



PRINCETON HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

Monthly Meeting Minutes

January 20, 2021 by Zoom

Monument Hall, East Meeting Room, Princeton, NJ 08540

Board Members – Present

Moriah Akrong
Ericka Deglau
Khristina Gonzalez
John Heilner
Bryan Hill
Monique Jones
Jorge Narvaez, Alt.
Loydes Nieves, Alt.

Veronica Olivares–Weber, Chair
Larry Spruill, Vice Chair
Ross Wishnick

Leticia Fraga, Council Liaison
Daniela Molina, Rutgers Intern

Board Members Absent

Corner House Student Board
Shirley Xie and Lia Bull-Krieg

Staff Present

Melissa Urias, Director, Ex-officio

Minutes Submitted by:

Julie Moy, Board Secretary

Call to Order

The Reorganizational meeting of the Princeton Human Services Commission was called to order by Councilwoman Fraga at 7:05 pm. She recited the announcement: *In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act: “In compliance with Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975, adequate notice of this meeting has been provided as required by the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice was provided of the date, time and location of this regular meeting by posting a copy with the Clerk’s Office and by emailing copies to the Princeton Packet and the Town Topics.”*

New Members

Councilwoman Fraga welcomed the new member, Bryan Hill. She asked all the Commission members to introduce themselves.

Election of Chairperson

Councilwoman Fraga called for nominations for Chair. Mr. Spruill nominated Veronica Olivares–Weber for Chair. Ms. Akrong seconded the nomination. Seeing no others, Councilwoman Fraga closed the floor for nominations. All in favor by voice vote.

Election of Vice-Chairperson

Councilwoman Fraga called for nominations for Vice Chair. Mr. Heilner nominated Larry Spruill for Vice Chair. Chair Olivares–Weber seconded the nomination. Seeing no others, Councilwoman Fraga closed the floor for nominations. All in favor by voice vote.

The meeting was turned over to Chair Olivares–Weber to lead the meeting.

Subcommittee Reorganization

Councilwoman Fraga reminded all members when volunteering on a subcommittee; the member should be able to maintain an active role on the subcommittee.

Dr. Deglau suggested we form a Steering Committee to provide support to the Chair and Vice-Chair and other areas where needed. Mr. Heilner asked if Dr. Deglau is suggesting the former Needs Assessment Committee become the Steering Committee; she responded that it can.

Chair Olivares–Weber stated that our goal is support Ms. Urias and Human Services; we will continue working on the subcommittee, however this would be a good time to determine which committees are or are not working.

Food Insecurity

Subcommittee members: Mr. Wishnick will Chair, Mr. Spruill, Mr. Hill and Ms. Akrong

Mr. Wishnick provided a summary of objectives and goals of this Subcommittee. Ms. Urias reported that they meet monthly with food providers so they can provide update and resources.

Housing Stability

Subcommittee members: Chair Olivares–Weber will chair, Mr. Narvaez, Mr. Spruill and Dr. Deglau
Chair Olivares–Weber provided a summary of activities and responsibilities of the committee
Joint Task Force with Civil Rights Commission
Chair Olivares–Weber reported on this joint commission and its activities; they are partnered with Civil Rights Commissioners.

Immigration

Subcommittee members: Mr. Heilner will Chair, Chair Olivares–Weber, Mr. Narvaez and Ms. Nieves

Outreach/Needs Assessment

Subcommittee members: Dr. Deglau will be Chair, Mr. Wishnick, Ms. Gonzalez and Ms. Jones

Welcoming America

Subcommittee members: Ms. Akrong will Chair, Ms. Jones and Chair Olivares–Weber
Ms. Urias explained this committee.

Youth Matters

Subcommittee members: Ms. Gonzalez will Chair, Ms. Akrong, Mr. Spruill and Mr. Narvaez

New subcommittees can be suggested/formed throughout the year.

Public Comments

Maria Juega expressed her support of the new leadership team, Chair Olivares–Weber and Mr. Spruill.

Approval of Meeting Minutes approval – November 18, 2020

The motion to approve the regular meeting minutes dated *November 18, 2020* was first moved by Dr. Deglau seconded by Mr. Spruill, all in favor by voice vote.

Meeting Dates

Mr. Heilner brought up the discussion to revise the meeting time to 5:30 pm since people are working from home; there was discussion on proposed time change.

Mr. Heilner made the motion to change the meeting start time to 6 pm seconded by Dr. Deglau, all in favor by voice vote.

Mr. Heilner amended his motion to approve the meeting dates as proposed with a start time of 6 pm, seconded by Dr. Deglau, all in favor by voice vote.

Director's Report – Melissa Urias

Ms. Urias reported that the Human Services Outreach position has been filled by TK Oluwafemi; she will begin February 1, 2021. She will be the 2nd full time position in Human Services.

Ms. Urias will send out updated Commission's contact information.

Council Updates, Leticia Fraga

Councilwoman Fraga asked Commission members to make suggestions to meet needs of the community to meet the goals and mission of the Commission. Councilwoman Fraga reported that the Council has not yet met with BCCs to set goals and priorities. The Council participated in re-organization retreats to discuss goals and priorities with presentations from department heads. The Council will be reaching out to the BCCs for their goals and priorities for 2021. Ms. Urias will share the 2020 Department goals and priorities with this Commission.

