

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

Minutes of the February 9, 2018 Meeting

Present:

Richard Koubek, Chair
Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair
Ayesha Alleyne (Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation)
Peggy Boyd (Family Service League);
Barbara DeFina (Suffolk County Community College)
Gabrielle Fasano for Greta Guarton (LI Coalition for the Homeless)
Don Friedman (Empire Justice Center)
Kim Gierasch (Suffolk County Department of Health)
Charles Fox (EOC-LI)
Karen Klafter for Legislator Tom Donnelly
Christian Limbach (SC Association of Municipal Employees)
Richard Krebs, (SC Department of Labor)
Commissioner John O'Neill (SC Department of Social Services)
Donna Raphael for Jeffrey Reynolds (Family and Children's Association/LICADD)
Michael Stoltz (Association for Mental Health and Wellness)
Luis Valenzuela (LI Council of Churches)

Excused: Christina DeLisi (Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory); Barbara Egloff (Eastern Suffolk BOCES); Michael Haynes (LI Cares/Harry Chapin Food Bank); Ellen Krakow (Nassau/Suffolk Law Services)

Absent:

Sr. Lisa Bergeron (Catholic Charities); Rachel Seiler (Community Development Corporation of LI)

Guest: Natasha Saini, LI Coalition for the Homeless

1. **Minutes:** A motion to accept the January minutes, made by Luis Valenzuela, seconded by Christian Limbach, passed unanimously.
2. **Leg. Tom Donnelly:** Chair Richard Koubek announced that the new Chair of the Education and Human Services Committee is Legislator Tom Donnelly. Legislative aide Karen Klafter was introduced as his representative. Legislator Monica Martinez remains on the Education and Human Services Committee but neither she nor her aide Lisa Pinkard will be attending Commission meetings. Legislator Donnelly may attend the March Commission meeting.
3. **Supportive Housing Work Group:** Mr. Koubek reported that the Work Group has completed its recommendations, which will be finalized at a February meeting. The Commission should get a draft report in the spring.
4. **Child Care Commission:** Kathy Liguori reported that the Child Care Commission has secured New York State Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffe to be the keynoter at the May 4 summit. Assemblywoman Jaffee is a leader in the child-care movement and is sponsoring a bill to conduct a study of child-care needs in New York State. Other speakers include Presiding Officer Gregory, Legislators Kara Hahn and Leslie Kennedy;

- and possibly Cong. Peter King. The summit will focus on government actions to support child care at a time of suburban fiscal crisis.
5. **Commission Hearing on Poverty:** Mr. Koubek summarized the points made at the January meeting for and against holding a Welfare to Work public hearing on programs that move people out of poverty.
 - a. There was a clear understanding that this hearing needs to be linked to federal funding reductions for anti-poverty programs. However, at this point, there remains a great deal of uncertainty as to when and how these reductions will impact Suffolk County and New York State. The Commission thus reached consensus to postpone consideration of a public hearing until there is more clarity as to what the actual impacts of federal spending reductions will be on both the Suffolk County and New York State budgets and anti-poverty programs. Monitoring federal budget and policy changes in welfare and anti-poverty programs and policies will be a Commission 2018 goal.
 - b. Mr. Koubek shared with the Commission the major recommendations contained in its 2012 poverty report. The recommendations for Sunday bus service and staff stability at DSS, DOL and DOH appear to have been met. The educational recommendations for SWEP clients have not been met largely due to federal welfare regulations that limit clients' participation in education and training. Mr. Koubek again stated his concern that County legislators do not fully understand the restrictive TANF regulations under which DSS and DOL operate. There was some consensus that educating legislators about these regulations might be a focus of a future poverty hearing, should the Commission decide to hold one later in 2018.
 6. **Commission 2018 Goals:** The Commission reviewed its 2017 goals, almost all of which were pursued this past year. The Commission reached a consensus to carry most of the 2017 goals into 2018 with changes indicated below in italics. These 2018 goals will be formally adopted at the March 9th meeting:
 - Continue to pursue these goals in the Commission's 2012 report, "Struggling in Suburbia: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty in Suffolk County":
 - Review and make recommendations about staffing levels and access to services at the Suffolk County Department of Social Services (SCDSS), Suffolk County Department of Labor, Licensing and Consumer Affairs (SCDOLL&CA) and Suffolk County Department of Health (SCDOH).
 - Receive updates on the privatization of the County's health centers under Hudson River Health Care and its impact on the provision of health-care services in Suffolk County.
 - *Invite the Suffolk County Department of Transportation to present to the Commission updates in County bus services* and continue to monitor Suffolk bus service as it relates to the needs of poor and near-poor people.
 - Create a scoring tool to measure supports provided to working-poor people by companies seeking a Suffolk County IDA benefit.
 - Continue to pursue recommendations in the 2014 Commission report, "Who's Minding the Kids? Meeting Challenges and Creating Opportunities for Quality Child Care and Early Learning in Suffolk County," with special attention to supporting increased State funding for child care while continuing to address inequities in Suffolk's State Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) allocation due to the inadequate CCBG formula used by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS.)

- Continue to plan, implement and evaluate a pilot for expanding on-site educational and work opportunities for work-eligible TANF and Safety Net (SN) SWEP clients at Suffolk County Community College toward the goal of creating SCDSS and SCDOLL&CA “hub centers” for the delivery of multiple SWEP services, including work experience, education, training and child care.
 - *Explore strategies that encourage Suffolk County contract agencies to participate in the SWEP program and to accept SWEP clients.*
 - Monitor ~~changes in 2018 federal budget impacts on TANF law and policy that may be implemented by the Trump Administration,~~ with special attention to education and training opportunities for SWEP clients.
 - ~~Continue supporting adoption and refinement of~~ Assess the implementation of the new Suffolk County ~~and~~ SCDSS “Americans with Disabilities Act” (ADA) policies and procedures at DSS, DOL and DOH. ~~In addition:~~
 - ~~Clarify and monitor the status of the nonprofit liaison communication lines crafted in 2012 by the Commission’s Employment Assessment Committee in cooperation with SCDSS and SCDOLL&CA.~~
 - Explore barriers to housing for Suffolk residents with behavioral health challenges and release a report to the Suffolk County Legislature on this topic.
 - Assess the impact of the ~~opioid~~ *opioid substance abuse* epidemic on communities/people of lower socioeconomic status with special attention to the effects on children and young people.
 - *Assess the impact of federal immigration policies on Suffolk County.*
7. **ADA Update:** Commissioner John O’Neill reported that his Department is adapting the new County ADA policy to DSS needs and procedures and that the completed document will be available for review, but not for substantive changes, when the adaptation is completed. However, he also said that the Department would be open to minor policy changes once the document is completed. He reminded the Commission that DSS has already implemented some ADA policy and procedural changes in advance of the adoption of a County ADA policy. He also again stated that all DSS staff are required to complete an online ADA training course. He agreed to share the course with Mr. Koubek and interested members of the Commission.
8. **Announcements:**
- a. Mr. Koubek reported that the Martin Luther King interfaith service and choir concert on January 14th commemorating the 50th anniversary of Dr. King’s Poor People’s Campaign and the launching of the 2018 New Poor People’s Campaign drew an audience of 450 people, twice what was expected, and that it was covered by Fios LI News and News 12.
 - b. Ayesha Alleyne announced that Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation is holding a legislative breakfast on April 27th to honor clients who have succeeded in their Self-Sufficiency Program and to thank government officials who have supported the program.
 - c. Luis Valenzuela announced a Statewide campaign to preserve health-care services.
9. **Next meeting:** March 9th at which time the remaining 2018 meeting calendar will be set.