

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

**Minutes of the May 11, 2018 Meeting**

**Present:**

Richard Koubek, Chair  
Ayesha Alleyne (Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation)  
Peggy Boyd (Family Service League)  
Barbara DeFina (Suffolk County Community College)  
Christina DeLisi (Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory)  
Charles Fox (EOC-LI)  
Michael Haynes (LI Cares/Harry Chapin Food Bank)  
Cheryl Keshner for Don Friedman (Empire Justice Center)  
Karen Klafter for Legislator Tom Donnelly  
Richard Krebs, (SC Department of Labor)  
Christian Limbach (SC Association of Municipal Employees)  
Donna Raphael for Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds (Family and Children's Association/LICADD)  
Michael Stoltz (Association for Mental Health and Wellness)  
Luis Valenzuela (LI Council of Churches)

**Excused:** Barbara Egloff (Eastern Suffolk BOCES); Greta Guarton (LI Coalition for the Homeless); Kim Gierasch (Suffolk County Department of Health); Ellen Krakow (Nassau/Suffolk Law Services); Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Commissioner John O'Neill (SC Department of Social Services);

**Absent:**

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

1. **Minutes:** A motion to accept the amended April minutes, made by Peggy Boyd, seconded by Charles Fox, passed unanimously.
2. **Child Care Summit:** Chair Richard Koubek reported that the May 4<sup>th</sup> Child Care Summit sponsored by the Child Care Commission was a success. About 100 people attended. The theme was a legislative dialogue on child care at a time of fiscal crisis in the suburbs. The keynote speaker, Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffe, provided an overview of the need for quality child care and described her child care-task force legislation that was passed and signed by the Governor during this 2018 legislative session. The keynote address was followed by reaction panel that included Cong. Peter King, Sen. Phil Boyle, Assemblywoman Kimberly Jean-Pierre, and Suffolk Legislators Kara Hahn and Leslie Kennedy. Each legislator gave pointed remarks about the importance of funding child-care services.
3. **Supportive Housing Work Group:** Mr. Koubek announced that the Work Group has completed drafting the supportive housing report which will be distributed to all Commission members for a vote at the June 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. Don Friedman is providing a final proof-reading of the draft which will be emailed to all Commission members in advance of the June meeting.
4. **IDA Scoring Tool:** Mr. Koubek reported that, thanks to the efforts of Christina DeLisi in the Presiding Officer's office, the Commission's Ad Hoc IDA Committee met with IDA staff Kelly Morris and John McNally on April 30<sup>th</sup> to discuss the Commission's proposed

IDA Scoring Tool. Present at the meeting were agencies and Commission members who sat on the original IDA Ad Hoc Committee, including Mr. Koubek, Kim Gierasch, Christina DeLisi for the Presiding Officer, Roger Clayman for the LI Federation of Labor and Anita Halasz for LI Jobs with Justice. The IDA staff shared a report with the Commission detailing the Agency's efficacy since 2012. The contents of the IDA Scoring tool were discussed, with the IDA staff noting individual IDA Board members already use several of the measures as a lens for evaluating applications, such as wages and if unions are utilized for construction projects. They noted that there are challenges with local hiring requirements since, among other things, these might violate the interstate commerce clause of the US Constitution. However, the IDA does have a "Long Island First" hiring policy, which encourages Agency clients to utilize local labor and vendors. The IDA staff also noted that there is a great deal of competition in getting businesses to locate on Long Island due to the high costs associated with this region. Thus, additional requirements such as those in the IDA Scoring Tool might discourage businesses from coming to Suffolk County. Christina DeLisi stated that she thought the meeting was very productive and that follow-up conversations may take place. Deputy IDA Director Kelly Morris agreed to speak with the Agency's Board Chair about the tool and Mr. Koubek agreed to write a letter to the IDA Board for possible future discussions.

