

**Welfare to Work Commission
Of the Suffolk County Legislature
Minutes of the September 13th, 2013 Meeting**

Present: Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; 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; John Nieves; Sr. Lisa Bergeron

Excused: Debbie Joseph; Marjorie Acevedo; Charvon Pierce for Leg. DuWayne Gregory,

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

1. **Tribute to William Lindsay:** Chair Richard Koubek began the meeting with a tribute to the late Presiding Officer William Lindsay whose integrity, care for poor and vulnerable people, along with his ability forge consensus, marked his career as a labor leader, legislator and Presiding Officer. The Commission observed a moment of silence in his memory.
2. **Minutes:** Minutes of the August meeting were adopted unanimously on a motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Mike Stoltz.
3. **New Member:** Mr. Koubek introduced Sr. Lisa Bergeron who will assume the Catholic Charities seat on the Commission. Sr. Lisa is director of the St. John Nepomucene outreach center in Bohemia. She is also an attorney.
4. **Sober Homes:** Mr. Koubek reminded the Commission that its 2010 sober-homes report led to the creation of the Suffolk Sober Homes Oversight Board. Co-chair of that Board, Jeff Reynolds, then provided a detailed update on the status of the sober-homes issue:
 - a. Senator Lee Zeldin's bill to require the New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) to regulate sober homes did not pass in the 2013 legislative session.
 - b. Local town and police enforcement of violations at bad sober homes has been episodic, leaving the Suffolk Request for Qualifications (RFQ) pilot program as one of the only viable alternatives. This RFQ provides enhanced DSS payments to sober homes that adhere to quality guidelines established by the County.
 - c. The first RFQ in 2011 excluded for-profit providers with good sober-home programs such as Seafield, which created problems. The second RFQ in 2013 which would have included 45 beds funded by the County, drew only 3 applicants – all unknown providers. One roadblock to submitting the RFQ was a requirement that house managers be paid the County Living Wage. Since these house managers are most often clients who receive free room and board, rather than a salary, this Living Wage requirement deterred many providers from applying. Ellen Krakow asked if the Suffolk Legislature could adopt an amendment to the Living Wage Law exempting sober homes managers. Mr. Koubek thought this to be an excellent suggestion that could be pursued by Legislator Kate Browning. Dr. Reynolds said he would ask her to do so.
 - d. Dr. Reynolds stated that an important positive step has been that DSS now has better recognition of bad sober homes and is therefore less likely to refer clients to these homes. He also stated that the County still does not have an accurate count

of the number of sober homes, although Legislator Browning estimates there are about 100 in Suffolk.

- e. Mr. Koubek asked if the OASAS Supportive Living Homes – which OASAS attorney Rob Kent said could be considered sober homes – would be created in Suffolk. Dr. Reynolds replied that these homes provide a much higher level of care than sober homes as well as more restrictions on residents which caused many clients to avoid them.
 - f. Sr. Lisa Bergeron noted that there are several sober homes in her catchment area that are asking residents to pay additional funding beyond the DSS payment. Don Friedan suggested that the Commission reach out to the State Legislature’s Mental Health Committees to try to move the Zeldin bill.
 - g. The self-regulatory California sober homes model was raised. Dr. Reynolds stated that the Oversight Board does not believe that this industry self-regulation model alone is enough to address the problem of bad sober homes. The key solution here is for OASAS to assume responsibility for regulating sober homes.
5. **Child Care Committee:** Chair Kathy Liguori reported on an extraordinarily positive first meeting of the Child Care Committee to plan Child Care Hearings, on August 29th, attended by 11 industry representatives and Commission members. The minutes of this meeting are appended below.
- a. Ms. Liguori reported that the Committee decided to hold pre-hearings focus groups with parents, at child-care centers, to identify salient issues which could be addressed at the hearings. In addition, the Committee suggested post-hearings summits in targeted communities that would provide another forum for parents to tell their stories. John Nieves stated that these summits should be held in places where there is access to public bus service. The hearings will be held in December of 2013.
 - b. Ms. Liguori reported that the Committee discussed how the Obama Administration is moving to raise the quality of early-learning and child-care experiences throughout the country. While this appears to be a positive move, administrative costs to support these new standards would come out of the already flat-funded CCBG and it could eliminate the number of child-care providers that do not meet these new standards, thereby denying much-needed access to child care, especially for working-poor parents and their children.
 - c. Peggy Boyd stated that New York State is expanding access to Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) programs and focusing these programs on the Common Core curriculum. UPK is administered by the State Education Department whereas child-care is regulated by the State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS.) Ms. Liguori raised the concern addressed by Jennifer Casey and other Committee members that all-day Kindergarten is still not mandated in New York State. She also reiterated her position that UPK and child-care funds could be merged in certain situations to expand access and provide more continuity of coverage for working-poor families.
 - d. Mr. Koubek reported that Suffolk Planning Commission Chair David Calone will be arranging a meeting with Joanne Minieri, Deputy County Executive for Economic Development, to discuss creating a Child Care Task Force, per the Commission’s poverty-report recommendation, that would link child care to

economic development. Prior to this meeting, members of the Child Care Committee will draft a proposal. Ms. Liguori again stated the importance of linking child care to economic development. Don Freidman noted that the State Assembly is holding hearings on child care. Susan Antos of the Empire Justice Center is one of the invited speakers.

