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FOCUS GROUP

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"Urban Problems in Asbury Park"

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- | | |
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| Councilman William H. Harrington | Robert Murray |
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New Jersey State Library



SENATOR DICK LaROSSA (Chairman): We'll gavel this to order. First of all, I'm Senator Dick LaRossa, Chairman of the Urban Policy and Planning Committee of the New Jersey State Senate. I have a couple of opening comments, but just so you know, the microphones in front of you are not for amplification; they are for recording over to my right here. (indicating)

There is no press in the room. One of the reasons is, we really want people to let their hair down. It's very, very important that we have as frank and as candid a discussion as is possible with the task that is at hand. The reason for the transcription is that we have done, I think, a fairly decent job in capturing a lot of the ideas that have been presented.

As we work toward putting together a comprehensive urban initiative, we do want to make sure the information that comes out of these meetings has as much opportunity as possible to be integrated into what the final outcome is, or at least, the first cut of the final outcome, because there are no outcomes that are final; it should be a fluid process.

So with that, when I finish my opening comments, I'll go around the table. We like everyone to simply introduce themselves. The reason for that is so the transcribers from the Office of Legislative Services know who it is who may be speaking. We'll try to keep it moving as quickly as possible.

I welcome each of you here today, again, for this Focus Group here in Asbury Park. Last January, the Senate President announced a new Senate Committee called, Urban Policy and Planning, and I was honored to be named the Chairman. I represent the 15th legislative district which includes the City of Trenton.

It's a pleasure to have as other members of the Committee: Senator Bob Martin, who is our Vice-Chairman and represents district 26 which includes part of Essex County; Senator John Bennett from district 12 -- who is also the

majority leader of the Senate -- which is also part of Monmouth County; Senator Ed O'Connor from district 31; and Senator Ron Rice who represents most of Newark.

You'll note the three individuals up front: Jack Callahan of the Senate Majority staff, Pat Gillespie of the Minority staff, who should be here shortly, and Hannah Shostack from the Office of Legislative Services. All the ideas that I come up with, this is the lady who has the responsibility of trying to put it into law, so that it makes some kind of sense. So, if it sounds great, I'll take credit; if it doesn't, blame her. (laughter)

Let me spend a minute or two on an overview of the mission of the Committee, and our goals and objectives. I think it can be summarized very briefly. State government and urban centers working together as partners will seek out unique solutions that will revitalize the urban areas into the centers of commerce, entertainment, and culture that they once were. This Committee will lead an urban renaissance that will transform the cities through the development of a creative and workable solution through a process of listening to the ideas of the people who live and work in the urban areas. These ideas will be implemented through urban policy initiatives and legislation as appropriate. You'll notice that we're talking that it will happen, not that it might, but it will happen.

The Senate President asked that the Committee seek solutions that are as unique in nature as the problems that face our urban communities, and travel to cities to meet with the individuals and leaders who have the ideas that make sense for their communities.

The Committee has put together a somewhat ambitious program for our first year. We've traveled to Trenton, Passaic, Irvington, Camden, New Brunswick, Jersey City, Hoboken, today Asbury Park, and, I believe in two weeks, we'll be in the Vineland/Bridgeton area. The meetings have all been

conducted similar to today's, beginning with a Focus Group of elected, appointed officials, as well as civic, religious, and community leaders.

We have a tour a little bit later to see both the successes and failures of the urban community, and in the evening, a Public Hearing so that the general citizenry may come and also express their concerns. In addition to these forums, we'll be traveling throughout the State on the Urban Redevelopment Initiative which we hope will be the outcome of these meetings, which, in fact, we have developed.

The initiative and accompanying legislation is designed to assist the urban centers in rehabilitating and marketing vacant buildings, and commercial and industrial sites. The intent of the URI is to increase rateables in the urban centers and create those much needed quality jobs for their residents, which should result in greater tax collections, lower reserves for uncollected taxes, less reliance on State aid, and the most important one, stabilization of property taxes.

As we begin the Focus Group, I would just say that we do have a limited amount of time available, so if we can be as succinct as possible-- Because the idea is that we want to bring light to the topic, not heat. There is enough credit to be garnered when we solve it, and there is more than enough blame to go around. So we'll move on from that.

There are other legislative Committees and bodies of government to address a lot of the other issues that face the State and our citizens. I talked about our transcribers from OLS-- Finally, I would like to add that as we've gone throughout the State, one of the things I constantly say is that the geographic boundary line that has historically separated urban centers from suburban communities -- and I use those terms loosely -- doesn't really define the boundaries of an urban problem.

Crime was a problem 30 years ago in the urban centers. It's a bigger problem today, because now people see it in suburban backyards. The lack of educational opportunity and jobs was a problem 30 years ago, but now it's a problem for everybody, because it's happening in suburban backyards. It's a matter of the closer it hits home to you, all of a sudden, it begins to seem a reality.

One of the things I keep saying is that New Jersey is really, in effect, one large city -- factually. I've been using that line for about seven months, and it's interesting that sometime in June, I believe, the U.S. Census Bureau made an observation where they, in fact, defined Washington, D.C. and the State of New Jersey as metropolitan areas, not part of the State, the entire State. So that lends an awful lot of credence to the fact that we are, indeed, one large city. Because whatever the problems are in the urban centers and the inability of the urban centers to be self-sustaining, the bottom line is somebody will, in fact, bear the brunt of the economic part of maintaining those centers.

If it doesn't exist in urban New Jersey, it's going to be paid for by suburban New Jersey, which is all the more reason for suburban New Jersey to understand that they do, in fact, and should have a very vested interest in addressing the kinds of problems we need to address on a very systemic change basis. The bottom line is real simple, to those people who say, "It's expensive, we're putting more money into the same problem," there is a real simple answer: What is more expensive, the cost of doing something or the cost of doing nothing? I think that is the premise from which we work.

We'll proceed from there-- The short- and long-term plan, again, is to change a whole lot of things, but, as we change the infrastructure, the most important thing is to change what is right up here (indicates). Because no matter how much change we make, if we do not begin to change both the

attitudes of urban residents toward themselves and their environment, and change the attitude of suburban residents toward the urban environment and the people who live there, then, in fact, we have really done nothing. Because it inures to all of our benefit to, in fact, bring about a change in which everybody benefits. It's very hard for anybody to walk away from a win/win situation, with a win/lose situation there is always a loser. Our goal is to create a win/win for everybody. With that, if I may, starting on my left, have the members around the table introduce themselves.

I'm very, very delighted to have this gentleman to my left here.

Thank you and the Mayor for having us here.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: I'm Assemblyman Tom Smith. I represent this district, it's the 11th.

DR. MUNDY: I'm James Mundy, Superintendent of Schools.

MS. COOK: I'm Joyce Cook, President of the Asbury Park Board of Education.

MR. BLUMENTHAL: Carl Blumenthal, Community Development Director for the City of Long Branch.

MS. ELLIOTT: Helen Elliott, Director of Community Programs for Brookdale Community College.

MS. ARNOLD: Odel Arnold, resident of Asbury Park.

MS. LESINSKI: I'm Barbara Lesinski, I'm a resident of Asbury Park.

MR. FEIT: Alan Feit, City Manager, Asbury Park.

MR. NUCCIO: Anthony Nuccio, Director of Social Services, Asbury Park.

MS. ALTHENBERG: Elizabeth Althenberg from Baldwin Hammond in Asbury Park.

MS. FOAT: I'm Marva J. Foat, Postmaster, Asbury Park.

MR. ROBERTS: Dave Roberts, Planning Director, Asbury Park.

MR. DiBIANO: Frank DiBiano, Director of Public Safety, Asbury Park.

MR. KAYE: John Kaye, I'm the Monmouth County Prosecutor.

MR. GORCEY: Lloyd Gorcey, Gorcey Realty, a local business in Asbury Park.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Bill Harrington, Councilman, City of Asbury Park.

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: Ron Cassel, Councilman, City of Asbury Park.

MAYOR CANDIANO: Patricia Candiano, Mayor of the City of Asbury Park. If I might, I would be remiss if I first of all didn't welcome the Senator and his Committee members for coming to Asbury Park to address some of the issues and concerns of our city. I would also like to thank Postmaster Marva Foat -- did she leave -- for her hospitality in arranging the meeting.

MS. SHOSTACK (Committee Aide): Hannah Shostack, I'm the Committee Aide from the Office of Legislative Services

MR. CALLAHAN: Jack Callahan from the Senate Majority, staff to the Senate Urban Policy and Planning Committee.

MS. WIERZBICKI: Kathy Wierzbicki, I'm Senator LaRossa's legislative aide.

SENATOR LaROSSA: The good news is that 98 percent of my good reputation is over here, 100 percent of my bad reputation is personal. (laughter)

Let me start by asking a question, and this really, in Asbury Park, is probably going to get a more unique answer than in other places. Please just raise your hand and we'll try to just go around the table. In your minds, define for me: What is urban? Do you want to take a shot at it?

