

**Welfare to Work Commission  
Of the Suffolk County Legislature  
Minutes of the May 10th, 2013 Meeting**

**Present:** Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; James Andrews; Roger Podd for Ray O'Rourke; Marcia Spector; Kathy Malloy; Marjorie Acevedo; Rob Greenberger; Peggy Boyd; Michael Stoltz; Nina Leonhardt; John Nieves

**Excused:** Debbie Joseph; Don Friedman; Ellen Krakow; Kimberly Gierasch; Chavron Pierce for Legislator DuWayne Gregory; Bridget DePasquale; Gwen O'Shea; Barbara Egloff; Michael Haynes; Jeff Reynolds; Gwen Branch

**Guests:** Denise Marzano-Doty and Judith Lespirasse, Touro Law Center's Senior Citizens Law Program

1. **Minutes:** Minutes of the April meeting were adopted unanimously on a motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Marcia Spector.
2. **Presentation: Tuoro Senior Citizens Law Program:** Denise Marzano-Doty and Judith Lespirasse, at the request of Rob Greenberger, provided an overview of the Touro Law Center's Senior Citizens Law Project that provides Suffolk County residents over the age of 60 with free legal counseling. There is no income requirement for seniors to access such services as: income and nutrition benefits including Social Security and SSI, Medicaid/Low-Income Medicare, Disability Benefits, Public Assistance and Food Stamps; health and long-term care including Medicaid; housing and utilities assistance such as HEAP, home repair fraud, landlord/tenant issues; guardianship/neglect/abuse; consumer protection services. The staff can provide assistance in English, Spanish and Creole. Undocumented seniors can receive the services.
3. **Sunday Bus Service:** Richard Koubek reported that IR 1295-13 to create Sunday bus service passed the Legislature on May 14<sup>th</sup> with a vote of 17 Yes and one recusal. He thanked the members of the Commission for their flexibility and promptness with both the electronic vote of support for the Newsday Op/Ed piece and for the amended resolution. The Op/Ed was not published by Newsday because they published an editorial supporting the resolution, as did News 12 which based its support on the recommendation in the Commission's poverty report. The amended resolution, which was worked out between Legislator Jay Schneiderman and County Executive Steve Bellone, requires \$1.1 million of the \$2 million in additional State STOA transportation assistance to be used for extended service. The balance will be applied to deficit reduction. The resolution also calls for the Department of Public Works to file a federal JARC (reverse commute) grant of approximately \$1 million that will be used for Sunday service. Legislator Schneiderman and DPW staff believe the County has a good chance of receiving this grant. A decision on the grant application is expected in late June or early July. Mr. Koubek acknowledged the work of other agencies that were partners in this advocacy, including Tri-state Transportation Campaign, Vision Long Island and Long Island Jobs with Justice, all participating in letter-writing, testimony and legislative visits. He also noted that the resolution to cap the proposed \$1 increase in the SCAT fare, based on a 25 cent increase in the senior-citizens fare, died in committee, to the disappointment of advocates for the disabled.

#### **4. Poverty Report:**

- a. Mr. Koubek reported that he, Kathy Liguori, Mike Stoltz along with Ryan Lynch of Tri-State Transportation Campaign and Charlene Obernauer of LI Jobs with Justice presented the Commission's poverty report recommendation for extended bus service as well as support for IR 1295-13 to the Legislature's Public Works and Transportation Committee on April 30<sup>th</sup>. The recommendations were well received. Chair Jay Schneiderman pointed out the importance of the poverty report's findings. IR 1295-13 was unanimously voted out of committee on April 30<sup>th</sup>.
- b. Members of the Commission received copies of a portion of the LI Jobs with Justice (LI-JwJ) discussion guide/toolkit on LI poverty that utilizes the Commission's report. The guide/toolkit was unveiled at the May 3<sup>rd</sup> LI-JwJ "Working But Still Poor" conference attended by 200 people. The guide includes educational inserts for publication in congregational and agency newsletters and websites that use the Commission's report to document poverty in Suffolk County.

#### **5. Employment Assessment Committee:**

- a. Chair Rob Greenberger, along with Mr. Koubek, reported that most of the final issues in the ADA draft were being resolved among committee members. Commission members were reminded that this initiative was undertaken two years ago to simultaneously help ensure public assistance applicants with disabilities have access to appropriate services thereby reducing sanctions as well as limiting the County's risk and exposure to litigation due to ADA violations. He reminded the Commission that the Committee was close to finalizing the draft just before Commissioner Greg Blass announced his retirement in January, 2013.
- b. John Nieves stated that he will be contacting the County Attorney (CA) to get a legal opinion regarding the proposed ADA draft policy. He noted that the federal and/or state ADA policy templates might be adequate and may not require a new policy. Mr. Nieves stated that approval of the CA was not sought at the onset of this project by the previous staff and thought it best to not take any further action until he has that approval. There are now new DSS staff who have the responsibility of overseeing ADA/LEP policy, which could possibly change the equation.
- c. Mr. Koubek stated that, regardless of staff changes, County liabilities may persist. It was felt by a number of Commission members that asking for the CA opinion at this time without presenting the completed document would only further delay the process, however, having the CA approval was important.
- d. Kathy Liguori stated that the committee had received a legal opinion from welfare-rights attorney Cary LaCheen that the County may be at risk of lawsuits in the absence of a new policy, which is why this project began several years ago and had the full cooperation of then Commissioner Greg Blass and his staff, Roland Hampson and Catherine Clifford.
- e. Marjorie Acevido stated that this process should be expedited with a sit down meeting of the major parties.
- f. Mr. Greenberger stated that the ADA policy has enormous ramifications for some DSS clients and that he would convene the Committee in the coming weeks

to bring the draft to conclusion and that he hoped Mr. Nieves would receive a prompt opinion from the County Attorney.

- g. James Andrews pointed out that the “Did You Know?” ADA brochure is now being distributed to clients at DOL sites.
6. **Child Care:** Peggy Boyd asked Chair Kathy Liguori if she had seen problems with Head Start facilities closing. Apparently, the federal Sequester has caused a reduction in Head Start funding. There have also been media reports questioning the effectiveness of Head Start. Mr. Koubek noted that some years ago similar studies were debunked. It was suggested that Ms. Liguori reach out to Head Start leaders, possibly to make a presentation to the Commission at a future date.
  7. **Announcements:**
    - a. Marcia Spector announced her retirement from EOC at the end of June. She will be replaced by Charles Fox. Mr. Koubek expressed his gratitude for her dedicated service to the Commission.
    - b. Mr. Koubek announced that Catholic Charities representative Bridget DePasquale was out on a long-term leave due to a recurrence of an illness.
  8. **Next Meeting: Friday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 9:30 AM** at the SCDOL One Stop Center.