- e. Mike Stoltz moved and Jeff Reynolds seconded a motion that the Commission move forward with child care hearings. The motion passed: 12 – Yes; 0 – No; 2 – Abstentions (Roger Podd and James Andrews)

6. Employment Assessment Committee:

- a. Mr. Koubek stated that the ADA policy has been submitted to Acting Commissioner O’Neil who has agreed to review it.
- b. Mr. Koubek also reported that the Commission’s request made in June for DSS data on sanctions and fair hearings was still being worked on. Mr. Nieves stated in an August email that some of the data needs to be secured from the State. Since Mr. Nieves had left the meeting at this point, he was unable to comment further on this issue.
- c. Mr. Koubek noted that the Employment Assessment Committee will next take up SWEP education and training placements. James Andrews reported that the State has imposed a new computer system on DOL that is slowing down their ability to access data. He hopes to provide a thumbnail sketch of placements by the October meeting.
- d. Mr. Koubek reported that David Calone is arranging a meeting with Suffolk Industrial Development Agency (IDA) director Anthony Minetta to discuss the recommendation in the Commission’s poverty report that companies receiving IDA tax breaks be asked to provide community benefits to their workers such as education and training, apprenticeships or child care.

7. Public Opinion Poll on Taxes: Mr. Koubek stated that Larry Levy, Executive Director of Hofstra University’s Institute for Suburban Studies, is unable to fund the suggested public-opinion survey on tax issues. He again asked if any Commission agencies are able to do so.

8. Announcements:

- a. Mike Stoltz announced that October 6th-12th is Health Awareness Week. The Clubhouse of Suffolk along with other agencies is hosting 25 programs about the myths and realities of mental illness.
- b. Mr. Koubek again reminded the Commission that Hofstra University is hosting a conference for journalists, “Covering Suburban Poverty,” on September 26th and 27th. He and Gwen O’Shea are presenters. The conference is an excellent opportunity for Commission members to share their concerns about how the media report on poverty issues.

9. Next Meeting: Friday, October 11th, 9:30 AM at the SCDOL One Stop Center.

**Of the Suffolk County Legislature
Minutes of the Child-Care Committee, August 29th, 2013 Meeting**

Present: Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Michael Haynes, Peggy Boyd, Linda Hassberg for Don Friedman), Meghan Ashford-Grooms (HWC-LI) Shea Levin (Every Child Matters), Katie Roche (Rainbow Chimes), Diane Eppilito (Long Island Head Start), Angela Zimmerman (Molloy College), Danielle Asher (Child Care Council-Suffolk), Jennifer Casey (Suffolk Planning Commission), Janet Walerstein(Child Care Council-Suffolk), Nick LaMorte (CSEA), Denise Dowell(CSEA)

Excused: John Nieves (SCDSS); Charles Fox(EOC –Suffolk), Adrienne Fasset (EOC-Suffolk)

Summary: Hold focus groups for parents, possibly at selected day-care centers, October-November, to identify child-care issues that will be highlighted in the hearings. Hold public hearings between December 2 and December 13, 2013. At the Hauppauge and Riverhead hearings, have keynote speakers followed by industry experts, government officials and academic specialists (consultants on committee). Hold a separate hearing (evening) for the general public and then hold summits in selected townships for more collection of data and community outreach. Final report to be presented in the Spring of 2014.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, September 24, 2013 – 3:00 pm at the Child Care Council of Suffolk

10. Welcome and Introduction of meeting participants: Kathy thanked everyone for attending and announced that the WTW Commission had voted in favor of considering public hearings on child care and gave a brief overview.

- a. Over the past several years, the childcare industry at large in Suffolk County has endured many challenges. Due to the advocacy efforts by the WTW Commission, the County Executive, the County Legislature and the members at this meeting, positive movement has been made, as an example, raising the income eligibility to 150% of the FPL, but more work has to be done. President Obama’s 2013 State of the union message made expanding access to high quality early childhood education a national priority. Families are faced with many challenges meeting their child-care needs as indicated by a recent News 12 poll that revealed 58% of the respondents claimed they had difficulty-affording childcare. All that being said, time for the public hearings on childcare is greater than ever.

11. Legislative Charge to the Commission and Previous Commission Hearings: Affordable Housing, Sober Homes and Suffolk Poverty.

Dick Koubek gave an overview of the Commission. The Commission is charged with holding public hearings from time to time and has been successful in conducting those hearings, which have resulted in reports to the legislature. These reports have effected change. As an example, the sober homes hearing report resulted in an oversight board. The Poverty report resulted in \$2 million dollars added to Sunday bus services and \$1 million dollars added to childcare.

