

LONG ISLAND POLITICS

Suffolk red-light camera program extended for a year

The county Waiver Committee voted unanimously to permit the contract with Conduent Inc., due to expire at year's end, to continue through 2019.

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Suffolk's red-light camera program got another year of life after a county committee voted Wednesday to extend the contract of the current vendor, despite a letter from all seven Republican legislators urging an end to the program.

The three-member waiver committee voted unanimously to permit the contract with Conduent Inc., due to expire at year's end, to continue through 2019 with a waiver.

But the panel directed county public works officials to seek proposals from bidders next year. Public works officials originally asked for a two-year extension of the contract because state legislation authorizing the red-light cameras must be renewed next year.



A red-light camera at Indian Head Road and Jericho Turnpike in Commack on April 11, 2016. Photo Credit: Steve Pfost

Legis. Tom Cilmi, who heads the GOP legislative caucus, said, "Regardless of how you feel about red-light cameras, County Executive Steve Bellone is handing out a contract worth tens of millions of dollars without sending out a request for proposals, . . . competitive bids" or legislative scrutiny.

"Every single taxpayer . . . should be outraged," said Cilmi, of Bay Shore.

Gilbert Anderson, county public works commissioner, said his office wanted a delay to see if there were any changes in the state law before going out to bid. Should the county pick a new vendor, there would need to be a transition period for installing new equipment and getting necessary permits to replace the current system, Anderson said.

But Barry Paul, one of two Bellone aides on the waiver committee, called for limiting the waiver to one year so Suffolk would not have to wait until 2020 to determine whether it can get a better deal for taxpayers through a new competitive process.

Camera critics, including legislative Republicans, opposed the extension, saying the program was created as a revenue producer, not to improve safety. They also say the timing of yellow lights has been shortened and the county has failed to get the engineering approval required at each site.

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The Suffolk Legislature has authorized a study to review the program. A preliminary report is due in November, and a final report is due early next year.

“They have been put on notice . . . what they are doing is illegal,” said Legis. Robert Trotta (R-Fort Salonga).
“It’s a money grab plain and simple.”