

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

**Meeting of May 5, 2008**

**Present:** Richard Koubek; Kathy Liguori; Linda O'Donohoe; Nina Leonhardt; Michael Stoltz; Sondra Bachety; Peter Barnett; Pam Killoran; Peg Boyd; Rob Greenberger; Idania Aponte; Ken Zone; Gwen Branch

**Guests:** Don Friedman, Consultant; Kathy Malloy, Debra Alloncius, SC Association of Municipal Employees (AME)

1. **Minutes:** The minutes of the April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting were approved on a motion by Peter Barnett, seconded by Kathy Liguori. Richard Koubek announced that the Commission now has a place on the Suffolk County Legislature's website. He will be posting all the Commission's minutes from 2007 and 2008 on the site as well as the affordable housing report. All future Commission minutes will be posted on the site.
2. **Congressman Steve Israel:** Peter Barnett, Richard Koubek and Don Friedman met with Congressman Steve Israel on April 18<sup>th</sup> to discuss the Commission's arguments related to the burdens that the new TANF regulations have placed on the SCDSS and SCDOL. They met earlier in the year with Congressman Tim Bishop on the same topic. Congressman Israel asked for a packet containing the Commission's proposed changes which he will pass on to House Ways and Means Chair Charles Rangle.
3. **Education/Training Pilot:** Nina Leonhardt reported that the Education/Training Committee met on April 23<sup>rd</sup> to review the pilot and prepare for the 2008 launch. Because of the new Continuous Enrollment policy, the pilot will be housed at Eastern Suffolk BOCES, not SC Community College. Assuming location and space and at least six students, the target date for launching the pilot is May 12<sup>th</sup>. SCDSS and SCDOL are working to obtain clearance for the pilot case managers to access client information electronically. This is especially important for case managers working with clients who face sanctions.
4. **Child Care Committee:** Co-Chair Peggy Boyd reported that the Committee has had three meetings over the past several months. The Committee is re-thinking whether public hearings on child care would be as productive as forming a Child Care Task Force to examine specific, priority issues. This is the model that was used by the Commission's Education/Training Committee to launch the mentoring pilot. The Child Care Council of Suffolk has joined the discussions and the next meeting of the Committee will be later in May at their office in Commack. Co-Chair Kathy Liguori pointed out that the Committee is beginning to focus on the rising cost of child care services which is pricing out lower and middle income families.
5. **Commission Membership:** The Commission reviewed the membership list as assigned by IR 1151-2003 which created the Welfare to Work Commission. It was noted that the Family Service League has occupied the mental health seat and that a number of organizations that should have seats, such as the Empire Justice Center and the Suffolk County Association of Municipal Employees (SCAME) do not have seats, while the seat assigned to a high school teacher appointed by the Suffolk County Superintendent's Association has not been occupied for several years. The following motions were made to alter the membership of the

Commission. These recommendations will be passed on to the Presiding Officer and to the sponsor of IR 1151-2003, Legislator Vivian Vilorio-Fisher:

- a. Delete Seat # 17 assigned to a high school teacher. Moved by Peggy Boyd, seconded by Sondra Bachety. Yes: 13; No: 0; Abstentions: 0.
- b. Add a representative from the Family Service League. Moved by Peter Barnett, seconded by Rob Greenberger. Yes: 13; No: 0; Abstentions: 0.
- c. Add a representative from the SCAME. Moved by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Sondra Bachety. Yes: 12; No:0; Abstentions: 1.
- d. Add a representative from the Empire Justice Center. Moved by Michael Stoltz, seconded by Peggy Boyd. Yes: 13; No:0; Abstentions: 0.

6. **Extended Hours at SCDSS:** The Commission continued its review of SCDSS

Commissioner Janet DeMarzo's "Report Pursuant to IR 1001-2008 To Implement the Welfare to Work Commission Recommendations" on extended hours at SCDSS, focusing on the fact that the Commission's original request for a study of extended hours included concerns about 40 unfilled SCDSS positions which existed in November, 2007. Among the key points discussed were:

- a. According to a survey conducted last summer by an intern working with Cheryl Keshner, 33 New York State DSS districts allow clients to enter their buildings after 3PM. Only 3 have evening hours. The issue of understaffing impinges on both concepts since, according to Kathleen Malloy of SCAME, there are currently 11% to 13% SCDSS vacancies in positions that were authorized and budgeted. Lacking proper staff, SCDSS workers cannot process the paperwork for their clients if they are required to see additional clients after 3:00 PM and the staff is spread too thin to accommodate evening hours.
- b. Pam Killoran noted that SCDOL also has a problem with understaffing.
- c. The Commission had an extensive discussion of "Option C" in the Commissioner's report that would create a centrally located "working family emergency call Center" staffed by two examiners who would telephone screen working family requests for emergency assistance, such as Emergency Aid to Families (EAF) and, where appropriate, schedule an evening appointment. The total cost of this option is \$98,000 a year. Several people noted that, with proper daytime staffing of SCDSS, this Option might be implemented with flexible time at little or no cost to the County.
- d. Motion by Michael Stoltz, seconded by Ken Zone, to Support Option C, providing that SCDSS is staffed as per the 2008 County operating budget. Yes: 12; No: 0; Abstentions: 1.
- e. Given the understaffing of SCDSS, the Commission reached consensus that the issue of allowing clients to enter SCDSS centers after 3:00 PM should be tabled for now.
- f. It was agreed that Richard Koubek, Kathy Liguori and Peter Barnett would present the Commission's position, including concerns about understaffing at both SCDSS and SCDOL, at the May 8<sup>th</sup> Health and Human Services Committee at which Commissioner DeMarzo was scheduled to present her report on extended hours.

7. **Announcements:** Linda O'Donohoe announced that SCDSS is providing trainings for not-for-profits on SCDSS programs: May 15 and 16.

8. **Next meeting:** Wednesday, June 4, 2:00 PM at SCDOL One Stop center.