MR. BLUMENTHAL: It's clearly a density of population and settlement that doesn't exist in an otherwise suburban county. It used to be a rural county, whereas Asbury, Long

Branch, Keansburg, and Union Beach were always more developed -- developed earlier and had more of a concentration of people and business.

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: Well, I think commerce would place a part in that.

SENATOR LaROSSA: The abundance or lack of?

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: Abundance of commerce, I guess.

MAYOR CANDIANO: I also see it as dilapidated buildings and properties and a high crime rate.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay. Anyone else?

MS. COOK: I see it as being multicultural.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Interesting. Anyone? (no response)

Let's take it a step further: Does anyone want to take a shot at defining suburban by contrast?

MAYOR CANDIANO: Okay. Low density, manicured lawns (laughter) low crime rate, probably not multicultural, probably more of a monogamous mix of people.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay. Anyone else? (no response)

Let me ask you another question. This is probably going to raise the hackles: Would anybody care to just give me -- only two per customer on this one -- what you consider to be some of the problems that exist in an urban center?

MS. ELLIOTT: High unemployment.

MR. GORCEY: High crime and high taxes.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Unemployment, crime, and taxes; that's it?

MR. NUCCIO: Concentration of special needs populations.

MS. LESINSKI: I think image is a problem. There is always a bad image to an urban area, whether it's true or not.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Anyone else?

MR. FEIT: Deteriorating infrastructure.

MR. BLUMENTHAL: Poverty.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I'm sorry?

MR. BLUMENTHAL: Poverty.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Let me ask you this: Does anyone want to take a crack at articulating one or two problems that exist in suburban areas?

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Traffic. (laughter)

SENATOR LaROSSA: All right. So traffic is not a problem in the urban centers?

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Unfortunately not.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Crime, maybe?

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Many of the same things that have been expressed here are expressed by the suburbanites, so it's a concern of everybody.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Right. I think therein lies the crux; the problems aren't different, they're the same. That again goes back to what I said in the very, very beginning, because the problems are the same, maybe a different magnitude, but the laundry list of problems is, in fact, the same. The comment that was made about density before--

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: That's the difference.

SENATOR LaROSSA: One of the comments that we heard very, very early on, in fact, during the very, very first meeting, they said they characterized urban centers -- and I thought it was a great statement -- by the density of the lack of opportunity. I thought that was a very powerful statement; that just conjures up all kinds of things.

But if you could wave a magic wand and somebody just gave you a blank check, what's the first thing you would want to do?

Oh, you're chomping on it, Bill-- I can tell he's ready to go. (laughter)

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Which one?

MS. COOK: Which one, that's it. Erase some of the poverty really; erase some of the poverty.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Reduce the poverty levels.

DR. MUNDY: I would say increase the visibility of police forces, to make people feel safe in the environment.

MR. FEIT: Provide jobs.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Someone else?

MS. LESINSKI: I would think, try and eliminate the drugs in the city; that's the prime thing I would spend money on.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Anyone?

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Improving the infrastructure and, of course, the buildings and the surroundings, because when people look at things it's visual as much as anything else. If you're looking at old, decayed buildings, older styles, so forth and so on, it doesn't promote people; people seem to go to newer places. All cities that seem to come up have been renewed by redoing either the old and making it look old/new, or putting new things in. You have to raise people's expectations by doing those kinds of things.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Yes?

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: The demolition of buildings that aren't salvageable.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay. Yes?

MR. BLUMENTHAL: We talked a lot about jobs, and that's certainly my priority, but even before that is education. We have a 60 percent retention rate. That means 40 percent of our high school students are dropping out. So, unless we take care of education first, we're not going to have trained workers for the jobs of tomorrow.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Yes?

MS. ELLIOTT: A centralized location for service needs for special populations.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Almost a clearinghouse of sorts?

MS. ELLIOTT: Yes. One stop shopping.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Yes?

MR. GORCEY: Redevelopment of the oceanfront areas.

SENATOR LaROSSA: That's what makes this one very, very unique, because when you think of an urban center, you don't think of oceanfront. That's one of the reasons why we came here, because this is very-- I don't want to say it's an anomaly, but as an urban center it's "very, very unique."

Someone else had their hand up?

MS. ALTHENBERG: Rehabilitating the downtown shopping area for an increase in commerce; without commerce you don't have many jobs.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Everybody is articulating jobs, drugs, infrastructure, rateables, one stop shopping, education, commerce, rehabilitation, image, taxes, and so on. What do you see as the biggest impediment to achieving these things? You can have more than one on this one.

MS. ELLIOTT: Lack of collaboration between the existing leaders and community groups within the municipality.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay.

MAYOR CANDIANO: I have to say it's a lack of money. Over 50 percent of the properties in Asbury Park are tax exempt, and that impacts on what we can do as a city.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay. Anyone else?

MR. BLUMENTHAL: Competition from the suburbs in terms of economic development. It's just cheaper and easier to develop in the suburbs.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay, but the big question is, why?

MR. FEIT: I'd go with the Mayor. But to follow up on the lack of money, the restrictions on the use of the money are too severe, and the restrictions on how we can approach certain buildings, what we can do with them, and the use of State funds get too severe for us.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Someone else?

MR. ROBERTS: I was just going to say an unfair distribution of the social burden over a region characteristically falls on the cities.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Yes?

MS. LESINSKI: The only thing I have to add is a lack of community pride; morale in the city is very low; people keep getting upset about how people view the city, and they keep getting upset about how much they have to defend the city.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Hopefully, if you could get a few people to stand outside and take a look at the face of this building, that begins to, again, start to change this, as I said. Because, if you change everything else and you don't change this, you've changed nothing because you are still dealing with the perception. It's like: How do you start to change the perception?

What about housing, is that a problem in Asbury Park or no?

MS. COOK: Definitely not.

MS. LESINSKI: I think the condition of the housing-- We have plenty of housing; it's just the condition of the housing.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: There, you're back on the problem of density and the type of housing. Does the kind of housing that exists in the city lend itself to high density? It doesn't. What we have is low-density housing, which has been converted to high-density housing, then has deteriorated and caused a lot of the problems. So you always have to have a mix in an urban area, but one of our problems is that we've converted too many inappropriate properties to high density. You have to have an adequate density so that people won't feel too crowded.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay. Go ahead.

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: To add to what Bill was saying, now we have perhaps less than -- probably less than 20 percent of the properties are one family. The one-family homes help establish and keep neighborhoods going, and those have been, to

a great extent, eliminated. That's one of the problems, trying to rebuild neighborhoods and encourage more one-family construction.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay. Forgive me because--
I'm sorry, go ahead.

MS. COOK: You know, you said something about, "Before we can do change, we have to change up here." There is so much apathy and despair in our residents--

SENATOR LaROSSA: It's not that easy, is it? The difficulty always is, where do you begin to attack this? Because you end up-- If you put all of this up on a board, where do you start? This is going to be very chauvinistic -- and I apologize -- but how many golfers are there in the room? (no response) Okay. (laughter) Thank God. I'm going to use an example. I will come up with another analogy, but I only started using this three days ago, and I haven't perfected this.

When you hit a golf ball and it either goes to the right or goes to the left, and, invariably, what somebody tries to do is they try to adjust for the ball going to the left or to the right. What they don't do is they don't attack the cause of the ball going to the right or to the left. By making the adjustment, they compound the cause. I think to a certain extent, it's pretty much what I think we have in a lot of the urban centers. We keep trying to make adjustments rather than going to the heart of what the problem is.

How much of a problem do you have in Asbury Park with single-parent, or no-parent families?

MR. ROBERTS: A significant problem.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Significant? You talked about density -- and forgive me, this is one of the reasons why we're here today, to try to see this and understand this. You talk about density in housing-- What's the highest housing building in terms of floors in Asbury Park?

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Twenty-six stories.

MR. ROBERTS: Presbyterian Towers has about 36 stories on the beachfront.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Is that public housing?

MR. ROBERTS: No, it's owned by the Presbyterian Church, it's totally tax exempt.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: It's 26 stories.

SENATOR LaROSSA: On a percentage of housing stock-- What was the number somebody used, about only 20--

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: Less than 20 percent are single family at this point, the last we've been able to ascertain.

SENATOR LaROSSA: All right. Let's talk about density for a second. The reason I want to know in this area -- because we've heard this in a lot of the other Focus Groups, in Jersey City, New Brunswick, and so on-- There seems to be a-- That 26-story building, are there other multistory buildings--

MS. ELLIOTT: Sixty to seventy percent of the families are probably female-headed households, single parent; that's where you go.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay. That's part of where I'm going, but the question is the living conditions as well. One of the observations that was made is that -- forgive me if I'm not articulating this as clearly as I would like to -- there seems to be a tremendous feeling that one of the worst things that is happening is the multistory high-rises that really tend to almost be warehousing people who are at a certain level of income -- I don't want to say poverty level -- and it creates a secondary problem, which is very interesting, when you talk about lower-density housing.

