

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

Minutes of the September 13, 2018 Meeting

Present:

Richard Koubek, Chair
Ayesha Alleyne (Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation)
Peggy Boyd (Family Service League);
Christina DeLisi (Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory)
Barbara Egloff (Eastern Suffolk BOCES)
Greta Guarton (LI Coalition for the Homeless)
Michael Haynes (LI Cares/Harry Chapin Food Bank)
Arlene Jackson (Suffolk County Community College)
Traci Barnes for Commissioner John O'Neill (SC Department of Social Services)
Luis Valenzuela (LI Council of Churches)
Beth Zweig (Nassau/Suffolk Law Services)

Excused: Charles Fox (EOC-LI); Karen Klafter for Legislator Tom Donnelly;
Richard Krebs, (SC Department of Labor) Kim Gierasch (Suffolk County Department of Health); Don Friedman (Empire Justice Center); Christian Limbach (SC Association of Municipal Employees); Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds (Family and Children's Association/LICADD); Michael Stoltz (Association for Mental Health and Wellness)

Absent:

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

Guests: Rebecca Sanin, Gina Dorso, Mary Hallowell (Health and Welfare Council of LI);

1. **New Commission Member:** Chair Richard Koubek introduced Arlene Jackson, Assistant Dean, Office of Continuing Education, Suffolk County Community College, who has been appointed by President Shaun McKay to the college's seat on the Commission.
2. **Minutes:** A motion to accept the July minutes, made by Ayesha Alleyne seconded by Greta Guarton, passed unanimously.
3. **Health and Welfare Council of Long Island (HWCLI) Immigration Forum:** Mr. Koubek reminded the Commission that a consensus had been reached regarding in federal immigration policy impacts on Suffolk County to meet with agencies serving immigrants to discuss their immigrant clients' access to public benefits. A committee was formed for this purpose that included: Mr. Koubek; Peggy Boyd; Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds; Karen Klafter and Luis Valenzuela. This committee held a conference call on August 7th during which Ms. Boyd reported that the Health and Welfare Council of Long Island had recently held a forum on this topic for agencies that serve immigrants. It was agreed that HWCLI would be asked to report on their forum at the September Commission meeting. Mr. Koubek welcomed Rebecca Sanin, President and CEO of the Council along with staff members Mary Hallowell and Gina Dorso.

- a. **Decline in Immigrants' Request for Services:** Ms. Sanin reported that the bottom line from the HWCLI forum was the agencies reporting that immigrants are not accessing services to which they qualify because of the climate of fear generated by increased ICE activity on Long Island as well as an overall anti-immigrant climate in the nation and on Long Island and public perceptions that unaccompanied immigrant children and other immigrants pose criminal risks.. Ms. Sanin stated that HWCLI coordinates SNAP (formerly food stamps) and WIC (Women, Infant and Children Nutrition Services) enrollments, both of which are down, due to immigrant fears of somehow getting caught in an ICE action through their enrollment (or their citizen-children's enrollment) in these programs. Mr. Koubek reminded the Commission that immigrant advocates are concerned that the Suffolk County Police Department may be adding to this climate of fear by collaborating with ICE.
 - b. **Changes in Federal Public Charge, TPS and Asylum Policies:** Ms. Sanin also noted that the Administration is considering revising the Public Charge regulations so that enrollment in public benefits such as Medicaid or SNAP could be used to disqualify immigrants from having their legal status renewed or even from receiving citizenship, on the grounds that use of public benefits indicates a lack of self-sufficiency. Ms. Sanin also reported that the Administration has announced that Temporary Protective Status (TPS) will be revoked by 2019 for Haitians, Salvadorans, Hondurans and Guatemalans, thus forcing these people to return to their countries of origin or to live illegally in the United States. It was also noted during this discussion that the Administration has redefined the grounds for asylum to exclude domestic violence and gang violence – the two major requests made by Central American immigrants seeking entry into the United States. Ms. Sanin corroborated what Carmen Maquilon of Catholic Charities had reported to the Commission at an earlier meeting: domestic violence reports by immigrant women are down sharply on Long Island. Ms. Sanin expressed concern that these federal immigration policies and the anti-immigrant sentiments in the nation and on Long Island are creating a public health crisis and that they are traumatizing immigrants, particularly immigrant children.
 - c. **Public Safety Committee: Public Safety Committee:** The Commission members discussed a number of options for educating the legislature and the public about the negative impacts of federal immigration policies. Traci Barnes asked, what are we looking for the Legislature to do? Mr. Koubek pointed out that County legislators can influence Suffolk County police policies and procedures that collaborate with ICE and therefore add to the climate of fear. He stated that advocates have been working with members of the Legislature's Public Safety Committee on ways to prescribe police/ICE interactions so as to reduce the fears that impede police-community cooperation in immigrant neighborhoods. He also stated that advocates may ask agencies that serve immigrants to report to the Public Safety Committee about how the climate of fear is causing a decline in immigrants seeking services such as the child-care subsidy or SNAP or access to food pantries or domestic-violence counseling.
- a. **Commission Immigration Seminar for Legislators:** After an extensive discussion, the Commission reached a consensus to compose a short, bullet-pointed summary of public services and benefits that have declining immigrant

participation due to the fears caused by federal immigration policies. This brief document will be based on reports received by the Commission from HWCLI and other agencies that serve immigrants during various 2018 Commission meetings. In addition, the committee formed to address federal immigration policies will plan a seminar for legislators and their aides on resources and programs they can refer their immigrant constituents to for assistance. This seminar would be in lieu of a formal presentation to the Legislature's Education and Human Services Committee on the negative impacts of federal immigration policies.

4. **Supportive Housing Report:** Mr. Koubek distributed printed copies of the report and announced that a press conference will be held at the Middle Island facility of Concern for Independent Living at 11AM on October 2nd. Speakers will include Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory, possibly Legislators Monica Martinez and/or Tom Donnelly, Greta Guarton, Michael Stoltz, Ralph Fasano of Concern for Independent Living, a resident of that facility and a resident of Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation. A presentation of the report to the Education and Human Services Committee will be scheduled for the fall.
5. **SCCC/SWEP Pilot:** Mr. Koubek announced that, with the appointment of Ms. Jackson to the Commission, a meeting will be scheduled with Richard Krebs of the SWEP program and SCCC staff to assess the pilot.
6. **Child Care Commission Hearings and Summit:** Mr. Koubek distributed a flyer created by the Child Care Commission announcing two public hearings (September 27th and October 1st) to gather testimony from parents and providers on the state of child care and early learning in Suffolk County. These hearings will help frame the March 2019 Child Care Summit.
7. **Suffolk County Budget:** Mr. Koubek stated that the 2019 Recommended Suffolk County Budget will be released within a week. Its effects on DSS, DOH and DOL staffing will be discussed at the October Commission meeting
8. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be Thursday, October 11.