

**Welfare to Work Commission
Of the Suffolk County Legislature**

Minutes of the January 14th, 2011 Meeting

Present: Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Ellen Krakow; Don Friedman; Richard Krebs for Eric Lopez; Roland Hampson; Vinny Cassidy for Pam Killoran; Mike Stoltz; Bridget DePasquale; Michael Haynes; Rob Greenberger; Frank Casiglia; Peggy Boyd; Jack Caffey; Fred Combs for Joan Grant.

Excused: Peter Barnett; Nina Leonhardt; Judy Cahn; Idania Aponte; Jane Devine; Gwen Branch.

1. **Minutes:** Minutes of the December 10th Commission meeting were accepted unanimously, on a motion by Frank Casiglia, seconded by Ellen Krakow.
2. **Sunday Bus Service Resolution:** Chair Richard Koubek announced that IR 2092 creating a pilot project for Sunday bus service passed the Legislature on December 21st by 11 votes, one short of the 12 needed for a veto override. He stated that a veto of the resolution was expected from County Executive Steve Levy. He noted that Legislator Jay Schneiderman believes that the Commission's support of his resolution caused two legislators who had previously voted No to vote Yes on December 21st. Mr. Koubek also announced that a number of Island-wide community organizations are supporting the resolution, including Sustainable Long Island, Vision Long Island and LI Jobs with Justice. Mr. Koubek is employed as Community Outreach Coordinator by LI Jobs with Justice.
 - a. Among the legislators who voted No on December 21st were Lou D'Amaro, Rick Montano, John Kennedy, Jack Eddington, Thomas Baraga and Thomas Cilmi.
 - b. Richard Koubek and Kathy Liguori had a one-hour meeting with Legislator Kennedy on January 5th at which Legislator Kennedy expressed his reservations about Sunday bus service in terms of his larger reservations about the operations of the entire Suffolk bus system. Mr. Koubek and Ms. Liguori urged Legislator Kennedy to reach out to Legislator Schneiderman about connecting the Sunday service pilot with a review of the entire bus system, through the Public Works Committee, since the contracts for the bus companies are up for renewal in 2011. Ellen Krakow and Don Friedman both spoke in support of a full bus system evaluation since there is a lack of evening service and other problems that confront riders, especially working poor riders who have evening jobs.
 - c. Mr. Koubek also noted that LI Jobs with Justice was working with outreach centers in Legislator Montano's district to conduct a survey of their clients regarding Sunday bus service, since Legislator Montano had stated that he did not know if his constituents supported a 50-cent fare increase in exchange for Sunday service. These outreach staff planned to meet with Legislator Montano.

- d. It was agreed that Mr. Koubek, Kathy Liguori and Mike Stoltz would visit with Legislator Eddington to urge his support of a veto override.
3. **Sober Homes:** Mr. Koubek reported that the sober homes Request for Qualifications (RFQ) had been completed and that Legislator Browning arranged for a meeting to review the RFQ, on December 22nd, with himself, Kathy Liguori and Jeff Reynolds of the LI Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency, SCDSS Commissioner Greg Blass, Deputy Commissioner Ed Hernandez and Donald Reed, Assistant Division Administrator. He stated that it appeared the RFQ reflects the principles for administration of “safe and effective” sober homes that were outlined in the Commission’s report. He and Ms. Liguori are concerned that the criteria in the RFQ may be so high as to discourage sober home providers from responding to the RFQ. However, they and other Commission members also noted that the enhanced payment for sober-home providers who meet the criteria in the RFQ might be an inducement to comply with the RFQ. There was also concern that SCDSS may not have the staff needed to enforce the RFQ. Mr. Koubek announced that Legislator Browning had asked legislative counsel to draft a resolution creating a Sober Homes Oversight Board to assist in the enforcement of the RFQs.
4. **Employment Assessment Committee:** Chair Rob Greenberger reported on three issues that have been addressed by the Committee:
 - a. The “Did You Know?” flyer outlining the services and rights of people with disabilities was close to completion. The language and layout in the flyer will be finalized in about a week. The flyer will be available in English and Spanish to all SCDSS applicants in their documents packets and will be posted on computer screens and elsewhere in the centers.
 - b. Roland Hampson announced that, in part as a response to a request from the Committee, SCDSS will be designating a supervisor at each center to respond to any questions arising about an applicant’s disability status and will be empowered to assist in the disposition of the application process. Mr. Greenberger, Ms. Krakow and other Commission members commented that this new procedure should improve outcomes for people with disabilities who are applying for assistance.
 - c. The Committee continues to discuss steps that can improve communication between DSS workers and non-profit organizations that may assist clients who are applying for benefits and entitlements. SCDSS drafted an authorization form designed to allow, with the applicant’s consent, SCDSS representatives to speak with non-profits in an effort to improve communications. This form, which conforms with HIPAA confidentiality regulations, was distributed and discussed. There was consensus that this form was too complicated and gave the incorrect impression that the SCDSS/nonprofit liaison discussions would be exclusively related to an applicant’s medical issues. Ellen Krakow noted that her agency, Nassau/Suffolk Law Services, had developed a much simpler release form that she would share with the Committee. Ms. Krakow also has accessed several SCDSS release forms from upstate counties that she will share with the Committee. There would be further Committee assessment as to whether the release form could legally bypass

