

**Welfare to Work Commission
Of the Suffolk County Legislature
Minutes of the April 25th 2014 Meeting**

Present: Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Leg. Monica Martinez ; John Nieves; Richard Krebs for James Andrews; Jacky Horsley for Ray O'Rourke; Ellen Krakow; Debbie Joseph; Cynthia Monthie for Charles Fox; Barbara Egloff; Kimberly Gierasch; Michael Haynes; Don Friedman; Marjorie Acevedo; Joan Travan; Luis Valenzuela

Excused:; Jeff Reynolds; Sr. Lisa Bergeron; Gwen O'Shea; Michael Stoltz; Rob Greenberger; Peggy Boyd; Nina Leonhardt

Guests: Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory; Deputy Presiding Officer Jay Schneiderman; Lisa Pinkard (Office of Legislator Monica Martinez)

1. **Minutes:** Following a minor correction, the minutes of the March meeting were adopted unanimously on a motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Marge Acevedo.
2. **Child Care Committee:** Child Care Committee Chair Kathy Liguori distributed the Table of Contents for the child-care report to provide members with an overview of the report's content, thanked Richard Koubek for drafting the report and commended the Committee members for their hard work. Mr. Koubek stated that the report is quite long. It will be sent in advance to all Commission members, with the goal of having it adopted at the June Commission meeting. Ms. Liguori noted that the report is "encyclopedic" in that it covers many aspects of the complex Suffolk County child-care industry, some of which she herself did not know. A brief discussion followed on one example of an obscure child-care issue that is laid out in the report: preschool settings for special-needs children. Mr. Koubek expressed surprise that public schools participate in evaluating and classifying preschool children with special needs but that the County funds their preschool services. He also noted that, upon entering the public school system, some children lose their special-needs classification, often from kindergarten through the third grade. Ellen Krakow stated that she knows of instances in the past where districts deliberately declassified children in the primary grades in order to avoid the additional expenses incurred with special education.
3. **Conversation with the Presiding and Deputy Presiding Officers:** Chair Richard Koubek introduced Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory and Deputy Presiding Officer Jay Schneiderman. He outlined the 2014 Commission goals and expressed the Commission's desire to continue working closely with the Legislature on these goals. He noted that the success of the Commission's advisory activities is closely related to the cooperation received from the executive departments: Social Services, Health and Labor.
 - a. Presiding Officer Gregory thanked the members of the Commission for their many hours of volunteer efforts and their contributions to the Legislature. He stated that the Commission often delves deeply into issues that the members of the Legislature do not have the time to investigate, and that the Legislature has come to rely on the Commission for its reports and recommendations. He stated that cooperation from the executive departments is critical to the Commission's work. Going forward, he noted that the Commission could be helpful in his efforts

to strengthen and keep affordable Suffolk County Community College (SCCC.) Mr. Koubek pointed out that a member of the college administrative staff sits on the Commission and, in the past, the Employment Assessment Committee has successfully brought together SCCC, DOL and DSS for creative projects.

- b. Deputy Presiding Officer Jay Schneiderman also thanked the Commission for its contributions. He pointed out the critical role that the Commission played in securing Sunday bus service. Mr. Koubek announced that, as a result of his Sunday bus service efforts, Legislator Schneiderman is being honored at the Vision Long Island Smart Growth Awards ceremony on June 13th. Mr. Koubek also thanked Legislator Schneiderman for the 2008 Rutgers study he commissioned on affordable housing needs in Suffolk which was brought before the Legislature at a recent committee meeting. The report contains excellent town-by-town assessments of affordable housing needs, an issue that was raised in the Commission's 2007 report to the Legislature on affordable housing. Mr. Koubek said that he would share the Rutgers study with the Commission.

4. **Employment Assessment Committee:**

- a. Mr. Koubek inquired as to the status of the Commission's ADA proposal. John Nieves reiterated Commissioner O'Neill's concerns that DSS is being held to a higher ADA standard than other County entities in this proposed policy. Mr. Koubek asked if DSS was prepared to share with the Commission its own ADA policy announced by Commissioner O'Neill at the March meeting. Mr. Nieves pointed out that, as noted in the minutes of the March meeting, Commissioner O'Neill "was not comfortable sharing this document at this time." Mr. Koubek noted that the Commission could FOIL the document but that this should not be necessary. He stated that the goal was simply to sit with DSS, compare the proposed and existing ADA policies and negotiate differences.
- b. Both Legislators Gregory and Schneiderman expressed concern that the Commission, created by the Suffolk Legislature, was not receiving the documents requested from DSS. Legislator Martinez also expressed surprise that DSS would not share the document with the Commission and stated that, as a legislator, she should be able to receive a copy. Mr. Nieves said that he provide a copy of the DSS ADA policy to her, but not share it with the Commission. Legislator Martinez noted that, upon receiving the DSS ADA policy, she would share it with the Commission. Joan Travan stated that AME workers she represents have a right to see this policy. Mr. Nieves said that the DSS workers are being staff developed for this policy but that he would provide Ms. Travan a copy of the DSS ADA policy. Legislator Gregory stated that the policy should be posted on the DSS website for the public to read and that every executive department should post its ADA policy. He also expressed concern about the refusal of DSS to share their ADA policy with the Commission.
- c. Legislator Schneiderman asked for somebody to explain to him why there seems to be a problem between DSS and the Commission. Mr. Koubek and Ellen Krakow both noted the cooperative relationship the Commission had with Commissioner Blass; neither could explain the current tensions. Ms. Liguori pointed out that one of the causes might be the limited staff in the Commissioner's office today compared with the staff during the Blass

administration, which may slow down their response times to Commission requests for information. Legislator Schneiderman suggested that Commissioner O'Neill be invited to the next Commission meeting and that other legislators also be invited so that these problems can be aired and addressed. Legislator Martinez stated that she would arrange for a meeting with DSS and members of the Commission's Employment Assessment Committee to attempt to resolve differences and reach consensus on the ADA policy and other issues. Mr. Koubek agreed that a smaller meeting is a good idea and that this meeting should lead to meaningful discussions between DSS and the Commission toward reaching an agreement on a DSS ADA policy. He stated that this meeting is preferable to a recent negative and unsettling public statement by a veteran DSS administrator about the proposed ADA policy.

- d. Mr. Nieves shared the DSS revision of the "Did You Know?" ADA flyer. Mr. Koubek stated that members of the Employment Assessment Committee generally agreed with the edits made by DSS. Ellen Krakow noted that the original introduction which did not use legal language was easier to read and preferable to the legal language used in the DSS version. Mr. Koubek stated that these issues could easily be resolved at the meeting with DSS which Legislator Martinez is arranging. Mr. Nieves stated that the flyer will not be distributed until agreement is reached with the Commission on the language. He also distributed a Spanish version of the "Did You Know?" ADA flyer.
5. **IDA Scoring Tool:** Mr. Koubek announced that the IDA scoring tool has been put on hold since the IDA President who requested it, Anthony Manetta, has resigned and a new appointment is awaited.
6. **Next Meeting:** Mr. Koubek announced that the May 6th meeting will likely be cancelled due to the heavy May meeting schedule of the Child Care Committee