

**Welfare to Work Commission
Of the Suffolk County Legislature
Minutes of the February 19, 2016 Meeting**

Present: Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Legislator Monica Martinez; Olga Ayala; Lisa Pinkard; Mike Stoltz; Ellen Krakow; Richard Krebs; Don Friedman; Charles Fox; Ayesha Alleyne; Valerie Smith; Peggy Boyd; Steve Chassman;

Excused: Luis Valenzuela; Barbara Egloff; Christina Maher; Nina Leonhardt; Ray O'Rourke; Kimberly Gierasch; Sr. Lisa Bergeron

Guest: Dana Friedman, Deputy Commissioner, DSS

1. **Welcome of Dana Friedman:** Chair Richard Koubek introduced Dana Friedman, Deputy DSS Commissioner, who has been appointed by County Executive Bellone, to focus on child-care issues for the County. Mr. Koubek noted that Ms. Friedman was formerly Director of the Early years Institute, that she is a respected researcher and spokesperson for early-childhood learning and that she served on the Child Care Committee during the period when it created the Commission's child-care report. Ms. Friedman was one of the keynote speakers at the first child-care hearing where she outlined national research findings that demonstrate the benefits of quality early-learning and child-care programs.
2. **Election of Commission Chair and Vice Chair:** Mr. Koubek reminded the Commission that the terms of the Chair and Vice Chair correspond with the two-year legislative terms, the latest of which is 2016-2017. Mr. Koubek asked if any member of the Commission wished to serve in either position, noting that he and Kathy Liguori are willing to serve again. On a motion by Peggy Boyd, seconded by Ayesha Alleyne, the Commission voted unanimously to re-elect Mr. Koubek as Chair and Ms. Liguori as Vice Chair. Mr. Koubek thanked the Commission for their support.
3. **Minutes:** The minutes of the January meeting were approved, upon acceptance of amendments proposed by DSS, unanimously, on a motion by Don Friedman, seconded by Kathy Liguori.
4. **Child Care Commission:** Mr. Koubek welcomed Legislator Monica Martinez, thanking her for her year-long effort to secure legislative and executive support for the resolution to create a Child Care Commission which was unanimously adopted by the full legislature on February 9, 2016.
 - a. Child Care Committee Chair Kathy Liguori presented the final resolution to the Commission and asked for suggestions regarding individuals who might occupy the open seats. Mr. Koubek noted that the Legislature must approve three of the 13 seats, stating that the one year life-span of the new Commission will begin on the day that County Executive Bellone signs the resolution. In addition, the Commission cannot formally meet until 30 days after the oaths have been administered to all 13 members.
 - b. Given these time parameters, he asked Legislator Martinez to expedite the legislative approval process for the three seats (a person knowledgeable with then operation of a child-care center; a person familiar with the operation of a group and family child-care facility; a representative of the business community.).