stringent HIPAA regulations regarding the release of information. Roland Hampson will check as to whether SCDSS has some flexibility regarding HIPAA regulations.

5. **SCDSS Budget and Staffing:** Roland Hampson distributed an updated SCDSS staffing analysis, comparing 2008 with 2010. The data showed dramatic increases in demands for SCDSS services, with Medicaid caseloads rising by 30% and Medicaid applications up by 35%; Food Stamp caseloads up by 84% and applications up by 8%; Temporary Assistance caseloads up by 42% and applications up by 18%, to cite several examples. Yet total SCDSS staff increased by only 9%. Mr. Hampson noted that efficiencies along with overtime have actually improved the processing time for applications. He therefore stated that staff vacancy rates do not provide a full indicator of SCDSS staff performance and Department productivity. Richard Koubek suggested that the application-processing times be appended to the chart. Mr. Koubek noted that the vacancy rate may have fallen due to Commissioner Blass and his administration being more attentive to having vacancies filled in a timely manner by the County Executive. All agreed that the 2010 retirement incentive has caused some additional vacancies that Mr. Hampson said would be filled with the 2011 budget calling for 117 new SCDSS positions. Additionally, Richard Krebs reported that SCDOL has experienced a 54% increase in services with only a 9% increase in staff. Richard Koubek will speak with Commission Dow about this pattern.
6. **Commission 2011 Goals:** Richard Koubek distributed the Commission's 2010 goals, noting that all had been pursued and in some cases completed during the previous year. The Commission reviewed these goals and reached consensus to pursue all the 2010 goals into 2011, except for the affordable housing goal. It was also agreed that the goals related to disability assessments be revised to include assessment of disability policy implementations during 2011. There was also consensus to pursue Sunday bus service and Medicaid funding in 2011. The goals will be incorporated into a draft Commission report to the Legislature for analysis at the February meeting.
7. **Announcements:** Richard Koubek distributed two flyers that he thought would be of interest to Commission members. One was for a January 16th interfaith Martin Luther King prayer service and choir concert devoted to ending childhood hunger on Long Island. The other was a "Save the Date" announcement for a March 25th LI Jobs with Justice conference, "Working But Still Poor," that will feature two workshops related to the activities of the Commission. One workshop, presented by Don Friedman, will profile the importance of the New York State Self Sufficiency Standard. The other workshop will profile the Commission's analysis of SCDSS staffing and will include Commission members Peter Barnett, Frank Casiglia, Roland Hampson and Bridget DePasquale. Commissioner Blass will be part of a panel discussion during the opening plenary session of the conference.
8. **Next Meeting:** Friday, February 18th, 9:30 AM in Conference Room A of the SCDOL One Stop Center. It was agreed that, beginning in March, the Commission would resume meeting at 9:30 AM on the second Friday of each month.