

**Welfare to Work Commission
Of the Suffolk County Legislature
Minutes of the August 16th, 2013 Meeting**

Present: Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Charvon Pierce for Leg. DuWayne Gregory, Debbie Joseph; James Andrews; Roger Podd for Ray O'Rourke; Don Friedman; Ellen Krakow; Michael Haynes; Barbara Egloff; Rob Greenberger; Nina Leonhardt; Peggy Boyd; Jeff Reynolds; Charles Fox; Michael Stoltz

Excused: Marjorie Acevedo; John Nieves

Absent: Gwen O'Shea; Kimberly Gierasch; Gwen Branch

Guest: Jennifer Casey, Suffolk County Planning Commission

1. **Minutes:** Minutes of the June meeting were adopted unanimously on a motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Don Friedman.
2. **Attendance Policy:** Chair Richard Koubek again clarified the Commission's attendance policy per a resolution adopted by the Legislature in 2008 requiring that any commission member who misses four consecutive meetings be removed and replaced by the agency he or she represents. The Commission's practice is that if a member cannot attend he/she can choose someone from the agency to represent him/her at a meeting. In addition, when a member RSVPs regrets to the electronic meeting reminder he/she will be marked "excused." Members who do not RSVP are marked "absent." Four consecutive absences, per the Legislature's resolution, require that the member be removed and replaced by his/her agency. James Andrews and Kathy Liguori asked what can be done when an agency does not send a representative. Mr. Koubek responded that the legislation is silent on this issue but that the Presiding Officer will likely be asked to take action in such situations. Michael Stoltz announced that Gwen O'Shea, President and CEO of the Health and Welfare Council of LI, will be e-mailing Mr. Koubek with a request to be excused for a period of time due to the burdens placed on the agency by Super Storm Sandy recovery programs. Mr. Koubek stated that he thought this would be a reasonable request.
3. **Employment Assessment Committee Presentation - Draft ADA Policy:** Chair Rob Greenberger announced that the Committee had met after the June Commission meeting to make what were essentially stylistic changes to the draft ADA policy. Don Friedman, who coordinated the edits, stated that almost all the changes were organizational or stylistic. Ellen Krakow pointed out one substantive change which was new language regarding substance abuse that was added to the mental-health screening tool at the recommendation of Jeff Reynolds. Mr. Friedman reminded the Commission that the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) has finally validated a mental-health screening tool after pilot testing it in five districts. It is anticipated that OTADA will recommend but not mandate that districts use this tool. He suggested that, at least for the time being, since it is not known what OTDA will do or when, SCDSS should proceed with the mental-health screening tool recommended in the proposed ADA policy. Jeff Reynolds made a motion to adopt the ADA policy, seconded by Don Friedman. The motion carried: 11 Yes; 0 No; 2 Abstentions (James Andrews and Roger Podd.) Mr. Koubek stated that he

would craft a letter to Acting Commissioner O'Neill presenting him with the ADA policy for SCDSS review. By consensus it was agreed that all members of the Commission receive a CC of this letter including Human Services Committee Chair, Legislator DuWaye Gregory. It was also agreed that it would be inappropriate at this time to send a copy of the proposed ADA policy to the County Executive or to each member of the Legislature. Mr. Koubek stated that it would make sense for the Acting Commissioner to forward this version of the proposed ADA policy to the County Attorney since he/she has been reviewing one of the earlier drafts. Mr. Koubek also noted that, in time, the proposed ADA policy might be presented to the Legislature's Human Services Committee.

4. **Poverty Report Presentation to the Suffolk County Planning Commission:** Mr. Koubek reported that, at the invitation of Suffolk County Planning Commission Chair David Calone, he and Kathy Liguori presented the Commission's poverty report to the Planning Commission in a one-hour session on August 7th. He noted that the main theme of this presentation was a call for the Planning Commission keep the needs of Suffolk's working-poor people before them as they make planning decisions. There were a number of aspects of the report which were of special interest to the Planning Commission. Mr. Calone made the following recommendations, which were enthusiastically supported by Mr. Koubek and Ms. Liguori:
 - a. The Planning Commission will include a member of the Welfare to Work Commission in the stakeholder group it is forming to receive feedback on the County's Comprehensive Plan so that "the needs of the working poor can be incorporated into the County's long-term strategic plan."
 - b. Jennifer Casey, a member of the Planning Commission, will work with the Welfare to Work Commission on creating a task force to link child care to the County's economic development plans. Ms. Casey's attendance at the current meeting of the Welfare to Work Commission represents the beginning of this collaboration.
 - c. A meeting with the Suffolk Industrial Development Agency will be coordinated by Mr. Calone to discuss implementing the poverty report's recommendation that IDA tax-reduction grants include community-benefits requirements in which the company receiving a tax reduction agrees to provide services to working poor people such as child care, on-the-job training, hiring of local residents or sub-contractors, etc.
 - d. The poverty report's recommendation for continued coordination and implementation of County affordable housing programs and the Commission's sober homes report recommendation for a County-wide summit of town supervisors and code-enforcement officials to identify best practices was also viewed as a possible joint initiative of the Planning and Welfare to Work Commissions.
5. **TANF Conference:** Mr. Friedman reported on a federal Health and Human Services conference he attended in Washington regarding TANF policies. He noted that both "red" and "blue" states are seeking more flexibility and feel too restricted by participation-rate requirements that focus exclusively on performance of prescribed activities that often do little to improve clients' employability. States also complained about the excessive documentation and paper work requirements associated with TANF regulations. Mr. Friedman reported on one working session at the conference which made a strong impression on him: Jack