Councilwoman Fraga reported that we are trying to get COVID vaccines. Mercer County is scheduled to receive 800 doses a week. The state is experiencing a supply shortage. The Dept. of Health is encouraging everyone to register on the state and Princeton sites. Mr. Hill explained how the vaccine is being distributed and the shortage

issues. Ms. Urias explained how they are reaching out to the community to inform everyone about the registration. Vaccine registration flyers will be distributed in Spanish.

Local Assistance Board (LAB)

Councilwoman Fraga opened the Local Assistance Board (LAB). Ms. Urias explained the purpose of LAB. 2021 LAB members include Mr. Heilner, Ms. Jones, Mr. Hill, Ms. Nieves and Ms. Akrong.

Election of Members for LAB

Mr. Spruill made the motion to approve the elected members to LAB, seconded by Dr. Deglau, all in favor by voice vote.

Election of LAB Chairperson

Chair Olivares–Weber nominated Mr. Heilner for Chair, seconded by Ms. Nieves, all in favor by voice vote.

LAB Chair Heilner carried on with the meeting.

General Assistance Program

Ms. Urias reported that the General Assistance Program remains at six cases. The state has not changed their regulations; all waved. Ms. Urias is currently opening a new case; a transfer from Trenton. Client is moving to Princeton. Ms. Urias explained the requirements to be eligible for General Assistance. She explained how she gets the information out to the community.

LAB Chair Heilner closed the LAB meeting, seconded by Ms. Nieves, all in favor by voice vote.

Committee Reports

Food Insecurity

Mr. Wishnick explained the purpose of this subcommittee is to meet with organizations that are dispensing food and what foods are distributed. The idea is to find out what they are giving out and who needs food. We have not identified who actually needs food. Ms. Urias explained some of the problems: due to confidentiality, organizations that may have people in need of food, they cannot share their contact information, possible overlap of services; impossible to find out exactly who is and are not receiving food. Residents in senior and affordable housing are accessible; it is those who do not live in a development that is connected to social worker. There is a population of residents who has no connections to resources that are falling between the gaps. We do not have a way to get this information.

Housing, Chair Olivares–Weber

Chair Olivares–Weber reported on their activities during these pandemic times. She explained the goals of the committee. Housing Subcommittee will continue with its partnership with the Civil Rights Commission and Princeton Affordable Housing. She explained how they reach out to those families who need rental assistance. Ms. Urias explained how they work with the liaisons with the rental managers; if a resident falls behind on their rent, they inform Human Services and they offer resources. Councilwoman Fraga explained the outreach especially getting the word out on the eviction moratorium. Mr. Wishnick brought up discussion on how the residents are meeting their other needs: utilities, dental, medical, etc. Chair Olivares–Weber explained what Ms. Urias has done to outreach to the community.

Immigration, John Heilner

Mr. Heilner reported that the committee met January 19; he provided a summary of what was discussed: goals and priorities were listed and will be sent to this Commission. Mr. Heilner explained the update for Driver's License application. Councilwoman Fraga asked if the Community ID can be used for identifications purposes to secure their drivers' license; not sure. Ms. Urias reported that there may be some delays in issuing the Community ID at the Mercer County Library. Mr. Heilner continued explaining their list of goals for 2021.

Maria Juega, Princeton resident, reported that the AARP Tax program at the library will not operate this year; no free tax help in Princeton. Ms. Juega reported on a number of other programs and activities she is involved with.

Outreach/Needs Assessment

Dr. Deglau reported that this committee has been working on listening sessions since September; there were 6 – 8 people attending the sessions. Surveys will be sent to those who attended for their feedback. Ms. Gonzalez summarized her listening session on what they discussed. Ms. Molina stated that one of the topics was the need for transportation services. They also discussed Wifi – access and reliability. Councilwoman Fraga reported that through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), they found Wifi access is a need; CDBG funds will provide Wifi in the Affordable Housing developments.

Dr. Deglau stated the listening session helped them recognize community's needs. It was brought to her attention, day care providers would like to be recognized for their child care services to front line workers and first responders during COVID.

Welcoming America

Ms. Akrong just joined the committee and is looking forward to activities and working with this Community.

Youth Matters

Ms. Gonzalez explained the committee's priorities.

Miscellaneous

Black History Month Calendar, Mr. Wishnick reported that YWCA created a universal electronic calendar to promote all events by participating organizations to promote events relevant to Black History.

Emergency Funds

Chair Olivares–Weber explained the need for the emergency funds and who would benefit from services from Princeton. Prior to COVID, it was established that when Mayor Lempert performed a wedding ceremony, the fee was to go to Human Services. We are not a 501c3 therefore we cannot fundraise. This will be further discussed at another meeting. Ms. Nieves asked if we can work with Princeton Mutual Aid for funding; no. PMA is not 501c3, cannot fund raise and has limited funds. PMA is looking to be a grassroots organization. If anyone requests aid from Ms. Urias, due to confidentiality, she cannot pass the information onto another organization. PMA cannot assist everyone coming to them.

Chair Olivares–Weber asked for volunteers to join Ad-hoc committee to explore ways to raise fund and explore the possibility of creating a 501c3 and return to the Commission with their findings. Chair Olivares–Weber volunteer to participate; she asks those would like to participate to send her an email.

Adjournment

The motion to adjourn at 9:26 pm was first made by Mr. Spruill seconded by Mr. Heilner, all in favor by voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Julie Moy
Recording Secretary