

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

April 18, 2008

Present: Linda O'Donohoe for Gregory Blass; Peggy Boyd; Judy Cahn; Kathy Liguori; Richard Koubek; Rob Greenberger; Peter Barnett; Idania Aponte; Sondra Bachety; Pam Killoran

- Richard Koubek also pointed out what Catholic Charities believes to be an error on page 4 of the report which states that "EAF limits a family of three to an annual income of approximate 9sic) \$35,200." This should have read, "an annual income of approxitaley \$35,200 of gross available income."

Guest: Don Friedman, Consultant

1. **Minutes:** The minutes of the March 14, 2008 meeting were approved unanimously on a motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Pam Killoran.
2. **New Commission Member:** The Commission welcomed Sondra Bachety, former Suffolk County Legislative Presiding Officer and former member of the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee. Ms. Bachety will represent the Gerald Ryan Outreach Center.
3. **Education Pilot:** Judy Cahn reported that the Education Subcommittee will meet on April 23rd to plan the implementation of the second year of the pilot now that the funds for the pilot have been transferred to SC Community College. Richard Koubek thanked the Presiding Officer Bill Lindsay and his aide, Terry Pearsall, as well as Legislative Budget Director Gail Vizzini, for expediting the transfer of funds.
4. **Child Care Subcommittee:** Co-Chairs Kathy Liguori and Peggy Boyd reported on the subcommittee's April 10th meeting which was attended by Katie Roche and Dana Friedman, as well as themselves and Commission members Jack Caffey, Rob Greenberger and Richard Koubek. The meeting covered a range of child care issues, including the quality of services and management, affordability, government subsidies and the need for public-policy advocacy. The Co-Chairs felt the need to focus these concerns if the public hearings are to be held in September. They continue to reach out to the Child Care Council of Suffolk to encourage their participation in the discussion. They will meet again on May 22 at 2:00 PM.
5. **Extended Hours at SCDSS:**
 - Richard Koubek reported that he and five other Catholic Charities/parish outreach coordinators were invited to meet with SCDSS Commissioner Janet DeMarzo on April 14th to discuss her report on extended hours. Related to evening hours, it was reported that the waiving of finger imaging for Food Stamps applicants remains County policy pending a study being conducted in New York City. Attendees at the meeting were not given copies of the Commissioner's report on extended hours but spent two hours discussing its contents and were told that the Commissioner would present the report at the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee meeting on April 17th.

- Mr. Koubek further reported that the Commissioner did not present the report on April 17th because Legislator Ed Romaine withdrew his resolution calling for a report on April 16th. However, members of the Health and Human Services Committee asked for the report and, pending approval of the Chair Elie Mystal, asked that it be discussed at the Committee's May 8th meeting, along with the related issue of chronic understaffing at SCDSS.
 - Mr. Koubek further reported that Legislator Romaine said that he withdrew his report because he believed that the report would be delivered on April 17th and because he had met with union representatives who told him that extended hours would cost over \$1million dollars a year as per Commissioner DeMarzo's report.
 - Mr. Koubek also reported that Kathy Malloy from the Suffolk County Association of Municipal Employees Union publicly criticized the idea of extended hours in testimony on April 17th as well as the fact that the union has no seat on the Commission. It was agreed that Ms. Mallloybe invited to attend the May 5th meeting of the Commission to share her concerns about extended hours and staffing at SCDSS.
 - The Commission then reviewed the Commissioner's report on extended hours:
 - Richard Koubek pointed out what Catholic Charities believes to be an error on page 4 of the report which states that "EAF limits a family of three to an annual income of approximate (sic) \$35,200." This should have read, "an annual income of approximately \$35,200 of *gross available income*." Such a family could be earning \$50,000 in gross income and would likely constitute the type of working family seeking EAF (Emergency Assistance to Families) during evening hours at SCDSS.
 - Mr. Koubek also noted that SCDSS reported 1325 emergency assistance payments (EA) over a 3 month period, only 15% of them were to families and only 43% of that number were working families. However, SCDSS was unable to identify the number of EA denials due to their antiquated computer system. The number of EA denials is important because many people must present a DSS denial in order to access other funding sources for emergency assistance, such as EFSP funds which are distributed by United Way.
 - The Commission was especially interested in the report's Option C which calls for a centralized working families call center operating during evening hours, staffed by two examiners on voluntary overtime, who would telephone screen the needs of working people and, where appropriate, schedule an evening appointment. This option would only cost \$98,000 annually in overtime.
 - A consensus was reached that the Commission members should study the report and set a meeting for May 5th, in advance of the May 8th HHS meeting, to decide on a position.
6. **State Budget Outcomes:** Richard Koubek reported that the additional 2% county share of social services costs had been removed from the State budget adopted in Albany earlier in April.
 7. **Commission Memberships:** This issue was tabled until the next meeting.
 8. **Next Meeting:** May 5th, 2008, 9:30 AM at SCDOL One Stop Center.