

Suffolk County Disabilities Advisory Board

February 29, 2012 Meeting Minutes

Approved

A meeting of the Suffolk County Disabilities Advisory Board was held on February 29, 2012 in the Conference Room of Building 158, North County Complex, Hauppauge at 2:00 pm, Chairperson Beverly Cody presided.

PRESENT:

GROUP A

Frank Krotschinsky, Esq.
Marjorie E. Acevedo
Barbara Falkman

Representing County Executive Steven Bellone
Representing Presiding Officer William Lindsay
S. C. Dept. of Health Services/Div. Services for Children
with Special Needs
S. C. Department of Social Services
Representing SCDPW Transportation Division
Representing SC Human Rights Commission
S.C. Department of Parks

Linda O' Donohoe
Chris Chatterton
James Kokindo
Terry Maccarrone

GROUP B

Beverly Cody

Member Secretary & Acting Chair

GROUP C

Teresa Strum

Member, Western Suffolk BOCES

GROUP D

Jodi Nicastro
Mitch Shapiro
Glenn Campbell, Esq.,

Rep., Peter Conticello, Member, ACCES
Member
Member

GUESTS: Garrett Hulett, Judith Weiber, Robyn Mayr, Justin Ainsworth, Doug & Erin King, Patty Furino.

STAFF: Heidi Zeitler-Senior Clerk Typist, Suffolk County Office for People with Disabilities

EXCUSED: Debbie Epple, Cliff Hymowitz, Valerie Lewis, Donna Passin/Carolyn Bossert, Roy Probeyahn, Kleo King, Esq., Lew Johnson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JANUARY 25, 2012: Beverly asked if there were any changes to be made to the minutes of January 25, 2012. There were none. Linda made a motion to accept the minutes as distributed and Terry seconded the motion. All were in favor and the minutes were unanimously approved.

CORRESPONDENCE: Beverly read the thank you letter we received back from Legislator John M. Kennedy, Jr. in response to the letter the board sent to all County Legislator's and the County Executive in opposition to reducing the SCAT Reservation from 7 days to 3 days.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT: Beverly said she has been in touch with Thomas Lawrence, Code Enforcement Officer for East Hampton regarding the 2 establishments which were not in compliance with accessibility and were brought to the attention of this board by former Chair, Richard Rosenthal. As of yesterday, the Golden Pear still didn't have the grab bars installed so they will be issued a citation and John Papas is now in compliance.

Beverly read a letter that Thomas Lawrence sent to Mayor Paul Rickenbach regarding non-compliance, accessibility laws and getting the word out about it.

Marjorie from Presiding Officer William Lindsay's office said that each town does have a Code Enforcement Officer and you can contact them by calling each Town Supervisor's Office. We can write to them directly and cc the letters to the Supervisor and Town Board members as well. Frank said his office will work on this list.

Beverly attended the Aging Out Legislative Breakfast and said it was the best attended legislative breakfast ever. Senators La Valle, Flanagan, Zeldin came personally, Owen Johnson and Marcellino sent aides. Assemblymen Graf, Boyle, LaSala were there, Fitzpatrick, Losquadro, Montesano, Englebright, Murray, Sweeney and Conte sent aides. Congressman Bishop sent an aide. Suffolk County legislator Romaine came and about 6 Nassau/Suffolk legislators sent aides. Both County Executives sent aides and 100 people over all attended, the largest turn out ever.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Architectural Barriers - Lew was excused.

Community Partnership - Frank said as the ADA Compliance Officer, one of the first things he did was send a checklist over to the County IT Dept. to make sure the County website was in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The County is doing their best but there are still some issues with it and it isn't completely accessible. Cliff couldn't make the meeting today but he had some concerns with the website, so Frank said he will work with him and IT to see if they can address them. Our office continues to work with the Joint Emergency Evacuation Program (JEEP) for people with disabilities. Our office is going to help put together a webinar presentation to help get more people signed up. The JEEP application has been totally revised from a year ago.

Education - Teresa had nothing new to report.

Beverly said at the last board meeting we asked Roy Probeyahn to draft a letter regarding the board's opposition to doing away with the IEP diploma. Beverly read the letter to everyone. Heidi will include a copy of it in next month's handouts. Roy suggested we send the letter to the Governor, Senators, State Assemblyman the head of the Board of Regents, head of the Dept. of Education. Mitch said he will be going to Albany on Monday and can handout copies of the letter for us.

Housing - Vacant.

A woman Beverly knows had been receiving alimony and child support but now her children are past that age and her income is going to be drastically reduced. She has several disabilities including a psychiatric one. Board members recommended she contact SILO, Family Service League or FECS. Linda told Beverly she could give the woman her email address.

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Legislation - Vacant.

Transportation - Vacant.

