

**Welfare to Work Commission
Of the Suffolk County Legislature
Minutes of the April 13, 2012 Meeting**

Present: Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Rushka Tcholakova; Gwen Branch; Marcia Spector; Bridget DePasquale; Barbara Egloff; Jeff Reynolds; Kimberly Gierasch; Roland Hampson; Debbie Joseph; Barbara Stootoff for Eric Lopez; Kirk Cronk for Pam Killoran; Marjorie Acevedo; Michael Haynes;

Excused: Don Friedman; Frank Casiglia; Peggy Boyd; Michael Stoltz; Ellen Krakow; Rob Greenberger

Guest: SCDOL Commissioner Samuel Chu

1. **Presentation by Commissioner Chu:** Chair Richard Koubek introduced Suffolk County Department of Labor Commissioner Samuel Chu to discuss the County's budget deficit and its impact on SCDOL staffing and programs. Commissioner Chu began by pointing out that the deficit is a crisis that will require tough decisions by all County departments. He highlighted SCDOL's commitment to the SWEP program which it administers for SCDSS and the central SWEP goal of bringing public assistance clients to lives of self sufficiency. To do this, SCDOL must examine external levers that create or add to the problems faced by SWEP clients. There is no single prescription to the complex problems faced by these clients. The Department must view them and its mission from 30,000 feet up right down to the granularity of the problems they and the Department face.
 - a. Commissioner Chu next provided an overview of County Executive Bellone's Economic Development plan which he sees as a long-term solution to the County's fiscal crisis as well as to the obstacles confronting SWEP clients who are seeking jobs that pay self-sufficiency wages. Under this plan, the County is hiring an economic development "czar" who will oversee about 10 departments whose missions relate to economic development such as environmental protection, tourism or housing. The goal is to recognize the interconnectivity of these departments and to coordinate planning and policy-making geared toward economic development.
 - b. Commissioner Chu pointed out that the meeting with the County executive and legislative leaders to finalize the staffing cuts has not yet taken place for his Department or for the other departments. These meetings will likely occur the week of April 16th. Decisions on the layoffs must be made by April 30th to comply with the County's 60-day notification requirement. He acknowledged that there are no final decisions yet on SCDOL staff cuts and that speculating about them at this time would not be useful.
 - c. Richard Koubek noted that the Commission is holding three public hearings, May 14, May 22 and June 1 on poverty in Suffolk County which should highlight the importance of County programs that serve poor people such as SWEP. He stated that the Commission has a long history of monitoring staffing at SCDSS and SCDOL and making recommendations to the Legislature to maintain appropriate staffing levels so that each department can successfully carry out its mission. He said that the Commission is prepared to reconvene its Ad Hoc Staffing Committee and that he has

asked both Commissioner Blas and Commissioner Chu to submit their finalized list of 2012 staff cuts with an assessment of how each cut will affect the delivery of services. Mr. Koubek thanked the Commissioner for his presentation and for his decision to remain present for the entire Commission meeting.

2. **Minutes:** Minutes of the March 9th meeting were adopted unanimously on a motion by Marjorie Acevedo, seconded by Kathy Liguori. Mr. Koubek announced that Legislator Ed Romaine asked Human Services Committee Chair, Legislator DuWayne Gregory, to invite the Commission to present its annual report at a Committee meeting. The date for this presentation will be April 16th, 10 AM. Mr. Koubek invited Vice Chair Kathy Liguori and the Commission's committee chairs to participate in the presentation.
3. **Out of State Safety Net Clients.** Mr. Koubek reminded the Commission that SCDSS Commissioner Blass briefly referenced the high cost of out-of-state Safety Net clients when he spoke at the April meeting with regard to the State's increasing the County's share of Safety Net costs from 50% to 71%. He shared a report prepared by SCDSS that was given to Legislator Kate Browning which showed that 1200 Safety Net clients (or 22%) were from outside New York State in 2011, costing SCDSS about \$10 million. Many of the out of state families who are now receiving Safety Net Family Assistance have used up their federal TANF benefits. Jeff Reynolds asked if the Department has analyzed long-term patterns of migration to the State as well as reasons for this migration. Roland Hampson stated that SCDSS is limited in what they can ask new applicants about their residences, but that the Department has long believed that the influx is caused by that fact that 40 of the 50 states do not provide any form of Safety Net services. He also noted that there is no hard data on whether there is an influx of applicants from other New York State counties such as Nassau. Richard Koubek noted the absence of Ellen Krakow and Don Friedman, both attorneys, whose opinion on this issue will be sought before the next meeting of the Commission.
4. **Commission Hearings on Suburban Poverty:** The Commission reviewed the list of potential invitees for the public hearings. Mr. Koubek stated that Trudi Renwick from the US Census Department has confirmed that she will present the opening keynote on the Federal poverty definition as well as the rise in suburban poverty. The reaction panel will consist of Pearl Kamer, Chief Economist for the LIA; Sarah Eichberg of Adelphi University's Vital Signs Project and very likely Gwen O'Shea of the Health and Welfare Council of LI. Roland Hampson will confirm the availability of Samantha Garvey as the opening speaker. Invitations will be offered to the following people to make 10 minute presentations. Each will appear on the agenda for each hearing:
 - a. Senators Charles Schumer and Krisen Gillibrand
 - b. Scott Martell representing Governor Andrew Cuomo
 - c. Congressmen Steve Israel, Tim Bishop and Peter King
 - d. Each New York State assembly member representing Suffolk County
 - e. Each New York State senator representing Suffolk County
 - f. County Executive Steve Bellone
 - g. Suffolk county Commissioners Greg Blass (DSS); Samuel Chu (DOL) and Dr. James Tomarken (DOH)
 - h. Maryanne Garvin (CDC)
 - i. Paule Pachter (LI Cares)
 - j. Randi Dressner (Island Harvest)
 - k. Luis Valenzuela (LIIA)

