

**Suffolk County Disabilities Advisory Board  
December 3, 2008 Meeting Minutes**

**Approved**

A meeting of the Suffolk County Disabilities Advisory Board was held on December 3, 2008 in the Conference Room of Building 158, North County Complex, Hauppauge at 2:15 pm, Chairwoman Beverly Cody presided.

**PRESENT:**

**GROUP A**

Bruce G. Blower	Representing County Executive Steve Levy
Jack Caffey	Representing Legislature Presiding Officer William Lindsay
Linda O'Donohoe	S.C. Department of Social Services
Terry Maccarrone	S.C. Department of Parks
John Murray	S.C. Department of Public Works/Transportation Division
Tedd Godek, R.A.	S.C. Department of Public Works, Design & Construction Division
Alice Young	S.C. Department of Labor

**GROUP B**

Beverly Cody	Member, Secretary & Acting Chair
Kleo King, Esq.	Member, United Spinal Association

**GROUP C**

Ingo Gloeckner	Member, VESID
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**GROUP D**

**Guest:** Robert Shinnick, Director-SCDPW Transportation  
Kevin Darcy, SCDPW Transportation  
Douglas & Erin King

**STAFF:** Heidi Zeitler, Clerk Typist, Suffolk County Office of Handicapped Services

**EXCUSED:** Barbara Falkman, Paulette Bartunek, Debbie Epple, Teresa Strum, Roy Probeyahn, Glenn Campbell, Mitch Shapiro, Linda O'Donohoe, Judy Record, Joseph Sanseverino, Legislator Kate M. Browning, Chair, Tedd Godek, Kleo King, Frank Krotschinsky, Jim Sorrentino, Valerie Lewis

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF October 29, 2008:** Beverly asked if there were any changes to be made to the minutes as distributed. There were none. Jack made a motion to accept the minutes and Kleo seconded the motion. All were in favor and the minutes were unanimously approved.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** Bruce read an inter-office memo he received on 10/27/08 from staff member Michele Keenan who is responsible for running the SCAT paratransit application program. In summary, the memo requests that medical certification be required on SCAT & Recert applications. Michele said OHS receives an alarming number of SCAT Paratransit applications mostly from agencies that are very similar in context. Applicants write down that public buses cannot help them, even with travel training. The caseworkers know what to write on the applications to get them approved. Examples are, "I get confused using public transportation...I feel unsafe and may have a panic-attack riding with others, I can't walk to the bus stop because of bi-polar disability.

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Michele feels that having a medical doctor signing the application would weed out a lot of people falsely applying to the system. SCAT was intended for those people with severe disabilities that make them unable to use public bus service

Bruce said this same issue came to our board a couple of years ago and the board decided they didn't want a medical certification. But now the number of SCAT users being denied trips is above 900 each month. Whenever a "phony" uses SCAT, they deny an eligible SCAT rider a trip. Bruce also added that paratransit systems in our area do require medical certification, such as Nassau County, Westchester and NYC. Many applicants claim panic disorder as their disability and we have no way of checking it, so we have asked the Dept. of Health Services/Mental Hygiene to help us go through some of these almost identical applications. Bob Shinnick agreed with Bruce about restricting people who are not eligible. Bob said they book about 1,300 people a day for SCAT and 300-400 people cancel in a day. SCAT is mandated to follow the demand of the rider. It entails a functional review to go over the application. If medical certification was needed to be eligible, SCAT would be able to provide better service for those who are truly eligible. Bob said they would look into what other agencies do, lessons learned and what would be best for us in Suffolk County. Medical certification would make sure that the people who apply for SCAT are eligible. Beverly said it will become even more of an issue if there are cuts backs in bus transportation in Suffolk County. Beverly said, if there are cut backs, medical certification might be necessary so that the people who are severely disabled and are eligible for the service, get it. Linda asked if the SCAT applications in question are being denied or are they pending. Bruce replied we are pending them right now until the Deputy Director of Mental Hygiene can go over them with us. Kleo suggested possible training for the people who are signing off on these applications so they know who SCAT was originally intended for. Jack said SCAT transportation is an exceptional service and of course it doesn't always apply to everyone, but to those people who are truly eligible, those people should receive the service. Bruce said we aren't trying to keep those individuals who are truly eligible, off the system; the idea is to weed out those who are not eligible, but are getting through because there is no real way to check. SCAT was intended for people whose disability is so severe that it prevents them from using the regular fixed route bus system. Right now, OHS probably denies about 20 applications a year. Bob said we need trained professionals who know what they are approving and why they are approving the applications. We all know there are people using SCAT right now because it's more convenient than the fixed route buses. Beverly asked, if Bob was suggesting in some instances, perhaps especially with psychiatric disabilities, other than having their own person's treating doctor certify the application, that you might possibly set-up some kind of system to review them. Bob said that could be one possible solution. Bob said we would have to work with members of the Advisory Board to see what other agencies are doing and find out what works and doesn't work and what would be the best fit for Suffolk County. Bob said if some type system is in place for application review and we tell a client they need to go to a doctor for medical certification and the person can't get there or they can't afford it, Bob believes its SCDPW's obligation to transport them there as well as pay for their session. Bob said this sounds like a lot of money until you realize that every trip we provide is at \$30.00 net cost. It wouldn't take a lot of trips from one person who shouldn't be using the system, to consume that money. Bruce said if the board is in agreement we can set-up a committee.

