

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

Minutes of the September 4, 2010 Meeting

Present: Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Judy Cahn; Legislator Kate Browning; Ellen Krakow; Rob Greenberger; Eric Lopez; Edward Hernandez for Roland Hampson; Vinny Cassidy for Pam Killoran; Mike Stoltz; Jack Caffey; Peter Barnett; Peggy Boyd; Nina Leonhardt Jane Devine.

Excused: Don Friedman; Bridget DePasquale; Idania Aponte; Frank Casiglia; Michael Haynes; Gwen Branch; Joan Grant

Guest: Pamela Mizzi, South Oaks Hospital

1. **Minutes:** The minutes of the July 9th meeting were accepted unanimously with minor changes and a clarification on Legislator Jay Schneiderman's bus initiative, on a motion by Jack Caffey, seconded by Peter Barnett.
2. **Sober Homes Committee:** Chair Richard Koubek again distributed IR 1758-2010 requiring SCDSS to distribute Requests for Qualifications (RFQs) to Suffolk sober homes whose clients receive SCDSS rental payments. This resolution passed the Legislature unanimously in August. He noted that this resolution could advance the efforts to form the Sober Living Network of Long Island – a coalition of approved sober-home providers – because it would create a list of approved sober homes in Suffolk County that would comprise the Network. While not required by IR 1758, the RFQ process could open the door to enhanced SCDSS rental payments for approved sober homes. He further noted that the Sober Homes Committee's discussion of creating an oversight board for the sober homes network was put on hold as SCDSS worked on constructing the RFQ forms. Legislator Browning stated that SCDSS has 60 days from the date that County Executive Steve Levy signed the bill (in late August or early September) to implement the RFQ process. She and Dr. Hernandez from SCDSS noted that they may require more time to design the RFQ since it involves complex legal issues. There next ensued a lengthy discussion of IR 1758.
 - a. Mr. Koubek distributed a copy of the draft OASAS "Recovery Residence Guidelines" which identified three types of recovery residences: (1) Residential Treatment which appeared to be the type included in the housing/treatment "100 bed" OASAS initiative for Long Island; (2) "Recovery Residence" which appeared to be a new type of program in which a nonprofit agency would hire paid staff to oversee the recovery home and establish "liaisons with community resources;" (3) "Sober Living Residence" which appeared to be sober homes that establish and maintain abstinence from drugs and alcohol without any professional staff to oversee the residence. Mr. Koubek noted that the draft guidelines did not seem to apply to sober homes. He reported that OASAS will be

reconvening its Work Group the week of September 6th to review the draft guidelines.

- b. Dr. Hernandez stated that the OASAS guidelines were not very helpful in creating the RFQ process because they deal with OASAS regulated homes, not sober homes. In addition he pointed out that SCDSS is charged and equipped to supervise “health and safety” standards in sober homes, not therapeutic issues related to recovery programs and activities. Under State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) guidelines, local DSS offices are limited in what they can require of landlords beyond health and safety standards. He further noted that if SCDSS pays enhanced rents to clients living in approved sober homes, these homes may be treated as shelters, thus requiring on site case managers. Several Commission members questioned whether the Housing Division of SCDSS has adequate staff to enforce the RFQs. Dr. Hernandez pointed out that the RFQ process will legitimize good sober homes but will not likely eliminate the bad sober homes. He stated that creating the RFQ process is very complex due to State, County, town, village and other legal parameters that must be addressed in the RFQ.
- c. A number of Commission members suggested that the Sober Homes Committee reconvene to assist SCDSS in crafting the RFQ. Mr. Koubek noted that he has commitments from a number of stakeholders to send representatives to an expanded Sober Homes Committee for this purpose. Sober Homes Committee Co-chairs Peggy Boyd and Mike Stoltz also supported the Committee helping to create the RFQ. Dr. Hernandez said that the time frame for creating an RFQ process is typically 3-4 months. Ellen Krakow urged that the process not be done in haste thereby creating an opening for possible litigation if errors are made. Legislator Browning said that she would speak with SCDSS Commissioner Greg Blass about involving the Sober Homes Committee and about the need for a possible extension of the 60 day time frame for developing the RFQ.
- d. Dr. Hernandez stated that he would be attending the OASAS Work Group meeting the following week that will address the draft OASAS Recovery Residence Guidelines. He pointed out that, despite a 10 month period that OASAS had to draft these guidelines, they seemed quite inadequate in addressing the problem of sober homes in Suffolk County. A number of Commission members expressed their disappointment with the draft guidelines. Richard Koubek yielded the Chair to Kathy Liguori to make the following motion, which was seconded by Peggy Boyd: “The Welfare to Work Commission has reviewed the draft OASAS Recovery Residence Guidelines and found that they in no way address the problem of sober homes in Suffolk County. The Commission is awaiting OASAS guidelines and regulations for sober homes.” The resolution passed: 12 Yes; 1 No; 2 Abstentions (Eric Lopez and Edward Hernandez.) It was agreed that Dr. Hernandez would bring the resolution to the OASAS Work Group meeting devoted to the draft guidelines.

