

**Welfare to Work Commission of the Suffolk County Legislature  
Minutes of the November 18, 2016 Meeting**

**Present:** Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Lisa Pinkard for Legislator Monica Martinez; Christina DeLisi; Traci Barnes for DSS Commissioner John O’Neill; Don Friedman; Peggy Boyd; Ayesha Alleyne; Michele O’Connell; Richard Krebs; Ellen Krakow; Lauren Laurore for Steve Chassman; Kim Gierasch

**Excused:** Michael Stoltz; Nina Leonhard; ; Michael Haynes Sr. Lisa Bergeron; Charles Fox; Barbara Egloff; Luis Valenzuela;

1. **Minutes:** The minutes of the October meeting were approved unanimously on a motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Peggy Boyd
2. **The 2017 Suffolk Recommended Budget:** Chair Richard Koubek reported that three of the four asks in the Commission’s budget letter to the Legislature were fully or partially restored. The restorations included: (1) the \$1.5 million reduction in DSS funding was replaced by a \$250,000 reduction, thereby allowing DSS to maintain eligibility for the child-care subsidy for working-poor families at 125 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL); (2) the Public Health Nurses were restored; (3) the 1 percent administrative fee on the County portion of nonprofit contracts was eliminated. He stated that the bus cuts remain in place.
3. **Child Care:**
  - a. Kathy Liguori expressed concern that 125 percent of FPL is still too low and that the County should aim for the subsidized (CCBG) child care eligibility at 200 percent of FPL. She asked Traci Bonds of DSS to provide the Commission with data on the number of children served per month with the subsidy and the cost per child per month. Ms. Liguori stated that these data would help monitor the need for an increase in the State’s CCBG award to Suffolk. Traci Barnes agreed to provide the Commission with this requested data. Ms. Liguori also expressed concern that the increase in Child Protective Services reports, related to drug abuse, many of which require mandated child-care services, may put additional strains on the funds available for working-poor families.
  - b. Ms. Liguori reported that the Child Care Commission has set May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 as the date for the Child Care Summit at Suffolk County Community College that will assemble parents, providers, government officials and child-care/early-learning experts to examine child care and early learning programs with regard to their: (1) quality; (2) accessibility; (3) affordability.
4. **Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA):** Richard Krebs, Suffolk SWEP Director, provided an extensive report on SWEP and WIOA. He noted that there was a cut of \$841,000 in Suffolk funding for WIOA but, with the losses spread over two County budget years, most of the staff reductions will be covered by attrition;
  - a. **History:** Mr. Krebs reported that WIOA can be traced back to the CETA job-training programs of the 1970. Many of the trainees were hired by government agencies or nonprofits. CETA was eventually phased out and replaced in JTPA which in turn was replaced 1998 by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) that created One Stop Centers. In 2014, WIA was replaced by WIOA. The Suffolk County Department of Labor’s One Stop Center is administered by WIOA.

- b. WIOA Mission:** Mr. Krebs distributed a document detailing the mission of WIOA which is education and job training to expand a skilled workforce. He noted that WIOA’s public-workforce mission now is encouraged to work closely with labor unions, community colleges, nonprofits, youth organizations and government agencies on education and training.
  - c. SWEP and WIOA:** Mr. Krebs detailed how the Suffolk Works Employment Program (SWEP) for welfare recipients is now being more closely integrated with the WIOA One Stop Center. He stated that SWEP clients often become “comfortable” in their work sites and need encouragement to build their skill bases, their resumes and their ability to secure better-paying jobs. While SWEP and WIOA are separate programs, efforts are underway to integrate them so that SWEP clients can avail themselves of WIOA job training, job search and other opportunities offered at the One Stop Center. Employment assessment are done by SWEP at the Oser Avenue site with many referrals then made to the WIOA One Stop Center.
  - d. Family-Sustaining Wages:** Several Commission members noted that Long Island’s high cost of living requires at least an annual income of \$80,000 for a family of four to pay for basic necessities. Mr. Krebs stated that the WIOA One Stop Center is geared toward job training opportunities that lead to family-sustaining wages. He and other Commission members expressed frustration with the one-year limit on education and training that is allowed under federal welfare regulations. Mr. Koubek thanked Mr. Krebs for his excellent overview of WIOA and for the efforts being made to integrate SWEP into the One Stop Center’s programs. He suggested that the Commission might benefit from a tour of the One Stop Center at a future date.
5. **Supportive Housing Work Group:** Mr. Koubek distributed minutes from the October 20th Work Group Co-Chair Michael Stoltz announced that the Work Group will meet on October 20<sup>th</sup> to discuss SPOA housing for people with behavioral health challenges. This program was discussed by the Commission which raised the following questions that should be discussed at the meeting that focused on the Suffolk County department of Health’s Single Point of Access for Adults program. The meeting addressed these questions:
- a. What organizational changes have been undertaken this year in the SPOA program?** The Work Group learned that SPA (Single Point of Access) for people with behavioral health challenges has now become SPOA and has absorbed several other programs such as CAMERA (clients who need case managed housing) and AOT (Assisted Outpatient Treatment). Efforts are underway to merge the data bases from these once separate units, thereby improving efficiency.
  - b. What are the screening steps and criteria used in the SPOA process?** The Work Group learned that SPOA housing is not intended to be permanent housing. Depending on the level / type of housing can impact Length of Stay (LOS). Some such as a community residence have a goal LOS of two years or less. She stated that her staff screens applicants for eligibility to enter SPOA housing which includes (1) Suffolk County residency; (2) applicant must be at least 18 years of age; (3) a medical diagnosis which is no older than two years, by a physician, of a Seriously Persistent Mental Illness such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or major depression. The process has been simplified so that if an application is incomplete it is now not accepted but rather the applicant/referring source is notified that they need to complete the application and resubmit. Following Department of Health screening, potential residents are referred to a nonprofit contract agency, Family residences essential

enterprises (FREE) which has the responsibility of placing people in appropriate housing settings. FREE has three employees for Suffolk and three for Nassau.

- c. **Are there sufficient beds for families and singles seeking SPOA housing?** There are approximately 2,300 single adult beds for the program. Currently there is a Suffolk SPOA waiting list of 1,500 people. There was consensus among all at the Work Group that the State must provide additional beds and that the FREE staff is not large enough to adequately process all the Nassau and Suffolk applications it receives each month. Mr. Koubek pointed out that New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo, in negotiations with New York City Mayor DiBlasio, had promised the creation of a significant number of additional beds for homeless people in January of 2016 as part of the State budget process, but that the actual number of funded beds apparently fell far short of the announced goals. The Work Group will research this issue.
  - d. Mr. Koubek state that the Work Group will convene in December or January to begin discussing recommendations.
6. **Welfare to Work 2017 Priorities:** Mr. Koubek reviewed the Commission's 2016 priorities, noting that most had been addressed. He asked members to consider what the 2017 Commission priorities should be, which will be discussed at the December meeting.
  7. **Next meeting: Friday, December 16<sup>th</sup>.**