

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

Minutes of the January 13, 2017 Meeting

Present:

Richard Koubek, Chair
Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair
Ayesha Alleyne (Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation);
Peggy Boyd (Family Service League)
Christiana DeLisi (Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory)
Don Friedman (Empire Justice Center)
Kim Gierasch (Suffolk County Department of Health)
Christian Limbach for Michele O'Connell (SC Association of Municipal Employees)
Commissioner John O'Neill (Suffolk County Department of Social Services)
Lisa Pinkard for Legislator Monica Martinez
Rachel Seiler (Community Development Corporation of LI)
Pat Weiner for Richard Krebs (Suffolk County Department of Labor)

Excused: Sr. Lisa Bergeron (Catholic Charities); Barbara Egloff (Eastern Suffolk BOCES); Charles Fox (EOC-LI); Greta Guarton (LI Coalition for the Homeless); Michael Haynes (LI Cares/Harry Chapin Food Bank); Ellen Krakow (Nassau/Suffolk Law Services); Nina Leonhard (Suffolk County Community College); Jeffrey Reynolds (Family and Children's Association/LICADD); Michael Stoltz (Association for Mental health and Wellness); Luis Valenzuela (LI Council of Churches)

1. **Minutes:** The minutes of the December 2016 meeting were approved unanimously on a motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Ayesha Alleyne.
2. **Suffolk Bus Cuts:** Chair Richard Koubek reported on a conversation he had on January 10th with Gary Lenberger, Director of Transportation Operations for the Suffolk County Department of Public Works. Approximately 400 riders were impacted by the elimination of ten bus lines, down from the initial 1,100 riders anticipated to be affected. Rerouting has not yet taken place due to costs in excess of \$100,000; the only rerouting took place on the Number 66 line up Nichols Road in which a low-travelled midday run was eliminated and an early morning run was created to accommodate students at SUNY Stony Brook and Suffolk County Community College. The promised demographic study has not aided in rerouting plans/needs and was not intended for this purpose since it is an annual federal requirement. Mr. Lenberger reported that he presented to County Executive Steve Bellone in early January on \$2 million in new capital improvements for the bus lines such as an electronic rider counter(Automatic Passenger Counter), bus locator tracking (Automatic Vehicle Locator), the purchase of 40 new small buses and 30 new hybrid electric buses that may contribute productively to rerouting plans. Hybrid buses purchased may help restore lines by way of fuel savings. Mr. Koubek reported that the County Executive hopes to demonstrate to State officials that the County is contributing additional revenues to improve its bus service in the hope that this will stimulate the State to increase Suffolk's transportation funding in the 2017 State budget.
3. **Supportive Housing Work Group:** Mr. Koubek reported that the Work Group met on January 6th. Housing chronically homeless individuals with mental health challenges as

well as chronically street homeless individuals has been the focal point of the Work Group. The January 6th meeting addressed the question of whether such targeted focus should continue, or if focus should go beyond supportive housing to address the housing needs of poor people without mental health diagnoses, including shelter issues, high LI housing costs and the dearth of affordable rental housing on LI. There is a sense that expanding the focus to look at the lack of housing options for those without mental health diagnoses will lead away from County policies and back to towns and villages that control zoning. Some on the Work Group argued that the larger, systemic issue of the lack of affordable housing options for poor people could be mentioned in the report without losing the focus on people with mental health challenges.

