

**Welfare to Work Commission
Of the Suffolk County Legislature
Minutes of the November 15th, 2012 Meeting**

Present: Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Charven Pierce for Legislator DuWayne Gregory; Ray O'Rourke; Marcia Spector; Michael Stoltz; James Andrews; Don Friedman; Marjorie Acevedo; Meghan Ashford Grooms; Barbara Egloff; Debbie Joseph; Nina Leonhardt; Jeff Reynolds

Excused: Michael Haynes; Peggy Boyd; Ellen Krakow; Roland Hampson; Rob Greenberger; Bridget DePasquale; Kimberly Gierasch; Gwen Branch

Guest: Legislator Tom Cilmi

1. **Minutes:** Minutes of the October meeting were adopted unanimously on a motion by Marcia Spector, seconded by Marcia Spector.
2. **Child-Care Funding:** Kathy Liguori reported that the press conference for release of the Commission's child-care report was scheduled for 11:00 AM on Friday, November 16th, immediately following presentation of the report to the Human Services Committee at 10:00 AM. The Commission is hoping that the legislative testimony and press conference will highlight, at the State level, that the child-care allocation formula needs to be revised because it penalized Suffolk County. To compound the situation, it was reported that OCFS officials stated in a recent conference call that statewide child care demand rose by only 3% and that this official was unaware that Suffolk's demand rose by 51%.
3. **Poverty Report:** Richard Koubek shared with the Commission a draft of the report that had been approved by the Poverty Report Committee for discussion by the full Commission. He reminded the Commission that the targeted date for release of the report is the week of December 17th – the height of the Holiday Season – when there is significant media attention to the plight of poor people on Long Island. He noted that the report's presentations to the various legislative committees will not occur until after the new committees are organized in January. The full report will be finalized with a vote at the December 14th Commission meeting.
 - a. Mr. Koubek stated that an electronic copy would be mailed to each Commission member immediately following the meeting for their review and that he welcomed suggested edits to the report which should be sent electronically to all members of the Commission.
 - b. The Commission looked at the format of the report, as Mr. Koubek explained the report's organization, chapter by chapter. He called attention to several key themes:
 - i. Lack of government interest in programs to assist the poor and the tendency to cut these programs during fiscal shortfalls;
 - ii. The significant number of Long Islanders who are near-poor (earning between the Federal Poverty Level or FPL of \$23,050 and 200% of FPL or \$46,100) who are largely without government supports;
 - iii. The need to redefine the federal definition of poverty and to regionalize that definition to Long Island's high cost-of-living;

- iv. The unique plight of vulnerable poor people such as DSS clients, children, segregated people of color, people suffering from mental illness, substance-use disorders or physical disabilities;
 - v. The rigidity and inflexibility of eligibility and other regulations in government programs that are supposed to support poor people;
 - vi. The need for the County to address new revenues to support programs for the poor.
- c. The Commission spent the remainder of the meeting focused on the proposed recommendations contained in the report. There was extended discussion around these topics:
- i. The role of nonprofits in providing services to poor people. It was agreed that this section would be enhanced with information provided by the Health and Welfare Council of Long Island.
 - ii. The trend toward privatization of services. There were differences of opinion among Commission members as to where and when privatization is an effective response to the delivery of services. It was agreed that James Andrews would add information to the section on nonprofits on the cost-effectiveness of services provided by the Department of Labor.
 - iii. The report's recommendation for a ¼ cent sales tax increase and a 2% General Fund increase was discussed at length with preliminary consensus that the report should call for these enhanced revenues that would yield \$71 million, with about 20% (approximately \$15 million) of the new revenues dedicated to the report's policy recommendations. Mr. Koubek thanked the legislative Budget Review Office for their assistance in the revenue analysis.
 - iv. The specific policy recommendations were discussed, with consensus that they appeared acceptable as presented by the committee. It was agreed that there should be several additional recommendations considered for inclusion:
 - 1. Evening bus service;
 - 2. Staff restorations at DOL;
 - 3. A broader education and training recommendation for all SWEP clients;
 - v. The SSA "Ticket to Work" program may be eliminated from the report because it is not cost-effective for Suffolk County;
 - vi. The educational and training recommendations for disabled people seemed to be duplicative of services already provided by DOL.
 - vii. The federal/State advocacy agenda recommended for the Legislature may also include a recommended youth-program funding item.
4. Legislator Tom Cilmi thanked the Commission for their work and commended them on the depth of the analysis that he witnessed during the meeting. He cited several examples of the Legislature diverting funds from various revenue sources to programs that serve poor people. He also objected to the call for a tax increase, noting that Long Island taxpayers are among the highest taxed in the nation. He also spoke about the need to encourage self-reliance when dealing with poor people. Mr. Koubek stated that the report's focus is on developing self-sufficiency for poor people. Legislator Cilmi then announced that he is introducing three

resolutions to provide greater oversight of nonprofit organizations. He agreed to share the resolutions with the Commission.

5. **Next Meeting:** Friday, December 14th 9:30 AM, SCDOL One Stop Center.