Shonkoff of Harvard University who reported on early-childhood development issues. Professor Shonkoff's thesis is that poverty can have long-term negative impacts on a child's pre-school brain development. Family stress, which is endemic in most families living in poverty, can have a "toxic" effect on a child's early development when not addressed in a healthy environment. Therefore, TANF policies should focus not merely on job placement but on ways to relieve family stress, such as developing parenting skills and providing quality child care for working parents.

6. **Child Care Committee:** Chair Kathy Liguori summarized the rationale (appended below) for the Commission holding child-care hearings. She noted President Obama's commitment to early childhood education in his 2013 State of the Union address, as well as growing public awareness about the need for quality child care and pre-K programs.
 - a. Ms. Liguori pointed out that recent reductions in Suffolk's subsidized child care program due to State budget cutbacks had an especially harsh impact on working-poor families, but that middle-class families earning up to 400% of the Federal poverty level (c. \$90,000 a year) are having difficulty paying for child care. A recent News 12 poll found that 58% of respondents indicated that they were having difficulty affording child care.
 - b. Ms. Liguori reminded the Commission that, due to its advocacy as well as support from the County Executive and the Legislature, the County received \$1 million more in child care funding for 2013-2014 but that the Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) funding formula remains flawed and the threshold has been raised to 150% of FPL, still short of the 200% FPL threshold that the County used until 2012. She discussed the concept that State Universal Pre-K (UPK) and CCBG funds should be merged in certain situations to increase access to child care. Mike Stoltz asked about the relationship between UPK and school districts. Mr. Koubek stated that some districts do not want to participate in UPK because they believe it adds to their costs and consequently that thousands of UPK dollars go unspent each year. Mr. Stoltz recommended that the relationship of child care to public schools be added to the goals of the hearings, which was agreed to by consensus.
 - c. Following an extensive discussion of the importance of quality child care as well as the goals for the hearings outlined in the rationale, Mr. Stoltz moved, and Ellen Krakow seconded a motion that the Child Care Committee explore the possibility of holding public hearings on child care and report back to the Commission at the September meeting. The motion passed: 11 Yes; 0 No; 2 Abstentions (James Andrews and Roger Podd.)
 - d. A number of child-care experts and agencies were mentioned as possible invitees to serve on the Child Care Committee as it plans the hearings: Janet Walerstein of the Suffolk Child Care Council; Angela Zimmerman of Molloy College; Nick LaMorte of CSEA; Shea Levin of Every Child Matters- LI; Dana Freidman of The Early Years Institute; a representative of the business community from the Long Island Association and/or Action Long Island. In addition, these members of the Commission agreed to serve on the Committee: Richard Koubek; Mike Haynes; Charles Fox.
7. **Sunday Bus Service:** Mr. Koubek reported that the County has been awarded a federal JARC grant of about \$1.3 million a year for three years which, with County use of additional State transportation funding of about \$1 million a year, will provide about \$3 million a year

for Sunday service. He noted that this is sufficient funding to cover the 10 high-impact lines identified by Legislator Jay Schneiderman several years ago which reached about 75% of the 26 low-income communities the Commission had identified as most in need of Sunday service. Legislator Schneiderman, who led the struggle for Sunday service, considers this a major victory and expressed gratitude for the Commission's support. Legislator Schneiderman would like to begin Sunday Service in November with 2013 County funding, but Suffolk Bus may not be ready to implement service at that time because they need to hire and train additional drivers. James Andrews noted that SCDOL has a number of unemployed bus drivers it is working with. Full Sunday service is scheduled to begin in 2014.