Kevin Darcy from SCDPW Transportation said he came to the board a couple of years ago and made a presentation about Braille markings at Bus stops. At that time they had received a lot of requests to identify bus stops along Suffolk County transit using Braille. Kevin passed around a metal sample that would be attached to the bus stop sign post. Kevin said the color of the Braille markings was discussed at that time. Kevin did find out since then, that it can be a color as long as there is contrast in it. SCDPW Transit would like to move forward with this project and came to our Advisory Board for advice and guidance.

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Bob mentioned when they had first looked into this a couple of years ago there wasn't much information out there but since then, much has changed. The Braille markings would be screwed onto metal post by the bus stop. Kleo mentioned the possibility of vandalism with the way the plate was made. Bob said that particular piece is an old piece which was probably designed so it could be changed easily.

Kleo also mentioned that the route to the post also needs to be accessible. Beverly suggested a sub-committee to help with these projects and appointed the following people: Valerie Lewis, Mitch Shapiro, Kleo King, Bruce, Tedd Godek Jack Caffey. Ingo suggested N.Y.S. Commission for the Blind as a Resource.

Beverly asked Bruce to chair this committee and he will try to get a meeting together hopefully around the second week in January 2009. Jack suggested that Kevin bring to the first meeting the different types of placards they have available and possibly pictures of different sites that we have been talking about. Bruce said we will set the meeting up by e-mail.

Beverly asked Bob about the article in Newsday today (12/3/08) about the MTA possible taking over Nassau and Suffolk Buses. Bob said he knows very little about it but in the recent past the MTA Executive wanted to develop a whole series of initiatives and improvements for the MTA. One of the projects was called Regional Bus and what he wants to do is create a bus system which includes Westchester County and all of Long Island by dismantling their corporate entity and bringing it in just as a division of the MTA, which is what the article seemed to be alluding too. Right now it is just a plan, some plans have a basis and merit and some never happen. The Ravitch Commission was put together to find ways to fund a sustainable MTA going forward, looking at new funding sources and new ways of developing revenues to keep them operating. Newsday article was about that MTA Commission Report.

Beverly said she also read that they want to raise the fare and charge SCAT passengers double the fare. Bob said that would be Nassau County's ABLE Ride Paratransit which is under L.I. BusM, a subsidiary of the MTA, not SCAT. Beverly asked, who decides? Jack said at the end of the Newsday article it says, State Senator John Flanagan.

Bruce asked Beverly if the Task Force committee for the Braille markings should also look into issue of medical certification on SCAT applications and Beverly said, yes.

Bob mentioned that the new policy of Origin to Destination which began on October 6, 2008 is working well.

