpayers continue to subsidize an inefficient public facility when the same quality of care can be provided by private facilities at zero cost to the taxpayer?

Matt Miner

Editor's note; The writer is deputy commissioner of suffolk County's Department of Health Services.
Hauppauge

Workers Protest as Nursing Home Sale Mullied

By Reid J. Epstein--Newsday

A week after County Executive Steve Levy proposed studying selling Suffolk's John J. foley Skilled Nursing Facility, the fight over the facility intensified yesterday as Levy warned of possible layoffs and employees protested any sale.

About two dozen nurses and other employees picketed over any potential sale outside the 264-resident nursing home in Yaphank, holding signs saying the county should sell Levy rather than the Foley facility.

Linda Ogno, a 20-year nursing home employee who works alongside her two adult

sons, said Foley is the best facility of its kind on Long Island precisely because it is county-owned.

"Of course we're concerned about our jobs," said Ogno, 49, of Manorville, who works in recreation. "But we're most concerned about our residents.

"To balance the budget on the backs of the sick is unconscionable," said Deborah McKee, a vice president of the Suffolk County Association of Municipal Employees.

While the nurses protested, Levy said the county would have to lay off enough employees to plug the \$12 million the nursing home loses annually.

"It's to be expected that the union will rile up its members to keep the status quo," Levy said. "We just ask that they not use the patients as pawns."

In the late 1980, then-County Executive

Pat Halpin pushed to privatize the county's nursing home, but the idea was killed by legislators under intense union pressure.

Were Levy to cut \$12 million in staff costs, about 200 people would lose their jobs based on county employees' average salary, according to Robert Lipp, deputy director of the Legislature's budget review office.

Lipp said the nursing home has \$16 million in 2008 salaries budgeted for 314 employees.

Levy said he is considering selling, leasing or closing the facility and the county will soon issue a request for proposals for either sale or lease.

Levy said it makes no sense for the county to run the facility but "there was a political fear of biting the bullet."

Opinion, --Newsday, April 25, 2008

As a lifetime Suffolk resident and a 25-year county employee, I think budgetary issues, real or perceived, at the John J. foley skilled Nursing Facility or anywhere else, should not be void of sensitivity when dealing with workers and residents alike. Sadly, Steve Levy showed little compassion in a letter sent to the residents at foley, which told them that the county was "inefficiently" managing the facility, and that union contracts are "restrictive," ["Nursing home letter slammed," News, April 22].

Levy can no longer hide behind his calamitous mantra that the union contracts are holdover agreements from his predecessors. The contract in place was entered into by Levy in 2005 and expires this December. Is Levy using the workers and residents at the nursing facility as pawns as he prepares for negotiations with the largest union in county government?

There may be hope as new ways are being explored to deal with comparable issues regarding the nursing home in Nassau County. Innovative and novel ideas have emerged in improving the administration of the A. Holly Patterson nursing home in Uniondale ["Hospital exec woos union," News, April 22]. both labor and management in Nassau are actually talking about the financial picture. Imagine that: Administration and workers' organizations talking about problems and perhaps coming up with real solutions.

Cheryl A. Felice

Editor's note: The writer is president of the Association of Municipal Employees, the county's largest labor union.
Bohemia

Nursing Home Letter Slammed

By Rick Brand and Reid Epstein, --Newsday, April 22, 2008

Lawmakers decry Suffolk health chief's warnings to residents as premature, after he writes of service cuts.

Suffolk Health Commissioner, Humayun Chaudhry came under fire yesterday for a letter to residents of John J. Foley Nursing Home warning that the county may "possibly reduce the current level of service" and a "better alternative" is to transfer the complex to another operator.

"I wasn't happy with the letter," said Presiding Officer William Lindsay (D-Holbrook) adding it was "way premature" as the county-run 264 bed nursing home in Yaphank is no longer part of the \$65million cutback plan now before lawmakers. "I think it is premature to worry those poor old people(lying) in beds over there," Lindsay said.

Legis. Edward Romaine(R-Center Moriches) said "Chaudhry is following the directive of the county executive and has no interest in getting input from the legislative branch. Chaudhry's letter was distributed at the Yaphank facility Thursday and mailed to about 500 families. The letter came two days after a compromise cutback bill-with no mention of the nursing home- was approved in legislative committee.

While Chaudhry's letter said Suffolk is "fully committed to continued quality care," it added, "the county is unable to run the Foley Nursing Home as well as a private entity could and "this is placing pressure on the county to possibly reduce" service. He said the home loses \$12 million a year.

Levy said Chaudhry "shouldn't have said it like that" and that money is being spent "inefficiently" because of "restrictive" union contracts. Cheryl Felice, President of the Association of Municipal Employees, said Levy and Chaudhry are "creating a self fulfilling prophecy of an inefficient operation" by trying to empty beds. She maintains the county could make the facility cost-effective by marketing it properly.