They talk about high density versus low density, where you don't want to go more than two or three stories. One of them is: How does a guardian -- whether it be the parent, grandparent, aunt, whatever it is -- who is 15 stories up in the air, keep an eye on the child who is down on the ground? In terms of just having the kind of thing that we would think

about with regard to how we just simply are going to keep an eye on our kids, in terms of keeping them out of trouble or, again, to just know what is going on?

Is there a feeling in Asbury Park with regard to that kind of density? Is that experienced at all, or is it just not as obvious?

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: I don't think it's as obvious because our projects only go four stories, as opposed to the ones in Jersey City which go 10, 12, etc., or Newark or what have you; although, we do experience similar problems of what you spoke to. The other high-rises we have in town are basically middle-income older people who are in there. So we don't experience-- They're in the northern end of the town, and we don't experience that density problem because they're basically self-contained. It's a different social group that lives in those apartments, than lives in the high-density project areas.

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: I think that has even changed to a certain extent economically--

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Maybe changing.

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: --because the people living in Asbury Towers and Seaview Towers are not middle income; they're low income also. But there is another-- Dealing with this type of a building you have two things, you have: Where do these children play? That's one of the issues. Also, having common hallways is an absolute breeding ground for crime. That's another problem with this type of building.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: We experience almost the same problems when we cut up the large, old Victorian houses and make four or five apartments in them. Again, the same problem-- Whether they're in a subsidized project or they're in some particular house, the same social problems exist as far as what you were just speaking to -- play, control of the children -- because we see it as we try to do code enforcement and try to improve these different things.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Would you expand on that common hallway thing? That's the first time I've heard that comment.

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: Yes. In essence, if the residents have a private entrance into their own apartment, then they are safe in going in there. But if you have these very tall buildings that have common hallways and so forth, they tend to very frequently be a place where someone can get in and cause an unsafe condition for the residents in there. I think it has been one of the problems of having a lot of people living in a tall building with common areas.

MR. BLUMENTHAL: Just to contrast, Long Branch has always had garden type apartments, as far as public housing goes, with the individual entrances as you described. I couldn't say whether social conditions are better or worse, but certainly we have our problems. So I don't think it's the housing by itself that is the cause.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Design, you mean?

MR. BLUMENTHAL: Yes. I think it has more to do with the income and the social problems.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: I'd like to comment on that particular statement. Some of the older people at Kingsley Arms came to me and said that there were other people who had keys to their building, and they felt unsafe in the building. What has happened is, sometimes some of the parents or grandparents have given keys to some of their youngsters, and they've had keys made.

I know over in Neptune they have the single situation that Ron mentioned with the apartments, but they are the most sought after ones; you really do not have to deal with the safety part, because you're the only one with a key to that building. I was trying to understand what he was saying, but it's a safety problem because sometimes they wait for someone to open the door, and then they'll go right in behind them.

MS. ARNOLD: I can attest to what he says; I live in public housing. We have a very serious problem with security. There, too, you had mentioned about what can be done, I think-- We're under HUD, and the instance right now is that I quite honestly think we're being mismanaged. I think the funds are being-- They're going somewhere, but they're not helping us. I think, if we had more of an eye on who is minding the store, who is handling the funds, I think it would be a big benefit to us.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Well, we've been trying just to-- It has been an ongoing battle for at least two years now, which is to try to -- I hate to use the word -- mandate representation of the residents of public housing on the housing boards. I am a very, very firm believer that nobody understands a problem better than the people who have to live with the issue and the problem on a daily basis, but there always has to be some kind of balance there as well.

That is, to a certain extent, the reason for the Committee coming out here. Because one thing I don't want to have happen is that solutions -- and I use that term very, very loosely -- have been developed in a laboratory called West State Street, in Trenton, and rather than having them be an integrated opportunity, they've been imposed on the communities at large, rather than having them be part of the development of what this is, in the first place, and providing them with a certain opportunity and flexibility to really apply the solution to their own particular environment. I don't think the solution, in the broadest sense of the term with urban centers, can ever be a cookie-cutter approach. I think that is part of what the difficulty is, people are looking for the silver bullet and there isn't one. There are a whole host of things--

If you go back to the golf analogy, no matter how many things have gone wrong, you can usually come back to one thing which is maybe the primary cause. I'm leading up to something, but before I do that--

Go ahead.

MS. COOK: We kind of got off the subject of the single parent watching their children from the top floor. Now, I've lived that and the only way -- because we don't have adequate recreational facilities -- I could keep my children safe and out of trouble was in the house. They had to be in the house when I was at work. Unless I was outside, they were in the house. That's just coming from a single parent.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: I wanted to mention the single parent, too, because that is nothing new, being a single parent. It takes the same qualities to raise a child, as a single parent, as it does with two in the house. But I think somewhere along in the '60s, we kind of lost it because a lot of people just kind of -- it was a get high time, and a lot of people raised themselves. I think, today, what we're really facing is, a lot of those people are parents and grandparents and haven't put anything in theirs. Not being the community that we used to be, where the community reached out and helped, has become a major problem. Again, like I said, it takes the same types of things to raise a child as a single, as it does to have two, because you can have two in the house, and if they're on the wrong channel, it's still not working.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: I'd like to just switch back. I agree with what Carl says, but-- You talked about the laboratory in Trenton and things coming down-- Some of the problems-- Back in the late '60s early '70s, we used to have the Federal Open Grants that came down. The money was unencumbered; you could do what you wanted with it. I'm going back to what the City Manager said, our problem that exist in

the city moneywise is that we cannot -- if we see the problem, you don't say, "Here's a million dollars, do what you want."

Although we do get some aid, I'm talking additional things. When you try and do certain programs there are so many strings, this, that, and the other thing attached, that you're unable to adjust them to your local circumstances. Then you have to sometimes walk away from it and say, "There is no way we can manipulate these particular funds that are available to our problem, because they've been so put together by the Legislature that they're unusable for us." Now, maybe sometimes they're tailored for another district and that's why it's done that way, but that's a problem we find.

If we could get more funds that we could use appropriately and directly, be our own master of our own fate-- Right now, I feel like I'm on welfare. We wait every year for the appropriations to come down from the State, then we can set our budget, rather than sit down-- Now, it felt the same way when I was on the Board of Education for 12 years. We had to wait until you set the budget, and then you would do your thing, rather than say, "This is the kind of money we have and we'll spend it that way." If we knew what we were going to have in the beginning of our budget year, then we're responsible for what we do. But it makes it a lot easier for people to sit back and say, "Well, if we get \$5000 less this year, we'll cut this program out." We need to be more in control of the funds coming down to us and have the Legislature put less strings on it, knowing that you have to have control.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Obviously, because you know the watchword or the buzzword today is accountability.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Right.

SENATOR LaROSSA: But, by the same token, what happens is, in an effort to achieve accountability, sometimes what you do is become such a regulatory morass that you simply choke the

life out of it. Then, in fact, it makes it next to impossible to try to apply the solution to the problem.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Exactly, then it destroys the local people from using their imaginations to do things. You experience the same frustrations on the Board when you do the budget. I went through it, and it's really frustrating.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I want to come back to the regulatory question in a second.

Yes?

MR. BLUMENTHAL: One of the best programs that we have, both in Asbury and in Long Branch, is the Community Development Block Grant which comes from the Federal government. You can use it for a variety of purposes. There are rules, but they're more general in nature. Right now, the Clinton administration is trying to make those rules even more flexible, so that's a program worth duplicating at the State level, I think.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Going back to the regulatory question, you talk about not only the moneys that are already available, but you said-- What was the percentage of nontaxable property?

MAYOR CANDIANO: Over 50 percent, probably 55 percent.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Now, how much of that is municipal, county, State versus nontaxable corporations, as opposed to whatever they may be?

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: Do you know that Alan or Tony?

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Most of our property is nontaxable; it's church property.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: The city was very generous, in its years when it was prosperous, on giving tax-free properties to churches. In fact, the history of the city is, the City of Churches was founded by Methodist ministers, so forth and so on, and that's why you see so many churches in Asbury Park.

Then it grew like topsy as the city prospered, but now they're paying the piper for being so generous because now we don't have a tax base.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: But also public housing comes into play there, too, because they don't pay regular taxes, and they consume a great amount of our property here.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Is that in that 50 percent mix?

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: I would imagine it should be.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: I think the problem with that was allowing some of the cities to sell their rights to it instead of taking the responsibility themselves.

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: This is one of the problems that the suburban areas do not have. They don't have that concentration of taxes and properties.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Well, the cities were very generous at that time -- Tommy certainly was-- I have these memories of childhood and everything, the history and everything, but Tommy has been around a long time; he knows the history. The city was very generous as an urban center in creating all of these entities that are here.