- e. Legislator Browning announced that there were two tentative dates for the Sober Homes committee to meet with State legislators to discuss a bill authorizing OASAS to regulate sober homes: September 20th or 21st. The dates need to be confirmed.
3. **Employment Assessment and SCDSS Liaison Committees:** Committee Chair Rob Greenberger reported on the very productive July 21st meeting at SCDSS at which Tom Grecco provided an overview of changes in OTDA policies regarding educational activities for public assistance recipients. Peter Barnett and Eric Lopez commented that the current TANF regulations, passed on to OTDA, are burdensome and at times counterproductive with regard to clients' work and education requirements. It was agreed that the OTDA and TANF policy discussion would be tabled until Don Friedman updates the Commission on the work he is doing with State and national groups reviewing proposed changes in TANF regulations. Mr. Friedman will also be asked to provide the Commission with an overview of the new Self Sufficiency report. Mr. Greenberger also reported that Roland Hampson had arranged for three SCDSS staff members to be present to discuss Peter Barnett's recommendation that staff of DSS and non-profit organizations work collaboratively to process benefit applications. Mr. Barnett stated that he has sent draft consent forms to Roland Hampson and that progress is being made. Mr. Greenberger also reported that the "Did You Know?" flyer, intended to alert those applying for benefits of their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act, is close to completion. He thanked Ellen Krakow and Roland Hampson for their efforts in creating this flyer. Nina Leonhardt said that the July 21st meeting with SCDSS was the best she had attended since the Commission was created. Mr. Koubek credited the leadership of Commissioner Blass, and the hard work of the Committee and SCDSS staff, for this progress.
4. **Child Care Committee:** Chair Kathy Liguori reported that she and Mr. Koubek met with Dennis Nowak of SCDSS Child Protective Services (CPS) and again with her full Committee, the Child Care Council of Suffolk and other stakeholders and SCDSS over the summer and that she is trying to schedule another meeting to create an educational module that would improve communication between CPS and providers as well as enhance providers' skills in dealing with at-risk children, as well as discuss the self sufficiency standards and how it relates to childcare. The Committee discussed the possibility of ARRA funding for this educational quality enhancement initiative.
5. **Announcements:**
 - a. Mr. Koubek reported that Legislator Jay Schneiderman returned his call regarding a possible Commission effort to support his initiative to slightly raise Suffolk bus rates in order to expand service hours and days. He would communicate with legislator Schneiderman to discuss this matter in detail.
 - b. Mike Stoltz reported that the Prompt Contracting and Prompt Payment bills for nonprofit contractors which Erica Chase described to the Commission at a previous meeting have passed the Legislature and is awaiting the County Executive's signature

6. **Next Meeting: Friday, November 12, 9:30 AM** in Conference Room A of the SCDOL One Stop Center. [Note: the October full-Commission meeting was cancelled to accommodate committee meetings.]