Chaudhry said his intention was not to create fear, but to be "proactive and forthcoming" informing everyone no decision had been made and no one would be left unattended. If the letter "leaves the impression we are cutting or reducing service, that was not the intent," he added. While the nursing home was removed from the compromise cutback bill set for an April 29 vote, Levy said he is still pursuing the idea with an in-house study and will seek proposals to sell the home this summer.

Levy Still Plans To Sell Yaphank Nursing Home

By Reid J. Epstein--Newsday, August 14, 2008

County Executive Steve Levy yesterday withdrew a bill to hold hearings on the proposed sale of the John J. Foley nursing home, but said he still hopes to sell the Yaphank facility.

Levy's move comes months after legislators, led by Presiding Officer William Lindsay (D-Holbrook), made it clear that they opposed any sale or closure of the 264-bed nursing home.

Yesterday Levy took aim at Lindsay, blaming him in advance of a tax increase Levy said will be necessary to cover predicted nursing home operating losses, which an audit contends could reach \$51 million over the next three years.

"If the presiding officer doesn't want to take this sensible route, he's going to have to raise taxes by a colossal amount," Levy said. "There's no free lunch here."

Lindsay and other legislators this summer passed legislation calling for a request for proposals for new management of the nursing home. Levy vetoed the provision, and legislators subsequently overrode the veto.

Lindsay then refused to schedule legislative hearings

to discuss a sale. He did not respond to requests for comment made through his press secretary. [CORRECTION: Because of an editing error, a story yesterday about the proposed sale of Suffolk County's John J. Foley nursing home stated incorrectly that legislative Presiding Officer William Lindsay did not respond to requests for comment. "In my heart of hearts, I don't believe that the nursing home has been managed properly," he said. "I absolutely believe that there have been some colossal blunders made by management that goes all the way up to the county executive." (A19 ALL 08/15/08)]

Levy said there is no point to hold executive hearings when the Legislature will not do the same. He said legislators are "kowtowing" to the nursing home's employees, who oppose any sale.

"I've never seen legislators kowtow to such a small group of union members," he said.

"This is a case of the tail wagging the dog, where 200 employees want to maintain the status quo, even if it bankrupts the county."

Cheryl Felice, the president of Suffolk County Association of Municipal Employees, which represents nursing home workers, said Levy should work to improve the facility's management and halt his effort to sell it.

New Compromise Could Keep Suffolk Nursing Home Open

By Rick Brand--Newsday, October 21, 2008

Closing the John J. Foley Skilled Nursing Center may not be completely off the table, but Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy and Presiding Officer William Lindsay reached a new compromise that could keep the 264-bed Yaphank complex open next year.

"The good news is that we have language we have agreed upon," said Levy yesterday, after the two men met Saturday with Suffolk Democratic chairman Richard Schaffer following a breakdown in talks last week.

"We resurrected the agreement," said Lindsay, saying his office sent a written draft to Levy for review yesterday. When he gets it back, "I'll take it to the two caucuses to see if we can get the votes."

Under the deal, Levy said that Lindsay agreed it is the "legislature's responsibility to find real money" to restore the nursing home and its 278 employees back for next year's bud-

get. Levy said he reserves the right to veto the budget if the legislature fails to find adequate cuts or funding elsewhere to pay for keeping Foley open. Levy also said he will veto the measure if the funding causes a property tax hike.

The county executive said the county legislature would vote to allow a series of public hearings required that would allow the county to seek request for proposals to either sell or privatize the nursing home. Levy, in turn, says he will expedite the legislature's request for proposals to bring in an outside management team to make the nursing home more efficient. Levy added the deal allows him to pursue completion of a sale or lease of the nursing home any time next year, subject to legislative approval of the final deal.

The agreement gives the nursing home a chance to succeed and allows for the potential sale to "see what its

worth," Lindsay said.

The new deal came as community groups sought to restore funding cuts to their organizations during legislative hearings. In those sessions, several lawmakers who are staunch Levy allies worried that there is not adequate time in the budget process to determine the fate of the nursing home. "I don't have all the information in front of me to make a good decision," said Legis. Brian Beedenbender (D-Centereach), a Levy ally.

Cheryl Felice, president of the Association of Municipal Employees, could not be reached last night for reaction to the deal, but earlier in the day said she was "encouraged" by lawmakers' concerns about a speedy closing of the nursing home.

"The overriding theme was time and making a final decision without all the facts on the table," she said.



Join Us In The Fight

Rally at the Suffolk County Legislature, Hauppauge

November 5, 2008 at 12 Noon

All Seniors, Labor Members and Veteran Groups are Invited

Radio Commercial- October 22, 2008-November 5, 2008

John J. Foley Skilled Nursing Facility

County Executive Levy has called us a “special interest” because we are fighting to save the John J. Foley Skilled Nursing Facility. Well, if a special interest means that we care about AIDS patients maintaining their dignity; seniors staying in their only home; people keeping their jobs; veterans having a place for rehab then: **YES WE ARE A SPECIAL INTEREST-**

Please join us at the **Suffolk County Legislature in Hauppauge on Wednesday, November 5 at 12 noon** as we walk with those who are special too! Let’s show Levy that we are all: **“SPECIAL INTERESTS”**.



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