

**Welfare to Work Commission
Of the Suffolk County Legislature
Minutes of the November 8th, 2013 Meeting**

Present: Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; James Andrews; Roger Podd for Ray O'Rourke; Don Friedman; Ellen Krakow; Michael Haynes; Rob Greenberger; Debbie Joseph; Marjorie Acevedo; Charvon Pierce for Leg. DuWayne Gregory; Kimberly Gierasch; Michael Stoltz; Dennis Nowak for John Nieves; Sr. Lisa Bergeron; Joan Travan

Excused: Barbara Egloff; Nina Leonhardt; Peggy Boyd; Jeff Reynolds; Gwen O'Shea; Charles Fox

Absent: Gwen Branch

Guests: Nick LaMorte, CSEA; Denise Dowell, CSEA; David Mohr, DSS

1. **Minutes:** Minutes of the September meeting were adopted unanimously on a motion by Sr. Lisa Bergeron, seconded by Marjorie Acevedo. Chair Richard Koubek noted that the October meeting was cancelled after none of the Commission members reported having a problem with the proposed 2014 County budget and due to the heavy meeting workload of the Child Care Committee in preparation for the December child-care public hearings.
2. **Budget Updates:** Mr. Koubek thanked the members of the Commission for their prompt attention to the electronic discussion of the proposed 2014 budget and their electronic vote on the letter to the Legislature supporting the legislative Budget Review Office (BRO) recommendations which were released at 3PM on Friday, October 18th and required the Commission's attention prior to the Tuesday, October 22nd budget hearing. The letter, adopted electronically on a motion by Mr. Koubek, seconded by Kathy Liguori, passed: 14 - Yes; 0 - No; 2 - Abstentions (Ray O'Rourke and James Anderson). The letter is appended below. Mr. Koubek testified in support of the letter at the joint Human Services and Health Committee budget hearing on October 22nd. All of these BRO recommendations supported in the letter were adopted by the Legislature on November 6th for inclusion in the 2014 County budget:
 - a. Reallocate a total of \$573,000 from the \$2 million in 2014 gross DSS program savings identified by [BRO] in order to supplement the recommended shortchanged permanent salaries funding levels by
 - i. \$277,000 in FCSA,
 - ii. \$179,000 in CBA and
 - iii. \$117,000 in CSEB.
 - b. "The County Executive...recommend his candidate for [permanent] Commissioner of Social Services to allow a vote before the Legislature as soon as possible." Mr. Koubek pointed out that the Human Services Committee was meeting at the same time as this Commission meeting to vote on a resolution appointing John O'Neill to be permanent DSS Commissioner. The vote was expected to pass.
3. **Child Care Committee:** Mr. Koubek again commended Kathy Liguori, Chair of the Child Care Committee and its members and consultants who put together the child-care hearings,

five pre-hearings focus groups and a child-care parental survey in a short period. The consultants represent some of the most respected leaders in child care on Long Island, two of whom, Nick LaMorte and Denise Dowell, joined the Commission for today's discussion. Mr. Koubek stated that the focus of the discussion today will be to prepare the members of the Commission for the December 2nd and 18th public child-care hearings. Ms. Liguori next facilitated the discussion.

- a. Rob Greenberger noted that child care is an extremely difficult and complex public-policy issue. He asked what the focus of the hearings would be. Ms. Liguori stated that child care and early learning have been major news items since President Obama called for a federal early-learning initiative in his 2013 State of the Union message. She called the Commission's attention to the hearings letters of invitation and flyer which have these focus questions:
 - i. How do pre-school children benefit from quality early-learning and child-care experiences?
 - ii. How do parents struggle to find or pay for quality child care?
 - iii. How will Suffolk businesses and the Suffolk economy benefit from more quality, affordable child-care?
 - iv. How do pre-school learning experiences affect school success?
 - v. How would mandated full or part-day Kindergarten be beneficial?
 - vi. How are child-care providers struggling with funding and other industry issues?
 - vii. What recommendations can we make to improve early learning and child care in Suffolk?
- b. There ensued an extensive discussion and Question/Answer session regarding some of the specific questions that will be raised during the hearings. Among the salient points raised:
 - i. One of the major reasons that child care is such a difficult public policy area is that there are multitude state and federal funding streams that have created child-care silos with overlapping and sometimes contradictory eligibility and other requirements and standards.
 - ii. The move toward quality early learning experiences being pushed by the White House will raise public attention about the importance of these experiences for later school success. However, lacking appropriate funding, raising standards could force many child-care providers out of business because they do not have the fiscal or personnel resources needed to meet these quality standards. In effect, improved quality could deny access to child care services, especially for working-poor families.
 - iii. The early-learning and child-care fields are now being influenced by the national move toward a Common Core curriculum and the possibility that what is being criticized as the "over-testing" of elementary, middle and secondary school children may begin to affect early-learning practices. Sr. Lisa Bergeron, a former Kindergarten teacher, stated that there is growing concern about early-learning being overly intellectualized at the expense of developing other non-academic social and emotional readiness skills needed by pre-school children.