### **Correspondence Cont.....**

Bruce mentioned at the last SCDAB meeting there were questions about the number of fuel efficient parking spaces in relation to the number handicapped parking spaces at the new Tanger Outlet Arches in Deer Park. OHS sent one of our handicapped parking enforcement agents over to check it out. Handicapped Parking Enforcement Agent #99 found there are about 5,184 parking spaces, of which 128 are fuel efficiency spots, they are red & white in coloration and there are only 89 handicapped parking spaces. For every 1,000 regular parking spots there should be 20 handicapped spaces, which means 106 handicapped parking spots would be required for all. For every 151-200 spots, six handicapped spots are required. Agent 99's final deduction mathematically is this shopping center requires 106 handicapped parking spaces, so they are currently 17 handicapped parking spaces short of the required number by N.Y.S. Uniformed Fire Prevention Code Citation #9NYCRR. Jack said we need to find out what the law is for amount of fuel efficient parking spots allowed.

Kleo said the figure for handicapped spots isn't correct. She said 20 handicapped spots are required for the first 1,000 and for each 1,000 there after, there should be 1 per 100, so there should be 60 handicapped spots available to the nearest accessible route. Bruce said we will have to send our Parking Enforcement Agent back to take another look. Kleo suggested we get the plans from the Town of Babylon. Bruce mentioned a letter we received from Legislator John M. Kennedy, Jr. requesting our Advisory Board to do an assessment. Bruce read the letter: Dear Mr. Blower, Presently the Suffolk County Division of Real Estate has ordered appraisals concerning the presently shuttered Bavarian Inn. As a unique water body, Lake Ronkonkoma serves as the next door neighbor to the Inn. The lake, as you may be aware, is a major attraction for visitor picnicking, viewing and for fishing purposes.

I write to you for the opinion and recommendations of the Suffolk County Handicapped Advisory Board concerning the placement of a handicapped accessible fishing pier at Lake Ronkonkoma. The existing parking area for the Bavarian Inn appears to be an ideal location. Please provide input and evaluation concerning this possibility, should Suffolk County succeed in acquiring the Bavarian Inn property. Thank you for your assistance with this request. Sincerely, John M. Kennedy, Jr. S.C. Legislator, 12<sup>th</sup> Legislative District.

Bruce also read out loud the letter that Leg. Kennedy, Jr. had received from the Dept. of Environmental Conservation, dated 11/25/08 regarding the possibility of using the Bavarian Inn property as a site for a handicapped accessible fishing pier on Lake Ronkonkoma. In the letter, Regional Fisheries Manager, Charles A. Guthrie expressed his complete support of this concept.

Jack motioned to approve above concept and it was seconded by Kleo in supporting it. All were in favor, motion was carried. Terry from Parks abstained.

**CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT:** Beverly mentioned an issue that she brought up a couple of years ago, which was resolved, has resurfaced again. Beverly lives in a condominium complex which has 308 units and they have a mailbox which is centrally located. They have once again removed the mailbox. She has spoken twice with the head postmaster who says the reason it was removed was because times are hard, money issues etc... Beverly said for anyone with a disability, elderly...., it's a very difficult situation. Beverly said the last time this happened she fought with them and got the mailbox put back, unfortunately, this time he is fighting back harder. Beverly called the Condominium Management Committee who said they would bring it up at the next board meeting. She asked them to have a petition go around and have the residents sign. The post office said they are doing this because they don't have much usage from the mailbox. Beverly told them it doesn't matter if there is much usage because some people totally depend on it so she suggested they pick up the mail every other day, but they said they aren't allowed to do that. Beverly said she will keep bringing it up until it is resolved. Jack suggested she call her Legislator or Congressman and Beverly said, she will.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Architectural Barriers** – Tedd mentioned his DPW Commissioner received a letter from Ruth Berger of the Family Service League in which she voiced a couple of concerns, one of which was the Family Service Leagues Holiday Party and accessibility at the West Sayville County Club where they hold the party. It has been an issue for over a year or so now. Tedd doesn't have jurisdiction over Parks so he forwarded the letter to Deputy Commissioner Bellone at Parks. Terry said it is a historic building which puts certain restrictions on it as far as what can be done to it.

