

8. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The Division of Intergovernmental Relations serves primarily as the liaison between all levels of government on behalf of the County Executive. Intergovernmental Relations works to develop strong effective relationships with the Federal, State, County and Town governments to ensure that programs, grants, aid and other benefits are afforded to the residents of Suffolk County. Through this division, many local concerns are addressed and are often brought to the attention of our representatives at the State and Federal levels.

Within the division of Intergovernmental Relations, the County Executive has several assistants who specialize in town, county, state or federal issues. These aides work to ensure that programs, aid, grants and legislation are obtained and are beneficial for the residents of Suffolk County.

RELATIONS WITH THE STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS

Since Suffolk County has its own Charter, it is less dependent on New York State than a non-chartered county. The approval of the Municipal Home Rule Law (an amendment to Article IX of the State Constitution) by the voters of New York State in 1963, made it possible for Suffolk County and other counties with Charters to supersede some State laws that are binding on counties without charters.

In spite of this rather generous degree of home rule, the State restricts the County's actions in certain areas, such as landfill closures, gifts or loans to private enterprise, sale of parkland, state-mandated moratoria and wetlands development. The State mandates specific action in certain areas, such as social services, elections and health. It also provides grants and reimbursements for certain programs, such as health, mental health, youth and senior-citizen programs.

In many cases, the administration of State law is in the hands of County officials. For example, the rules governing elections are set by the State but administered by the Suffolk County Board of Elections. The Suffolk County Department of

Social Services administers welfare, but the rules, schedule of payments, and other matters are defined by the State.

In addition to the aid the County receives from the State, a number of programs receive substantial amounts of aid from the Federal Government. The Federal Government's grants-in-aid and community development grants for various programs are predicated on the recipients' meeting specified requirements. These programs are often integrated and coordinated with State aid. The County long-range transportation programs, for example, must be approved by a State coordinating committee before State or Federal aid can be claimed. Public health and welfare programs must also meet both State and Federal standards.

State and Federal aid programs fall into specific categories. The main ones are:

Mandated Programs. These are usually ongoing programs, such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Medicaid, and the Disabled Children's Programs.

Grants. Usually limited in time and for a particular project, these programs are often costly to introduce. However, the aid gives the County the opportunity to institute new services, while sharing the startup costs with Federal and State Governments.

Contract Agencies. Either the Federal or State Government can fund programs, but a contract agency may actively deliver the service, with the locality acting as the grant monitor.

Department Heads in the County are responsible for administering aid programs falling within their respective jurisdictions. In the case of mandated programs, they must comply with all State or Federal requirements. In the case of grants of contract agency funds, the department head is responsible for evaluating the benefits to be received, given the County's costs and needs. The County Executive has a Federal and State Aid Office that is available to assist in any of these programs.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTIES

Suffolk County's strongest tie with another county is with Nassau County, by way of the Long Island Regional Planning Board and the new Long Island Partnership (planning and economic development).

A number of other organizations exist to promote cooperation with various levels of County government. Suffolk County cooperates with such agencies as the Regional Plan Association, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the National Association of Counties and the New York State Association of Counties.

RELATIONS WITH TOWNS

Suffolk County Government cooperates with the towns in the County in matters pertaining to police protection, probation, district court management (five western towns only), sewer construction, the training of police and fire personnel, and some highway maintenance.

The ten towns of Suffolk County provide some services for the County, such as property assessment and tax collection.



Photo by Henry Mangels

Plaque Commemorating Southampton as First English Settlement in New York