- l. Janet Walerstein (Child Care Council of Suffolk)
 - m. Elaine Gross (ERASE Racism)
 - n. Kevin Law (LIA)
 - o. John Durso (LI Federation of Labor)
 - p. Bishop William Murphy (Diocese of Rockville Centre)
 - q. Rev. Tom Goodhue (LICC)
5. The Commission next reviewed the list of agency heads who will be personally invited to testify; each will be asked to fill out a speaker's card and will not appear on the agenda. Several additions were suggested including Phil Basso who is a nationally-recognized expert on governmental systems analyses, as well as representatives from the domestic violence and criminal justice fields. Mr. Koubek thanked Tim Laube, Clerk of the Legislature, and his staff, for processing the invitations. All Commission members were asked to mark their calendars for the three hearing dates: May 18, May 22 and June 1.
6. **Sober Homes:** Richard Koubek reported that the sober homes conference call took place on April 3rd. In attendance were the Governor's representative Jim Introne, OASAS Chief Counsel Rob Kent, Legislator Kate Browning who chaired the call, her aide Joshua Slaughter, a representative of the Brookhaven code enforcement department and Commission members including himself, Kathy Liguori, Jeff Reynolds, Peggy Boyd and Mike Stoltz. He noted two significant accomplishments of this call:
- a. The governor's representative, Jim Introne, agreed to examine the degree to which State housing codes preempt local codes, which has been a source of complaint when towns seek to enforce their stricter building codes on State funded DSS housing.
 - b. OASAS Chief Counsel Rob Kent acknowledged, as he had done in his January 2102 letter to Legislator Browning, that sober homes could qualify as OASAS regulated Supportive Living Services housing. This is a reversal of a position he took in writing in 2008. Mr. Kent also agreed to the recommendation made in the Commission's 2010 sober homes report that OASAS research the success of Supportive Living Services units as sober homes in other counties.

Jeff Reynolds pointed out that he was disappointed with OASAS continued refusal to accept responsibility for sober homes, noting that very few of them would qualify, or want to qualify as OASAS Supportive Living Services homes because of the rigorous standards used by OASAS for these homes. His opinions were shared by other participant in the conference call.

7. **Child Care:** Child Care Committee Chair Kathy Liguori shared with the Commission a report and letter that was drafted calling upon the New York State Office of Children and Family Services to restore SCDSS Child care Block Grant (CCBG) funding to the 2008-2009 level. She pointed out that the report, developed by the Commission's Child Care Committee showed a total loss of \$5,049,334 in CCBG funding while the monthly number of children served by SCDSS rose from 3,658 in December, 2008 to 5,621 in February, 2012. Without a restoration of CCBG funds to 2008-2009 levels, 1,724 children will lose subsidized child care. She further pointed out that the County has already reduced eligibility for subsidized child care from 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to 180% of FPL while increasing the family co-payments. This will place a serious burden on working poor families in Suffolk County where, according to the New York State Self Sufficiency Standard report, a family of four needs to earn almost \$80,000 a year to cover basic expenses (or 452% above the FPL.) She fears that many of the vulnerable working poor families in Suffolk will either

have to leave work without child care or will be forced to place their children in substandard and dangerous child care situations. Jeff Reynolds moved, and Gwen Branch seconded a motion to approve the letter and report. The motion passed unanimously. The letter and report are appended below.

8. **Next Meeting:** Friday, May 11, 9:30 AM, SCDOL One Stop Center (Note: Subject to cancellation due to the public hearings.)



April 13, 2012

Dear Governor, State Assembly Member, State Senator, County Executive, County Legislator, The Welfare to Work Commission of the Suffolk County Legislature is writing you to request your support to help restore the New York State Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) funds to Suffolk County which have been cut by \$5 million over the past three years, despite an increase from 4,000 to 6,000 in the number of children served. To help you understand this funding crisis, we are providing the attached report; *2012 Child Care Block Grant Subsidy for Suffolk County - A Statement of Need*. These CCBG funds serve the most vulnerable working poor families who rely on child care to remain in the workplace.