- iv. Ellen Krakow stated that the hearings and report need to address the special child-care needs of working-poor families and other groups with unique circumstances such as immigrants or families with children that have physical or mental disabilities. Ms. Liguori and Mr. Koubek stated that this is an important priority for the hearings and the report that will follow.
 - c. Mike Stoltz asked what the timeline is for the post-hearings development of a report to the Legislature. Mr. Koubek stated that there may be a forum for providers in January or February, if many providers fail to testify at the hearings. He will then develop a report outline that will be submitted to the Child Care Committee, and then adopted by the full Commission in the spring. Ideally, the report will be submitted to the Legislature in May or June.
 - d. The Commission reviewed the list of speakers who were invited to be placed on the agenda of the hearings for testimony. Mr. Koubek thanked the staff of the Clerk of the Legislature for mailing these letters by November 1st, despite their heavy workload preparing for the November 6th County budget vote.
 - e. The Commission next reviewed the parent child-care survey. Several members made editorial suggestions that Ms. Liguori accepted. The survey will be distributed in English and Spanish and will be circulated by providers as well as on line via a Google survey.
4. **Employment Assessment Committee:**
- a. Chair Rob Greenberger reported that DSS has provided the Commission with sanctions/fair hearings data that will require additional analysis by the Committee. For example, the fact that about 23% of fair hearings, January-October, 2013, were decided in favor of the clients does not necessarily demonstrate that the reasons for these decisions were due to undiagnosed disabilities. Many other variables could have led to the pro-client determination.
 - b. James Andrews reported that 20% of SWEP clients are placed in educational settings. He e-mailed the specifics to Mr. Koubek. Since this e-mail never arrived, it will be resent.
 - c. Mr. Koubek announced that he, Ms. Liguori, Legislator Gregory will meet on November 18th with Commissioner O’Neill to discuss DSS/Commission relations. The status of the ADA policy will be raised at that time.
5. **IDA Scoring:** Mr. Koubek reported that he and Ms. Liguori participated in an October 17th conference call with Suffolk County Planning Commission Chair David Calone and Suffolk IDA President Anthony Manetta to discuss the Commission’s poverty-report recommendation that IDA tax-break recipients be required to provide community benefits to assist working-poor people. Mr. Manetta stated in this conversation that the IDA has a “Long Island First” policy that would encourage IDA grant recipients to hire locally – one of the Commission’s recommendations. However, legal counsel advised the IDA that such requirements violate the interstate commerce clause of the US Constitution. Debbie Joseph and Chavron Pierce noted that the Albanese Corporation is hiring locally for the Wyandanch Rising project. It was unclear if this practice was voluntary on the part of the Albanese Corporation or required by the Town of Babylon. Mr. Manetta invited the Commission to submit a one-page summary of ideas that might be included in an IDA scoring tool for IDA requests, such as local hiring, child care for workers, education and training or

apprenticeships for local workers, etc. It was agreed that a Commission IDA committee be created for this purpose with the goal of submitting ideas for a scoring tool to Mr. Manetta by February. The Committee will include consultants Roger Clayman of the Long Island Federation of Labor and a representative of Long Island Jobs with Justice – both organizations having worked on community benefits agreements – as well as these Commission members:

- a. Richard Koubek
 - b. Kathy Liguori
 - c. Marjorie Acevedo
 - d. Kim Gierasch
 - e. Chavron Pierce
 - f. Michael Stoltz
 - g. Sr. Lisa Bergron
6. **Next Meeting:** The December meeting will be cancelled due to the child-care hearings. The next meeting will be Friday, January 10th, 2014, 9:30 AM at the SCDOL One Stop Center.

Letter to the Legislature on BRO Recommendations

October 21, 2013

TO: Members of the Suffolk County Legislature

Since 2008, the Welfare to Work Commission has repeatedly expressed concern about understaffing at DSS, most recently in our 2012 poverty report that identified a 9.6% staff vacancy rate, as reported by the BRO in 2012. This year, the BRO has identified a 10.3% DSS vacancy rate.

The BRO 2014 budget analyses again documents serious staffing shortfalls at DSS that “will further burden a department overwhelmed with mandated responsibilities, with its dwindling workforce strained beyond their limits in too many service areas.” This year, the cause appears to be the budget’s inflated \$7 million in “recommended” turnover savings (TOS) that will result in a \$1.2 million reduction in permanent salaries.

We agree with the BRO assessment that “since 2008, DSS has witnessed and processed historic growth in demand for help from the most fragile of our society...” The Commission therefore strongly supports the BRO recommendation to reallocate:

“a total of \$573,000 from the \$2 million in 2014 gross DSS program savings identified by us in order to supplement the recommended shortchanged permanent salaries funding levels by \$277,000 in FCSA, \$179,000 in CBA and \$117,000 in CSEB. After applicable Federal and State aid, calculated conservatively on a last dollar reimbursement level, the local share costs of providing enough permanent salaries to reverse the potential deficits next year would be projected at \$294,257, and would reduce the net DSS 2014 program savings of \$1,697,800 down to \$1,403,543.... This redirected funding will provide three critically important divisions with enough permanent salaries to keep their staffing levels stable in 2014”

Given the enormous burdens on DSS, the Commission also strongly supports the BRO recommendation that “the County Executive...recommend his candidate for [permanent] Commissioner of Social Services to allow a vote before the Legislature as soon as possible.”

Yours truly for the Commission,
Richard Koubek
Richard Koubek, PhD, Chair

Kathy Liguori
Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair