

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

Minutes of the July 25, 2007 Meeting

Present: Pam Killoran; Peter Barnett; James Andrews; Edward Hernandez; Nina Leonhardt; Robert Greenberger; Kathy Liguori; Richard Koubek; Peggy Boyd; Sheryl Keshner, Sabrina St. John

Guests: Charon Pierce (Office of legislator Ele Mystal), Mary weiler, Joan McGay, Pat Gyscek

1. **Minutes:** The minutes of the June 6th meeting were amended and approved unanimously on a motion by Robert Greenberger, seconded by James Andrews.
2. **TANF Letter:** The email vote results to send a letter expressing our concerns regarding TANF legislations was as follows: 10 AYE, 6 abstentions and 0 no's. In the letter we requested the Long Island delegation members have a follow-up meeting with members interested from the WTWC and members of some Nassau County agencies. The following members offered to attend joint meetings with Nassau County representatives at the local offices of Clinton, Schumer, King, Israel and Bishop: Peter Barnett, Dick Koubek, Robert Greenberger, Kathy Liguori and Peggy Boyd. Dick Koubek will arrange for these meetings and contact the members who offered to attend these meetings. Dick mentioned that Cheryl Keshner provided him with an excellent article written by CLASP on this subject area. Dick also commended the outstanding support the WTWC has continued to receive from the Office of the Clerk of the Legislature.
3. **Education/Training Pilot:** Nina Leonhardt reported that the second cohort consists of 27 referrals from DOL. Nina shared that all but 1 started the program and feels the ability for the case manager to engage the clients prior to the program beginning and the good communication with DOL staff and program staff were the primary reasons for such success. In short, if 27 referrals were made and all but one participant began the program we are looking at a huge success rate...moving from a 40% dropout rate to a 10 % drop out rate. However, James Andrews stated that DOL actually made 44 referrals to the program not 27 and that 8 individuals were deemed as non-compliant for not following through with requirements. Additionally, James would like to see employment placements prior to reporting to the legislature any program success. James expressed that there were concerns about participants being dismissed early on occasion and as such the impact this has on counting that day as an activity. After much discussion as to what constitutes a referral, it was decided that another meeting of the Education/Training Committee be scheduled to agree on shared definitions and address any other concerns regarding the pilot.
4. **Consolidation of Wyandanch Center & South Shore Center:** Edward Hernandez was asked to report on the proposed merger of the Wyandanch Center & South Shore Centers. The new site will be called the South West Center; will be located on 2nd Avenue in North Bay Shore.

Mr. Hernandez shared the rationale behind DSS proposing this merger is related to DSS trying to address a number of issues:

- The elimination of clients having to go to more than one site
- Issue with the landlord and lease at existing sites
- Issues with community complaints/concerns
- Overall thought that a new site will best serve the larger community

Mr. Hernandez also shared that this consolidation has many advantages which include:

- Increased size which will afford the ability to add onsite services
- The site is easily accessible by train and bus
- The site size provides appropriate space for an enhanced reception area w/ space for a drop-off window
- The site size provides appropriate space for more specialized services including DOL having approximately 12 workers on site and Vita services on site

Mr. Hernandez also shared the following statistic:

- Approximately 1/3 of the clients who utilize the Wyandanch Center live in Wyandanch. The other 2/3 resides in other communities
- This merger allows DSS to move from 5 Centers to 4
- The current Wyandanch center caseload consist of 40% TA, 44% FSA, 40% TA under-care, and 48% FS under-care cases

Charvon Pierce, a guest to the meeting, representing Elie Mystal expressed deep concern about the relocation /closing of the Wyandanch Center. She shared that the Legislative office has received a large amount of calls expressing concerns as to the impact this will have on the community. Some concerns expressed by the community and the WTWC about this merger are as follows:

- Access to the new center will be extremely difficult and will include a 5-10 minute walk to those taking the train
- The transportation cost of getting from Wyandanch to the new site
- Concerns that individuals will still have to go to different centers for HEAP, Medicaid and prescriptions
- While the WTWC is eager to ensure clients will be able to drop off paper work, it will be imperative that this not just be a box but staffed by DSS for proof of delivery/receipt
- Were there any public hearings to discuss the impact of this merger?
- Was any thought given to how clients presently are getting to the center, bus, car, train?
- Concerns that while there have been many community complaints about the Wyandanch Center

After much discussion that left many unanswered questions as to the merits of this consolidation, Dick urged WTWC members to attend the Ways and Means Committee meeting scheduled for 8/1 @ 9:30 in Hauppauge to become more familiar with the issue. Additionally, the WTWC members are urged to attend the Health & Human Services

Committee meetings to learn more of the issue. At this time, it was agreed the WTWC will not take a position on this merger until we have more information. Additionally, Dick will send a letter to Commissioner DeMarzo requesting an opportunity to receive any reports DSS has put together regarding this matter. In closing members of the Welfare to Work Commission felt that any discussion about the Center merging must address discussion on extended hours of operation.

5. **Extended Hours:** The Commission felt it important to continue our discussion regarding the need for extended hours of operation at the DSS Centers. Peter Barnett expressed that this conversation flows appropriately as we are exploring the center merger proposal. As a follow-up to our last meeting, Cheryl Keshner distributed the results of some research her student intern had done in relation to DSS offices throughout NYS. The research required contacting 33 of the total 58 counties in NYS to ask if they had extended hours and what are their hours of operation. The result: Suffolk County is not the only center that does not provide extended hours but we are the only Center in NYS to close @ 3. WTWC members asked for clarity as to the question asked to the various DSS centers about their hours of operation. Perhaps we should ask up to what time clients are allowed to enter the Center or how late a person entering the Center will be seen? Cheryl will look into the survey and let us know what was asked of the various counties. Dick Koubek reported that CSEA President Nick LaMorte would be reaching out to SCAME President Cheryl Felice and arranging for a lunch meeting with Dick to explore any union issue related to extended hours. At the next meeting the Commission will discuss this issue further. In closing Dick Koubek asked Ed Hernandez if the Commissioner will continue to support the concept of extended hours, contingent on budgetary concerns and union issues being worked out, Ed stated an affirmative yes the Commissioner support evening hours.
6. **RAP:** Westchester RAP discussion was tabled until the September meeting.
7. **Child Care Agency Reimbursements:** Ed Hernandez reported that the reimbursement time is holding had risen slightly to 44 days.
8. **Prompt Payment Bill:** Kathy Liguori reported on Interim Resolution 1510, sponsored by Leg. Vivian Fisher, would require prompt payments (i.e., within 30 days) for child-care agencies. She noted that child care agencies have been singled out in IR 1510, because state child-care regulations do not permit them to build into their contracts the administrative and fiscal costs, such as the interest on bridge loans that can be used to cover expenses due to delayed payments or delayed contract approvals.
9. **Tier 2:** Peter Barnett shared that at the June 12 legislative session funding for the Tier 2 shelter (17 Million) had been transferred into funding for Land Preservation. He expressed strong feelings that this funding was earmarked for our homeless and should be used to develop new initiatives & programs for our most vulnerable. He suggested the WTWC ask the County to rethink how this money should be used before it gets spent. There was a lot of discussion as gaining a better understanding about the sources of these funds and determining if there is any why that these funds can remain earmarked for our homeless. Peter Barnett and Robert Greenberger offered to craft a position letter to be sent to Levy and the Presiding Officer regarding

our concerns about the transfer of these funds. In essence, the position will spell out what the funding was intended for, what was done and what we suggest. Peter B. & Robert G. will forward to Dick K. a draft of our position.

10. **Employment Program Assessment Committee:** Robert Greenberger reported that the committee had scheduled a meeting with Kim Staub of DSS to determine a viable assessment tool. He will report the outcome of this meeting at the next WTWC meeting in September.
11. **Next meeting: The next meeting of the WTWC is scheduled for 9/17 @ 9:30 at DOL**