- a. Mr. Koubek stated that the Commission's 2007 affordable housing report "Affordable for Whom?" did not explicitly address low-income housing needs. Christina Delisi stated that Suffolk Resolution 663-16 was adopted to maintain an online affordable housing guide for Suffolk residents. She also noted that Suffolk law 20-2007 requires that when developers connect to an existing County sewer district, 20 percent of the housing must be set aside as affordable.
 - b. DSS Commissioner John O'Neill pointed out that the Shelter Supplement Program (SSP) can go up to 150% of the Federal Poverty Level, but this level does not meet HUD recommended levels and is far too low to meet the high cost of rental housing on Long Island. The Commissioner also pointed out that median area income is now \$106,000 for a family of four giving the impression that Long Island is an inordinately wealthy region. He noted that this high Area Media Income like represents households with two earners, rather than a single earner, and that correcting this possible misperception is key to framing the conversation around housing affordability on LI.
 - c. Commissioner O'Neill further stated that the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) slots for people with mental health challenges do not comport with LI population pressures/needs, and recommended inviting OMH to meet with the Work Group to focus on Medicaid Redesign Team housing slots for chronically-homeless people. He believes State funding has been earmarked for new slots but it is unclear as to whether or where they are available. County legislators need to know that OMH is the proper authority for meeting these needs.
4. **Poverty Simulation:** Kathy Liguori advised the Commission that the Longwood School District is conducting a community action poverty simulation - an awareness and empathy building exercise - which will offer attendees the opportunity to problem solve regarding simulated client vignettes. This event will be held on March 25th and Commission members, elected officials and other community stakeholders are encouraged to participate.
 5. **CCDBG Letter to Governor Cuomo:** Mr. Koubek presented a draft letter to Gov. Andrew Cuomo from the Commission regarding child care on LI and the need to create a special two-year State fund, as described in the December Power Point presentation by Jennifer Rojas of the Child Care Council of Suffolk. The two year fund's goal is to help large counties reach a child-care subsidy eligibility level of 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. It was recommended that the 2nd paragraph reference to unaccompanied immigrant minors be struck from letter. There was discussion regarding how most counties in NYS are losing census numbers but the growing Latino and immigrant populations in Suffolk have increased the number of poor children in need of subsidized child care. A motion to adopt the letter as amended was made by Peggy Boyd, seconded

by Don Friedman. The motion passed: Yes-9; No -0; Abstentions – 2 (Commissioner O’Neill and Pat Weiner). The letter is appended below.

6. **FSL request for Letter of Support:** Peggy Boyd reiterated an emailed request by Family Service League for letters of support from agencies, and possibly the Commission, regarding zoning changes for shelter use which will be considered by the Town of Islip. A motion was made by Kathy Ligouri for the Commission to provide a letter of support, seconded by Don Friedman. The motion passed unanimously. The letter is appended below.
7. **Child Care Commission May Summit:** This event, entitled “Kindergarten is Too Late: Learning Starts at Birth” will shed light on issues relevant to varied stakeholders, i.e. legislators, service providers, parents, etc. regarding brain development from birth to age 4, and the resulting importance of quality early-learning and child care experiences.
8. **2016 Commission Goals:** There was discussion regarding which 2016 goals to carry over or eliminate as well as new goals for 2017. Consensus was reached to carry over, delete or amend the 2016 goals as follows:
 - a. Continue to disseminate the Commission’s report, “Struggling in Suburbia: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty in Suffolk County,” while pursuing these prioritized recommendations in the report:
 1. Review and make recommendations about staffing levels and access to services at the Suffolk County Department of Social Services (SCDSS), Suffolk County Department of Labor (SCDOL) and Suffolk County Department of Health (SCDOH).
 2. ~~Monitor~~ [Receive an update on] the privatization of the County’s health centers under Hudson River Health Care and its impact on the provision of health-care services in Suffolk County.
 3. Monitor Suffolk bus service as it relates to the needs of poor and near-poor people.
 4. Create a scoring tool to measure supports provided to working-poor people by companies seeking a Suffolk County IDA benefit.
 - b. Continue to pursue recommendations in the 2014 Commission report, “Who’s Minding the Kids? Meeting Challenges and Creating Opportunities for Quality Child Care and Early Learning in Suffolk County,” with special attention to ~~these~~ prioritized recommendations: ~~Supporting the newly created Child Care Commission~~ supporting increased State funding for child care while continuing to address inequities in Suffolk’s State Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) allocation due to the flawed CCBG formula used by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS.)
 - c. Continue to plan, implement and evaluate a pilot for expanding on-site educational and work opportunities for work-eligible TANF and Safety Net (SN) SWEP clients at Suffolk Community College toward the goal of creating SCDSS/SCDOL “hub centers” for the delivery of multiple SWEP services, including work experience, education, training and child care.
 - d. ~~Seek a New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) request for waivers from the federal Department of Health and Human Services to expand educational opportunities for SWEP clients, such as pursuit of a GED, that count as core activities.~~
 - e. Continue supporting adoption and refinement of Suffolk County and SCDSS “Americans with Disabilities Act” (ADA) policies and procedures. In addition:

1. ~~Monitor the effectiveness of the ADA “Did You Know?” brochure intended to educate individuals applying for public assistance about their rights and opportunities under the ADA.~~
2. Clarify and monitor the status and effectiveness of the nonprofit liaison communication lines crafted in 2012 by the Commission’s Employment Assessment Committee in cooperation with SCDSS and SCDOL.
- f. ~~Continue to explore Federal and State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) Child Support policies toward the goal of eliminating or minimizing disincentives for non-custodial parents to work.~~
- g. Explore barriers to housing for Suffolk residents with behavioral health challenges.
- h. [Add] Assess the impact of on communities/people of lower socioeconomic status . [discussion of this matter was tabled until February when Jeffrey Reynolds, a Commission member with expertise in this area, is present.
- i. [Add] Monitor changes in federal TANF regulations that may be implemented by the Trump Administration.

9. Next meeting; February 19, 2017 at 9:30AM at DOL

CCDBG Letter to Governor Andrew Cuomo

January 17, 2017

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
 Governor of New York State
 NYS State Capitol Building
 Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We are writing on behalf of the Welfare to Work Commission of the Suffolk County Legislature with an issue of urgent importance to Suffolk County. Unlike many other counties across the state, Suffolk is experiencing an increase in overall population, and more critically an increase in the number of low-income families and children.

More than 25 percent of children under age 6 in Suffolk are in families below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (\$48,600 for a family of 4). This is an increase of nearly 9 points since 2007. (See Chart 1.) We are also experiencing a significant increase in immigrant families. In addition, Long Island’s minority populations — particularly Latinos — are continuing to rise. Latinos are an estimated 17.8 percent of Suffolk County’s 1.5 million people, up from 15.3 percent in 2010 — a 15 percent increase.

These are the families most in need of child-care subsidies, which allow a parent to earn a living and a child to participate in a positive early childhood environment. Unfortunately, due to the way child-care funding is allocated to counties, it has become more difficult to meet this need in Suffolk County. In response, we are requesting the state to make available a temporary, two-year fund to help counties with significant population changes so they can adequately support working families.

Specifically, we are making two important requests:

1. **Establish a special Fund to increase the number of low-income children able to access child care subsidies.** This fund should prioritize counties:

- a. with populations in excess of 450,000 and a positive population growth rate of at least 1% based on census data and,
- b. that are unable to meet the child care needs of families of low income working families earning less than 200 percent of poverty.

Any funding allocated through this special fund should be counted as eligible claims in future years in New York State's allocation methodology for the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG). This fund would help counties facing significant demographic changes while also continuing to recognize and reward counties that are able to increase spending on child care.

2. Include **additional funding to support the implementation of the new federal CCDBG requirements** in the 2017-2018 NYS Budget.

Background

The CCDBG Formula: The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is allocated from the federal level down to states based on need, as determined by factors including:

- The number of young children in a state;
- The number of children in families earning low incomes;
- The state's share of uninsured children under 200% of the federal poverty line; and
- The state's share of all children below 200% of the federal poverty line.

In contrast, when New York passes the CCDBG funding through to counties, it is not based on current need. Instead, it is determined by looking back at spending (claims) on child care over the past five fiscal years. That means if a county experiences an increase in eligible children or any significant change in circumstance, the allocation will not reflect that shift.