8. **Proposed Policy Advocacy Coalition:** Don Friedman announced that he is assembling a Long Island welfare-policy mailing list that will be kept abreast of federal and state policy proposals. Members of the Commission will be invited to participate. Asked if this would be a lobbying coalition, he noted lobbying would probably be one of the activities involved, and that non-profit agencies are permitted to lobby for public policies so long as they do not make partisan electoral endorsements. Mr. Koubek stated that he believes in New York State nonprofits can utilize up to 20% of their budgets for public-policy lobbying.
9. **Sober Homes:** Mike Stoltz asked for an update on sober homes. Jeff Reynolds, who co-chairs the Suffolk County Sober Homes Oversight Board, stated that the response to the second issuance of the RFQ was again less than expected and that the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) continues to refuse oversight or regulation of sober homes. A bill requiring such oversight sponsored by Senator Lee Zeldin did not pass in this session. This issue will be discussed in more detail at the September meeting.
10. **Public Opinion Poll on Taxes:** Mr. Koubek asked if any of the agencies at the table were interested in joining with Amy Hagedorn to fund this survey. Jeff Reynolds suggested that Larry Levy, Executive Director of Hofstra University's Institute for Suburban Studies, be queried about a co-sponsorship, which Mr. Koubek agreed to do.
11. **Next Meeting: Friday, September 13th, 9:30 AM** at the SCDOL One Stop Center.

Rationale for Welfare to Work Commission Conducting Child Care Hearings, February-March, 2014

A Teachable Moment: In his 2013 State of the Union Address, President Barack Obama said, "In states that make it a priority to educate our youngest children...studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, form more stable families of their own. We know this works. So let's do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind."

The White House Early Childhood Learning website page states that:

"Expanding access to high quality early childhood education is among the smartest investments that we can make. Research has shown that the early years in a child's life—when the human brain is forming—represent a critically important window of opportunity to develop a child's full potential and shape key academic, social, and cognitive skills that determine a child's success in school and in life."

“Participation in high-quality early learning programs—like Head Start, public and private pre-K, and childcare—will provide children from all backgrounds with a strong start and a foundation for school success. These programs also generate a significant return on investment for society; numerous economic studies have documented a rate of return of \$7 or more on each dollar invested through a reduced need for spending on other services, such as remedial education, grade repetition, and special education, as well as increased productivity and earnings for these children as adults.”

The importance of early childhood learning was clearly demonstrated in the 2005 HighScope Perry Preschool Study, “Lifetime Effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40.” This study — perhaps the most well-known of all HighScope research efforts — examines the lives of 123 children born in poverty and at high risk of failing in school. From 1962–1967, at ages 3 and 4, the subjects were randomly divided into a program group that received a high-quality preschool program based on HighScope's participatory learning approach and a comparison group who received no preschool program. In the study's most recent phase, 97% of the study participants still living were interviewed at age 40. Additional data were gathered from the subjects' school, social services, and arrest records.

The study found that adults at age 40 who had the preschool program had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes, and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not have preschool.

A Critical Time for Child Care in Suffolk: The national attention President Obama brought to early childhood education occurred at a critical time for child care in Suffolk County. After several years of New York State underfunding Suffolk's Child Care Bock Grant (CCBG) and persistent, unsuccessful advocacy to change the CCBG formula conducted by the Welfare to Work Commission, the County Executive, the County Legislature and other advocates, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) increased Suffolk's CCBG grant by \$1 million for 2013-2104. This decision, along with the County adding local funds in the spring of 2013 allowed the County in July, 2013, to restore subsidized childcare to children in families earning 150% of the FPL (\$35,325/family of four). This is still short of the 200% FPL eligibility that had been Suffolk's benchmark for subsidized childcare until December of 2011 when it was reduced to 100% of FPL due to the State CCBG reductions. Still unresolved is the State's funding formula which Suffolk County believes is flawed.

The need for additional funding of subsidized child care, especially for working-poor families, was featured in the December, 2012 Welfare to Work Commission report, “Struggling in Suburbia: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty in Suffolk County.” The report received wide media attention, as did the decisions to increase eligibility for subsidized child care announced in the spring and summer of 2013. A July 2013 News 12 story on subsidized child care was accompanied by a News 12 poll which found, of 783 respondents, 458 or 58% said that they had difficulty affording child care.

Goals of the Public Hearings: With the President's national focus on early childhood learning, the State's long-awaited increase in Suffolk's CCBG funding and growing public awareness about the need for and importance of child-care, the Commission's public hearings would

provide a platform for working families, child-care providers, academicians and government officials to:

1. ***Tell the stories*** of how working families earning between 100% (\$23,550/family of four) and 400% of the FPL (\$94,200) struggle to afford child care for their pre-school children.
2. ***Define modalities of quality child-care services*** in Suffolk County.
3. ***Document the importance of quality early-childhood learning experiences*** for all children, especially the children of working-poor families.
4. ***Document the need for quality child care in Suffolk County.***
5. ***Review the contributions of quality child care to the health and future development of the Suffolk County economy.***
6. ***Analyze the potential impacts on Suffolk County of President Obama's Early Childhood Learning Agenda***, including:
 - **Providing High-Quality Preschool for Every Child;**
 - **Growing the Supply of Effective Early Learning Opportunities for Young Children.**
7. ***Assess the impact of State child-care policies***, including:
 - The CCBG grant and the formula used to award the grant;
 - Universal Pre-K
8. ***Propose policy recommendation to the Suffolk County Legislature*** to enhance the availability and quality of child care.