

**Welfare to Work Commission  
Of the Suffolk County Legislature  
Minutes of the January 18, 2013 Meeting**

**Present:** Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Marcia Spector; Michael Stoltz; James Andrews; Don Friedman; Marjorie Acevedo; Gwen O’Shea; Barbara Egloff; Debbie Joseph; Nina Leonhardt; Bridget DePasquale; Michael Haynes; Ellen Krakow; Roland Hampson; Rob Greenberger; Kathy Malloy

**Excused:** Kimberly Gierasch; Peggy Boyd; Jeff Reynolds; Gwen Branch; Ray O’Rourke

**Guest:** DSS Commissioner Gregory Blass

1. **Minutes:** Minutes of the December 14<sup>th</sup> meeting were adopted unanimously on a motion by Nina Leonhardt, seconded by Mike Stoltz. Chair Richard Koubek acknowledged that the December minutes were somewhat more detailed than usual because there were important discussions and some differences of opinion among the members regarding portions of the poverty report. He noted that all Commission members who were cited in the minutes received draft copies in advance and had an opportunity to clarify or correct their portion of the minutes.
2. **Remarks from Commissioner Blass:** Commissioner Blass stated that he wanted to personally inform the Commission of his retirement even though this had been reported in the press several days ago. He stated that John O’Neill would serve as temporary Acting Commissioner until a permanent choice is made by the County Executive. He stated the importance of having a permanent commissioner selected at the earliest time. Commissioner Blass acknowledged the strong working relationship he and his Department has had with the Commission and particularly thanked the members for their frequent support of appropriate staffing for the Department. He noted that the Commission’s work is public service in its purest form. He also announced that Roland Hampson will be moving from the Commissioner’s office to Child Care; he will be replaced by John Nieves who will serve on the Commission as well. Chair Richard Koubek commended the Commissioner for his integrity, his care for the poor and his support of DSS staff – all of which have yielded extraordinary leadership in difficult times. Rob Greenberger and Ellen Krakow commended Roland Hampson for his leadership and cooperation with the Commission’s ADA work via the Employment Assessment Committee.
3. **Suffolk Poverty Report:** Mr. Koubek led an assessment and discussion on release of and next steps for the Commission’s poverty report.
  - a. Mr. Koubek stated that the report had been distributed to each Suffolk County legislator, the County Executive and each New York State assemblyperson and senator representing Long Island. It was also sent to Larry Levy at the Hofstra Institute for Suburban Studies, Sarah Eichberg at Adelphi’s Vital Signs Project and to the Rauch Foundation. Links to the report on the Legislature’s website or the report itself have been circulated to thousands of Long Island leaders and activists by LI Jobs with Justice and Vision Long Island. Members of the Commission were encouraged to post the report on their agency websites and to

circulate it widely. He noted that LI Jobs with Justice would be excerpting portions of the report for use in its educational activities.