5. **SCCC/SWEP Pilot:** Mr. Koubek stated that he received a call from Lora Gellerstein, the Presiding Officer's Chief-of-Staff, asking for an update on the SCCC/SWEP pilot. He reported to Ms. Gellerstein that the child-care component of the pilot never caught on because the SCCC is not open during the summer break and during SCCC vacation breaks, SWEP clients prefer year-round child care services near their homes. He reported that the SWEP placements at SCCC went from 14, prior to the pilot, to 31 and now down to 24. Staff changes at SCCC slowed the pilot in 2017. Mr. Koubek, Richard Krebs of DOL and Barbara DeFina of SCCC plan to meet immediately after the Commission's May meeting to discuss strategies for increasing participation in the pilot. Mr. Krebs will provide the Commission with a detailed breakdown of SCCC educational and work placements.
6. **Federal Immigration Policies:** Mr. Koubek welcomed back to the Commission Cheryl Keshner from the Empire Justice Center who would represent Don Friedman at the meeting. Ms. Keshner was also invited because of her expertise in public benefits for immigrants. Mr. Koubek reminded the Commission that speakers at the April meeting reported declines in undocumented immigrants recertifying their citizen children for SNAP or WIC as well as declines in domestic violence reports. The Commission next entered into an extended discussion of what role it might play in pursuing its 2018 goal to assess the impact that federal immigration policies are having on Suffolk County.
  - a. **Immigrants and Public benefits:** Cheryl Keshner pointed out that there are different eligibility criteria for different public benefits, depending upon whether they are federally or state funded, so that some immigrants may qualify for assistance in one category but not another. For example, income eligible refugees, asylees and TPS recipients may qualify for cash assistance and Medicaid yet may not be eligible for SNAP benefits. Adults who have been Legal Permanent Residents (LPR) for 5 years (or LPR with 40 qualifying quarters of work) may qualify for SNAP; LPR children do not have a 5-year wait. Immigrants who are PRUCOL (Permanently Residing Under Color of Law) and undocumented immigrants who are pregnant may be able to access Medicaid in NY State. Undocumented children may qualify for Child Health Plus up to their 19<sup>th</sup>

birthday. Child care subsidies are available to children of undocumented immigrants if the child is a legal permanent resident, a citizen or qualifies for preventive services. All immigrants, regardless of status, have a right to access public education and hospital emergency room services. Emergency Medicaid and financial assistance (Charity Care) should be offered by the hospital to assist with medical expenses if a person is low income and does not have medical insurance. Ms. Keshner corroborated what speakers at the Commission's April meeting had stated: the climate of fear is preventing many immigrants from accessing public benefits that they or their family members are eligible to receive. Michael Haynes of Long Island Cares added that the number of undocumented immigrants seeking help at local food pantries has fallen due to their fear of visiting public spaces.

- b. **Public Charges:** Ms. Keshner stated that the Trump Administration is considering changes in federal regulations that would make it difficult for immigrants who receive a multitude of public benefits to adjust their immigration status; for example, to seek permanent legal residence or even citizenship. If enacted, this would be effective prospectively, and would not impact those currently receiving assistance. The argument being used by administration officials is that use of public benefits suggests that the applicant is not self-reliant. Ms. Keshner distributed a fact sheet demonstrating that there are 13 categories of immigrants who are either exempt from the public charge regulations or can seek waivers, such as asylees, refugees and TPS recipients. She again pointed out that the public-charge issue is being used to intimidate immigrants and that it adds to the climate of fear they are experiencing. There will be a public comment period prior to the approval of any changes.
- c. **Immigration and the Mission of the Welfare to Work Commission:** Richard Krebs pointed out that the legislation creating the Commission (which was distributed to each Commission member at the meeting) limits its mission to people leaving welfare for work. He stated that immigration does not fit the mission of the Commission. Mr. Koubek noted that the Commission has always broadly interpreted its mission to include societal and economic conditions that may affect people after they leave welfare or that might cause people to seek welfare benefits such as the lack of public transportation or affordable housing. He also stated that the Commission has often examined access to public benefits or government programs such as the regulation of sober homes or the current assessment of the need for supportive housing, neither of which directly affects people leaving welfare for work. There appeared to be a growing Commission consensus that immigrants' access to public benefits falls with the mission of the Commission.
- d. **Possible Commission Actions:** There also appeared to be a Commission consensus that a public hearing on immigrants receiving public benefits might prove counterproductive. Peggy Boyd expressed concern that in the present anti-immigrant climate, such a hearing could attract anti-immigrant people who would oppose immigrants receiving any public benefits and suggested we could seek to educate the legislature by putting together a fact sheet instead of hearings and trainings. Ayesha Alleyne stated that the Commission has always played an important role in public education around issues of poverty and that this might be its role with the immigration topic. She noted that the Commission could help inform immigrants of their rights to access public benefits, inform nonprofits of immigrants' rights to benefits and ultimately inform the Legislature on these issues. Several possible forums were discussed around education on the issue of immigrants' rights to receive public benefits:

- A forum for nonprofit/community agencies on what benefits immigrants are entitled to and what funding streams can be used for these benefits.
- A forum for nonprofit/community agencies at which they can describe what conditions and situations their immigrant clients are experiencing.

These possible Commission actions will be discussed at a future meeting.

7. **Announcement:** Richard Krebs announced that summer youth job applications are now available online. Ms. Keshner reported that Empire Justice has hired an immigration attorney.
8. **Next meeting:** Friday, June 8.