Employment - Donna/Carolyn were excused

COUNTY DEPARTMENTS:

Suffolk County Office for People with Disabilities - Frank said he tried to make it to the Task Force on Aging Out Breakfast but unfortunately on the way to the breakfast he had a bad car accident, which sent him to the hospital.

Frank said he received a couple of work related emails from Debbie Epple who is still on the mend but hopes to be back at our board meetings shortly.

Frank said his staff has been cut by 2 people, one was bumped and retreated to the Dept. of Aging and the other one was laid off, but might stay, pending the return date of another staff person coming back from maternity leave.

Having less staff has made things in the office very difficult. We have had to reallocate the work with much of it getting put upon Heidi. Our office has seen an increase of phone calls and many of the calls that come through are people with disabilities looking for accessible housing. Our office will continue to work with outside agencies like SILO, L.I. Housing Services etc.

We are participating in a grant application and are hoping that a piece of the grant might fund a staff salary in our office. Marjorie said if you are applying for grants through the federal government, she suggests you get in touch with Congressman and Senators because they have staff that will help push the grant forward.

Suffolk County Parks - Terry had nothing new to report.

S.C. Department of Social Services - Linda had nothing new to report.

S.C. Office of Public Information - Debbie was excused.

Old Business - None

New Business - Cliff couldn't make the meeting today but wanted to make the following suggestion. The Suffolk County Office for People with Disabilities website has no link directing people to SCAT or the Handicapped Identification card. The links are available on another part of the county's website in a pdf format, but Cliff's recommendation would be to have direct links from the OPWD website, along with a link to SCT and to the Suffolk County Disabilities Advisory Board minutes.

S.C. Dept. of Health/Division of Children with Special Health Care Needs - Barbara had nothing new to report.

S.C. Department of Public Works/Transportation Division - Chris said transportation is conducting fair hearings to increase bus fares on the fixed route buses. One is going on right now in the H. Lee Dennison building and another one will be held tomorrow in Riverhead. Fare on the fixed route bus would increase from \$1.50 to \$2.00 and seniors, persons with disabilities and Medicare card holders fare would increase from .50 to .75. SCAT will remain the same for now at \$3.00 each trip.

Chris said transportation is looking to set a time table for the board's review of the no-show and late cancellation policy. If the board has any proposed changes please let them know so they can make their recommendation to the County Executive.

Beverly mentioned the article in the ABLE Newspaper about the Feds reviewing the SCAT service.

Beverly mentioned that in the packet Chris handed out last meeting the window waiting time for how long the SCAT bus waits should be 10 minutes not 5 minutes. Chris said it actually says no longer than 10 minutes. Beverly feels that it should say that the SCAT bus will wait up to 10 minutes. Chris feels there should be clarification on how long the bus does wait.

Robyn noticed that somewhere in the policy it says the amount of trips a person late cancels or has no-shows on, has to be written as a percentage as well as a number?

Also when a person misses a certain amount of trips per month, what is the start date and cutoff date of those 30 days, is it the beginning of the month? Chris said, it's on a rolling 30 days. Robyn feels that should be written into the policy. Chris will take a look to see if it can be clarified.

Beverly read Bruce and Valerie's emails regarding DPW Transportation's SCAT passenger no-show/late cancellation proposed policy. (Emails attached)

Garrett said 90% of the reservationists are former bus drivers and all dispatchers were former bus drivers as well. Suffolk County Transportation is the only municipality in the tri-state area that doesn't have a no-show/late cancellation policy.

Frank said the SCAT Procedures & Guidelines are included within the scat application and number 8 rule states, that if cancellation of your reservation is necessary, it must be made at least (2) hours before your scheduled pick-up time. In an emergency, call as soon as possible. **However, riders who are repeat no shows or cancel excessively risk having their riding privileges suspended or revoked.**

Marjorie said from her experience, there have been several riders that have been held accountable for their repeated no-shows. Marjorie said there was nothing in writing but those passengers were told they had several no-shows and or late cancellations, so they were suspended from using the service. They told the riders that they could put their concerns in writing and they would forward their concerns to the Commissioner.

Chris said this is why DPW Transportation needs to put the policy in writing.

Beverly would like to see the cancellation period changed from up to 2 hours to 5 o'clock the night before, because you cannot fill those vacant seats.

Frank said the federal government states you cannot sanction someone unless their cancellation of a ride is equivalent to a no-show.

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Jodi announced that ACCES has a new Director, Sandy Silver. Jodi said they have seen a lot of kids coming out of foster care that have nowhere to go and are now in shelters. It's very hard to provide services to these children when their housing isn't stable.

S.C. Human Rights Commission –James had nothing new to report.

S.C. Community Development - Vacant.

S.C. Library System - Valerie was excused.

