

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

**Minutes of the February 13, 2019 Meeting**

**Present:**

Richard Koubek, Chair  
Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair  
Ayesha Alleyne (Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation)  
Peggy Boyd (Family Service League)  
Christina DeLisi (Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory)  
DJ Russo for Legislator Tom Donnelly  
Charles Fox (EOC-LI)  
Don Friedman (Empire Justice Center)  
Kim Gierasch (Suffolk County Department of Health)  
Greta Guarton (LI Coalition for the Homeless)  
Michael Haynes (LI Cares/Harry Chapin Food Bank)  
Arlene Jackson (Suffolk County Community College)  
Richard Krebs, (SC Department of Labor)  
Christian Limbach (SC Association of Municipal Employees)  
Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds (Family and Children's Association/LICADD)  
Kathy Gierasch for Michael Stoltz (Association for Mental Health and Wellness);  
Beth Zweig (Nassau/Suffolk Law Services)

**Excused;** Barbara Egloff (Eastern Suffolk BOCES); Dennis Nowak (Acting Commissioner, SC Department of Social Services); Luis Valenzuela (LI Council of Churches)

**Absent:**

Rachel Seiler (Community Development Corporation of LI)

1. **Minutes** A motion to accept the January minutes, made by Christina DeLisi, seconded by Christian Limbach, passed unanimously.
2. **2019 Meeting Calendar:** It was agreed that the Commission will move its meeting dates to the second Thursday of each month except for these dates that accommodate the Legislature's calendar: May 10. July 12, December 13. The meeting schedule for 2019 is:
  - March 14
  - April 11
  - May 10 (Friday)
  - June 13
  - July 12 (Friday)
  - August 8
  - September 12
  - October 10
  - November 14
  - December 13 (Friday)
3. **February 9<sup>th</sup> Child Care Commission Forum:** Kathy Liguori reported on the Child Care Commission forum that was scheduled in lieu of a March summit pending the election of a Suffolk County legislative successor for Senator Monica Martinez. The forum was very well

attended by 45 child care providers. The forum focused on specific Suffolk County child-care State 2019 budget asks for Suffolk County, including:

- \$4 million for facilitated enrollment for working-poor families;
- \$51 million additional funding statewide for the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) subsidy for working poor families (which is currently available to Suffolk families earning 175% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) rather than the federal government's recommended 200% of FPL);
- increase State funding to stabilize the child-care workforce and infrastructure by reinstating the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile market rate reimbursement formula (up from 69%);
- funding the Long Island Pre-K Regional Technical Assistance Center (RTAC) at \$750,000 annually for professional development, technical expertise and regional collaboration between school districts and community-based child care programs.

Statements of support were made by Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory, NYS Assemblywoman Kimberly Jean Pierre and NYS Senator Monica Martinez. Jennifer Rojas, Executive Director of the Child Care Council of Suffolk, presented the agenda, and then facilitated input from forum participants on the challenges and opportunities facing child care in Suffolk. Many challenges were identified including:

- difficulty paying the minimum wage;
- OCFS overregulation and lack of funding to meet regulations;
- slow OCFS response time;
- the shortage of qualified teachers and the need for staff development for teachers
- the shortage of pre-K programs in Suffolk compared with universal public-supported pre-K for four-year olds in New York City.

The Child Care Commission will organize an advocacy effort around the State budget agenda as well as the on-going challenges facing the Suffolk child care industry. The advocacy will include a letter-writing campaign on behalf of the Suffolk county budget asks, legislative visits and a March Albany advocacy visit to Albany.

4. **Commission State Budget Agenda:** Mr. Koubek suggested that the Commission develop a NYS budget agenda. With the Senate now controlled by Democrats, progressive legislation and budget items appear to be moving quickly through the State government. After some discussion, a consensus was reached to prepare an omnibus Commission budget advocacy letter for discussion at the March Commission meeting that could include:

1. The Child Care Commission's budget asks;
2. Additional funding for Suffolk bus service;
3. Expansion of the Home Stability Support program that raises the DSS shelter allowance for homeless people to 85 % of the federal Fair Market Rental rate for each DSS district (Suffolk already has a version of this funding formula).
4. Possibly a budget ask specific to Suffolk County DSS

**Commission Goals:** Mr. Koubek provided the Commission with the draft 2019 goals discussed at the January meeting. Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds suggested that the Commission add a goal that would explore ways that nonprofit Suffolk contract agencies can get more contract flexibility so as to maximize the use of funds, especially at the end of the contract year. This additional goal will be discussed more fully at the March meeting. Kathy Liguori suggested a goal that would focus on the unmet needs of children born to opioid-addicted parents. Dr. Reynolds agreed on the needs of kids

impact by substance use, noted that there are some existing programs to meet these needs and that several other programs are under development. He agreed to keep the Commission posted and also pointed out that the Suffolk County Opioid Addiction Task Force has been meeting regularly and recently released a new set of recommendations designed to address the crisis in Suffolk County. After discussion there was consensus to support the following goals which will be voted on at the March Commission meeting (bold indicates new goals; non-bold indicates goals carried over from 2018):

1. **Update the Commission’s 2012 report, “Struggling in Suburbia: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty in Suffolk County” with current poverty statistics in the context of addressing barriers to self-sufficiency in Suffolk County, including:**
  - **Creating a clearing house of in-demand jobs that pay self-sufficiency wages. The data would include Suffolk occupations most-in demand, growth-rates of in-demand occupations and their wage scales, training opportunities and requirements, etc.**
  - **Mental health services available to social-services clients to help them attain self-sufficiency. This goal may also include Commission revisiting the issue of an OTDA/SCDSS mental health screening tool.**
  - **The role that case management plays in helping poor people attain self-sufficiency.**
  - **The importance of financial literacy.**
2. 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 and Eastern Suffolk BOCES toward the goal of creating SCDSS and SCDOH “hub centers” for the delivery of multiple SWEP services, including work experience, education, training and child care.
3. Monitor 2019 federal budget impacts on TANF law and policy with special attention to education and training opportunities for SWEP clients.
4. 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).
5. Create a scoring tool to measure supports provided to working-poor people by companies seeking a Suffolk County IDA benefit.
6. **Support additional State funding for the Suffolk County bus system.**
7. 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.)
8. Continue to explore barriers to housing for Suffolk residents with behavioral-health challenges **through the policy recommendations** contained in the Commission’s 2018 report to the Suffolk County Legislature on this topic including:
  - Improve Single Point of Access (SPA) supportive-housing placements for people with mental illness;
  - Prioritize homeless families on Public Housing Authority waiting lists;
  - Create a coordinated County response to the lack of affordable housing.

9. Continue to assess the impact of federal immigration policies on Suffolk County.
10. **In an era of significant need and scant funding, seek input from contract agencies about whether refinements to the contracting process could enhance program efficiency and further maximize the use of public dollars with more flexibility for agencies to make budget/staffing changes as program needs evolve throughout the year.**

**Deleted from 2018 goals:**

~~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.~~

~~Explore strategies that encourage Suffolk County contract agencies to participate in the SWEP program and to accept SWEP clients.~~

~~Assess the implementation of the new Suffolk County "Americans with Disabilities Act" (ADA) policies and procedures at SCDSS, SCDOL and SCDOH.~~

~~Assess the impact of the substance abuse epidemic on communities/people of lower socioeconomic status with special attention to the effects on children and young people.~~

5. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be Thursday, March 14th.