

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

**Minutes of the October 15th, 2008 Meeting**

**Present:** Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Pam Killoran; Michael Stoltz; Don Friedman; Sondra Bachety; Kathy Malloy; Peter Barnett; Ken Zone; Frederick Combs for Joan Grant; Ellen Krakow; Judy Cahn; Bridget DePasquale; Peggy Boyd; Jack Caffey; Rob Greenberger; Gwendolyn Branch

**Excused:** Idania Aponte; Eric Lopez; Nina Leonhardt; Linda O'Donohoe

1. **Minutes:** The minutes of the September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008 meeting were unanimously approved, with a minor change, on a motion by Michael Stoltz, seconded by Jack Caffey.
2. **Report on SCDSS Understaffing:** Chair Richard Koubek distributed a copy of the draft report to each Commission member. There followed an extensive discussion of the report.
  - a. Mr. Koubek pointed out that a draft of the report was shared with SCDSS officials and he distributed an e-mail from SCDSS Deputy Commissioner Greg Blass outlining these concerns:
    - i. The Department has 95 to 96% of its positions filled as of October 14<sup>th</sup>. Response: the report focuses on vacancies, January to September. The report notes a tendency to fill vacancies in the last quarter of the year.
    - ii. The Department objects to the calculation of average workloads. Response: the report provides an average of the workloads reported to the Commission by the Department. The report clearly shows an overall trend, 2001-2008 that demonstrates a dramatic increase in workload as compared with a very small 3% increase in staffing.
    - iii. The Department objects to the negative portrayal of SCDSS workers and the lack of references to commendations that have been received regarding staff performance. Response: Pages 1, 5, 6 and 7 of the report provide very positive references to the staff, including: their “extraordinary efforts to successfully” comply with the difficult new TANF regulations; the fact that understaffing “takes a toll” on the employees; the increased use of technology and more efficient personnel deployments that “have improved staff productivity;” and the heroic efforts made by SCDSS employees to provide more services without adequate staffing. It was agreed, however, that Mr. Koubek would ask the Department to share written commendations with the Commission so that they can be entered into the text of the report.
  - b. The following changes were made in the report by consensus of the Commission members present:
    - i. The title was changed to read simply, “A Report on Understaffing at SCDSS.”

- ii. A reference to SCDOL missing data was inserted on page 2.
  - iii. Lacking data on the quality of services received from SCDSS, additional sources, such as the Empire Justice Center’s law suit, will be used to show service-delivery problems with Medicaid and Food Stamps related to understaffing.
  - iv. The BRO comments on overtime as symptomatic of understaffing will be inserted on page 6.
  - v. A section titled “Systemic, Not Worker Failure” will be added on page 6 to further clarify that problems in the quality of services are caused by understaffing, not worker failures.
  - vi. The 3<sup>rd</sup> recommendation in the draft was eliminated.
  - vii. The recommendation calling on the HHS Committee to monitor staffing on a monthly basis was moved to the #1 position.
  - viii. It was understood that additional data would be inserted in the final version of the report upon release of the Budget Review Office’s analysis of the budget on October 17<sup>th</sup>.
- c. A motion was made by Don Friedman, seconded by Ellen Krakow, that the report be accepted, as amended, subject to the addition of current data drawn from the BRO report on the 2009 Suffolk County budget, scheduled for release on October 17<sup>th</sup>. Yes: 15; No: 0; Abstentions: 2 (Sondra Bachety, Pam Killoran); Absent: Eric Lopez; Linda O’Donohoe; Idiana Aponte; Nina Leonhardt.
  - d. Chair Richard Koubek thanked the members of the Ad Hoc Staffing Committee for their work preparing the report: Kathy Liguori; Don Friedman; Jack Caffey; Peter Barnett; Michael Stoltz; Kathy Malloy.
  - e. The report will be presented to the Legislature’s Health and Human Services Committee at the October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008 budget hearing. The presenters will be Richard Koubek, Kathy Liguori and Peter Barnett.
3. **SCDSS Evening Hours:** A copy was distributed of IR 1879-2008 “To Implement Welfare to Work Commission Recommendation” on evening hours at SCDSS, co-sponsored by Legislators John Kennedy and Duwayne Gregory. Chair Richard Koubek noted that he has thus far unsuccessfully attempted to get clarification from the resolution’s sponsors as to the meaning of opening SCDSS centers in the evenings on a “rotating basis.” A motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Judy Cahn, was made to table discussion of IR 1879 until the Commission’s Chair and Vice Chair meet with Legislator Kennedy to receive clarification on the intent of the resolution.
  4. **Child Care:** Kathy Liguori reminded the Commission that representatives of the New York State Office of Families and Children would make a presentation on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM, regarding the State’s \$2.2 million cut in Suffolk Child Care funding. She noted that the Empire Justice Center provided legal counsel as to whether the State was in compliance with federal child care regulations when it cut Suffolk’s funding. Don Friedman from the Empire Justice Center reported that the federal regulations are recommendations rather than mandates and that the State appears to have been within its legal rights to reduce the Suffolk County funding.
  5. **Next Meeting:** November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2:00 PM at the SCDOL One Stop Center.