The City of Asbury Park is a microcosm of a larger city -- of Jersey City, of Newark, of New York City -- because you go block to block-- This city changes as you go from block to block, just as in any other urban city. They were very generous in creating these things, but, when things changed, we were left with it, and nobody else picked up the burden. Those are some of the problems that the city has holding the burden, as we've all spoken about, for the suburban towns. We never wanted to pick it-- That's some of the reasons they left. The tax rate went up because you had to support those people who we generously wanted to at that time; attitudes changed -- whatever -- people left the city, and now we're left with the burden. Of course, now the State has to come down and help us

because we don't have the tax base to support the services which the people so generously, years ago, gave to the people who didn't have money.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: You know another problem with that, Bill? We have a responsibility, a social responsibility, to the ones that we have, but as I'm talking with people -- they're coming from New York; they're coming from Newark; they're coming from all over here -- they'll stay here a couple of weeks, establish an address here, and then go on the social service end.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Right.

MR. NUCCIO: For an example of what Deputy Mayor Williams was saying, we need to keep in mind that in addition to the churches and the public housing, we have a very large proportion of nonprofit organizations within the city that are providing services.

Taking this one step further, as the Deputy Mayor is saying, I also teach college in the evening and -- I just happen to teach at Ocean County College -- and several students in one of my classes are caseworkers for the Ocean County Department of Social Services. They made it very clear that their supervisors tell them that before they place anywhere in Ocean County, they should look at the resources in Asbury Park first. I'll be the first to say, when I heard that with my role in Asbury Park, I just about went through the ceiling. So, what we're actually being told is, that we will go to Asbury Park before we will place in our own county.

MR. FEIT: We have something like 3 percent of the county population, but 28 percent of the licensed rooming and boardinghouses in Monmouth County. We have COAH that says that each municipality shall have its fair share of low- and moderate-income housing, but we don't apply that same principle to rooming and boardinghouses meeting the needs of residents of each community, and they end up here, which further depresses property values.

To follow up on what Tony was saying, once the State changed the law with respect to welfare -- that residency was no longer a requirement -- the game began. You have relatives here; it's easier to get welfare here. You get out of jail in a community, and you might stay in that community; no residency was required -- proof of residency. Whereas before, if someone were to get out of jail and come back here and didn't have a previous residency here, they couldn't get welfare here, but now they can. That has increased our load--

What's our monthly count? We're over 300 clients a month.

MR. NUCCIO: Over 300 municipal welfare clients.

MR. FEIT: The State is footing that bill. They recently raised rates for rooms to over \$1000--

MR. NUCCIO: That's \$1020 to one classy boarding home that is waiting for their license as a drug and alcohol program. They have now received a contract with the Department of Human Services for municipal welfare recipients to be placed in that facility at \$1020 a month

MR. ROBERTS: If I could just make a couple of comments to underscore that, in 1980, 17 percent of our population was on some form of public assistance. Now, in 1990, it's up to 22 percent. Almost 23 percent of the population is on some form of public assistance. I think that speaks to this uncontrolled influx of immigration of that type of population.

The other point I wanted to make is that the need for an urban policy on the State level, which is one of my soapbox things I like to talk about, is underscored by the fact that it's so easy for a lot of these State agencies to place people in cities. Whether it's Asbury Park or any other city, it's the path of least resistance. Whether it's low-income housing, or whether it's the Department of Corrections looking for halfway houses for prereleased prisoners, they always seem to

look for the cities that have the motels and the boardinghouses for the homeless families -- or whatever faction of the population you're looking at -- and it's very difficult for the cities to try to get control of that, because every time we try, we get the Fair Housing Act shown to us or brought up to us or some other type of nondiscriminatory type of impediment. So it's a very frustrating thing to get a handle on.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Yes?

MS. ELLIOTT: Before going to Brookdale, I was the Director of Social Services here in Asbury Park.

I'll talk to you later, Tony, about the 300.

At any rate, you have to be very aggressive about placements in Asbury Park. I have a question and then something I'd like to share.

Does the State of New Jersey require planning from municipalities in terms of where the municipality is going in terms of development of property and care of people in the city who have special needs?

SENATOR LaROSSA: No.

MS. ELLIOTT: So the funding is not connected to any planning?

SENATOR LaROSSA: Absolutely.

MS. ELLIOTT: Absolutely not connected?

SENATOR LaROSSA: It is not. Right.

MS. ELLIOTT: Okay, here is my thing. For many years, I sat on State Committees regarding human services, welfare, the placement of people, and housing for people with special needs. As those laws were being changed regarding residency, the people on those Committees were given the impression that dollars to provide people -- to pay people -- to work within municipalities to deal with the issues of special populations and housing would be provided. Obviously, it has not.

The State did this thing in terms of, "Yes, we will pay for the total cost of the client, but the municipality still has to pay for the administration of the program." Now,

to administer the program in Asbury Park requires quite a bit of work, and because we are a magnet area, we have an administration that cannot do all the things it possibly needs to do. There are things that the administration here could do if they had the manpower to lessen the number of people who are being placed here, but the dollars have to come with that.

Considering that the State of New Jersey has statistics on everything that exists here, the State can tell you, through Human Services, how many deinstitutionalized are living in Asbury Park, and how many families here are on AFDC. All of those statistics are in the State.

To me it seems logical that the State would say to an urban area such as Asbury Park, "Give us a plan to address the problems that you have. Give us a plan over a five-year period of what steps you want to take." Then, appropriately fund that municipality to fulfill the plan to address not the superficial issues but the real core issues of what needs to be done to not adjust where the golf ball is going but where it came from in the first place.

Now, that to me is the core of what has to start, in terms of making the change, to help cities like Asbury Park and Long Branch. You know, I could get livid about the whole welfare thing here, because I invested seven years in here. I know what Mr. Nuccio is talking about. This is a magnet area; you have boarding homes; you have easy access here.

We put in a transportation center here hoping to bring people here to the waterfront to shop and to cultural events. What do we get? We get people from Newark. We get people from wherever the train stops to come here for social services, and the municipality cannot afford it.

Okay. So tie the funding to planning based on the identifiable problems and issues. The State has the statistics, and, if they don't, I am sure that the City of Asbury Park will call someone in the State, get them, put them in their plan, and give it back to you.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I'm going to come back to your thing about planning, because that is one of the questions I asked in one of the previous meetings when I said, "If you had a magic wand and could wake up tomorrow and have every dime you needed to implement every program you wanted, could you spend it?" The question is: Is there a plan to do that?

MS. ELLIOTT: There has to be a plan.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I think that because it has, kind of, been a constant chasing of a problem rather than saying, "If we can't do everything, where do we start?" There has to be some place where you start. I would rather do one thing well and accomplish an end and a goal than to do 100 things half-assed. Because, ultimately, you just -- I think to a certain extent -- compound the problems, because you haven't really solved anything. You aren't getting-- Nothing is really changing. I think the plan idea -- and I'll talk about that as part of the initiative a little bit later -- I think you're absolutely dead on the money with that.

Yes?

MR. BLUMENTHAL: As far as the planning goes, once again, the Community Development Block Grant is one of the Federal programs for which both Asbury and Long Branch have to prepare a plan. It used to be called the Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy; now it has become much broader. But it includes the questions that you were asking about special needs populations, housing, and resources. Although the resources in this case are Federal resources, again, you might be able to piggyback on those plans.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I just want to digress for a second--

Senator Palaia?

SENATOR PALAIA: Sorry, Mr. Chairman, you kept me late at our session yesterday; it was your fault.

SENATOR LaROSSA: What can I tell you? Those things happen. (laughter) Senator Palaia tells me with his years of experience in the Senate, at one time, he was as tall as I am, and that's what I have to look forward to over the next 20 years. (laughter)

SENATOR PALAIA: This is what happens to you in politics. (laughter)

I want to thank you for coming here, Senator and the Committee, really. We appreciate it in the 11th district, especially Asbury Park.

SENATOR LaROSSA: This is a very lively group of folks so far. This is good.

SENATOR PALAIA: That's very good. They have good suggestions, good ideas, and their only thought is the betterment of Asbury Park. I will vouch for that.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: Senator Palaia, what you should have said to him is, "When you are a concerned citizen in politics, that's what happens. (laughter)

SENATOR PALAIA: Thank you. I could have said other things to him, but I have bills up before his Committee. (laughter)

SENATOR LaROSSA: I'm sorry, yes?

MS. COOK: Senator LaRossa, I probably missed it, where did you say you were from?

SENATOR LaROSSA: Trenton. I was born in the City of Trenton. Just as a point of information -- which is a good momentary digression -- I spent six years as a classroom teacher in New Jersey. I also spent 10 years as an international educational program developer in 48 states, every province in Canada, and half of Central and South America. But all of the programs the company I worked for that we put in, were almost exclusively in state capitols, all of which are, obviously, urban centers. We worked very, very heavily with 94142 and, also, had a hand in actually working with some of

the pilot sites on the original CETA legislation -- NJTPA. So, as far as the populations that I have dealt with, it has been that through my entire life. It has been a matter of seeing these things firsthand. Believe me, no matter what you think you've seen, I could tell you stories that would literally make your hair stand on end.

