

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

**Minutes of the April 15, 2009 Meeting**

**Present:** Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Legislator Kate Browning; Jack Caffey; Ellen Krakow; Don Friedman; Roland Hampson for Linda O'Donohoe; Frederick Combs for Joan Grant;; Peggy Boyd; Rob Greenberger; Eric Lopez; Jane Devine; Kathy Malloy; Nina Leonhardt; Peter Barnett; Gina Caporaso for Idania Aponte; Judy Cahn

**Excused:** Michael Stoltz; Gwen Branch; Bridget DePasquale; Pam Killoran; Ken Zone

**Guest:** Joan McGay, St. Joseph the Worker Outreach; Frank Casielia

1. **Minutes:** The minutes of the March 30<sup>th</sup> meeting were adopted unanimously, with minor changes, on a motion by Kathy Malloy, seconded by Nina Leonhardt.
2. **SCDSS Responses to Evening Hours Questions:** Roland Hampson of SCDSS responded to these Commission questions about the evening hours pilot:
  - a. What center will conduct the all day pilot and who is overseeing the study?
    - Response: Coram. The study will be conducted over several months and will be administered by Nancy Woessner, Assistant Administrator for Client Benefits.
  - b. Can not-for-profits participate in the study by being asked how evening hours are affecting their clients (e.g., parish outreach centers, Family Service League, etc.?) If so, how do we get them involved?
    - Response: SCDSS looks forward to feedback from the not-for-profits but does not know how they could be involved in a survey.
    - Reactions: Despite the fact that SCDSS sent 34,000 post cards, some Commission members felt that several stories in Newsday related to IR 1019 may have led many people to believe that evening hours had been cancelled. The proposal was for a simple questionnaire that could be mailed to not-for-profits that deal with SCDSS such as outreach centers, asking for their reactions to the pilot. Mr. Hampson said that the evening hour's pilot is being assessed based on a variety of factors, including the numbers of people using the services in the evenings and the affect on overall operations. Mr. Hampson did not see a questionnaire measuring evening hours as a valid determinant in this assessment process. However, he will take this proposal back to SCDSS.
  - c. Does SCDSS really need a full staff for evening hours? How does NCDSS have evening hours without a full staff, yet comply with State regulations?
    - Response: Mr. Hampson indicated that he was asked about full services, not full staffing for evening hours. State Law requires that all services be provided if a center is open. Mr. Hampson was not sure what services NCDSS provided in the evenings.

- Reaction: Kathy Malloy said that the AME union believes SCDSS technically does not have full staff in the evenings since the employees' hours are staggered.
- d. How many people continue to get turned away in the mornings that the centers close because they are open in the evenings?
    - SCDSS does not have solid number on people being turned away in the mornings that the centers are closed, but these people may use any other service centers that are open. For those without transportation, tokens are provided so they can be served at another center that is open. Mr. Hampson said that he believes the number of people being turned away is very limited.
  - e. What are the services provided to people in the evenings? Particularly, can “emergency services” be broken down to show specific services such as EAF and other “emergencies?”
    - Response: All services are being provided during the evening hours.
    - Reaction: Kathy Malloy said that the AME union believes people are using evening hours for their Food Stamps applications even though the entire Food Stamps application process can now be done by telephone, with supporting documents mailed in to SCDSS. There is no need for face-to-face interviews to open a Food Stamps case.
  - f. Can clients enter the centers that remain open between 3PM and 6PM? Do they close at 7PM on the evenings that they remain open, or are they open until 8?
    - Response: Clients can enter the centers from 3PM to 8PM.
- 3. SCDSS Flyer to Re-Publicize Evening Hours:** Roland Hampson pointed out that the number of working people using evening hours is quite limited and varies – perhaps 4-8 working people per night are using the evening hours at SCDSS. There ensued a lengthy discussion as to whether the population of working people who need emergency services was ever reached by the 34,000 post cards sent to SCDSS Public Assistance clients or the flyers distributed at outreach centers and other not-for-profits that serve the poor. Several Commission members felt strongly that this population is averse to seeking help at SCDSS and other agencies that serve the poor and that they would not have received notice. Emergency Assistance to Families (EAF,) for example, is a service that could be available to families of four earning as much as \$70,000 a year. Rob Greenberger pointed out that this population requires a carefully worded flyer that does not use “public assistance” or “welfare” language. Others noted that, in addition to outreach centers and food pantries, this population needs to be reached in many different venues such as: unemployment offices; libraries; Social Security offices; child care centers; announcements enclosed in LIPA, water authority or Keyspan bills; schools; pediatrician’s offices; health clinics; and the offices of county legislators.
- a. Motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Don Freidman, that the Welfare to Work Commission create a committee to draft a SCDSS flyer announcing evening hours that would be designed to reach working people in need of

emergency assistance. The motion passed: Yes: 12; No: 0; Abstain: 3 (Kathy Malloy, Eric Lopez, Roland Hampson)

