



# PRINCETON HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes

June 15, 2022

Zoom Meeting \* Princeton, NJ 08540

## **Board Members – Present**

Erica Deglau, Vice Chair  
Leticia Fraga, Council Liaison  
Lina Genovesi, Alt.  
John Heilner  
Loydes Nieves, Alt.  
Veronica Olivares–Weber, Chair  
Larry Spruill

Ming Kuang

## **Board Members Absent**

Rebecca Balaguer  
Khristina Gonzalez

## **Guest Speaker**

Katherine Taylor  
Lisa Derieyssol  
Maria Juega

## **Staff – Present**

Soorya Baliga, Chair of Youth  
Advisory Committee

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## **Call to Order:**

The Regular Meeting of the Princeton Human Services Commission was called to order by Chair Olivares–Weber at 6:02 pm. Councilwoman Leticia Fraga recited the announcement: *“We gather today on the land of the Leni 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.

## **Approval of Meeting Minutes: May 18, 2022**

Chair Olivares–Weber addressed the minutes from the May 18, 2022 Princeton Human Services Commission (PHSC) Regular Meeting. After review, no proposed changes were made. Ms. Loydes Nieves motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Ming Kuang. All were in favor. Chair Olivares–Weber approved the minutes without opposition.

## **Public Comments:**

Maria Juega proposed to the PHSC that the Human Services Department request or create an emergency fund for the purpose of being able to assist residents who are unhoused in the community, at times of extreme weather or during natural disasters or crisis that may occur. She requested that the Princeton community be able to provide temporary housing (such as at a hotel), as well as any other emergency assistance that people may require during these times. There is an increasing number of residents in Princeton who are unhoused, and some of them have passed away this year. She addresses the need for resources for them when a crisis occurs, and inquired about the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). She urged the PHSC to support and request using some of these funds before they are allocated, to the mayor and council.

Chair Olivares–Weber addressed the current available funding in that it is limited, and Councilwoman Fraga also discussed the needed funding. They both thanked Ms. Juega for bringing this issue to the meeting tonight. Councilwoman Fraga suggested that if the PHSC is interested in using funds for this type of emergency, they can start by checking with a contact person she knows, who is an expert on how the HUD funding can be used. If the PHSC is interested in addressing and making recommendations to council, this is something that they can consider, the conversation can be started about what funding may be available, and then the commission as a body may need to vote on it if they agree they want to move forward on this.



Mr. Larry Spruill echoed the need for emergency funding for shelter during extreme weather and emergencies, adding that a local homeless person had passed away during the extremely cold weather in the winter. He added that this is something the commission should look into and see if there is any funding that can be used to help. Vice-Chair Ericka Deglau asked for clarification on which years' funding the CDBG funding has already been allocated, and added that PHSC needs to get a sense of how much money might possibly be needed to address this issue, as hotel stays are expensive and there is a need to provide longer term shelter sometimes, and some people may not want to go. Ms. Juega suggested speaking with Princeton Mutual Aid to get a sense of what some of the needs may be. Chair Olivares-Weber asked Councilwoman Fraga to include the people in the Community Needs taskforce in the discussion about this issue after she checks with Health Officer Jeffrey Grosser on the CDBG funding. Ms. Juega thanked the board for listening to her suggestion and offered to help in any way she can.

Lisa Serieyssol, a member of the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee, gave a brief introduction of herself and professional background, and brought to the board's attention public biking safety in town, and bicycles being stolen from the temporary biking racks in the community. She asked the PHSC to prioritize the issue of biking theft and safety, to the Princeton Municipal Engineering Department. Chair Olivares-Weber asked her to clarify what the proposed plan is from the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee, and joined in the discussion. Ms. Serieyssol suggested putting more bicycles parking racks within the Spring Street garage. Ms. Nieves suggested as a temporary solution to report the bikes and ask the police to increase patrolling of the area where thefts occurred. Ms. Serieyssol explained the reluctance of undocumented residents to report the bicycles thefts, though she explained there is a system in the police department to register stolen bicycles. Mr. Heilner expressed his interest in this issue and suggested that the PHSC should offer assistance and support in getting this issue addressed and prioritized.

Chair Olivares-Weber asked Mr. Heilner if the Immigration subcommittee is interesting in taking this on, and he agreed that asking for one or two parking spaces in the Witherspoon Street garage to provide the secure bike racking that Ms. Serieyssol is asking for is something that should be done. He then asked to be connected with Ms. Serieyssol, who provided her contact information and thanked the board for their time.

### **Director's Report**

No discussion was held.

### **Council Updates**

Councilwoman Fraga reported that this past Monday, council and mayor approved a contract for use of some of the CDBG funds. She summarized that at the last meeting, a contract and funding was approved with the local dentist to provide free dental care. This is going to start in July. At the most recent meeting, funding was approved for a contract to do eye exams for residents in low-income households. Another program which will be funded with the CDBG funds, will be a summer camp subsidy at the local YMCA. She added that about \$50k was approved to provide the subsidy for 33 low-income family students for summer camp. Funding was also used to purchase COVID-19 care packages.

