



PRINCETON HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes

May 17th, 2023

Zoom Meeting * Princeton, NJ 08540

Board Members – Present

Leticia Fraga, Council Liaison
Veronica Olivares-Weber,
Chair
Ari Meisel, Vice-Chair
Larry Spruill

Rebecca Balguer

Greg Sarjeant

Jean Durbin

Nakia Barr

Staff – Present

Rhodalynn Jones-Ex Officio

Salum Hur Bukhari-Board
Secretary

Board Members Absent

Ming Kuang

Khristina Gonzalez

Maya Wahman

Call to Order:

The Regular Meeting of the Princeton Human Services Commission was called to order by Chair Veronica O. Weber at 6:01. Commissioner Greg Sarjeant then recited the acknowledgment: *“We gather today on the land of the Lenne Lenape. As members of the Princeton Human Services Commission, we aspire to show appreciation, respect, and concern for all people and our environment. We honor the Lenape and other Indigenous caretakers of these lands and waters, the elders who lived here before, the Indigenous today, and the generations to come.”* Roll Call was completed with those present indicated. No member of the public was present.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Meeting Minutes for the month of April 2023, were approved unanimously after a motion was started by Vice Chair Ari Meisel and was seconded by Commissioner Sarjeant.

Director’s Report:

Director Jones informed the Commission that:

- **Social Services Workshop – Princeton Senior Resource Center:** Director Jones briefed the Commission on the successful initiation of several Social Services workshops, which are being organized by the Princeton Senior Resource Center through with partnership from the Department. Talk Tea Workshops are being held at various locations throughout the Municipality, such as the Spruce Circle and Redding Circle. Diverse conversations surrounding topics such as: substance abuse, mental health, and signing residents up for the Affordable Connectivity Program, are facilitated in these workshops. The next workshop will be focused on food insecurity. Director Jones highlighted that several other social services organizations have also partnered with the said two offices for this cause, for instance Corner House, United Way, and Arm in Arm.
- **Summer Youth Employment:** Director Jones briefed the Commission on the 23rd Summer Youth Program that will be organized by the Department. She noted that the Department has finally completed the application process and ended with a final total of 43 applications. She expressed her delight to see the resurgence of applicant numbers as compared to last year’s sudden dip. In her opinion, the upswing could be credited to several factors including strong outreach efforts by her department and parents understanding the existence of the guarantee of finding a job which this program offers. Princeton Housing Authority and Princeton Community Housing have both donated towards the program with the purpose of offering additional slots for the youth. She further noted that the Department realizes that the youth might not necessarily have business-formal suits/dresses in possession, therefore, the Department is holding a Work-Wear Drive under which new and gently worn clothes will be accepted by the Department for the youth and in-case of no-use all remaining items will be donated forward within the community. All donations can be made to the Office of Human Services directly.
- **Social Services Clinic:** Director Jones updated the Commission about the applaudable initiation of the Social Services Clinic at the Princeton Public Library. She noted the program was under a trial-period but due to the immense success rate, the Department of Human Services has now developed a year-long agreement with the library under which the clinic will continue to run. The purpose of this program is to increase its outreach efforts



and connect individuals to the right services. She expanded by sharing that the Department is now working on adding additional locations.

• **Discussion:**

- Director Jones informed the Commission that the clinics take place on the third Wednesday of each month from 9:30 am- 1:00 pm at the library, while answering Commissioner Larry Spruill's inquiry.

Council Updates:

- **Jewish Heritage Event:** The Council Liaison informed the Commission that the Council gave approval for the Jewish Heritage Event, which will be hosted on Sunday May 21st from 2023 from 2:00-5:00pm at Hinds Plaza. The event is being organized by the Jewish Federation to celebrate Jewish-American heritage. Parts of the Witherspoon St. will be closed for the purpose of installing food and other activity stalls.
- **Farmers market:** The Council Liaison briefed the Commission that Farmers market will return to Hinds Plaza during the first week of June. She further noted that the Council is expecting that by then a stretch of Witherspoon St. will get finished.
- **Youth Advisory Committee:** She added that she is expected to go out of the country from May 23rd through the 30th of the same month. Due to this she wishes to ensure that she initiates the process of accepting applications for the Youth Advisory Board Committee for the academic year 2023-2024. Under this program 4 rising sophomores are selected from any high school in Princeton for this Advisory Board for a term of 3 years and the only condition is for them to be a resident of Princeton.

Subcommittee Reorganization/Goals & Priorities:

Mental Health:

- Commissioner Rebecca informed the commission that she and Commissioner Khristina have yet to decide how to narrow down their goals and seek approval for their projects under the umbrella of this subcommittee.

Community Needs:

- Commissioner Jean updated the Commission over the progress of subcommittee. She noted that the subcommittee had selected 3-5 main goals which they as a committee would like to focus on and those that fall under the jurisdiction of the Commission. She expressed her delight and informed the Commission that she would shed more light on the goals during the goals retreat meeting.
- - Director Jones and Chair Veronica informed Commissioner Jean that they both coordinated with a group of students from Princeton, who had been working on developing an online resource list of mental health providers who accept Medicare and Medicaid. Director Jones stated that she would share the online list with the subcommittee members for their future assistance. She insisted that she would work on with the students of Princeton to see if they can develop a list of dental health providers in near future.

Immigration & Welcoming Week:

- Chair Veronica informed the Commission that Human Services is partnering with the Affordable Housing Department to organize a Tenants Rights Workshop on May 22nd from 6:30-pm-8:30pm. In addition to Human Services, 3 lawyers will join the meeting which will be carried out in both English and Spanish.
- She further noted that the subcommittee is working on brainstorming ideas surrounding Welcoming Week with the aim to increase the efficiency of the event and to share burden with other departments.

Discussion:



- Council Liaison noted that the Farmers market at Hinds Plaza will accept SNAP and will also give credit.
- Commissioner Larry enquired about the point of contact at the Farmers market for the purpose of finding fresh products for food pantries.
- Council Liaison responded by addressing the question and stated that in the past farmers haven't had issue in donating stuff which would not sell, however, she will get a thorough follow up from the organizers during the next scheduled meeting.
- Councilwoman Leticia requested Director Jones to coordinate with Corner House and the Health Department and connect Commissioners Rebecca and Khristina with them. Director Jones will connect with Rebecca prior to the next Mental Health and Wellbeing Committee meeting to discuss goal setting.
- Chair Veronica and Director Jones further added that the Talk & Tea Workshops could be a good place to start to teach seniors how to use the Tiger-Transit app. They applauded Commissioner Larry for introducing this idea.
- Commissioner Rebecca expressed her thoughts regarding developing a similar list for Urgent Care Facilities who accept Medicaid.

PHSC retreat: The Commission discussed ideas surrounding the in-person Human Services retreat, which will promote team building and integration among Commission members.

Adjournment

The motion to adjourn at 6:45p.m was made by Commissioner Larry, seconded by Commissioner Jean and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted by:

Salum Hur Bukhari

Recording for Princeton Human Services Commission.