SILO – Glenn handed out flyers about their Film Series coming up, the first one is titled Bullying, Sexuality and Disabilities and will be held on March 8, 2012 at SILO's office, 2111 Lakeland Ave., Suite A, Ronkonkoma, from 3:00 p.m. -5:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT: Glenn made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Chris seconded the motion. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m. **The next meeting will be held on March 28, 2012 at 2:00 p.m. in the Conference room, Building 158, Veterans Memorial Highway, Hauppauge.**

Respectfully submitted,
Heidi Zeitler

From: Valerie Lewis
Subject: Today's SCDAB meeting

Good morning, Beverly and frank

I must apologize, I cannot attend this afternoon's meeting. I suspect that at least a portion of today's meeting will focus on the continued conversation regarding Para transit services.

I indeed realize that I am not the only person who has an opinion on the issues related to the Para transit situation, but I would greatly appreciate if you could keep my concerns in mind while having these discussions. I of course, want to be there, but conflicts in my schedule will not permit me to be there.

I hope that you can debate these issues on my behalf...feel free to present them as my views and not your own, but please bring them into the conversation where you see fit.

I know that once again, the proposal to penalize passengers will be forefront in the conversation...I would once again state that it is understanding that we must have a way to make passengers understand that they play a role in the system, but to just begin penalizing them with never having had this process of engagement is wrong.

I believe strongly that we must evaluate the overall system before being able to determine that it is just the "late cancellations" and "no shows" that are burdening the system.

Looking at other system's penalization process does NOT help us to understand why our system does not work efficiently.

We must look at the reservations, process of routing, process of who is working as a reservationists, who is working as a dispatcher.

It is my experience that people are working as reservationists that have never been in a bus, have no idea where things are and have no idea how to incorporate a ride into a schedule.

It is my experience that some of the people working in dispatch have no experience in this type of work and have been drivers or reservationists for very short periods of time.

Passengers are marked as late cancellations or no shows, just because that is what is assumed. Often people state that they call the bus the day before to cancel, and immediately they are marked a no show or cancel at door...without any type of investigation as to whether or not they did indeed call to cancel "early". It is just blamed on the passenger without even checking...

Passengers are blamed for all of the problems with the system and we cannot continue to propose penalizing passengers without reviewing the entire daily operations of the Para transit system....on an ongoing basis.

I remained very concerned about our overall approach to this problem and feel that we just keep having the same discussion with county representatives who continue not to do any of the things we request or suggest. They just keep coming with the same proposal of penalization.

Additionally, I will state again that I feel as the Disability Advisory Board for Suffolk County, that we should be the strongest advocates for the rights of people with disabilities, in this case Para transit passengers, not the supporters of county disciplinary practices that are designed to lessen the burden of responsibility to the county and to the companies who are contracted to provide county services.

WE HAVE BEEN QUICK TO FIND A RESULT, BUT WE HAVE NOT YET FIGURED OUT THE PROBLEM!!!!

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

I most sincerely apologize that I cannot attend. I also am gravely concerned that someone is there to support my frustration and angst regarding these issues.

Respectfully,

Valerie

ACCESS = LIFE

BRUCE'S SCAT E-MAIL

SCDPW 1/28/12 HANDOUTS SHOW DPW PROPOSAL WON'T WORK

Instead of justifying DPW's proposal that cutting back advanced SCAT reservations from 7 days to 3 days would reduce the high number of trip cancellations, their own handouts prove otherwise.

Analysis of 12-year-old studies and a 5-year-old research report guidebook, distributed by SCDPW at the January 28, 2012 SCDAB meeting, shows that out of the 10 studied systems that shortened their advanced reservations systems in 2004, only 4 provided any data. The third paragraph below Table 7-6, says: "With the change to a 3-day reservation window, this system experienced a reduced cancellation rate—from 13.0% to 11.7%—but also found a dramatic increase in reservation calls...impacting the reservations staff." The Comments section on this Table notes: "Data measures advanced cancellations only." It further states: "No shows remained at about the same level over the time period."

Does a reported 1.3% reduction in advanced cancellations, coupled with a dramatic increase in phone calls "impacting reservations staff," justify inconveniencing 12,000 SCAT eligible riders? Even if implemented, SCDPW's proposal would still not meet the FTA reduction requirement.

Despite being told for months that their plan to reduce the high rate of ADA Paratransit Trip Request Denials does not address the real problem; DPW still attempts to push through their bureaucratic "hope" that inconveniencing 12,000 registered SCAT riders, instead of addressing the 19 or so reported trip abusers will solve this issue. DPW attempts to misuse study statistics that do not count riders who don't cancel in advance to make their case. Until DPW addresses the real SCAT problems (See my Dec.14, 2011 Public Hearing Testimony), their inadequate responses will not be acceptable.

Respectfully, Bruce G. Blower
2/29/2012 SCDAB Meeting

DPW BUS FARE PUBLIC
HEARING AT 3:00 PM