Should the 2012-2013 allocation remain at the 2011-2012 level, Suffolk County will have to drop 1,724 previously eligible children. Because of the loss of CCBG subsidies, effective January 2012, Suffolk County has:

- Increased the amount of the child-care costs parents must contribute from 15% to 30%
- DECREASED the eligibility level to 185% of poverty from 200% resulting in yet an additional 360 children no longer eligible to receive child-care subsidy.

The *2010 Self-Sufficiency Standard for New York State* prepared by the University of Washington reports that a three person Suffolk County family (parent, preschooler and school-age child) needs to earn \$78,916 to be self sufficient. **However, the same Suffolk County family can only earn up to \$34,281 to be eligible for the CCBG-funded child care subsidy.** It should be noted that the Self Sufficiency Standard is calculated using the actual costs of child care, food, housing and other basic expenses for Suffolk County.

In order to meet the child-care demands for Suffolk County's pre-school children, we respectfully ask you to request that New York State Office of Children and Family Services Commissioner Gladys Carrion restore the Suffolk County CCBG allocation amounts to the 2008/2009 levels of \$36 million so that Suffolk can serve vulnerable working poor families and avoid removing over 1,700 of their children from the subsidized child-care rolls.

We would appreciate your immediate attention to this matter as the allocation decisions are being made right now.

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

Kathy Liguori
Kathy Liguori

**Suffolk County Welfare to Work Commission
Child Care Committee Report April 4, 2012
*2012 Child Care Block Grant Subsidy for
Suffolk County - A Statement of Need***

Suffolk County's poorest working families are suffering as they make difficult decisions about who will care for their children when they go to work. For many; their child care subsidy has been taken away from them due to the cuts in the New York State Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) that have been allocated to Suffolk County by New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).

Suffolk County Child Care Subsidy Allocation

Fiscal Year	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
CCBG Allocation	\$33,180,167	\$32,311,723	\$29,932,213
MOE*	\$692,326	\$692,326	\$692,326
ARRA**	\$2,493,706	\$1,726,882	NA
Total	\$35,673,873	\$34,038,605	\$30,624,539
Total W/O ARRA	\$33,872,493	\$33,004,049	\$30,624,539
Total Loss	\$5,049,334		

* MOE is Maintenance of Effort (local share) assigned annually by OCFS

** ARRA is the one-time federal stimulus funds awarded in 2009-2010 that were used by Suffolk County for subsidized child care.

Of the total ARRA funding, \$3,925,951 was used for child-care subsidy for the 18 months it was available; the total number of additional children served was **365**.

□ *NYS OCFS only allowed claims for child care against the Block Grant while disregarding use of the ARRA funds for child care and consequently reduced the Suffolk County allocation base.*

□ *The ARRA money was used for child care that enabled parents to work. This decision to apply ARRA funds to working-poor families ultimately worked against Suffolk County because OCFS made this application of the ARRA funds their rationale for reducing the Suffolk CCBG.*

The demand in eligible families in Suffolk County has grown by 53% over the past four years, with a significant increase in demand over the past year that is GREATER than the child-care needs acknowledged by OCFS.

Monthly # of children

December 2008 3,658

December 2009 3,521

December 2010 4,605

December 2011 5,981

February 2012 5621*

****Should the 2012-2013 allocation remain at the 2011-2012 level Suffolk County will have to drop 1,724 previously eligible children and not have the capability to adequately provide child care to working poor families in a time of increased need.***

☐ **5,981** Suffolk County children received Child Care subsidy in 2011; this number will **decrease to 4,256** in 2012 because of a reduction in Child Care Block Grant funds. **1,724 of Suffolk County's youngest children from the most-vulnerable working-poor families will be at risk.**

Because of the loss of subsidies; effective January 2012 Suffolk County has:

☐ Increased the amount parents must contribute from 15% to 30% of child-care costs.

☐ DECREASED eligibility level to 185% of poverty from 200% resulting in an additional 360 (*) children are no longer eligible to receive child care subsidy).

☐ **Without additional allocation for the 2012-2013 year the eligibility level may decrease even further.**

The *2010 Self-Sufficiency Standard for New York State* prepared by the University of Washington reports a three member Suffolk County family (parent, preschooler and school-age child) must earn \$78,916 to be self sufficient. But the same Suffolk County family can earn up to only \$34,281 to be eligible for child care subsidy. It should be noted that the Self Sufficiency Standard is calculated using the actual costs of child care, food, housing and other basic expenses for Suffolk County.

In order to meet the child care demands for Suffolk County's youngest children, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services must restore the State CCBG allocation amounts to the 2008/2009 levels of \$36 million.