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## ***BARRAGA: NEWS FROM THE 11<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT***

### **MOVE OR STAY AND FIGHT**

*By Suffolk County Legislator Tom Barraga*

It is difficult to sit and listen to people who find themselves, through no fault of their own, living in a hamlet plagued with gangs, drugs and murder victims.

Frustration and fear are overwhelmingly exhibited by demands for increased police protection, school responsibility, family values and business support. Even with these key elements in place there are no guarantees that a Hispanic, African American or White male between the ages of 10 and 35 living in these communities will not be murdered on the street by a gang thug carrying out an order or as part of the initiation ritual to become a member of thugs anonymous. Those who do the killing have no conscience and no remorse – they will kill at 9:00 pm and be drinking and partying at 11:00 pm – they are of human form but the angelic side of human nature does not exist in their souls.

To those residents living in such a hamlet the choices are limited – move or stay and fight – there really are no other alternatives. For those who at personal and financial sacrifice choose to move it is certainly understandable and the right choice for them. Why live on any street in any hamlet where your children are at risk of severe injury or death – there is no more a compelling argument to relocate, then to preserve the life and well-being of your family. For those who choose to remain the road ahead is challenging and not without personal sacrifice and risk. It is a road that requires a great deal of work and involvement to give the hamlet and your family the best chance of survival, growth and a solid future. It means getting involved in all those groups you don't get involved with now – the Local Government, PTA, School Board Meetings, Chamber of Commerce, non-for

profits, church groups and political parties. It's shutting off the computer, turning off American Idol, letting the Yankees, Mets, Jets and Giants fend for themselves and putting you and your family on the top priority list for survival. It is easy to sit in the living room and depend upon Jane and Tom next door and Mary and Bob across the street to carry the banner of activism in the community. If the truth be known they are sitting in their living room doing exactly what you're doing – nothing of any real consequence. The only individual you control, the only individual who can start making a real difference - is you. When enough individuals feel the same way change will take place. So what are you waiting for or is it time to watch "Dancing with the Stars." The future of such hamlets will be determined either by ruthless gangs or by the positive actions of good people who have had enough and are ready and willing to stay and fight – only time will tell.