MS. COOK: We could top you. (laughter)

SENATOR LaROSSA: But the point is, there is a difference between having a perception or an image of what a problem is, than there is in terms of knowing what the genesis is of it on a firsthand basis. I mean, I could have written the initiative 10 months ago.

MS. COOK: Right.

SENATOR LaROSSA: But I didn't, because no matter what you think you know today, a week from now it changes.

MS. COOK: That's right.

SENATOR LaROSSA: But the encouraging thing is, or discouraging thing is, it has really been incredibly consistent in terms of the identification of the problems.

I want to just move on a little avenue for a second. I want to talk about something that has come up here a couple of times, in terms of almost a self-determination. The ability that, wherever the money is coming from, to kind of have your hands unmanacled, to be able to try to apply solutions.

Let me go back to that 50 percent tax exempt property question. Of the remaining 50 percent of the taxable property, how much of it is usable? Is that a problem?

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: You mean buildable?

SENATOR LaROSSA: Buildable, usable--

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Some of our problems are that we have very small lots. You know when we lose a house -- it decays, has to be torn down, you have a fire -- we've lost on a 50 or 75 by 100-foot lot and it's not buildable in today's schemes. That's some of our problem. We had looked at how do

you clear an area to promote new housing. It costs so much money. Sure the city has condemnation powers, but where do you get the money to buy up the property, demolish it, and build a project similar to what you see in Newark? What was the one that they were doing? There have been a couple of ones done in Newark, townhouses, so forth and so on. We're spinning our wheels because we don't have the financial resources, even though, we may have the desire to go in that particular direction -- the low-density housing, so forth and so on.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: Bill, we also have a lot of abandoned houses, and we do not have the resources to take them down.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Right, abandoned, right. To take care of all the problems--

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: If we could take them down, we might have something to make marketable.

SENATOR PALAIA: The problem they've had is what Al brought my attention to, Mr. Chairman. There was some funding for demolition, and Asbury did not get or didn't get as much as they really need. That money is directly needed toward everything they're trying to do here. They have to have the demolition money. The money has not been cut, but it's not nearly enough. What is it, \$25,000?

MR. FEIT: No, \$50,000 per community. That's the max that you can get. That's one building

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: There is other money available for demolition. That comes from the Community Redevelopment Fund, I think it is-- I mean the casino-- There was a bill that was passed and signed by the Governor that created a sum of money in that fund for demolition. That hasn't been all used yet. I was talking to the Assemblyman from Atlantic County, and he just said, "Well, you have to make application for it. They have to come and make another application for demolition money. I'll get you the information who you make it to," and some money is still there.

SENATOR PALAIA: We'll look into that. Is that DCA, Tom? The DCA funding?

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: No, it's casino--

SENATOR PALAIA: Well, casino, but does it come through DCA?

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: It comes through DCA. They control it.

MR. GORCEY: I was just going to say that Asbury has a disproportionate share of abandoned and dilapidated buildings. When you talk about rateables and collection for reserves for nontaxable items, which of course, as you know, doubles, then, come full swing around, we get the State aid from you. It's really ridiculous that there is only \$250,000 available for the entire State of New Jersey of demolition moneys. Further to that, you know there have been communities who have received money from the treasury -- discretionary funds -- for the demolition. In Asbury, as well as in Long Branch, they've never been fortunate to be able to receive that, and there is never money to get rid of those structures. What that does is it deteriorates the neighborhoods in Asbury -- the single-family neighborhoods. If you own a house next to a dilapidated or boarded-up property, that property causes a strain on the public safety -- your fire -- on your cleaning -- cutting the grass. The guy who lives next to that can't refinance his house to put a deck on or improve it, and it causes a cancer throughout the neighborhood.

So I don't know why there cannot be any money available. In Asbury, in a motel, they'll pay \$1200 for a room to warehouse a family of four, yet there is no money for these dilapidated structures. Really, the State-- You're paying for that anyhow with the State aid that you're giving us, so it doesn't really make much sense that you wouldn't do anything.

The other thing, to further answer your question, Asbury Park has a disproportionate share of properties that are in bankruptcy or owned by banks that do not take care of the

properties and do not pay any taxes. Those properties get dilapidated -- they're not fixed up -- and then they're left there. The city is stuck with them and has to spend a lot of resources and moneys to clean them up, board them up, and do things of that sort. So there should be something looked into that area also, to make it a lot easier to either rehabilitate those houses, so that a family could come in, buy it, and use it, instead of the way it is done now.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Where I was going with the question when I said about how much of the balance is commercial or taxable, whatever the State is out, they're doing; whatever the county is out, they're doing. Obviously, you still come back to the local property taxpayer as where the overwhelming burden continues to exist. That burden, ultimately, gets reduced by whatever the rateables are that are in the community in the first place, which is driven by whatever the commercial part of the municipality is. So my question really is as it relates to -- and it was one of the very first comments that was made today -- commerce. The question is: What are -- we've heard about housing, the education, and so on -- the impediments to developing the rateables? What are the impediments to commerce here in Asbury Park?

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Perception.

MAYOR CANDIANO: Perception.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Perception becomes a reality.

SENATOR LaROSSA: We're right back to this.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Absolutely, that's why I think I'm going to use the word perception. The problem, at least locally, that we have is perception of what is going on in the city. I think if you ride around you're going to see that. You're going to see mixed neighborhoods, but the perception-- If you were to speak to residents outside the city limits as to what is going on in here, and then what is actually happening here; two different things are occurring.

I don't know how you can change that because crime is reported honestly, and, if you live in a suburb such as Allenhurst that has 1000 souls, how much crime can they have? We have 17,000 souls in our city, and we're going to have a heck of a lot more crime, so obviously, there is going to be a higher percentage. But when it's printed in the paper, nobody wants to go over the bridge into Asbury Park because there is crime over there; it's only a mental barrier. It's a bridge, you know? People who live over the city line think that they're living in another world.

SENATOR LaROSSA: But if you have a property which is lying fallow, why isn't it being developed? Is it regulatory, is it environmental, is it foreclosure, is it perception, or is it all of those things; is it a combination? What's the impediment to having that property be put back on the rolls?

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Are you talking commercial? You should probably address them commercial, residential, and then beachfront, because they're three separate--

SENATOR LaROSSA: All right. Let's talk about that. Because, again, that is one of the reasons Asbury Park is unique in the urban definition because of the beachfront.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: One of the big problems, Senator, is that banks have not felt they want to invest money in the City of Asbury Park. In fact, I hate to use the term, but I think to a great degree mostly every bank redlines Asbury Park when people come there for money to buy homes or even to just open businesses. We're in that redlining structure and we're trying to get out of it, but we haven't been that successful. That's where the whole answer is: The money for commerce is not here because the banks won't back it.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay.

Yes, go ahead.

MS. ALTHENBERG: I have a business in Asbury Park. We have a piano store, and I don't have any problems getting customers into Asbury Park, no problem at all. But the problem

I have is the derelicts coming in, panhandling for money. Someone put their fist through my front window, and that chases people away. I cannot conduct large ticketed items or large ticketed vending with the panhandlers and the derelicts coming in. They scare the customers away.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: Like that little old lady.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: That's based on what? The laws, you know, the problems that we have in society today, where the laws and the court decisions made it so you just can't-- You have to accept the people who may not be socially acceptable to us, and it becomes a police problem of dealing with it. In some ways, we have to come back to reality and change the laws, so that the police are able to deal with these problems that the businessmen have.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Let me--

I'm sorry.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: I have one question, and I ask this because I used to work out at Marlboro State Hospital. I have a real problem with letting people out who are unable to function on their own.

SENATOR PALAIA: Or supervised.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: Exactly. I think that's the kind of person that the piano store would run into, because I run into the same ones. You're trying to handle it in a mild type manner, and you're not reaching them. I really can't understand how that type of person, whenever they're released-- It would seem to me that you would only release the ones who have the potential of functioning on their own. That doesn't seem to be the case.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: The problem there is that whoever does the examination indicates that they are ready for community living, so they release them. But I take your viewpoint that a great number of them-- My office is just around the corner, just across the street from your place, and

we have the same problem. They come in, they'll ask for a dollar, and if you don't give them a dollar, they'll call you all kinds of names and everything else like that. So it's not good. But I think the State psychiatric hospitals should reexamine what they're doing when they release these people to the community, because they're hurting a lot of communities. That discourages a lot of investment in Asbury Park because we have so many deinstitutionalized people here.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Sure.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I think somebody said this before -- about teaching the class and-- What was the statement that you made?