### **Subcommittee Reports and Updates**

*Immigration*



Mr. Heilner spoke about the subcommittee's broad outreach event Immigration Fair on June 12, 2022 which went really well. Mayor Mark Freda stopped by and gave a welcome from the town after the presentations were held. About 7 presenters were there, and information from Legal Services of New Jersey was made available. He commended the local Princeton Library for doing an amazing job and for their hard work in making this event happen, along with the flyer they created, and thanked Kimberly Dorman and Melissa Leva for helping put it together. He addressed the work done by board members and said that this was the best program so far since he had an event like this, adding additional outreach efforts that were done. He added that the turn out was not as much as anticipated in proportion to the effort that was done, so he suggested in the future having a *Folleto* instead, and distribute a double-sided 4-paged handout with contacts on it in English and Spanish.

Chair Olivares–Weber thanked Mr. Heilner and expressed her gratitude for the event and added that the library was so happy to participate, and that Kimberly Dorman suggested having this event again. She added that on September 12, 2022 the Library has an opening for Welcoming Week. Chair Olivares–Weber also added that no attorney was present at the recent event, and there were a few legal questions that participants had which could not be addressed, so it would be helpful if one is present if the event is held during Welcoming Week. Mr. Spruill also thanked Mr. Heilner and everyone else for their efforts, and said the event was very informative and enjoyable for him. Vice-Chair Deglau added that it might be a good idea to do another event in September, and that PHSC Director Rhodalynn Jones intended on working on a community resource directory for residents, which Mr. Heilner suggested having one done in Spanish and if possible, Haitian Creole for local immigrants.

#### *Outreach and Needs Assessment*

Vice-Chair Deglau reported that this subcommittee wants to present in July at the mayor and council meeting. Chair Olivares–Weber asked Councilwoman Fraga if there is availability for them to present, and she said she would let the clerk's office know to put the subcommittee's presentation on the July 25, 2022 agenda. She reminded the subcommittee that the presentation is limited to fifteen minutes.

#### *Housing Stability & Food Insecurity*

Mr. Spruill reported that this subcommittee met and maybe half a dozen people showed up. 413 households were provided with food and deliveries were done. There was a big concern with the bag ban causing issues about people showing up to pickup groceries in dirty or not sanitized bags. The worry of COVID-19, or pests being on reused and soiled bags was a concern for providers. He also noted that shopping carts are starting to be left around Princeton by residents who do not have any bags with them when they get groceries, though most people are bringing in bags with them.

Councilwoman Fraga suggested reaching out to the Arts Council, where there were donated T-shirts in the past and volunteers made reusable and washable bags out of the donations. Perhaps this is something that can be done again. Chair Olivares–Weber thanked her for this suggestion and said she will reach out to Anna from the Arts Council. Mr. Spruill added it would be beneficial if word can be spread to the community about the importance of keeping reusable bags clean. Ms. Nieves asked whether there is an opportunity to work with the Sustainability Committee or others to get a stock of bags that can be used. Vice-Chair Deglau added that conferences always give away bags and this may be a resource.

#### *Welcoming America*

This was already discussed.



### **Discussion**

Ms. Katherine Taylor, a board member of the Princeton Board of Health (BOH), reintroduced herself and spoke about her professional background. She shared that she is happy to be present at this meeting and is trying to do an informal assessment of needs in the community. She commented that the information from the Needs Assessment Survey will be looked into by the Planning Subcommittee of the BOH. She asked if there was any further information or concerns for PHSC board members to reach out to her, and she provided her contact information. Vice-Chair Deglau explained that she is working on a written report on the survey and listening sessions with community providers in preparation for the meeting to present to the mayor and council. She offered to share some responses to questions that the Outreach and Needs Assessment subcommittee received. Councilwoman Fraga highlighted that one need that is not being addressed is the need to get access to HIV medication in the community, and she offered to share her notes with Ms. Taylor. Chair Olivares–Weber brought up the issue of mental health and that PHSC is looking into what is available and what can be done to address this need in the community. She directed Ms. Taylor to reach out to Rebecca Balaguer for more information on this.

Chair Olivares–Weber added that there is an ongoing problem in the community with minors who are alone (without a legal guardian) and are unable to receive medical services as a result (such as vaccinations or a medical exam to get into school). There is a need for these minors to have an adult present to sign medical forms if they go to medical providers or a hospital. She explained there is a need to see what more the PHSC can do to address this problem. Mr. Heilner added that the issue of medical assistance at a hospital was also brought up at the immigration event that was recently held, as well as issues with housing.

### **Adjournment**

The motion to adjourn at 7:31 p.m. was moved by Mr. Spruill, seconded by Mr. Heilner, and affirmatively carried by all those present.

Respectfully submitted by:

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*Paula Alexeev*  
Recording Secretary  
Princeton Human Services Commission