

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

**Minutes of the April 11, 2019 Meeting**

**Present:**

Richard Koubek, Chair  
Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair  
Chanee Hammonds for Ayesha Alleyne (Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation)  
Peggy Boyd (Family Service League)  
Barbara Egloff (Eastern Suffolk BOCES)  
Don Friedman (Empire Justice Center)  
Kim Gierasch (Suffolk County Department of Health)  
Jenn Hann for Legislator Sammy Gonzalez  
Greta Guarton (LI Coalition for the Homeless)  
Jeanne Durso for Arlene Jackson (Suffolk County Community College)  
Richard Krebs, (SC Department of Labor)  
Christian Limbach, (SC Association of Municipal Employees)  
Dennis Nowak (former Acting Commissioner, SC Department of Social Services)  
Frances Pierre, (Commissioner, SC Department of Social Services)  
Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds (Family and Children's Association/LICADD)  
Michael Stoltz (Association for Mental Health and Wellness); Christian Limbach  
Luis Valenzuela (LI Council of Churches)  
Beth Zweig, Nassau Suffolk Law Services

**Excused)** Christina DeLisi (Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory) Charles Fox (EOC-LI)  
Michael Haynes (LI Cares/Harry Chapin Food Bank)

**Absent:**

Rachel Seiler (Community Development Corporation of LI)

1. **Introduction of Commissioner Pierre and Legislator Gonzalez:** Chair Richard Koubek introduced Jenn Hann, representing Legislator Sammy Gonzalez who will be serving as the new Chair of the Education and Human Services Committee. Dennis Nowak introduced Frances Pierre who is the newly-appointed Commissioner of SCDSS. Commissioner Pierre greeted the Commission and spoke of her background in social services and housing for the homeless.
2. **Minutes** A motion to accept the March minutes, made by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Barbara Egloff passed with one abstention. Prior to the vote, Mr. Koubek provided context for Leg. Tom Donnelly's statement at the March meeting in which he expressed concerns about the section of the Commission's immigration report that was critical of Suffolk police relations with the immigrant community.
3. **Commission State Budget Agenda:** Mr. Koubek reported on these outcomes of the Commission's NYS budget appropriation requests:
  1. The Child Care Commission's budget asks: not adopted
  2. Additional funding for Suffolk bus service: not adopted
  3. Expansion of the Home Stability Support program: not adopted
  4. Opposition to Medicaid cuts: adopted

4. **Child Care:** Kathy Liguori expressed frustration that the State Legislature did not adopt recommended increases in child-care funding. She pointed out that insufficient funding is adding to the strains of an already overtaxed child-care system. Among the issues confronting providers are services for children with unidentified special needs and children who have endured adverse childhood experiences (i.e. parental opioid addiction, incarceration, domestic violence). She stated that it is very difficult to get diagnoses for children with extra or special needs, sometimes because parents are in denial, other times because services are difficult to access. She called on the Commission to look into criteria for accessing programs to help pre-school children with special needs or who are the victims of the adverse childhood experiences. Peggy Boyd and Mike Stoltz stated that there is some grant money as well as State programs available for these purposes. Mr. Koubek suggested that this issue be first presented to the Child Care Commission for consideration. A joint effort by the Welfare to Work and Child Care Commissions to explore supportive services for children with special needs might be a future project.
5. **Sanctions and Rent Subsidies:** Beth Zweig stated that the Home Stability Support program does not remove the shelter supplement from families who are sanctioned and that New York City apparently has been provided with an OTDA waiver that would allow for a pro-rata reduction of the supplement rather than eliminate it for sanctioned families. Mr. Koubek noted that DSS housing administrator Vincent Rothaar has been informed that OTDA will not allow DSS districts to pay rent arrears which would arise as the sanction-caused shelter supplement reductions are gradually imposed. Mr. Nowak said he will explore how New York City received the waiver allowing them to gradually reduce the supplement for sanctioned families and whether and how Suffolk might also receive such a waiver.
6. **Commission Goals:** Mr. Koubek asked the group to focus on a strategies for pursuing a number of the Commission’s 2019 goals:
  - 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 economic 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. **Strategy:** Richard Krebs and DOL staff will prepare a summary of jobs.
    - Mental health services available to social-services clients to help them attain self-sufficiency. This goal may also include the Commission revisiting the issue of an OTDA/SCDSS mental-health screening tool. **Strategy:** Don Freidman will provide the Commission with the OTDA screening tool.
  - SCCC/DOL pilot: Mr. Koubek updated the Commission on efforts at SCCC to coordinate implementation of the pilot at all three campuses so that SWEP clients can be placed for both work and study activities. A total of about 80 SWEP clients are in an educational setting, of whom about 20 are at SCCC. Eastern Suffolk BOCES also has about 20 SWEP clients in work-study program. **Strategy:** A committee was formed to work with SCCC, SWEP and Eastern Suffolk BOCES to expand educational opportunities: Don Freidman, Christian Limbach; Michael Stoltz, Barbara Egloff, Richard Koubek, Richard Krebs, Arlene Jackson. This group will meet at the Oser Avenue DOL center on June 19 at 10AM.
  - Supportive Housing report recommendations
    - Improve Single Point of Access (SPA) supportive-housing placements for people with mental illness. **Strategy:** Mr. Koubek will distribute the SPA section of the

supportive housing report to the Work Group, asking for suggestions on how to pursue this goal.

- Prioritize homeless families on Public Housing Authority waiting lists. **Strategy:** The LI Coalition for the Homeless is participating in assessment of how this goal can be accomplished, LICH Associate Director, Michael Giuffrida will be asked to update the Commission on their efforts at a future meeting.
- Continue to assess the impact of federal immigration policies on Suffolk County. **Action:** It was agreed that police relations with immigrant communities are best pursued by immigrant advocates. The Commission will await a forthcoming story by *Newsday* reporter Victor Ramos on the climate of fear faced by undocumented immigrants which will help frame how the Commission approaches this issue in 2019.

7. **Next Meeting:** Friday, May 10