MR. NUCCIO: The caseworkers from the Department of Social Services in Ocean County have been instructed that, before they place within their own county, they are to reach out to Asbury Park to look into the boarding home situation and to the facilities here. We have become the proverbial dumping ground not only for other areas in Monmouth County, but Ocean County. We even have the American Red Cross, when they need to have an emergency placement for some type of catastrophe, the first place they reach out to is Asbury Park. We need to keep in mind that we have, right now, over 700 boarding home beds. We have another 350 RHCF beds; we have roughly 75 motel rooms that are used for welfare recipients, and another, I believe it's 24 beds for residential group home facilities. So we are well over 1100 beds in capacity just for transient populations coming through.

MR. ROBERTS: Where no money is spent in town.

MR. NUCCIO: Where no money is spent in town. We even have one residential health care facility in Asbury Park, which has a population of 163, and we know for a fact that they have recruited from as far away as California and Puerto Rico.

Before I came back to Asbury Park as Director of Social Services, I was the Director of the Mens Shelters Programs at Bellevue Hospital. When I hit Asbury Park again

and made my first visit to this particular residential treatment facility, I found two of the people that I knew from Bellevue Hospital. So we have become the proverbial dumping ground for not only Monmouth County and surrounding communities, but other areas of New Jersey and parts of the country.

When we talk about the deinstitutionalized, as the Assemblyman said, we do get a significant number coming out of Marlboro State Hospital, who are probably coming back to their own communities. We won't question that some of these people are coming back to Asbury Park because this is where they may have resided. The problem that we find is that there are no follow-up services within Asbury Park. The State is releasing -- they are releasing back to the community, but providing no services at all as aftercare or follow up.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Is that a separate issue from what the caseworkers are doing in terms of referrals, or are they referring deinstitutionalized patients to Asbury Park?

MR. NUCCIO: They're referring some deinstitutionalized, and they're referring welfare recipients -- both emergency welfare and AFDC clients.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Because what I'm hearing you say is -- and forgive me, this is really a quantum leap and a digression -- something along the lines of the RCAs as it relates to meeting Mount Laurel II as a possibility. I don't know how you go about implementing that, but what you have is, you end up again having to-- I hate to use the term dumping ground, but for lack of a better choice of words, you have a disproportionate burden being placed on the global infrastructure that you have here. In fact, what is happening is, because somebody else doesn't want to pay attention to it, they have found an easy way to, kind of, turn their back on it and not have to pay attention to it. I just mentioned to Hannah--

I don't know, but again, the way you solve problems is to begin to identify them first. It's a very, very loosely formed idea. I wish I had the wisdom of Solomon and patience of Job. Some day they may get elected, but I don't think it's going to be in our lifetime.

I'm sorry, go ahead.

MS. ELLIOTT: I think it's important in the City of Asbury Park that the fact be very clear that the physical redevelopment of this municipality is tied to the rehabilitation of people in this municipality and social services.

Now, what happens within the city itself is, there is a need to provide services, but you don't want to create a self-perpetuating bureaucracy where the more social services you provide a municipality the more people are drawn to it. There has to be a plan set up here where there are set limits in terms of -- already that's happening through Senator Palaia's bill -- how many boarding home beds can be in a place. But, there has to be a line drawn in the sand saying this is what Asbury Park can do. We will deal with everyone who is here right now, and we need funding to deal with those issues appropriately. It should be based on a plan, not just funding.

Yes, we have deinstitutionalized. One of the problems we have with the deinstitutionalized is not that they are allowed out on the streets to bother store owners -- because they have a right to be there and you will never stop that; these are human beings, and they have the right to walk around the city as anyone else does -- but there needs to be programming for them. There needs to be some initiatives within the system that deals with mental health in Monmouth County for some type of constructive, occupational therapy, and some type of rehabilitation.

When you release someone from a mental institution, stick them in a boarding home and say, "All right, you've got a bed, three meals a day, and somebody to wash your laundry," that is not enough. These people have greater needs beyond that, and that is why they end up out on the streets panhandling, going in people's garbage, and bothering storekeepers, because the whole deal is not met there.

I must say this: When these things came about originally, there was a lot of rhetoric on the part of the bureaucrats in the State who said, "Yes, we're going to do this, but we're going to help you. We're going to give you this; we're going to give you that," and the "give you's" never got here. The support never got here. Once they got in beds and had housing -- which is only part of existing in a meaningful way in life -- it was all let go.

That has been a problem in this municipality not for five years, not for ten years, but for fifteen years. It is growing, and the longer it goes unaddressed, the more difficult it will be to make the adjustment to getting this municipality back on track to being a place where people want to buy homes and want to do business.

SENATOR LaROSSA: What's the unemployment rate in Asbury Park.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: About 9 percent?

MR. ROBERTS: It's up closer to 12 percent.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Yes, closer to 12 percent, now.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Are those permanent residents or does the county factor transients into that?

MS. ELLIOTT: But they don't count. The transients don't count, because once you've been unemployed for so long you're no longer a part of the statistic.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: You can't track them.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: If I could amplify Ms. Elliot's comments, why the people wander the streets is because the people are being housed in old hotels which were designed for you to come down to the boardwalk, sleep for your eight hours, go out of the hotel, walk the boardwalk, stay for two days, and go home. The design of these facilities, where the people are in there, are not to house people 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, in all kinds of weather. There is no place for these people to go, so they end up wandering the streets. If you go out to Marlboro State Hospital, what do you find? You find nice roomy grounds, and people can go where they want to go, so forth and so on.

Those are some of the problems we run into, because it's like being locked in a cage. There is no place for people to go. Although, when everybody comes out and the State investigates, it meets all the minimum criteria: is it clean, is it fire safe, is that, or is it the other thing? But is it safe for them mentally? It's not. The people can't stay in these places; they have to get out. You couldn't stay in a room or in these facilities for seven days a week and not walk outside, because there is nothing there. It's like being trapped in a jail, really.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: The difference being on grounds, they have a gymnasium for you--

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: There are no facilities in these places.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: --they have jobs for you. There is the Jigger Shop where you can go shop. There is a nice little pond out there if you just want to-- They do their own growing of vegetables and things. There is a lot for you to get involved with.

We keep saying here, we do not make the money for the individuals who are here, but they're our responsibility, because they'll come and hang in my store all day, and I have

to go out apologizing to people for them panhandling them. You know it's difficult enough to get customers in town, then when they have to be subjected to that and then get cursed out if they don't give any money; it just chases people.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Are there more people than jobs, or more jobs than people?

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: More people than rooming and boardinghouses.

MR. GORCEY: There are more people than jobs in general. You know the other problem is that every time the municipality -- and they try very hard to close up some of these places because they're substandard, and they're not adequately proper to house these people-- The State comes in, somebody from the State, and you throw more and more money at these places; it's unbelievable.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: We don't have any place to put them that's the problem.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Let me just step back for a second and just, again, digress for a moment. Part of the problem is whether these people who have been released are indigent, and part of the problem is that they are almost nomads to a certain extent. There is no sense, if you will, that they belong to a community at large. I think part of the descent of belonging to that community is they need to have some way of having a vested interest in what is going on in that community, which goes back to hearing all of the systemic causes.

One of the things-- Let me give my idiosyncrasy, because I think a lot of it goes back to employment or lack of employment. Because if I pay your way and you know your way is being paid -- and, in fact, it's somebody else's money -- but if the dollar is coming out of your pocket, maybe you now have more of a vested interest in what is going on, and that all begins to start to change part of this. Because if, in fact, you have always been cared for in the institution, or the

welfare situation, it has always been somebody else's responsibility. Now, we're talking about trying to find some way-- You know, it's not going to be throwing a light switch overnight, you're talking about something--

What did you say, 15 years just here -- let alone how many multicultural problems that exist as well. But if, in fact, we begin to create an environment where the vested interest is because that person is now a part of the community -- not just living there but working there -- when that tax dollar that goes to support that person is coming out of their pocket, then maybe they'll begin to take more of a vested interest, than wandering aimlessly. So I don't know, my own personal idiosyncrasy is that one of the major impediments to all of the problems is finding some outlet, and one of the outlets has got to be employment.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: That might be true, Senator--

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: But that would be the rooming and boardinghouse's responsibility, who is making the money off of them.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Yes, Carl, it might be true what he's saying, but the fact is, that is not a criteria for release. If a criteria for release for this person was that they could find a job and do something, then they wouldn't have eight hours to wander into Carl's shop. They would be doing something productive, and then they would go back to their rooms, or wherever we find our domicile to be at.

MS. ELLIOTT: The fact of the matter is that the State has deemed all of them unemployable, that's why they are receiving SSI. They are all deemed unemployable by a doctor. If they were employable they would not be receiving SSI. They would not be living in these boarding homes. They would be forced into employment, because the welfare system says that, if you are employable, you must seek employment and work.

SENATOR LaROSSA: And you have no way of drawing a line in the sand that says, "We can't take any more," you just have to take them?

MS. ELLIOTT: That's right.

MR. GORCEY: Every time they try not to take them-- If they close up a place in Asbury or somewhere like that, some Division of the State comes and gives them a grant for \$300,000 or \$400,000 to put in sprinkler systems or -- \$700,000, I'm sorry -- rehab the property, to put beautiful new siding on.