- b. Roland Hampson suggested that a SCDSS staff person not serve on the committee so that it is free to creatively design the flyer. It was agreed that the flyer would be sent to SCDSS for approval. Several members of the Commission expressed the hope that, should SCDSS approve the flyer, the Department would assist in its distribution as well. Not-for-profit agencies would also be asked to help distribute the flyer. There was support for the Commission also playing a role in the distribution of the flyer. Some Commission members asked if public service announcements and free newspaper ads could also be created.
  - c. The Ad Hoc Evening Hours Committee will consist of: Peggy Boyd, Rob Greenberger, Kathy Liguori, Richard Koubek, Joan McGay. The Committee will meet on April 22<sup>nd</sup> at Family Service League in Huntington.
- 4. Media Relations Committee:** Rob Greenberger chaired the Ad Hoc Media Relations Committee that also consisted of Michael Stoltz, Kathy Liguori and Richard Koubek. The Committee had a telephone conference on April 13<sup>th</sup> and developed draft policies and procedures for media contacts. Mr. Greenberger moved, and Kathy Liguori seconded, the motion below which passed unanimously:
- a. Understanding that the activities of the Welfare to Work Commission can be of interest to the media, the Commission adopts the following protocols for Commission statements to the media:
  - b. The opinions of current Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature regarding Commission media contacts should be obtained.
  - c. Only the Commission Chair and/or Vice Chair are authorized to speak to the media.
  - d. The Chair and Vice Chair should speak to the media only about specific policy issues, such as SCDSS evening hours that have been discussed and/or decided by the Commission.
  - e. Should the Chair and Vice Chair be asked to comment on a specific policy issue that has not been discussed or decided by the Commission, the Chair and/or Vice Chair should poll the Commission before commenting.
  - f. The Chair and/or Vice Chair can comment on broad issues (such as hunger on Long Island or child care) that have been a focus of Commission discussion.
- Legislator Browning pointed out that it is the policy of her office never to respond immediately to a reporter's inquiry. She asked that if the Chair or Vice Chair of the Commission receives a call from a reporter, that her office be contacted immediately before an interview is given. She is available by cell phone for situations that require a quick response.
- 5. Understaffing at SCDSS and SCDOL:** Commission Chair Richard Koubek distributed an analysis he composed using the Budget Review Office (BRO) report, "DSS Vacant Positions as of 03/22/09" as well as several other BRO memoranda and other sources. His analysis showed a 12.9% SCDSS vacancy rate at a time when requests for services have increased by 14%. Using 2008 reimbursement rates

obtained in a September, 2008 SCDSS memo, Mr. Koubek's analysis showed that the 229 SCDSS vacant positions would have yielded \$295,474 in federal and state reimbursements every two weeks since January 1<sup>st</sup> for a total of \$1.5 million in reimbursements, or a net County cost of \$218,425 for these vacancies during this period. He further pointed out that a BRO response to Jack Caffey's questions about vacancies showed that, in the Client Benefits Division alone, there had been a 22% increase in staff vacancies, March 2009 over March 2008, despite an 11% increase in Client Benefits services. Mr. Koubek described this situation as disturbing and untenable. There ensued an extensive discussion of the data, followed by a motion by Peggy Boyd, seconded by Don Friedman, that the report be presented at the April 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee. The motion passed: Yes: 15; No: 0; Abstain: 2 (Roland Hampson, Eric Lopez.) Legislator Browning agreed to place the report on the agenda of the Committee's April 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. A copy of the finalized report is attached.

6. **Child Care Committee:** Kathy Liguori announced that the press conference on March 31<sup>st</sup> at the Child Care Council of Suffolk to address the under funding of child care services by New York State was very successful. She will soon convene a meeting of the Child Care Committee to address the lack of child care funds for working poor families. Ms. Liguori made a strong appeal for the Committee to explore policies that would address a full range of children's needs. Some Commission members were concerned that the Committee's focus should remain on state funding for the working poor, rather than a broad range of child-care needs. The Committee will address these issues when it meets.
  - a. Roland Hampson announced that payments to child care providers are being made in a timely manner. There had been unfounded rumors of delays but only one provider, as a result of an issue with the US Postal Service, had a delayed payment.
7. **Employment Assessment Committee:** This Committee will meet on April 20<sup>th</sup> to take up new employment regulations.
8. **Suffolk County Human Rights Commission Award:** Peter Barnett announced that Commission Chair Richard Koubek is the recipient of the 2009 Suffolk County Human Rights Commission Chairperson's Award for Leadership in Human Rights which is being given for his affordable housing advocacy. Mr. Barnett nominated Mr. Koubek for this award.
9. **Next Meeting: Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 AM, SCDOL One Stop Center**