

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

**September 17, 2007**

**Present:** Pam Killoran; Barbara LoMoriello; Frederick Combs (for Joan Grant, EOC); Peter Barnett; James Andrews; Michael Stoltz; Edward Hernandez; Judy Cahn; Nina Leonhardt; Peggy Boyd; Rob Greenberger; Cheryl Keshner; Sabrina St. John for Ken Zone of LI Cares); Kathy Liguori; Richard Koubek

**Guests:** Mary Weiler; Joan McGay; Pat Gyscek

1. **Minutes:** The minutes of the July 25, 2007 Commission meeting were approved unanimously on a motion by James Andrews, seconded by Mike Stoltz.
2. **Extended SCDSS Hours:** Pam Killoran assumed the chair for this discussion. Richard Koubek reported that he was unable to make contact with the SC AME Union on this issue. It was agreed that, given the extensive discussion of the issue over the last three months, evidence from NCDSS, Commissioner Janet DeMarzo's support of the concept as well as the experiences of parish outreach coordinators, the Commission should ask the legislature to take up this issue.
  - a. A motion was made by Richard Koubek, seconded by Peter Barnett, that the Welfare to Work Commission support the concept of extending hours at least one evening a week at the Suffolk County Department of Social Services. After some additional clarifications, the motion passed, 12 Yes, 3 Abstentions (Ed Hernandez, James Andrews, Pam Killoran), 0 No.
    - i. It was understood that the Commission will support the concept, with technical details left for the SCDSS to work out.
  - b. A motion was made by Peggy Boyd, seconded by Nina Leonhardt, that the Welfare to Work Commission explore the implications of Suffolk County Department of Social Services remaining open to clients after 3PM.
    - i. Cheryl Keshner reported that her intern's study of New York State DSS departments found that 33 of the responding districts receive clients after 3PM.
    - ii. There was additional discussion regarding the limited opportunities for appointments that are available after 3PM. However, a number of Commission members spoke of other services that could be accessed, such as dropping off documents or obtaining applications.
    - iii. The motion passed, 11 Yes, 4 Abstentions (Rob Greenberger, Ed Hernandez, James Andrews, Pam Killoran), 0 No.
  - c. It was agreed that Commission Chair Richard Koubek would write a letter to the Legislature on extended hours in advance of testimony on the topic. A draft of the letter will be circulated to Commission members before it is sent to the Legislature.
3. **Education and Training Pilot:** Nina Leonhardt reported that the Education/Training Committee met on August 28<sup>th</sup> to review the final data on the pilot. She reported that,

with statistical clarifications and updates from James Andrews, the data show that the pilot reduced the dropout rate for those who started their education and training course from 25% (prior to the pilot) to 10% (for clients in the pilot) and that the job placement rate increased from 36% (prior to the pilot) to an estimated 50% (for clients in the pilot.)

- a. One problem that requires additional attention relates to those clients who are sanctioned after they are referred to education and training but before the course begins (10 of the 16 pilot referrals who dropped out before the start of the course.)
  - b. The Committee will meet again in October to review the tools that would be needed by the mentors/case managers to work with sanctioned clients to remove their sanctions and thereby allow them to enter the course.
  - c. A motion was made by Nina Leonhardt, seconded by Peter Barnett, that the Welfare to Work Commission request that the Suffolk County Legislature fund the pilot for a second year, at the same level of funding: \$29,500, for 2008. The motion passed: 11 Yes, 1 Abstention; 0 No.
  - d. A full report on the pilot's outcomes will be presented to the Legislature. Commission Chair Richard Koubek will reach out to Presiding Officer William Lindsay to request that he again sponsor the Omnibus line item for the pilot in the 2008 budget.
4. **Employment Program Assessment:** Committee Chair Rob Greenberger reported that he, Kathy Liguori, Richard Koubek, Peter Barnett and Cheryl Keshner met in August for two hours with SCDSS staff Kim Staab and Thomas Greco to discuss the employment assessment process for temporary Assistnace applicants and recipients. In general, Committee members were satisfied with the results of the meeting. Ms. Staab and Mr. Greco assured the Commission members that the Department is attempting to accommodate the needs of disabled clients and does exempt them from work assignments. Failure to do so is an aberration and such cases should be reported to the Department. SCDSS, through its DCAP, is also working to expedite the classification of clients for SSI or SSD.
- a. Cheryl Keshner reported that there remain numerous examples of disabled clients being required to work, or having their medical documents rejected.
  - b. Richard Koubek noted that many of these issues could be avoided if SCDSS used the draft assessment instrument devised by Wendy DeMarco at OTADA. The problem with this instrument is that it could extend the current 20 minute assessment to a two hour assessment, thereby creating a significant increase in staffing needs. On the other hand, use of the tool could expedite the DCAP process and avoid expensive sanctions and fair hearings, thereby yielding a net financial saving to the County.
  - c. It was suggested that the draft OTDA tool be pilot tested.
  - d. It was agreed that the Employment Assessment Committee would meet in October to discuss a possible pilot of the OTDA draft assessment instrument.
5. **Child Care Reimbursements:** Ed Hernandez reported that the reimbursement time for child-care providers is holding steady at 45 days. Kathy Liguori reported that Resolution 1293 requiring 75% child care payment in advance of the attendance audit

and Resolution 1510 requiring payment to child-care providers within 30 days both passed the Legislature but that a veto of each by the County Executive is anticipated.

6. **Merger of the Wyandanch and South Shore DSS Sites:** Peter Barnett reported that several former legislators (Sondra Bachety and Jane Devine) along with former Commission member Ann Druckenmiller – all affiliated with the Gerald Ryan Outreach Center, spoke against the merger at the August 1<sup>st</sup> Ways and Means Committee of the Legislature. The Committee voted to table the motion on the rental agreement for the merged site pending a public hearing in Wyandanch. That hearing was held on August 15<sup>th</sup>. There was a low public turnout for the hearing but considerable support from the speakers for the merger due to complaints about use of the current property in Wyandanch. The community was also assured by SCDSS Commissioner DeMarzo that an additional bus route would be established to facilitate Wyandanch residents reaching the new site in North Bay Shore. She also promised additional services, such as SCDOL employment services.
7. **Tier Two Shelter Transfer:** Richard Koubek reported that he spoke with Gail Vizzini, head of the Legislature’s Budget Review Office, regarding the Commission’s concerns about the transfer of \$17 million targeted for the Tier Two Shelter to the acquisition of land for environmental protection. Ms. Vizzini reported that these funds were bonded for capital projects and could not be used for SCDSS operational programs, as recommended by several Commission members.
8. **Westchester RAP:** The Commission again tabled discussion of this program until the next meeting.
9. **Next Meeting:** Thursday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2PM at SCDOL