- b. The report received coverage in *Newsday* on December 21<sup>st</sup>, following the December 20<sup>th</sup> press conference which was attended by Presiding Officer Lindsay, Legislator Gregory and Commissioner Blass as well as Mr. Koubek, Kathy Liguori, Don Friedman and several of the people whose stories were featured in the report. News 12 filmed the entire press conference but it was unclear if they aired any of the tape. The report was also covered by WSHU Public Radio, scheduled for their “Morning Edition” and “All Things Considered” segments on December 22<sup>nd</sup>. National Public News Services did a story featuring the report in early January. A meeting with the Cablevision editorial advisory board was scheduled for the afternoon of January 18<sup>th</sup>. A meeting with the *Newsday* editorial board has been requested.
  - c. Mr. Koubek reported that the Legislature now has new committee assignments. Legislator Rick Montano will be chairing Human Services with Legislator DuWayne Gregory as Vice Chair. He announced that the Commission would request time to present the report’s findings in February and March to the Legislature’s Human Services, Health, Public Works and Transportation, Ways and Means Committees and Economic Development Committees.
- 4. Commission Priorities for 2013:** Mr. Koubek reminded the Commission that the poverty report stated that the recommendations to the Legislature would constitute the Commission’s working agenda for 2013. He then led a discussion as to which of these recommendations should be prioritized for the year.
- a. Mr. Koubek reminded the Commission that the County Executive stated in December that he would not prioritize a request for the New York State Legislature to approve a ¼-cent sales tax increase for Suffolk because he did not think this request could pass. Absent the sales tax increase and the \$70 million it would generate, the Commission reached consensus that the 2013 priorities should not be those recommendations that require additional revenue.
  - b. The Commission reached consensus that the report’s education and training recommendations should be prioritized. James Andrews reminded the Commission that the report acknowledges the limitations federal regulations place on educational placements that are allowed to count as work activities. The Employment Assessment Committee, which is finishing its ADA work, would take up such education and training issues as GED placements, STEM trainings, apprenticeships, closer coordination with contract agencies in order to tailor education and training activities to the needs of disabled people. Several Commission members expressed frustration that New York State does not seem to be moving quickly to avail itself of the opportunities for more flexibility in education and training placements offered by the federal Health and Human Services Department in the summer of 2012. This is due, in part, to the lack of permanent appointments of State commissioners at OTDA and elsewhere in the State government.
  - c. There was consensus about the Commission prioritizing the child-care subsidy issue, pressing for a change in the State CCBG funding formula that has penalized Suffolk County with significant cuts in funding. Mr. Koubek again noted that the

County Executive has made this issue a priority for State advocacy and that he is trying to arrange a meeting with Luis Montez, Deputy County Executive, the Presiding Officer who agreed to attend this meeting, the Chair of the Human Services Committee and Commission members in order to coordinate County advocacy on this issue.

- d. The Commission also reached consensus to continue prioritizing staffing at the Department of Social Services, Department of Labor and Department of Health, as per the report's recommendations and Commissioner Blass' remarks earlier in this meeting.
  - e. The Commission also reached consensus to prioritize the report's recommendation about the need to monitor the privatization of the County health centers which is occurring in conjunction with their possibly achieving Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) status under Hudson River Health Care. It was agreed that a meeting with Legislator William Spencer, Chair of the Health Committee, might improve communication on this issue.
  - f. Kathy Liguori suggested, and there was consensus, that the Commission should also monitor developments around its two previous reports: affordable housing and sober homes.
- 5. 2013 Meeting Dates:** The Commission agreed that the permanent meeting date would remain the second Friday of each month, 9:30-11:30 AM. James Andrews was asked to confirm Conference Room A at the SCDOL One Stop Center for these meetings.
- 6. Legislator Cilmi resolutions:** Mr. Koubek reorted that Legislator Cilmi's Resolution 20412012 amending the County Charter to require human services contract agencies evaluations and disclosures was signed into law by County Executive Bellone. Several Commission members who represent contract agencies stated that much if not all of this information is already provided to the County. Marjorie Acededo reported that legislator Cilmi withdrew the other two resolutions that would have created greater County oversight of the contract agencies.
- 7. Announcements:**
- a. Mr. Koubek reported that Robert Lipp, who is serving as the temporary replacement for Gail Vizzini as Director of the legislative Budget Review Office (BRO), contacted him and asked to meet with him and Kathy Liguori to coordinate the Commission's work with BRO. Marjorie Acevido will attend this meeting as well.
  - b. Kathy Liguori announced that her two child-care centers are no longer affiliated with Tutor Time and are now incorporated as HabitTots.
  - c. Mike Stoltz announced that the Mental Health Association of Suffolk has merged with Clubhouse of Suffolk.
  - d. Mr. Koubek announced that the Huntington Township Housing Coalition in cooperation with other affordable housing and anti-hunger organizations is sponsoring a Martin Luther King interfaith service devoted to the need for affordable housing. The event will take place at the Suffolk Y Jewish Community Center in Commack on Monday, January 21<sup>st</sup>.
- 8. Next Meeting: Friday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 AM** at the SCDOL One Stop Center.