

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

Minutes of the July 13, 2018 Meeting

Present:

Richard Koubek, Chair
Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair
Peggy Boyd (Family Service League);
Ayesha Alleyne (Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation)
Karen Klafter for Legislator Tom Donnelly
Richard Krebs, (SC Department of Labor)
Commissioner John O'Neill (SC Department of Social Services)
Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds (Family and Children's Association/LICADD)
Michael Stoltz (Association for Mental Health and Wellness)
Luis Valenzuela (LI Council of Churches)
Beth Zweig (Nassau/Suffolk Law Services)

Excused: Christina DeLisi (Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory); Barbara Egloff (Eastern Suffolk BOCES); Charles Fox (EOC-LI); Greta Guarton (LI Coalition for the Homeless); Kim Gierasch (Suffolk County Department of Health); Michael Haynes (LI Cares/Harry Chapin Food Bank) Don Friedman (Empire Justice Center); Christian Limbach (SC Association of Municipal Employees)

Absent:

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

Guest: Joseph Jankowski; Michelle Flood - FREE

1. **New Commission Member:** Chair Richard Koubek announced that the Commission seat for Suffolk Community College is vacant due to the June 30 retirement of Barbara DeFina. Richard Krebs stated that he will research who has replaced Barbara DeFina.
2. **Minutes:** A motion to accept the June minutes, made by Commissioner John O'Neill seconded by Ayesha Alleyne, passed unanimously.
3. **Immigration Issue:** Mr. Koubek distributed the minutes of the May Commission meeting at which Cheryl Keshner of the Empire Justice Center outlined public benefits that immigrants – including undocumented immigrants – can access. This followed an April presentation at which three agencies described a climate of fear associated with the Trump Administration's immigration policies that has discouraged immigrants from seeking services and benefits to which they or their family members are entitled. Mr. Koubek noted that at the May meeting there was a consensus not to hold a public hearing on this volatile issue but rather to consider a forum at which agencies that serve immigrants can learn of the benefits to which they are entitled as well as tell the stories of immigrants being denied these benefits. Peggy Boyd suggested that an appropriate first step might be to form a Welfare to Work committee that would meet with agencies serving immigrants to discuss their access to public benefits. The goal would be to present a report to the Education and Human Services Committee of the Legislature. Mr.

Koubek stated that there seems to be legislative interest in the immigration issue as evidenced by two meetings of the Public Safety Committee that he recently attended. Mr. Krebs stated that the issue of immigrants' benefits is moot since federal law prohibits their accessing most public benefits and programs. Peggy Boyd moved and Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds seconded a motion "to form a committee to explore with relevant agencies the impacts that federal immigration policies are having on the ability of immigrants to access appropriate public services." The motion passed: Yes:7; No: 1; Abstention :2 (Commissioner O'Neill; Karen Klafter.) A committee was formed that will include: Mr. Koubek; Ms. Boyd; Dr. Reynolds; Ms. Klafter.

4. **FREE Speakers Bureau:** Mr. Koubek introduced Joseph Jankowski and Michelle Flood of FREE, an agency that provides numerous social services including programs for disabled people. Among their programs is a Speakers' Bureau through which people with physical, developmental and mental disabilities tell their stories about the barriers to self-sufficiency they have encountered as well as their successes. The barriers can include public stereotypes and stigmas about people with disabilities, physical access to buildings, the lack of public transportation, lack of sign language translators, lack of housing options, lack of medical insurance or access to medical services. The Commission reached consensus that the best venue for FREE speakers would be a meeting of the Legislature's Education and Human Services Committee. Ms. Klafter will help to arrange for this presentation in the fall.
5. **Supportive Housing Report:** Mr. Koubek announced that Clerk of the Legislature Jason Richberg has secured the Presiding Officer's approval for the County to professionally print the report. His hope is that the report will be ready in August for a formal rollout, likely via a press conference.
6. **Next Meeting:** Mr. Koubek announced that the August Commission meeting will be cancelled due to the August immigration committee meetings and the possible rollout of the supportive housing report. The next meeting will be Thursday, September 13.