MS. ELLIOTT: Let me put it more clearly. If 10 people got off the train right now from Newark, went into the welfare department in Asbury Park and said, "We are homeless. We need housing, house us," that department must issue funds to house those 10 people immediately. If they do not, those 10 people will go downstairs, in the Asbury Park municipal building, pick up the telephone, dial an 800 number to the Department of Human Services in Trenton and say, "We're in Asbury Park. We are homeless. They have refused to assist us." Immediately, the State of New Jersey will call that welfare office and say, "John Doe is downstairs in your municipal building. He says he is homeless. He says you will not house him. We are paying his whole care amount. You find housing for him right now."

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: Send them to Ocean County.
(laughter)

MS. ELLIOTT: That's what I would do, okay? I would say, "Fine," because, actually, you do have the right to find housing anywhere you find it, but you have to have personnel to do that, and you don't have it. But you have to find housing for that person immediately, so that is why that line cannot be drawn in the sand.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Does the total population remain reasonably constant throughout the year, or does it fluctuate tremendously?

MS. ELLIOTT: It fluctuates. It fluctuates because there are more in the summer.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay. What is, if you would characterize, the permanent population here?

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: The census said what, 17,000?

MR. ROBERTS: A little under 17,000, Senator.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: About 16,500.

MR. ROBERTS: And it has stayed that way for over the last 30 or 40 years.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: The census-- Actually what happened with the census is that they missed a lot of people. They didn't hit a lot of our low-cost housing over there on the west side. They never went in there and did a tally

SENATOR LaROSSA: I really do need an answer on one question. We keep hitting around it and I need this for a perspective. I'm going to go back to that 50 percent number again, in terms of tax exempt property. That's one of the highest numbers in the State, there is no question about that. You say a large percentage of that amount are churches or nonprofits?

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Nonprofits, not churches. You have the Housing Authority that has a great bit of property in Asbury Park, which, as you know, the Federal law does not allow you to tax them. But they give an in lieu of tax payment, I think, that's \$15,000.

Is that what they give you now, \$15,000 a year?

MAYOR CANDIANO: I'm not sure.

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: We're cracking the books now over it.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: They give for all their buildings. They consume a lot of land and they also consume a lot of services.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Right. That's what I was getting to. Of the, again, the nonprofits versus the churches -- I'm not going to pick on the churches, that's the last thing I'm

going to do -- I just need to get a perspective, again, with regard to the community as a whole. If this were 30 years ago and obviously everything is up -- the Convention Center and the commerce is very vibrant -- how much of the property that the churches own or the nonprofits own right now is just simply, quite frankly, they really don't have the population need for the amount of property they have?

In other words, you have property that could be put to work, not only municipal property, but in fact, maybe the church property -- tax exempt property that could, in fact, be put to work. But, because it is tax exempt-- Do they have more than they really need, maybe that's the word I'm looking for? If, in fact, some of that property were marketable and were made available to the tax rolls, does that have the potential to be more attractive to developers to come in and do some things? Is there enough land that is not tax exempt to be able to bring developers in, to bring people in, to begin to help also with some of the tax burden?

Because if only 20 percent of your population is paying that burden-- It's like a bank: 80 percent of the business is done by 20 percent of their customers. It seems to me that an urban center is not too far removed. Whatever the other sources are when you come to the community as a whole, the overwhelming percentage of what it takes to run the community is being provided by an underwhelming percentage of the population that lives there.

If you're talking about perception and you need to bring people in, they have to have a reason to come in here. Is there enough property for either industrial development -- for the churches or nonprofits selling it off -- is there enough opportunity for commerce to be developed at all to help lessen the burden on some of the individual property owners, the individual homeowners? That's a tough question, I know, but--

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: There are quite a number of empty lots, many of which are a good size. The market is not there for them.

SENATOR LaROSSA: But are they residential or are they commercial? That's what I'm trying to distinguish.

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: Residential, primarily residential, but some commercial also. But there just is not the demand for it.

MR. GORCEY: Well, you have the whole beachfront, there is nothing there. There is a mile by--

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: But that's mostly owned though.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Off the top of my head, most of the church properties have churches on them. You may be thinking there may be some which churches do own, some other properties-- To my knowledge, most of the properties are church-related, so they would have to tear the temple or house of worship down in order to convert it over to something else. So that's the problem that we have.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: That's actually the only way they become tax exempt, it must be used for churches. Say, for instance, a church owns a house here and they rent that house out, they have to pay taxes on that. But I don't know that if the churches-- Churches move out of Asbury Park. We all know that churches move out.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Right, they're moving now.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: As soon as they move out, some other church moves in. Is this a bona fide church or not, we don't know. But they move in so they acquire the same tax exempt status.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Plus the fact you can acquire tax exempt status on other areas.

Alan, wasn't there somebody who was applying for tax exempt status that we were concerned about in a couple of areas, because they're church-related groups? Right?

MR. FEIT: Yes, well there were a lot of them--

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Berkeley Carteret, for example. The people who bought it might consider themselves being a church and go for tax exempt status. Because the tax laws are so widely structured that some are-- Yes, they're a church or church-related, but those are some of the problems we feel we're going to experience.

COUNCILMAN CASSEL: Well, many of the churches are hurting also, especially the larger, well-established churches. They can't find parishioners. They've opened up-- I know the Methodist Church over on First and Grand -- they've opened up two, three, four, five different congregations. Essentially, they're all fighting for a very small pie is what has happened.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: I was going to say that's not the norm with a lot of the others.

MR. FEIT: I think that a different question and answer maybe needs to be looked at. Whether you have the right mix of commercial or residential, commercial is cyclical -- history, inflationary times, that's what happens with that. I think what we need to do in New Jersey is look at the burden we've placed on property owners and the fact that renters don't really have a stake in that burden at all. Now, it is true that landlords will pass some of those rents on. But I think we need to change and get away from the burden on property owners as almost the exclusive donor to local governments, to something that is more broad based and more evenly taxed -- for lack of a better word.

For instance, Pennsylvania has a very low property tax, but they have an income tax that is dedicated revenue back to the municipalities based on the amount of tax paid, so that renters are part of that mix as well. They contribute to the revenues of the local community, where they escape it now because they're burdened by the local property tax here. We

have the highest local property tax rate in the county. It's in part because we pick up that burden of all those nonprofits who require services, particularly, police services, trash services, public works types of things and, yet, don't do anything for the city to recover those.

I harken back to the fact that we still carry more than our fair share in low- and moderate-income housing, in rooming and boardinghouses. Again, the number that is startling to me is 3 percent of the population, 28 percent of the licensed rooming and boardinghouses. But I really think in New Jersey, unless you get a whole handle and change the way local governments are funded away from the property tax, we're going to continue to have problems.

There is legislation in the State Assembly to put a limit on the number of nonprofits, or the percentage of nonprofit land, in a community -- Assemblyman Bodine, I think -- it limits it at something on the order of 12 percent or 18 percent. That would help us. It doesn't automatically wipe out those above that level, there is a grandfather thing -- sort of like Senator Palaia's bill on the rooming and boardinghouses where it's grandfathered down, a moratorium. I think those things can help us. That's where I think we need to go.

SENATOR PALAIA: Didn't you have a bill in there, Mr. Chairman? I thought you had a bill dealing with that concept.

SENATOR LaROSSA: About the-- Which one?

SENATOR PALAIA: About the nonprofits. Remember the State was using up a lot of the territory in your district.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I did. That's being revisited with a vengeance.

SENATOR PALAIA: Okay. Because I thought that was pretty good.

SENATOR LaROSSA: What you have to understand is we refer to the period from the first of March to the end of June in Trenton as the ox goring season. The question is: Whose ox is going to get gored?

I want to just say and ask two questions -- I'd be very interested to know-- A lot of the commentary is enlightening, quite frankly, because it is really things that we have not heard in seven other cities, so this is very interesting. One of the things that just dawned on me -- I think sometimes you have to hit me over the head with a two-by-four; that's part of the Italian thing that Senator Palaia and I say you've got to get your attention first -- is that Asbury Park in terms of its history was not, and correct me if I'm wrong, an industrial center per se, as per the Jersey City, the Trenton, the Camden, the Newark; that it is really a resort area per se. So, when you look at the traditional, if you will, infrastructure that you're dealing with, you're looking at a very, very different infrastructure. Is that a reasonable--

MAYOR CANDIANO: That's correct.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: I have a difference, because all the commerce was geared into here too.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: Okay, but it wasn't industrial though.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: You had all your car dealers here-- All the car dealers were here, Sears and Roebucks, Steinbachs.

SENATOR LaROSSA: But this is why we come here. You come here because you think industrial or you think urban--

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: It was never industrial.

SENATOR LaROSSA: It was never industrial. It took me an hour and 45 minutes to have that sink in, but at least it sank in.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: The people came; the businesses came -- the businesses made (indiscernible).