12. **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:
- a. ***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.
 - ***Define all modalities of early childhood services*** in Suffolk County.
 - b. ***Document the importance of quality early-childhood learning experiences*** for all children, especially the children of working-poor families.
 - c. ***Document the need for quality child care in Suffolk County.***
 - d. ***Review the contributions of quality child care to the health and future development of the Suffolk County economy.***
 - e. ***Analyze the potential impacts on Suffolk County of President Obama’s Early Childhood Learning Agenda***, including:
 - i. **Providing High-Quality Preschool for Every Child;**
 - f. **Growing the Supply of Effective Early Learning Opportunities for Young Children.**
 - g. ***Assess the impact of State child-care policies and how they intertwine***, including:
 - i. The CCBG grant and the formula used to award the grant;
 - ii. Pre School - Universal Pre-K - Kindergarten – Before & After School Care
 - h. ***Propose policy recommendation to the Suffolk County Legislature*** to enhance the availability and quality of childcare.

13. **Some of the recommendations by committee members were:**

- i. Jennifer suggested conducting the hearings at night time with childcare provided to the families.
- ii. Peggy Boyd suggested the families have an opportunity to document their struggles via the child-care centers.
- iii. Danielle Asher mentioned that the National Women’s Law Center has a Strong Start Toolkit to support the President’s agenda and to use video testimonials.
- iv. Janet Walerstein suggested we ask: What has childcare done for you? She also suggested that and that public hearings at the legislature are too formidable for the public to testify. We need to go where parents are by having summits around the County. Each township has different needs
- v. Get the answers to “What has child care done for them” by asking questions:
 1. Economic development and children – what parts of the Suffolk economy rely on working parents and what happens with their children?

- vi. Angela Zimmerman mentioned Teen Pregnancy meetings hearings that relied on testimonials. Having local events would build up to the hearings. Shea suggested we identify the towns for the summits.
- vii. Dick Koubek mentioned that similar to the affording housing public hearings we will need to push the envelope of our mission, which would target the audience making \$125K on an annual basis. While the Commission's primary focus is always poor and working poor people, some issues such as affordable housing and child care require attention to the struggles of middle-income families. The unmet need of child care will be the hardest needs to identify.
- viii. Laura Hassenberg reminded everyone that the child-care populations should include immigrants parents and family child-care providers who often are low income as well. CLASP has an Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Beta Framework that provides criteria, indicators and metrics that can be used to help states and regions build quality career pathways. This framework should be considered in the hearings. She also mentioned that childcare is difficult to obtain for families with children that have disabilities and many do not know that their income eligibility is 200%.
- ix. Kathy recalled an email sent by Michael Haynes about a recent bill was introduced by the NYS Senate (S5250A). The purpose of this bill is to have the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) examine, evaluate and make recommendations concerning the availability of day care for children in this State. OCFS shall review with particular care on the impact of the lack of access to necessary day care services on the ability of women in or near poverty to enter into the workforce. It was said at the meeting this bill had "died" in the Assembly.
- x. Peggy Boyd mentioned reaching out to the business communities was important. Janet recommended that we send the message to the businesses that we need their voice and not their handout and to connect them to the future workforce
- xi. Dick recommended reaching out to the Rauch Foundation and revisiting the 2004 Child Care Industry report that was marking a 10-year anniversary. Janet stated she was working on that with the Rauch Foundation and was intending to illustrate to the towns and the county the importance of childcare as an economic industry. A goal is to have the County legislators speak to their constituents about child care.
- xii. Mike Haynes said a goal of the hearings could be to collect data. What information does do child-care providers collect regarding the qualitative outcomes of early childhood education rather than just the quantitative outputs. An example would be: What percentage of children receiving childcare went to college? Etc.
- xiii. Kathy talked about UPK – Head Start and CCBG funds. They are not connected and the CCBG requirements create a transient child by not providing continuity of care. Many CBO's that provide UPK do not accept DSS subsidies leaving the UPK monies unspent. If there were a way to create a pilot to marry the UPK and CCBG funds together children and families would be better served. Janet mentioned NYS receives \$6 billion dollars for child services overall. Her lifetime goal would be to join the funds together overall. Peggy pointed out that UPK falls under the State Education Department and has high academic standards, linked to the State Common Core Curriculum, that may not be attainable in some child care settings.
- xiv. Jennifer Casey suggested mandatory full day kindergarten in the school districts.
- xv. Denise Dowd stated we should focus on the funding. New CCBG federal regulations call for higher standards of care that will result in less subsidies for the children as there will be no new money added by the federal government and the

same flat funded CCBG will be used for administration costs to monitor the new regulations. NYS OCFS cost analysis of these new regulations suggests a loss of 20k – 50k lost slots. Janet stated that these new regulations represent the unresolved tension between “quality” and “access” in childcare.

- xvi. Dick spoke of the recent NPR report , “the third shift” - parents who work at night because of child care concerns.