

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

Minutes of the April 28, 2007 Meeting

Present: Judy Cahn, Ed Hernandez, Peggy Boyd, Kathy Liguori, Pam Killoran, James Andrews, Christine Brown for Ken Zone, Gwen Branch, Barbara LoMoriello, Rob Greenberger, Frederick Combs for Joan Grant, Nina Leonhardt, Peter Barnett Richard Koubek

Guests: Peter Crissano, SCDOL, Rosemary Dehlow (CHI)

1. **Minutes**. Motion by Peggy Boyd, seconded by Pam Killoran, to accept the February minutes. Unanimous. The March minutes were tabled pending revision of the Ryan White section by Rob Greenberger.
2. **Mental Health Commission Seat**. Richard Koubek announced that the legislation which created the Commission provides for a seat held by “a Mental Health Professional selected by the Presiding Officer of the Suffolk County Legislature.” The Commission brainstormed a number of possible candidates and, by consensus, agreed that an invitation should be made to the Executive Director of the Clubhouse of Suffolk, Michael Stoltz, who is the current Chair of the Suffolk Coalition of Mental Health Service Providers. If Mr. Stoltz accepts, his name will be presented to the Presiding Officer for approval.
3. **Affordable Housing Report**. Richard Koubek announced that he spoke with Presiding Officer Bill Lindsay about the Commission’s affordable housing report. Leg. Lindsay asked the Commission to identify specific items that the Legislature can act on. Toward this end, a Commission delegation (Richard Koubek, Kathy Liguori, Peggy Boyd, Peter Barnett and consultant Rosemary Dehlow) will meet with the following officials to prioritize the actionable items among the 15 report recommendations:
 - a. LI Regional Planning Board Director Michael White: May 4th, 11:30 AM
 - b. Chair of the Legislature’s Economic Development, Labor and Workforce Housing Committee Kate Browning: May 4th, 3:00 PM
 - c. Economic Development and Workforce Housing Commissioner Jim Morgo: May 7th, 2:00 PM
 - d. Chair of the Legislature’s Health and Human Services Committee Elie Mystal: (date to be determined.)
4. **Child Care Payments Update**. Ed Hernandez reported that the time for SCDSS child care reimbursements has been reduced from about 90 days to 45 days. He also announced that SCDSS is attempting to streamline the transition from TA to NTA (Non Temporary Assistance) child care for people who have left welfare for work. The goal is to make the transition seamless so that former PA clients do not have to reapply for child care assistance after their cases are closed. This reapplication process can take up to 30 days. The Commission will re-visit this issue at the May meeting.

5. **Education/Training Pilot Update.** Nina Leonhardt reported that the pilot formally began today with 7 clients currently assigned to the 15 targeted slots in the pilot. Numerous barriers remain for clients who might desire education and training, including: the early 8:00 AM start time (a problem for parents with young children;) difficulties arranging for child care; the lack of transportation. The Commission discussed the possible need to have the Child Care Council's counselor moved from DSS to DOL to help secure child care for clients entering the pilot or for those being placed in a work setting. The Child Care Council will be invited to take up this issue at a future meeting and child care will be added to the agenda of the Employment Program Assessment Committee.
6. **Employment Program Assessment Committee.** Committee Chair Rob Greenberger reported that the Committee (Kathy Liguori, Richard Koubek, Gwen Branch, Cheryl Keshner) met on April 16 at SCDOL's Employment Center. The Committee discussed the process used in assessing and placing clients in work or educational settings and proposed the following questions to be submitted to SCDOL and SCDCSS:

- In what Department does the responsibility lie for determining whether a client is employable?
- Are there written policies/procedures that guide the employability assessment/placement procedure? If so, would these be available to the subcommittee for review?
- Will the changing TANF regulations operationally change this process? If so, how do you think they will change?
- How many clients are in the Disabled Clients Assistance Program (DCAP) and how many, on average, work toward obtaining SSI? What is the expectation of work experience for those directed to apply for SSI by DSS or DOL?
- Are supportive services (such as child care and transportation) available to clients during the assessment phase?

Richard Koubek distributed a report on the impact that the new federal TANF regulations will have on Suffolk County submitted to the Legislature on April 12 by the SC Legislative Budget Review Office. He said that the report's author, Lance Reinheimer, was willing to meet with the Commission in May or June to discuss the report. He also reported that NCDSS is also conducting a review of its Employment Program and that, at their first meeting, the Director of program reported that the intake assessment and coding of clients is done primarily by the client filling out and self-declaring answers to questions that appear on printed forms such as those related to alcohol or drug use, mental and physical impairment, other barriers to employment, etc. The Client Benefits Screener typically spends only about 20 minutes with the client checking his/her responses and, based on these self-declared responses on the forms, assigns the client a WMS Employment Subsistence Code which determines if he/she is work "exempt" or work eligible.

7. **Request to Address the Commission.** Richard Koubek announced that a Task Force of Suffolk County parish outreach coordinators with whom he works at Catholic Charities has requested permission to address the Commission regarding their goal of

getting SCDSS to open one night a week to accommodate working people. This goal is also supported by the LI Council of Churches. The Commission reached a consensus to invite the Task Force to make their presentation at the May meeting.

8. **Rental Assistance Program.** Rosemary Dehlow from Community Housing Innovations (CHI) gave a brief presentation on the Westchester County Rental Assistance Program (RAP) which is administered by CHI. The goal of RAP is to provide families that have left PA one year of rental assistance until the family gets a Section 8 rental unit. RAP provides 65% of the Fair Market Rental with the family paying the remaining 35%. The guidelines are very similar to federal Section 8 guidelines. RAP is, in effect, a county-funded Section 8 program. Because of a shortage of federal Section 8 vouchers, many RAP recipients remain in the program for more than one year. RAP has helped reduce the number of homeless people in Westchester and has reduced the shelter population; there are only two remaining shelters in the county. The following questions about RAP will be submitted by Rosemary Dehlow to the program administrators with answers provided at the May Commission meeting.
 - RAP cost to the County
 - How much money was saved by Westchester due to this program? Not having persons in emergency housing; avoiding evictions
 - # of participants
 - Total annual cost of program: rental assistance; administrative; other?
 - % of RAP recipients who received Section 8
 - % of recipients who lost housing after 1 year. Where did they go?
 - % of recipients who returned to PA? Retained employment at self-sufficient wages?
 - How many fewer shelter residents are there?
 - What are the CM services? How often do you provide services? # of clients served at a given time?
9. **SCDSS-CAC Presentation.** Richard Koubek announced that he has been asked to speak to the SCDSS Commissioner's Advisory Council on May 2nd at 2:30 PM at the Mary Gordon Building. His topic will be a summary of the work of the Commission with special focus on the affordable housing report. He will be joined at this presentation by Commission members Peggy Boyd, Kathy Liguori and Peter Barnett.
10. **NEXT Meeting: Monday, May 14, 9:30 AM at the Department of Labor One Stop Center (across the parking lot from the legislative building in Hauppauge.)**