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: I think what we're all overlooking is the history of Asbury Park. Many years ago, Asbury Park was the commercial hub of the county. Then the malls came along

and it hurt us there. We had a great number of what we called locked factories, where pieces came in and were assembled in these factories. We had a great number of those in the city. There is only one left in the city and it's one over here (indicating). They're all gone.

But most of all, we were known as a resort city. In the summertime, we would have maybe 200,000 or 300,000 people here in this small, mile-square town, using our beaches and our hotels. At that time, we had about 10 hotels that were good hotels. They no longer exist.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: They were quality hotels of the time.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: That's right. So that's how Asbury Park was years ago. But as the changes came, and as the great number of people complained about taxes, we started to lose people. They just moved out of the city; businesses went out to the malls; the locked factories no longer exist here; and nobody comes down to use our beaches.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay, we're getting close to wrapping up, and I just want to focus in on a couple of things. I'd be very interested in knowing--

Go ahead.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: I'm just getting ready to run myself, but one area that I've been working on that we really have a serious problem with: 25 percent of the juvenile crime for the whole county comes out of Asbury Park. If you look from east of Main Street, there are no alternatives for the kids; there is not a swing; there is not a sliding board. If you go in the west side-- We just got notification from the school that we had two or three accidents -- the stuff is so old and outdated, they had to take children to the hospital.

We really need some help recreationwise, so we can offer some alternatives to the children. I know we had a problem with Green Acres some years ago, and they have not

participated since. But what is happening is the children of today are paying for mistakes that were made way before they got here. I don't know how you can do it, because everytime we try to get funding it seems to be very, very difficult. But for children of the ages three, four, five to ten years old there is absolutely nothing. In Ocean Township, they were going there to play basketball, they took the baskets down. They were going to Allenhurst because of a lack of things here, and there are an awful lot of children here. It's either we pay now for them or you pay later.

SENATOR LaROSSA: That goes along with what I said: What's more expensive, the cost of doing something or the cost of doing nothing? So, again, you think long term--

Please bear with me for just a second, I would be very interested in a couple of things. I'm going to throw this out to you, and I would appreciate not a response now, but I'd like to see this in writing because, obviously, we have a lot of it being transcribed as well.

I would be very interested to know, in Asbury Park, of any specific State program that is working. Only because, if there is a dichotomy which says that there is something that is working, then maybe we can look at a comparison between what isn't and see what the distinction between the two is. I heard a lot of things of issues that are really hamstringing the municipality, but is there something that is working? The reason I say that, going back to the realization that I had two minutes ago, which was: Wait a minute, this is not your traditional urban center, because it was not a factory city. It was not a steel city, it is a resort city. So the point is that if, in fact, everything has been geared this way, then what is there that, in fact, is working. There has to be a thread there someplace. I don't know what it is, but I think it's worth looking at that. You have to start with something that works and build on that, and maybe we can see where the holes are in the other thing. That's number one.

Number two is: I would be very interested in knowing, specifically -- no matter what your function is -- any regulations that you feel can be loosened, modified, adjusted, repealed -- whatever word -- that, in fact, will make your environment more manageable.

I want to go back to something that, I think, Alan said before in talking about the number of people in terms of renters. Just to give you a very interesting piece of information -- this goes to part of trying to solve the kinds of problems -- there are 2.7 million property tax payers in New Jersey. There are 3.5 million income tax payers in New Jersey. Effectively, what that means is that there are approximately 800,000 people who receive the benefit of property taxes but don't pay any. Think about that for a second. These are the kinds of things that, kind of, reinforce the fact-- Yes, part of it is an offset in terms of maybe factoring it into the rent and so on, but these are the kinds of realizations that we need to try to justify some of the changes that need to take place. What we've heard today I think also reinforces what I said before, that solving the problems in the urban centers is certainly not a cookie-cutter approach, and, for sure, that is something I heard today that this is not a cookie-cutter approach.

The last question that I have for you -- and let me go back to the churches: How involved -- forget about the property they own -- and active are the churches in participating in the community?

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: They're not.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Well, you have to realize one thing, Senator. Years ago, most of our churches -- especially on the "avenue of churches" we call Grand Avenue -- serviced people who didn't live in Asbury Park, mostly people from the surrounding areas who came to worship here. But that no longer exists, so they are not that active in the affairs of the City of Asbury Park.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: There is a movement that is starting in the churches to come back in -- I talked with two or three ministers in the course of this past year. But, as Tommy says, the churches have been very inactive because of the movement of the population out -- all the populations -- whether it's the black churches or the white churches. The people have tended to move out of the city and not bring their resources and the church back in. I can speak more to my churches that I am familiar with. Joyce may have a different opinion, but that is my overall view of what has happened.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: I want to make a point on that. When I was growing up in Asbury Park I went to Mount Pisgah. They had all types of programs for the youth. We used to go to the Banks Avenue gym and we had activities going on there. I really do not find an awful lot going on here now.

SENATOR PALAIA: Saint Peter Claver was good.

DEPUTY MAYOR WILLIAMS: We used to have dances there. But you go to a Council meeting, you very rarely find them there; you go to a Board of Ed meeting, you very rarely find them there; so they're not really in tune with what is really going on here.

COUNCILMAN HARRINGTON: What happened is we became a transient community, really. You talk about the 20 percent of the population who own their houses, the core people have stayed here -- have stayed here as residents. Tommy, myself, the Mayor, we've been here a long time.

A lot of the population is very, very transient and that has been part of the problem that we've had. We're trying to anchor people back down and say, "It's a good community to live in, put your roots here, and continue to stay here." If we can do that, that will start to change what is happening. But when people are transient, as we've all discussed, they have no vested interest in it. They just filter through the schools; they're in and out. The schools have problems keeping

their-- They get lambasted for having low marks, but they're not tracking the same kids; they come in and they come out. We have a very, very transient population. It's very difficult to do things sometimes in a city of this type.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay, two more and then we're going to wrap it up.

MR. BLUMENTHAL: I think we have an opportunity here in Monmouth County because our cities are small, probably smaller than they are in any of the other urban counties in the State. The opportunity is regionalization. The burdens of social services, which Asbury suffers and Long Branch to a lesser degree, cannot be solved unless the other towns in the county pitch in, in some way. I would recommend incentives to do that.

Now, in Long Branch, we're trying to team up with the surrounding suburbs to work on economic development. The Urban Enterprise Zone, which Assemblyman Smith worked so hard on and which your Committee was in favor of, is another example where we're trying to cooperate. We've worked with the county and with Middletown in terms of providing housing services. So I think that those kinds of connections have to be reinforced. Anything that you can do at the State level, if it doesn't encourage that cooperation, I don't think will ultimately be successful.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I'm sorry, let me--
Okay.

MS. ELLIOTT: My last thing, and this really has to do with employment training and education, 67 percent of the population in Asbury Park's households do not own automobiles, and most of the jobs are out on industrial highways and away from the city. So it is very difficult to get transportation to employment. In terms of my current employer, Brookdale, we have issues concerning transportation for people who want to pursue an associates degree or training through the Community

College. They can start here, at the Learning Center in Asbury Park, but eventually they have to go to Lincroft. We do some shuttle services out of our own coffers. But as far as transportation to training and education and then to employment, it is very difficult for many of the residents of Asbury Park to get that transportation.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Yes, last one.

MS. LESINSKI: The only thing I wanted to mention before we were through is that one thing that is successful in this town, and has been around for about three years now, is the Neighborhood Watch Program, and the cooperation with the police department. Recently, one of the police officers underwent training for a community policing program. He is all ready to go, but there are no funds available for the police department to get that going. That involves forming partnerships with other businesses, let's say, the power company, and things like that, to help neighborhoods try to solve some of their problems and fight crime; it has been very successful. We have a large population of people who are trying to help, and it builds morale.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I just want to thank everyone for being here. I will say that it has definitely been enlightening, and it has been, indeed, very, very different. Because, again, part of the difficulty, as is always the case, is we tend to-- If you hear the same thing over and over and over, you begin to stereotype not only the solution, but you begin to stereotype the problem as well, until you realize, wait a minute, this is a different set of circumstances. As I said, then it goes back to the laboratory on West State Street, and I don't think the opportunity to hear what we heard today really would have occurred.

I genuinely thank you for opening my eyes, but you just increased the magnitude of my job. But the good news is, at least, I think I have a much better understanding of just

how unique and how very, very different this situation and environment is. But as I said, I guess, in fact, this really is one large city from the George Washington Bridge down to the Ben Franklin, and the Delaware Memorial Bridge. It has to ultimately inure to everyone's benefit, because the bottom line is if we create a system of winners and losers, somebody gets hurt. If we create a system of winners, it is very hard for anybody to walk away when everybody wins. I think that is what we need to try for.

Thank you very much. We're going to do the tour. I am sure that my eyes will be opened even wider.

MAYOR CANDIANO: Yes, I think so.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you very much.

(FOCUS GROUP CONCLUDED)

