

**Welfare to Work Commission
Of the Suffolk County Legislature
Minutes of the September 9th, 2016 Meeting**

Present: Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Lisa Pinkard for Leg. Monica Martinez; Valerie Smith; Richard Krebs; DSS Commissioner John O’Neill; Ellen Krakow; Don Friedman; Ayesha Alleyne; Michele O’Connell; Sr. Lisa Bergeron; Kimberly Gierasch; Charles Fox; Lauren Laurore for Steve Chassman;

Excused:; Barbara Egloff; Luis Valenzuela; Nina Leonhardt; Mike Stoltz; Michael Haynes; Peggy Boyd

1. **Adoption of July Minutes:** Chair Richard Koubek reminded the Commission that the August meeting was cancelled due to the heavy meeting schedules of the Commission’s Child Care and Supportive Housing committees. The minutes of the July meeting were unanimously adopted on a motion by Michele O’Connell, seconded by Kathy Liguori.
2. **Suffolk Community College Pilot:** Richard Krebs reported that it is too early in the semester to gauge participation in the pilot. A detailed report will follow at a later meeting.
3. **Child Care Commission:** Lisa Pinkard and Kathy Liguori reported that the Commission is planning to hold an early learning/child care summit in the spring at Suffolk Community College to engage providers, parents, government officials and child-care experts in dialogue around the quality, accessibility and affordability of childcare and early learning in Suffolk. The Commission is also developing a synopsis of the barriers to quality child care and early learning.
4. **Supportive Housing Work Group:** Mr. Koubek distributed minutes of the July conference call of the Commission’s Supportive Housing Work Group.
 - a. The lead presenter on this call was Michael Giuffrida of the Long Island Coalition for the Homeless who has been researching options for housing chronically homeless people. Mr. Giuffrida reiterated that this population which may number about 245 on Long Island is extremely fragile, suffers multiple physical and psychological illnesses and challenges, generally avoids the shelter system and has problems that are often exacerbated by group-living situations such as a shelter. He noted that 145 of the chronically homeless have medical diagnoses but an estimated, additional 100 have never been medically assessed. He observed that placing just 10-20 chronically homeless individuals in safe housing could save \$2.5 million in short and long-term government services to these people.
 - b. Mr. Giuffrida restated that the Housing First model in which chronically homeless people are given safe shelter, with no preconditions, and then provided with supportive services, remains the most successful model. DSS Commissioner John O’Neill pointed out that State regulations require prescreening clients and therefore precludes DSS from utilizing the Housing First model in its shelters. Private shelter providers can opt for the Housing First model. Mr. Koubek stated that local NIMBY opposition makes the creation of any type of shelter very difficult on Long Island, especially if it is aimed at the chronically homeless population.

- c. Mr. Koubek then described the Tiny Homes approach to housing chronically homeless people that Mr. Giuffrida explained to the Work Group. Mr. Giuffrida has investigated two New York State tiny homes complexes. He described how two to four tiny homes, perhaps only 300 square feet, can be placed on a single plot, with one unit potentially used for staff oversight, including case managers. Each chronically homeless individual (tiny homes are not for homeless couples or families) receives his/her own tiny home, thereby reducing, if not eliminating the relational problems that often occur among this population in group settings. He noted that homeless people take pride in their own tiny home and that their resulting shelter stability opens them to greater responsiveness to counseling, substance-abuse prevention and job training services and programs. On-site case managers are best suited to counsel residents, although referrals to community-based organizations such as drug and alcohol treatment programs can also be utilized. Mr. Giuffrida believes that the best case-management model is to provide each tiny homes resident with his/her personal mentor.
 - d. Mr. Koubek noted that low-income housing could cost up to \$200,000 a unit while tiny homes cost only \$10,000-\$20,000 a unit. Tiny homes can also be used to upgrade abandoned or run-down properties, thereby reducing NIMBY opposition. Commissioner O'Neill stated that DSS has looked into tiny homes but that it does not have legal authority to purchase the land on which tiny homes would be constructed. However DSS would be open to the concept. Mr. Koubek concluded by stating that tiny homes are an exciting "out-of-the box" housing option that could be pursued by private agencies.
5. **Suffolk Bus Reductions:** Mr. Koubek reported that the County is going forward on October 1st with the elimination of eight bus lines affecting about 400 riders daily, which is a marked improvement from the July announcement of 20 potential line eliminations affecting 1,500 riders a day. He noted that the lines selected for elimination tend to be underutilized, costing the County about \$30 a day per rider compared with the average cost of \$7 a day per rider. One line on the East End has only 12 riders a day and costs about \$80 a rider. He pointed out that today's Newsday reported a \$180 million three-year projected deficit in the County budget which, the County Executive told the Legislature, might require eliminating Sunday bus service as well as other draconian cuts in government services. He stated that the Department of Public Works (DPW) plans to reroute existing lines to reduce the impact of the elimination of the eight lines. He also said that DPW has circulated a Request for Proposals to conduct a demographic and ridership analysis of the existing lines. He noted that a number of advocacy organizations (Vision Long Island, LI Jobs with Justice, Tri-State Transportation) have called for a moratorium on the cuts until the research is completed. He stated that a public hearing on the cuts was being held this afternoon and asked the Commission if they wished to take a position. There followed an extensive discussion on the importance of public buses for working poor people, the over-reliance of the County on sales tax revenues that has caused its deficits and the chronic underfunding of Suffolk County's bus system by New York State. Ellen Krakow moved and Kathy Liguori seconded a motion authorizing Mr. Koubek to speak at the September 9th public hearing in support of a moratorium on the elimination of the bus lines until such time as the research study is completed and released and the planned rerouting decisions are announced by DPW. The motion passed: Yes - 8; No - 0; Abstentions - 6 (Commissioner