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Terry said they just had someone take a look at the West Sayville Country Club by measuring the slope and height of the steps. Terry said there is a handicapped ramp in the back of the building but there are some issues with that as well. Terry said they are working on a solution to the problem. Bruce mentioned that our office had sent a letter as well, regarding the accessibility problem, stating that Parks is aware of the problem and is working on it.

Bruce said he will write a letter explaining that there is a better entrance in the back of the building. Kleo suggested signage be put in the front of the building to make people aware of the accessible entrance in the back.

**Community Partnership** - Bruce reported the Handicapped Parking Enforcement Blitz is underway and in it's 7<sup>th</sup> year under the County Sheriff's initiative. Sheriff Vincent DeMarco recruits 17 different police agencies to help, including handicapped parking volunteers from our office.

There were 5,000 tickets issued the first year and last year there were about 2,400 tickets issued. There is a \$230.00 ticket for the first offense. Bruce said OHS trained another 32 Suffolk County auxiliary police officers in handicapped parking enforcement this year as well as OHS volunteers. This blitz runs through New Year's Day.

**Education** - Teresa was excused.

**Housing** - Vacant.

**Legislation** – Frank was excused. Bruce said there is a bill in the County legislature which was introduced by Leg. Stern making all new housing constructed under visitability standards, which Bruce has explained in past meetings. Tedd asked Bruce what the IR# is, Bruce said he wasn't sure and would e-mail it to him.

**Transportation** - Cliff was absent

**Employment** –Alice brought in information to show everyone about the Employment Took Kit, which they feature in the Disability Resource Center at the One Stop for people with psychiatric disabilities. They also have more marketing materials that will include more general titles about serving a more diverse population of job seekers. More case managers from different agencies are coming to tour the One Stop Employment Center. Beverly asked Alice for a copy of the Employment Took Kit. Bruce said to Alice if you leave a copy we can mail it.

**COUNTY DEPARTMENTS:**

**Suffolk County Office of Handicapped Services** – Bruce had nothing new to report.

**Suffolk County Parks** - Terry had nothing new to report.

**S. C. Department of Social Services** - Linda was excused but at a later e-mailed Heidi her report. CDPAP cases for September 2007 were 306 and for September 2008 there were 331 active cases.

**S. C. Office of Public Information** – Debbie was excused but asked Bruce to read the following e-mail: Sorry I can't make the meeting. I e-mailed SCDAB members the attached bulletin but can you please remind everyone that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Health Disparities Conference is taking place on December 12, 2008 from 8-3:45 at SCC College Grant Campus in Brentwood. Suffolk County Home Page has all the information.

Bruce said the goals of the conference include outlining key factors impacting the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Suffolk County and identifying what works in closing the gap in health disparities and inequities concerning HIV/AIDS. The focus of this year's conference is on developing solutions and an action plan to address the spread of HIV/AIDS in Suffolk County.

**VESID** - Ingo had nothing new to report.

**Old Business** – Bruce also wanted to mention that the letter regarding IEP Diplomas for Special Education was sent out. This letter supports the position of telling the State Board of Regents not to eliminate IEP diplomas for special education.

Bruce also mentioned that Ivan Young from the County of Elections said that 61 disabled persons voted on the new voting machines in Suffolk County, which was twice the number of people from the last election.

Meeting schedule was e-mailed out for the next year.

**New Business** - None

**S.C. Department of Health/Division of Children with Special Health Care Needs** – Barbara Falkman was excused.

**S.C. Department of Public Works/Transportation Division** – John Murray reported the following figures:

**SCAT PARATRANSIT**      October 2008

<u>Total Trip Requests</u>	44,321
<u>Requests Approved</u>	42,525
<u>Trips Denied</u>	1,796
<u>Percentage of Denial</u>	0.04

**Glenn/SILO** – Glenn was excused.

**S.C. Human Rights Commission** – Paulette was excused.

**S.C. Community Development** - Joseph was excused.

**S.C. Library System** - Valerie was excused.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Beverly made a motion to adjourn and Tedd seconded the motion. All were in favor to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m. The next meeting will be held Wednesday, January 28, 2009 at 2:00 pm in the conference room, Building 158, Veterans Memorial Highway, Hauppauge.

Respectfully submitted,  
Heidi Zeitler