

Government Services Committee
Sullivan County Legislature
Public Comment
Thursday, August 4, 2022, at 9:30 a.m.

Good morning.

I am Martha Scoppa from Liberty.

I am speaking in regard to comments made by Legislator Joseph Perrello last week regarding the monthly reporting by department heads to the Legislature.

I am in agreement with Mr. Perrello that it is important to have first-hand news from each department once a month at Legislative Committee meetings. The first-hand news is fresh and it is this kind of information that matters to Legislators who want to stay abreast of issues. Department heads know about each and every program they oversee. They can speak about particular issues and how these issues are being handled by the department. They can speak about problems and successes with the details that are important to Legislators.

For many years working at the Office for the Aging, I would occasionally attend Legislative Committee meetings at the invitation of my director. Directors and Commissioners attended these committee meetings and they spoke every month about the workings of their divisions and departments. If pertinent, they would ask someone like me, further down the chain, to speak specifically about a program. The chairman of the committee would ask each Commissioner and Director to speak and then the Director would ask someone like me to add particulars. At these meetings, there was always a give and take discussion as Legislators learned new information and had new questions. I may be wrong, but I am guessing that Legislator Perrello wants to return to that same communication format.

When Commissioners appear at monthly committee meetings, they sometimes speak at length with lots of details. Other times they refer to their written reports and then ask for comments or questions. This is not the same as having Directors speaking directly about the people they serve and the programs they administer. Directors are close to the action. Many departments administer a huge number of programs. When I worked at the Office for the Aging, we had nineteen programs and it was very complicated. If Legislators want to know what is going on in a department, they might very well want to know first-hand from the department director.

Thank you.