John O'Neill; Lisa Pinkard; Richard Krebs; Ayesha Allene, Valerie Smith; Lauren Laurore.) The Commission's letter to the Suffolk County Legislature which contains the key points in Mr. Koubek's September 9th DPW hearing testimony is appended below.

6. **New Commission Members:** Lisa Pinkard stated that the resolution to seat new Commission members and to remove several existing seats is being drafted and should be placed on the table by October.
7. **ADA Update:** Ellen Krakow and Don Friedman reported that there has been a staffing change at the County Attorney's office, which slowed down their response to the advocates' analysis of the draft County ADA policy. She pointed out that the attorney now assigned to this project is Lynn Bizzaro who contacted the advocates and stated that she understands the advocates' concerns about further delays in this process, will discuss their request to meet with the decision makers in her office, and get back to them as soon as possible.
8. **Governor Kasich OpEd on Welfare Reform:** Members of the Commission received a *New York Times* OpEd by Ohio Governor John Kasich marking the 20th anniversary of "welfare reform" in August in which Governor Kasich stated that, despite some successes, welfare reform was not doing enough to educate and train people for family-sustaining jobs and wages. Don Friedman provided a summary of key welfare reform principles such as "work first" and the five year time limit on receipt of public assistance. He noted that New York is one of only a handful of states that provides a Safety Net for welfare recipients that exceed the five-year time limit. He reviewed what he described as some of the inflexible and counterproductive provisions in the federal TANF statute and regulations that limit substance abuse treatment, education and training as countable activities. He called attention to Governor Kasich's critique of welfare reform for having imposed a "one-size-fits-all" template on the states, agreeing with the Governor that simple local regulations such as expanding GED and other educational opportunities have been hampered by the federal regulations. Mr. Friedman described how the federal regulations place too much emphasis on regulatory processes and compliance with too little emphasis on outcomes like education and training that would help welfare recipients to become self-sufficient. Mr. Koubek reminded the Commission that it had decided in 2015 to present to the Human Services Committee of the Suffolk Legislature on the constraints imposed on DSS and DOL by these federal regulations. This presentation will be coordinated with a presentation on the successful SCCC Pilot which has provided a more flexible and outcomes-oriented approach to welfare reform.
9. **New WIOA Rules:** Richard Krebs stated that new federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) regulations have been finalized and that he will report on them at a future Commission meeting.
10. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be October 14th.

**Commission Letter to the Suffolk County Legislature
Containing Key Points Made at the September 9th DPW Suffolk Bus Cuts Hearing**

September 15, 2016

TO: Members of the Suffolk County Legislature

RE: Call for a moratorium on Suffolk bus cuts

The Welfare to Work Commission of the Suffolk County Legislature is deeply concerned about the County proposal to eliminate eight bus routes. The Commission shares the County's frustration with the

lack of adequate State transportation funding. So too, we understand the gravity of the budget deficit faced by the County. Unfortunately, resolution of these fiscal problems is falling on Suffolk's working-poor people who rely on buses, in some cases as their only means of transportation to and from work. The impact of the cuts will not only hurt these workers but also the businesses that employ them, not to mention businesses where they shop.

At this moment, we simply do not fully understand the impacts that these bus-line reductions will have on riders, the communities served by the eliminated lines and the Suffolk economy. We are especially concerned that these cuts fall disproportionately on certain geographic areas such as the East End.

We attended the two briefings on the cuts held over the summer and were pleased to hear that the Department of Public Works planned to reroute existing lines to minimize the negative impacts of the cuts. The Commission was also pleased to see that the Department has issued Request for Proposal 16044 for an outside agency to conduct an "on board origin to destination and demographic survey" of Suffolk's bus lines, presumably to reduce the impact of the cuts. However, the *Commission is disappointed that the cuts are being implemented before the study is conducted and the rerouting decisions are made.*

For this reason, **the Commission voted on September 9th to support a moratorium on the bus reductions until the "on board to destination and demographic survey" is completed, its results shared with the public and the actual reroutings of existing lines are announced.** The stakes for riders and the Suffolk economy are simply too high for bus-route cuts to be implemented "in the dark," without this important data and information. We ask you to join our call for a moratorium.

Yours truly for the Commission,

Richard Koubek

Richard Koubek, PhD, Chair

Kathy Liguori

Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair