

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

Minutes of the November 12th, 2010 Meeting

Present: Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Joshua Slaughter for Legislator Kate Browning; Ellen Krakow; Don Friedman; Eric Lopez; Roland Hampson; Paula Wilcox for Pam Killoran; Mike Stoltz; Peter Barnett; Idania Aponte; Bridget DePasquale; Michael Haynes; Gwen Branch

Excused: Rob Greenberger; Frank Casiglia; Joan Grant; Jack Caffey; Peggy Boyd; Nina Leonhardt; Judy Cahn; Jane Devine.

Guest: Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds, LI Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependency

1. **Minutes:** The October Commission meeting was cancelled to accommodate the meeting times of Commission committees. Minutes of the September 3rd Commission meeting were accepted unanimously with minor changes, on a motion by Mike Stoltz, seconded by Peter Barnett.
2. **Sober Homes Committee:** Roland Hampson, in the absence of Dr. Edward Hernandez, provided an update on the status of the SCDSS Request for Qualifications (RFQ) being developed by the Department. He stated that the draft RFQ is complete and has been sent to the legal department for review. He reported that Dr. Hernandez anticipates that the RFQ will engage 5-10 sober-home providers. The RFQ will create an opportunity for sober-home providers to receive enhanced payments in return for their compliance with the terms of the RFQ.
 - a. Richard Koubek reminded Mr. Hampson that Legislator Browning would like the Commission's Sober Homes Committee to have an opportunity to review the RFQ after it is approved by the legal department. Mr. Hampson saw no problem with this request to assess the RFQ, Mr. Koubek noted that invitations may be extended to stakeholder agencies to join the Committee in this review.
 - b. Mike Stoltz reminded the Commission that his and other stakeholder agencies that may submit an RFQ should recuse themselves from assessing the RFQ to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest. There was Commission consensus to request such recusals.
 - c. Mr. Koubek reported that Dr. Hernandez told him that he expressed concerns to the OASAS Work Group at their September meeting about the draft OASAS guidelines which did not address the problem of sober homes. Dr. Hernandez reported that the OASAS Workgroup is shifting its attention from developing the guidelines to following the progress of the Suffolk RFQ process which they apparently view as a pilot program with statewide implications. Mr. Koubek expressed his disappointment that OASAS appears to not be giving its full attention to developing the guidelines which could be used to oversee sober homes.

- d. Mr. Koubek also reported that Dr. Hernandez has concerns that SCDSS does not have the resources to adequately oversee the sober homes that submit RFQs. Mr. Hampson confirmed this position. Mr. Koubek noted that he and Legislator Browning have again discussed the possibility of drafting new legislation to create a Sober Homes Oversight Board, consisting of treatment and provider stakeholders as well as other qualified parties, which would be empowered to oversee the RFQ process.
3. **Presentation on Alcohol and Drug Dependence by Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds:** Dr Reynolds, Executive Director of the LI Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency is Chair of the Suffolk County Heroin and Opiate Epidemic Advisory Panel. He reported on the Panel's public hearings that profiled the extent of alcohol and drug dependency in Suffolk County with 300 residents a year dying from overdoses on Long Island. He noted that a number of the Panel's recommendations to the Legislature which will be submitted in the coming months will build on those contained in the Commission's 2010 report to the Legislature on sober homes.
 - a. Dr. Reynolds stated that the Panel members were especially concerned about gaps in recovery treatment given the widespread use of alcohol and drugs, especially among young people, and the prevalence of relapses. He noted that rogue sober homes – the focus of the Commission's report – are a major recovery gap.
 - b. He also pointed out a serious deficiency in educational programs to prevent the abuse of alcohol and drugs. He was concerned about the superficial educational programs that many schools provide which do not adequately engage students or involve parents in the dangers of alcohol abuse and drug addiction. The dangers of children accessing prescription drugs in the home which can trigger addictions are not receiving nearly-enough emphasis. He noted that other states, such as Minnesota, are doing a much better job at educating children and adults about the dangers of addiction and at providing treatment and recovery services. He suggested that Long Island schools introduce 12-step programs to help students who are attempting to break an addiction or maintain their recovery.
 - c. Dr. Reynolds concluded by reemphasizing the gaps in recovery programs that result in relapses, with sober homes among the most egregious of these gaps. He stated that the Panel he chairs would share their recommendations with the Commission so that each body can work together to address the problem of treatment gaps.
4. **Legislator Jay Schneiderman's Bus Fare Resolution:** Richard Koubek reminded the Commission that they had expressed interest in Legislator Jay Schneiderman's resolution to increase the Suffolk County basic bus fare from \$1.50 to \$2.00 in order to fund some Sunday bus service. He distributed copies of the resolution and reported that he spoke with Legislator Schneiderman who said that his resolution had failed by one vote during the October budget process. Legislator Schneiderman believes that the support of the Welfare to Work Commission could provide several additional votes needed to pass his resolution when he resubmits it. Ellen Krakow and Mike Stoltz expressed concern that the fare increase might fall heavily on poor and disabled people. Mr. Koubek reported that Legislator Schneiderman said this

population was represented in his public hearings on the question and that they supported the increase in order to secure some Sunday bus service, since none currently is provided. He also noted that the County has not increased the basic fare for many years. There was also concern that the trial Sunday routes would likely be directed at malls and shopping areas, which may not be helpful to poor riders who do not live near these routes. The Commission agreed that Mr. Koubek should follow up with Legislator Schneiderman on these concerns before the Commission takes action on the resolution.

5. **Child Care Committee:** Chair Kathy Liguori reported on the November 4th Child Care Committee meeting that was attended by SCDSS Child Protective Services staff and the Child Care Council of Suffolk. She announced that SCDSS and the Child Care Council would be receiving about \$300,000 in ARRA funds for quality enhancement, including training sessions to improve communication between CPS and child care providers. She stated that Brian Lahiff of the Child Care Council reported that the State officials found this CPS training proposal which originated in the Commission's Child Care Committee to be quite creative. She also reported that Jack Caffey suggested that the complex legal issues surrounding the degree to which CPS workers can reveal information to child care providers be submitted to County legal counsel for their opinions as was done with the sober homes issue. Among the legal questions that were posed at the Committee meeting were:
 - a. How can child care providers and CPS case workers improve collaboration without violating the confidentiality and privacy rights of the CPS children and their families?
 - b. What can be done to provide transitional care for CPS children whose cases have been released by CPS?
 - c. Can child care providers be informed of restraining orders and/or orders of protection when actively caring for a protected child?
 - d. Can SCDSS pay a special needs enhanced rate to child care providers who serve CPS children so as to lower the teacher/child ratio for these children?
 - e. Given the fact that 70% of CPS complaints are unfounded, how can child care providers be informed when their staff are named in a CPS investigation?

There ensued an extensive discussion of these questions and the Commission agreed that when the meeting with legal counsel takes place, there should be attorneys for the County as well as attorneys representing client rights and child-care providers present so as to secure a range of legal opinions.

6. **Employment Assessment and SCDSS Liaison Committees:** Because Committee Chair Rob Greenberger was called away for an agency meeting, most of this report was tabled. However, several Committee members reported that there was progress in developing the "Did You Know?" flyer on disabilities. Roland Hampson noted that a final draft of this flyer was approved by all parties concerned and given to Robert Greenburger, from FECS, for the final brochure formatting. He also stated that the proposed change in the SCDSS application package that would provide a release form enabling SCDSS to utilize the case management services of nonprofits when a client

enters the SCDSS system was being reviewed by DSS administration. Richard Koubek announced that the State has released new assessment documents for SCDOL which may create both improvements and problems in the assessment process. It was agreed that Eric Lopez of SCDOL would provide these draft documents to the Committee for review.

7. **SCDSS Budget and Staffing:** Roland Hampson reported that SCDSS received \$50 million more in the 2011 budget than it did in 2010. The budget is awaiting County Executive Levy's approval. He distributed a document showing increases of 40%-43% in Client Benefits caseloads, 2010 over 2009 with an accompanying Client Benefits staff increase of 32% and an overall SCDSS reduction of 24 SCDSS staff positions. He also showed significant decreases in the "days of disposition" for Client Benefits applications due largely to overtime. Mr. Koubek noted that use of overtime could place a strain on workers. He asked that Mr. Hampson provide the Commission with a detailed staffing breakdown, including children's services, for the December meeting.
8. **TANF and Self Sufficiency Reports:** Tabled for the December meeting.
9. **Announcements:** Richard Koubek announced two upcoming programs that might be of interest to Commission members: a December 9th Labor Religion prayer breakfast titled "We Are Our Brothers' and Sisters' Keepers ... Even After the Holidays" and a January 16th Martin Luther King interfaith service, "We Can End Childhood Hunger... We Have the Resources. Do We Have the Will?"
10. **Next Meeting: Friday, December 10th, 9:30 AM** in Conference Room A of the SCDOL One Stop Center