Following the allowable rules for the CCDBG, the previous Suffolk County Executive's administration rolled funds into future years in anticipation of a growing population. This rollover was then disallowed by the state when determining the County's claims, and future allocation. As a result the County's allocation was reduced and has remained significantly lower compared to our need. (See Chart 2.)

In an effort to increase spending (and claims) on child care, Suffolk County has worked hard to allocate an additional \$3 million toward child care over the past two years, even when facing very large overall budget deficits. Notwithstanding this increased funding, the County's eligibility for the child-care subsidy is now at 125% of the federal poverty level for new applicants (\$30,375 for a family of 4) – one of the lowest levels in the state.

Burdens of New Federal Quality Regulations: The pending implementation of the new federal CCDBG regulations will also have an adverse fiscal impact upon our local government, if not adequately funded. Without new dollars to support the increased health, safety, and quality mandates, thousands of children could be cut from subsidies to cover the costs of implementing the new regulations. This is not a solution.

Benefits of Quality Child Care to Suffolk County: Quality child care improves employee productivity, reduces absenteeism and prepares children for school success. Nearly 10,000 Long Islanders are employed in the \$800 million child-care industry¹. With almost 70 percent of children under age 5 on Long Island living in a household with all adults working², and those parents using

¹ Rizzo, John A (Long Island Association & Stony Brook University). The Child Care Industry: An Integral Part of Long Island's Economy, 2014.

² US Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

child care earning an estimated \$10 billion in wages each year,³ it is clear that child care is an essential part of our economy.

Governor Cuomo, we urge you to make a critical investment in children and their working parents. Without this investment, the ability of many parents to continue to participate in the work force will be compromised creating further economic challenges for Suffolk County and the state.

Your Administration has made a number of important investments to protect children—most notably in the increase in the State minimum wage, paid family leave and Pre-K. Between paid leave and Pre-K, though, is a child-care gap — one that has gone unaddressed for so long that it is threatening a collapse of the system. We urge you to bridge that gap by adequately funding child care and the new federal CCDBG requirements in the 2017 Executive Budget.

Long Island’s economic growth requires that we retain and attract more young families and create more avenues for upward mobility. Child care is a key strategy that will help achieve this and maintain Long Island as one of the primary economic engines for New York State.

Yours truly for the Commission,

Richard Koubek, PhD, Chair

Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair

Cc: Members of the Suffolk County Legislature

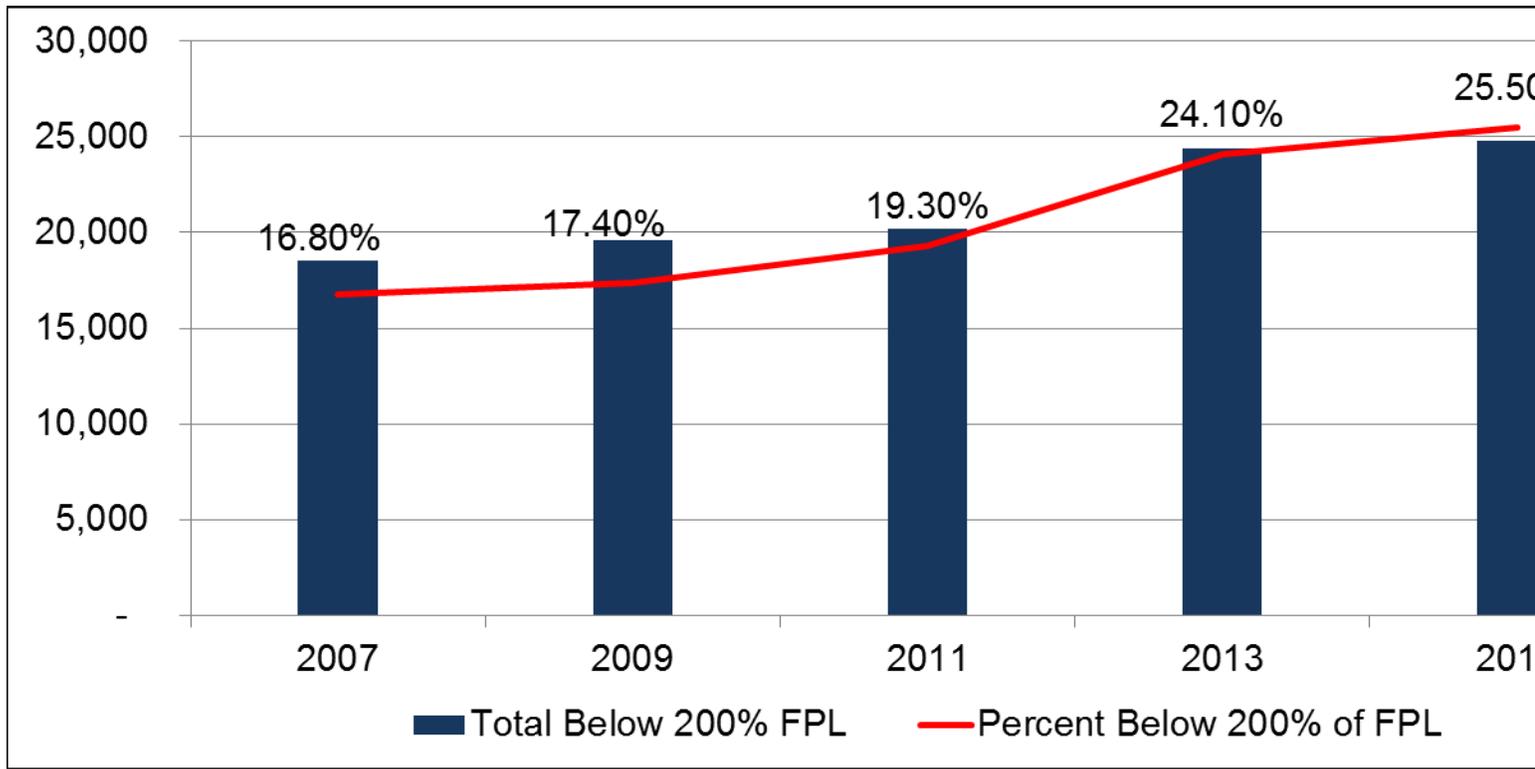
Steve Bellone, Suffolk County Executive

John O’Neill, Commissioner, Suffolk County Department of Social Services

Members of the New York State Senate and Assembly representing Suffolk County

³ Rizzo.

Suffolk County Child Population (Under Age 6) Below 200% Federal Poverty Level

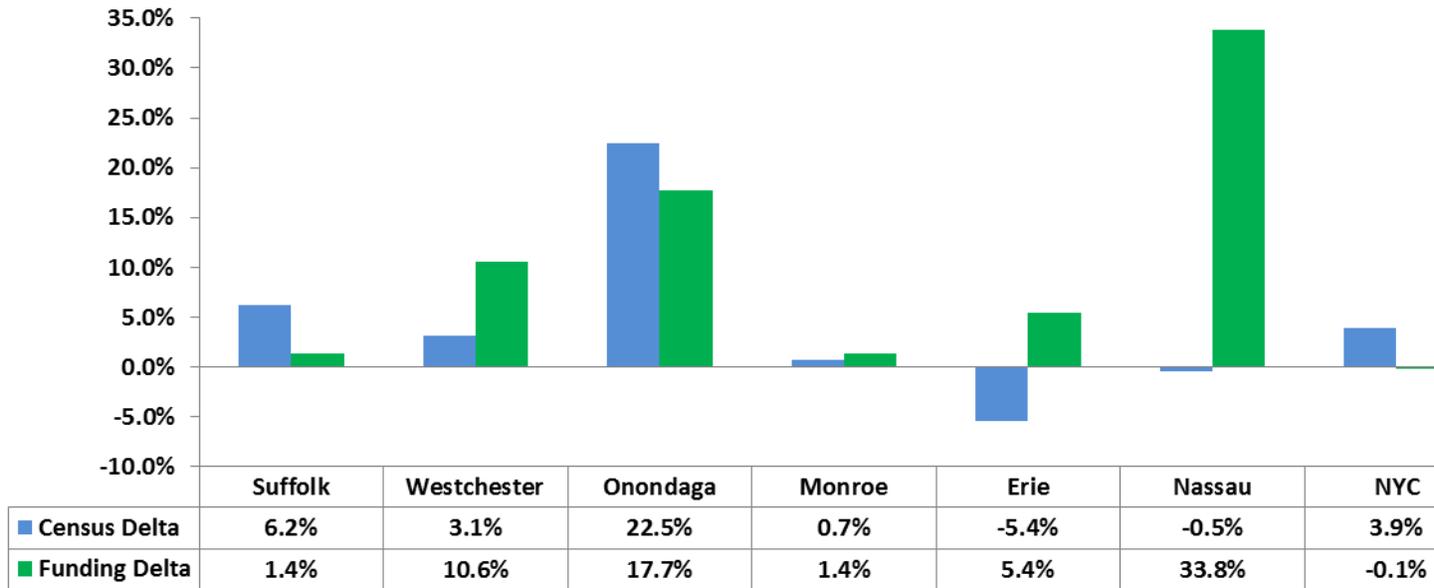


Source: American Community Survey, Age by Ratio of Income to Poverty Level, 2007-2015

Population Growth vs. NYS CCDBG Allocation

Change in Population Growth (Census) 2010 vs. 2015

Change in Allocation (Funding) 2010 vs. 2015



Notes: ¹ <http://labor.ny.gov/stats/nys/statewide-population-data.shtm>

² <https://pad.human.cornell.edu/counties/projections.cfm>

Letter in Support of Family Service League Shelter

January 17, 2017

TO: Members of the Town of Islip Planning Board

Subject: Letter of Support for Family Service League's Brentwood Family Shelter

I am writing to express the Welfare to Work Commission of the Suffolk County Legislature's support of Family Service League's Brentwood Family Shelter. The Brentwood Family Shelter provides temporary shelter and critical services to families experiencing homelessness. Family Service League (FSL) is an outstanding human services provider with extensive experience working with homeless families and individuals in Suffolk County.

The Welfare to Work Commission was established in 2003 to advise the Suffolk County Legislature on policies related to people on Public Assistance, people transitioning off Public Assistance as well as poor people who might require Public Assistance. Homelessness and the need for emergency and transitional housing are major priorities of the Commission.

Over the last several years, Suffolk County has experienced a dramatic increase in its homeless population. On average,

there are over 500 homeless families per day that rely upon Suffolk County's emergency housing system. When a family is homeless, without income, transportation, social supports or other linkages, finding, securing and maintaining permanent housing is a difficult task. For these reasons, FSL's Brentwood Shelter is a vital resource for homeless families. FSL offers programs and services onsite designed to meet the diverse needs of the shelter residents. Over half of the families placed at FSL's shelter are from the Brentwood community. Having a homeless shelter in this location allows these students to easily attend school in Brentwood without having to spend hours traveling to school from another town. This enables them to participate in after school activities and remain close to their social supports and friends. Since March of 2016, FSL has helped 42 homeless families to secure permanent housing and move out of the shelter system.

Family Service League (FSL) is an established human-service agency with programs across Suffolk County that include Children and Youth Programs, Senior Services, Vocational Programs, Family Support Programs, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Programs, and Housing and Homeless Services.. FSL is accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA), a national standard setting organization, for meeting the highest standards of care for children and families and best practices for administration and financial management.

Yours truly for the Commission,

Richard Koubek, PhD, Chair