- c. Legislator Martinez stated that this process should move quickly once the names are placed on a resolution. She, Mr. Koubek, Ms. Liguori, Lisa Pinkard and Dana Friedman (who will serve as the DSS representative on the Commission) agreed to attempt a conference call early in the week of February 22 to identify the names of people who might occupy the three seats that require legislative approval. Legislator Martinez also stated that she has a person in mind for the parent seat that her office is required to name.
 - d. The Commission brainstormed a number of possibilities for these seats including: the Long Island Association; United Way; Hauppauge Industrial Agency; Huntington Chamber of Commerce; a home provider named by County and State Employees Association (CSEA).
 - e. The Commission also discussed a possible focus for the Commission’s first year which might include identifying families that “fall through the cracks” and cannot access quality, properly authorized child care slots or the State CCBG child-care subsidy.
 - f. Mr. Koubek noted that he will serve on the Child Care Commission as the Welfare to Work representative. Ms. Liguori will serve in one of the appointed positions. The Welfare to Work Commission will continue to focus on the 15-20 percent of child-care recipients whose families earn under 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. Served by DSS, these families receive child care through Temporary Assistance or through the State child-care subsidy..
5. **Supportive Housing Discussion:** Mr. Koubek noted that the Commission reached consensus at the January meeting on its 2016 goals, most of which carry over from 2015. One goal that required further assessment was adopting supportive housing for behaviorally-challenged people as a new goal for 2106. Toward that end, a Supportive Housing Committee was formed, which met on February 4th and submitted a proposal (appended below) to adopt this goal. There ensued an extensive discussion of the proposal.
- a. Mr. Koubek noted that the Supportive Housing Committee agreed that public hearings on this topic could be very counterproductive since any public discussion of housing that departs from the single family model provokes angry “Not in My Backyard” responses from community groups. This is especially true when the housing is designated for poor people or those with behavioral health challenges. Therefore, the Supportive Housing Committee will rely on other forms of data gathering, including focus groups and consultations with experts in the field.
 - b. Mike Stoltz noted that the term “people with behaviorally challenges” is preferable to “mentally ill” since the latter carries significant public stigma. Mr. Koubek pointed out that the homeless population on Long Island contains a significant number of behaviorally-challenged people who, following deinstitutionalization of the large psychiatric hospitals in the 1970s, have not received quality community-based treatment or housing as was intended due to inadequate State funding of these programs. Mr. Stoltz agreed, but stated that the focus of the Supportive Housing Committee should be on exploring innovative short-term and long-term housing options for this homeless population: DSS emergency shelters; DSS transitional housing; state funded (Office of People with Developmental Disabilities – OPWDD and Office of Mental Health –

OMH) housing including congregate care (12-20 beds in a supervised setting or Single Room Occupancy homes with 50 beds – both funded by Medicaid and licensed by OPWDD), supportive housing (housing 3-5 people who are more self-sufficient and who receive weekly case management) and supported housing (housing 3-5 people with the most self-sufficiency and who receive twice-monthly case management). Ms. Ayala stated that the DSS emergency housing includes short-term emergency shelters and longer term transitional housing for homeless people.

- c. Mr. Stoltz also pointed out that the focus today, a generation after deinstitutionalization, is on preventive care and emergency care for behaviorally challenged people in crisis. This population includes people with: psychiatric disabilities; substance-dependency illnesses; physical illnesses that result in behavioral-health distress; physical and psychological trauma; people with multiple behavioral-health challenges and diagnoses. Mr. Stoltz also pointed out that, while treatment is an important focus, especially in the context of Medicaid and health-care delivery system changes previously discussed by the Commission in 2015 that have a holistic and community-based approach, there is a serious shortage of psychiatric personnel able to provide these services.
 - d. Peggy Boyd described her experiences with the clients who utilize the Family Service League's nightly TLC emergency shelter. She stated that this is an extremely vulnerable population who have multiple illnesses and barriers to self-sufficiency and who often avoid or reject treatment. They are the most difficult to serve portion of Suffolk's homeless population.
 - e. Ayesha Alleyne spoke about clients served by Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation (WHPDC) who are behaviorally challenged and work exempt, but yet do not qualify for educational/training experiences or other supportive services that might help them become self-sufficient. Mr. Koubek noted that, as a board member of WHPDC he has interviewed many potential clients over the years who clearly have undiagnosed psychiatric illnesses. He stated that the Supportive Housing Committee would likely re-visit the OTDA pilot screening tools for identifying the signs and symptoms mental-illness that Don Friedman described to the Commission in 2015.
 - f. The Commission reached consensus to include the goal "exploring barriers to housing for people with behavioral health challenges" in its 2016 goals. Mr. Stoltz and Kimberly Gierasch will co-chair the Supportive Housing Committee. Experts from the field, such as Ralph Fasano of Concern for Independent Living or Great Guarton from the Long Island Coalition for the Homeless will be invited to join the Committee, which will hold its first meeting in March.
6. **2016 Commission Goals:** On a motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Mike Stoltz, the Commission adopted its 2016 goals (appended below) on a vote of: Yes – 10; No – 0; Abstentions – 3 (Lisa Pinkard; Richard Krebs; Olga Ayala.)
 7. **Child Support:** Mr. Koubek reminded the Commission that James Andrews suggested a pilot, in lieu of changing the State law requiring 9 percent arrears payment for noncustodial parents, that would allow for case by case arrears-payment flexibility. He and Ray O'Rourke agreed to look more closely at this concept.

