

**Welfare to Work Commission
Of the Suffolk County Legislature**

Minutes of the May 19, 2017 Meeting

Present:

Richard Koubek, Chair
Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair
Ayesha Alleyne (Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation)
Tracey Barnes for Commissioner John O'Neill (SC Department of Social Services)
Barbara DeFina for Nina Leonhard (Suffolk County Community College)
Christina DeLisi (Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory)
Barbara Egloff (Eastern Suffolk BOCES)
Charles Fox (EOC-LI)
Don Friedman (Empire Justice Center)
Ellen Krakow (Nassau/Suffolk Law Services)
Richard Krebs, SC Department of Labor
Christian Limbach (SC Association of Municipal Employees)
Jeffrey Reynolds (Family and Children's Association/LICADD)
Michael Stoltz (Association for Mental health and Wellness)

Excused:

Peggy Boyd (Family Service League); Greta Guarton (LI Coalition for the Homeless); Kim Gierasch (Suffolk County Department of Health); Michael Haynes (LI Cares/Harry Chapin Food Bank); Lisa Pinkard for Legislator Monica Martinez ; Luis Valenzuela (LI Council of Churches)

Absent:

Sr. Lisa Bergeron (Catholic Charities); Rachel Seiler (Community Development Corporation of LI);

1. **Minutes:** The April minutes were approved unanimously on a motion by Christian Limbach, seconded by Don Friedman.
2. **SCCC Funding:** Chair Richard Koubek reported that a child-care funding elimination to non-Public Assistance students using the Suffolk County Community College child-care center had been restored by SCDSS Commissioner John O'Neill.
3. **Supportive Housing Work Group and Sober Homes:**
 - a. Mr. Koubek and Jeffrey Reynolds agreed that a joint meeting of the Welfare to Work Commission and the Sober Homes Oversight Board should be scheduled in the fall, perhaps in September, before Legislator Kate Browning leaves the Legislature. The New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) continues to refuse oversight of sober homes because the residents are not in treatment, which OASAS has determined to be a threshold for providing housing for people who have substance-abuse disorders.
 - b. The Commission was reminded that previous meetings of the Sober Homes Work Group, as well as statements by SCDSS Commissioner John O'Neill and his housing staff, pointed out that people with dual diagnoses of mental illness and substance abuse disorders tend to move between New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) housing and OASAS housing. The Work Group hopes to have a meeting with both OMH and OASAS representatives in attendance. OMH

has already agreed to attend the meeting. Dr. Reynolds stated that he is in conversation with OASAS staff and hopes to arrange for their participation in this meeting in June. The focus of the meeting will be on the continuum of care for people with mental-illness and/or substance-abuse disorders. He noted that the application process for new treatment facilities is time consuming and can take up to five years.

- c. There ensued a brief discussion of the recent opioid assembly organized by LI CAN at St. Anthony's High School which was attended by 1300 people, many from the faith community. Mr. Koubek stated that he will reach out to LI CAN to determine if their activities relate to the Commission's 2017 goal to examine the opioid crisis as it affects low-income people, particularly youths, in Suffolk County.
4. **Child Care Commission Summit:** Kathy Liguori distributed resource packets from the May 12th Child Care Commission summit, "Kindergarten is Too Late," which was attended by about 150 people. Legislator Monica Martinez served as the MC for the opening plenary; County Executive Steve Bellone addressed the opening plenary. The keynote speaker, Dr. George Askew, a nationally-respected specialist in early childhood learning, delivered an impressive PowerPoint lecture on the critical importance of quality early learning and child-care experiences for children, birth to age 5. His address was followed by a panel discussion that included Legislative Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory, Legislators Kara Hahn and Leslie Kennedy, a child-care provider, an elementary school principal and a parent. The breakout sessions explored challenges and opportunities for quality early learning as they relate to these venues: child-care providers; the family, public-school education; the business community; public policy. Mr. Koubek chaired the closing plenary at which State Assemblywoman Kimberly Jean-Pierre spoke and the breakout sessions reported back ideas for action, including: mobilizing parents to advocate for government funding of quality programs; public service ads about the importance of early learning; improved communication and collaboration among providers; increased State funding for Suffolk County's Child Care Development Block Grant. Ms. Liguori reported that the conference evaluations were overwhelmingly positive and that, should the Child Care Commission be renewed, the summit may be an annual event. Legislator Martinez needs to file a resolution extending the life of the Child Care Commission, which was created for a one-year period.
5. **Proposed Public Hearings on Federal Social Welfare Funding Reductions:** Mr. Koubek asked the Commission to consider holding public hearings later in the year to assess federal reductions in funding for social-welfare programs. The hearings might include the extent of the reductions to Suffolk County programs; the impacts that these reductions will have on Suffolk County; the long-term costs of these reductions, such as increased crime rates due to cuts in youth programs or expensive emergency-room treatment costs due to reductions in subsidized health insurance. The Commission reached consensus that these hearings should be considered, perhaps for October when the federal budget is being finalized and prior to the 2017 elections. A committee was formed to study the possibility of holding the hearings, with these members: Richard Koubek; Kathy Liguori; Mike Stoltz; Jeff Reynolds; Ellen Krakow; Don Friedman; Charles Fox. The committee will meet over the summer and report back to the full Commission in late summer.
6. **Next meeting:** June 9, 9:30AM at DOL (will include a tour of the SCDOL "One Stop Center")