

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

Minutes of the July 14, 2017 Meeting

Present:

Richard Koubek, Chair
Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair
Ayesha Alleyne (Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation)
Sr. Lisa Bergeron (Catholic Charities);
Barbara DeFina for Nina Leonhard (Suffolk County Community College)
Christina DeLisi (Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory)
Barbara Egloff (Eastern Suffolk BOCES)
Charles Fox (EOC-LI)
Don Friedman (Empire Justice Center)
Greta Guarton (LI Coalition for the Homeless)
Richard Krebs, (SC Department of Labor)
Christian Limbach (SC Association of Municipal Employees)
Commissioner John O'Neill (SC Department of Social Services)
Jeffrey Reynolds (Family and Children's Association/LICADD)
Luis Valenzuela (LI Council of Churches)

Excused:

Peggy Boyd (Family Service League); Ellen Krakow (Nassau/Suffolk Law Services);
Kim Gierasch (Suffolk County Department of Health); Michael Haynes (LI Cares/Harry Chapin Food Bank); Lisa
Pinkard for Legislator Monica Martinez ; Michael Stoltz (Association for Mental Health and Wellness)

Absent:

Rachel Seiler (Community Development Corporation of LI)

Guest: Benjamin Glaze, University of Delaware student, interning with the Presiding Officer for the summer

1. **Minutes:** Chair Richard Koubek reminded the Commission that the June meeting was cancelled due to a conflict that day with the Supportive Housing Work Group meeting. The May minutes were approved unanimously on a motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Jeff Reynolds.
2. **Child Care Commission:** Kathy Liguori reported that Legislator Monica Martinez has introduced a resolution to reauthorize the Suffolk County Child Care Commission. A report summarizing the Commission's first-year activities had been submitted to the Legislature. All members of the Commission agreed that it should be reauthorized. A hearing on the resolution will be July 18th followed by a full vote in the Legislature if it is reported out of the Education and Human Services Committee. A motion to support the reauthorization of the Suffolk Child Care Commission was made by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Sr. Lisa Bergeron. The motion passed: 13 Yes; 0 No; 2 Abstentions (Commissioner John O'Neill and Richard Krebs). Don Friedman pointed out that there is a new State-wide advocacy group in formation that will bring together a number of existing child-care groups into a more unified advocacy effort
3. **Supportive Housing Work Group and Sober Homes:** Mr. Koubek and Dr. Jeffrey Reynold reported on the June 9th meeting of the Supportive Housing Work Group with representatives of the New York State Department of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and Office of Mental Health. Mr. Koubek thanked Dr. Reynolds as well as Michael Stoltz for helping to arrange this meeting. The minutes of the meeting were distributed to each Commission member. There was consensus on the part of Mr. Koubek that both OASAS and OMH were well represented at the meeting by key decision makers, a few of whom were teleconferenced in from Albany or New York City. Mr. Koubek, Dr. Reynolds and other participants – Commissioner John O'Neill and Greta Guarton – agreed that this was a very lively and productive session. There was consensus among a number of the Long Island participants that funding for Suffolk County supportive housing has not kept pace with the need and that the process for applying for these funds needs to be streamlined. Among the highlights from the June 9th meeting that were discussed by the Commission:

- a. Dr. Reynolds reminded the State officials that the unresolved issue of sober-homes regulation by OASAS is a symptom of a deeper problem which is the shortage of supportive housing options for people with mental and substance use disorders in Suffolk County. OASAS reiterated that it is not responsible for sober home regulation
- b. Trends in Service Needs: Dr. Martha Carlin stated at the meeting that OMH has witnessed significant changes in the population needing supportive housing. In the past, the population served was primarily people with chronic mental illness coming out of large mental institutions. Today, the population is more heterogeneous, with a number of individuals in OMH supportive housing having co-occurring disorders and criminal justice backgrounds. Dr. Carlin stated that OMH is now providing funding for additional community supports for people in supported housing. These supports include mobile residential support teams that visit people in their homes to help assure that they are adjusting well to community living (e.g. adhering to prescribed medications, having sufficient food and quality of life activities). Dr. Martha Carlin stated that OMH has witnessed significant changes in the population needing supportive housing. In the past, the population served was primarily people with chronic mental illness coming out of large mental institutions. Today, the population is more heterogeneous, with a number of individuals in OMH supportive housing having co-occurring disorders and criminal justice backgrounds. Dr. Carlin stated that OMH is now providing funding for additional community supports for people in supported housing. These supports include mobile residential support teams that visit people in their homes to help assure that they are adjusting well to community living (e.g. adhering to prescribed medications, having sufficient food and quality of life activities).
- c. ESSHI Funds: OASAS distributed copies of the ESSHI Request for Proposals at the meeting. ESSHI is part of Governor Cuomo's \$20 billion, five-year plan for affordable housing and supportive services, which "includes \$2.5 billion in funding toward the creation and preservation of 100,000 affordable and 6,000 supportive housing units." Of the 6,000 supportive housing units, 5,000 will be located in New York City and the remaining 1,000 are designated for the rest of the State. OMH is the lead agency in the ESSHI initiative, whereby seven other State agencies can access the RFP as part of the ESSHI Interagency Workgroup. Mr. Williams stated that ESSHI is the largest amount of funding for nonprofit supportive housing agencies in many years. The target is for most of the 1,000 units to be placed in the Rest of the State counties including Nassau and Suffolk. He noted that the funds can be used for Operating and Supportive services in new housing stock or rehabilitated existing stock. Mildred Figueroa of OASAS stated that Suffolk shelters should consider applying for ESSHI funds. Several of the Long Island providers and advocates expressed disappointment and concern that New York City was receiving 80 percent of the ESSHI funds due to the large number of City residents who are in need of supportive housing. There was consensus among the Long Island providers and advocates that the need for supportive housing is both serious and underfunded here on Long Island. Nevertheless, Greta Guarton of the LI Coalition for the Homeless stated that ESSHI is a "very exciting" initiative. She said she is particularly pleased that funding will be linked to HUD Continuum of Care requirements that holistic supportive services be provided to residents. Commissioner O'Neil stated that ESSHI is a good long-term solution to the lack of supportive housing but it does not address the pressing immediate needs for this housing faced by Suffolk County.
- d. ESSHI Funding Constraints on Long Island: Mr. Williams, noting that ESSHI is in its second round of funding, asked why Long Island nonprofits have not been applying. Ms. Figueroa stated that by responding to the ESSHI RFP, a county demonstrates its need thus allowing a justification for additional housing for persons with disabilities. Thus if Long Island does not apply in Round One, they have fewer opportunities to receive funding in Round Two. Ms. Figueroa stated that annual funding round decisions are based in part on the previous year's applications. AnnMarie Csorny stated that if the State funding is not adequate to build or rehab homes, providers will not apply. Mr. Williams noted that Westchester, a county comparable to Nassau or Suffolk, has submitted numerous applications. Commissioner O'Neill and Mr. Koubek stated that housing costs on Long Island are prohibitive, especially rental units which comprise only about 18 percent of Long Island's housing stock compared with about 38 percent of Westchester's housing stock. The fewer rental units that exist, the higher the rents. Thus, in such a tight rental market, nonprofits cannot afford to either build or rehab rental units with current State funding levels. Dr. Reynolds again stated that one reason providers have not sought the enhanced payment rate for the SCDSS sober homes pilot program is that the requirements set down in the pilot are not cost effective for them. Commissioner O'Neill noted that only 20 percent of Suffolk's population receives Medicaid and is therefore eligible for SCDSS housing programs. He pointed out that 80 percent of the population is not eligible for SCDSS housing programs and likely represents an enormous unmet need.

- e. Following discussion of the June 9th Work Group meeting, Mr. Koubek asked for possible recommendations that would be included in the report. The Supportive Housing Work Group will meet on August 11th to begin formulating recommendations. These recommendations were offered:
1. Commissioner O’Neill: the State should consider turning over unused State property to the County for construction of supportive housing.
 2. Greta Guarton: the State should streamline funding for capital construction of supportive housing.
 3. Sr. Lisa Bergeron: the County Legislature should call upon town and village governments to expedite applications for creation of supportive and affordable housing
4. **Joint Meeting with Sober Homes Oversight Board:** Mr. Koubek reminded the Commission that the September 8th meeting will be a joint session with the Suffolk County Sober Homes Oversight Board. Dr. Reynolds reminded the Commission that sober homes remain unregulated by OASAS and that some are run by unscrupulous providers who create environments that actually encourage substance abuse. Legislator Kate Browning, in whose district many unregulated sober homes are located, will be in attendance. Dr. Reynolds, who co-chairs the Oversight Board, will assist Mr. Koubek in creating an agenda for the meeting. All Commission members will receive a copy of the Commission’s sober homes report in advance of September 8th.
5. **Proposed Public Hearings on Federal Social Welfare Funding Reductions:** A conference call of this committee will be arranged in August.
6. **Announcements:**
- a. Mr. Koubek welcomed Barbara DeFina who will be replacing Nina Leonhardt as the SCCC representative on the Commission.
 - b. Mr. Koubek announced a September 12th hearing, “Poverty Amid Plenty: A Truth Commission Hearing on Long Island Poverty.” This event will be one of three hearings in New York State. A report will be issued for an October gathering that will feature the rev. William barber who now heads the New Poor people’s Campaign that will plan national events in 2018 to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1968 Poor People’s Campaign. A flyer for the September 12th hearing is pasted below
7. **Next meeting:** September 8, 9:30AM at DOL (joint session with the Suffolk County Sober Homes Oversight Board).

Despite New York’s great wealth, more than 3 million New Yorkers live below the federal poverty line, and millions more struggle to make ends meet.

On Long Island, **35 percent of households earn less than the cost of living.**

Why is this? How are individuals, families and our community affected? What is being done to respond? How can we create a more just community in which all can thrive?

Poverty Amid Plenty On Long Island

Tuesday, September 12, 4-9pm

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Parish Hall

1434 Straight Path, Wyandanch, NY 11798

RSVP at <http://bit.ly/LITruth> and indicate whether you are interested in sharing your story and insight.

Dinner will be served gratis at 6pm

Telling the truth:

The reality of **poverty** in our state and region

The **resources** available to end these crises

The **values** we share as a community

The **leadership, resistance, and resilience**
of those directly affected

This event is part of the Truth
Commission on Poverty in New York
State being held across New York in

2017 and is part of a national Truth
Commission on the Right Not to Be
Poor, organized as part of the Call
for a New Poor People's Campaign.