8. **Suffolk Bus Reductions:** Mr. Koubek reported that rumors had begun to circulate in Suffolk that there might not be a need to cut 10 bus lines due to the County's \$10 million bus funding reduction and the failure of the State to increase the County's transportation funds by the \$10 million requested over the past three years. He stated that he spoke with Gary Lenberger, Director of Transportation Operations at the Suffolk County Department of Public Works. Mr. Lenberger acknowledged several grants: one to purchase buses; another to expand SCAT service. Both have already been implemented and cannot be used to restore bus lines that might be cut. He said Mr. Lenberger stated that his office will do everything possible to avoid cutting the lines, but that this will be a difficult task to accomplish if the County does not receive a significant increase in State funds. The current 2016 proposal is to increase Suffolk bus funding by only \$1.5 million. Mr. Koubek will provide the Commission with the 10 lines that have the lowest ridership and therefore most likely to be eliminated.
9. **IDA Scoring Tool:** Mr. Koubek reported that Jennifer Casey was elected on February 9th to replace David Calone as Chair of the Suffolk County Planning Commission. Mr. Calone had been liaison between the Commission and the Suffolk County IDA regarding the Commission's proposed ID Scoring Tool. Ms. Casey served on the Commission's Child Care Committee that wrote the 2014 child-care report. He and Ms. Liguori hope to meet with Ms. Casey in March to discuss both child care and the IDA Scoring Tool.
10. **Announcements:** Mr. Koubek announced that he and Aaron Watkins Lopez from Long Island Jobs with Justice have been invited to appear on the WLIW21/WNET broadcast, Long Island Business report, which will be taped on January 13th. The topic is bus transportation on Long Island. He has sent a copy of the Commission's poverty report to the producer and will be representing both the Commission and Jobs with Justice when he speaks during the program.
11. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be on Friday, February 19th, 9:30AM, a date different from the usual meeting time of the second Friday of the month, since County offices will be closed for Lincoln's birthday on February 12th.

Supportive Housing Committee Proposal

Supportive Housing Committee: Peggy Boyd; Don Friedman; Thomas Grecco; Kim Gierasch; Richard Koubek; Ellen Krakow; Kathy Liguori; Lisa Pinkard; Michael Stoltz

Having been charged by the Commission at the January 8th meeting to assess the feasibility of conducting public hearings and releasing a report on supportive housing for vulnerable Suffolk residents, the Committee met on February 4th and reached consensus on the following recommendation:

The Supportive Housing Committee recommends that the Commission adopt as a goal for 2016:
“Exploring barriers to housing for Suffolk residents with behavioral-health challenges.”

To pursue this goal, the Committee recommends that a “Supportive Housing Committee” of the Commission be formed consisting of the above-named members of the Commission as well as other Long Island behavioral-health and housing experts.

This committee will be charged with exploring and releasing a report, via consultations, focus groups and possibly public hearings, regarding the quality and availability of the following housing options for people with behavioral-health challenges (psychiatric disabilities, substance-dependency illnesses, physical illnesses that result in behavioral-health distress, physical and psychological trauma and especially people with multiple behavioral-health challenges and diagnoses):

1. Emergency homeless shelters
2. Transitional housing for the homeless
3. Housing options for people with behavioral-health challenges:
 - Congregate care facilities
 - Supportive housing facilities
 - Supported housing facilities

Welfare to Work Commission’s 2016 Goals

1. 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:
 - a. 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).
 - b. Monitor 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.
 - c. Monitor Suffolk bus service as it relates to the needs of poor and near-poor people.
 - d. Create a scoring tool to measure supports provided to working-poor people by companies seeking a Suffolk County IDA benefit.
2. 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:
 - a. Supporting the newly-created Child Care Commission
 - b. 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.)
3. 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.

4. 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.
5. Continue working toward adoption and refinement of Suffolk County and SCDSS “Americans with Disabilities Act” (ADA) policies and procedures. In addition:
 - a. 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.
 - b. 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.
6. 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.
7. Explore barriers to housing for Suffolk residents with behavioral health challenges.