



PRINCETON HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

Monthly Meeting Minutes

July 7, 2021 * by Zoom

Monument Hall, East Meeting Room, Princeton, NJ 08540

Board Members – Present

John Heilner
Bryan Hill
Khristina Gonzalez
Monique Jones (AL 7 pm)
Loydes Nieves, Alt.
Veronica Olivares–Weber, Chair
Larry Spruill, Vice Chair
Leticia Fraga, Council Liaison

Board Members Absent

Moriah Akrong
Ericka Deglau
Vacant, Alt.

Staff Present

Melissa Urias, Director, Ex-Officio
TK Oluwafemi, Outreach Coordinator

Minutes Submitted by:

Julie Moy, Board Secretary

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Princeton Human Services Commission was called to order by Chair Veronica Olivares–Weber at 6:00 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.”* Mr. Spruill recited the *Land of Acknowledgement for Indigenous People* pledge.

Public Comments

Maria Juega made objection comments to the Human Services Director posted job description. Hrishi Somayaji also had comments regarding the job description. Comments should be sent to Councilwoman Fraga and Gary DeBlasio, Executive Director of Corner House. Councilwoman Fraga and Mr. DeBlasio explained the hiring process. Per Mr. Heilner, per state law, the Local Assistant Board must be part of the approval process when hiring the person in charge of General Assistance.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The motion to approve the regular meeting minutes dated *June 15, 2021* was first moved by Mr. Hill, seconded by Mr. Spruill, all in favor by voice vote.

Director’s Report – Melissa Urias

Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)

Ms. Urias reported that the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) started July 6th. 34 students were signed up for the program; 6 students withdrew from the program. Ms. Urias reported on activities the students has participated in to date and upcoming activities. Students who attend 3 of the 4 Arm-in-Arm workshop, *Financial Fitness Program*, will be eligible for an additional incentive along with their pay from SYEP. Staff is looking into additional cash incentive if the students complete the eight-week program.

Backpack Drive

Ms. Urias reported that the backpack drive has begun. Past recipients have been notified; emails have been sent to past donors, school liaisons and office. We are anticipating a donation from Princeton Regional Educational Association (PREA) and a large donation from Princeton University which is through faculty and staff.

Financial Disclosure Statement

Ms. Urias reported that the Financial Disclosure Statement is not required from this Board.

Local Assistance Board (LAB) – John Heilner, Chair

Mr. Heilner opened the LAB meeting. Ms. Urias reported that there are currently six general assistant cases open; COVID waivers are still in place. The Municipality is considering transferring the General Assistant

program to the County. The consideration is on the Council's agenda on Monday. Ms. Urias reported that Princeton has the lowest caseloads in state. The training for GA program is intense, the program is complicated and there are constant changes. Ms. Urias explained how Princeton residents can apply for General Assistance; applicants also have to apply with the County for food stamps. Once the program is transferred to the County, residents will only have to deal with one agency. The County issues the funds via a EBT card where we issue checks, making it difficult for the homeless to cash because of the lack of identification. Councilwoman Fraga added that Legal is still researching to what has to go into the resolution for the transfer. If transferred to County, the Local Assistance Board will be abolished. Ms. Urias is in support of the transfer to the County; it is easier for residents since they are already going to Trenton for services, and it will be easier for incoming director. Mr. Heilner explained why LAB came to Princeton. Ms. Urias explained reason for reduction of participants. The Human Services department shares a part time administrative assistant; Ms. Urias has been advocating for a full-time administrative assistant. Ms. Nieves asked what happens to the funds when the program is transferred to County; the program is state funded, so funds will be sent directly to the County. Once the program is transferred to the County, it will be permanent.

Mr. Heilner closed the LAB portion of the meeting.

Outreach Update, TK Oluwafemi, Outreach Coordinator

Ms. Oluwafemi reported on her outreach activities. We now have SNAP benefits, and it will be accepted at the farmer's market up to \$500. She is working with the manger to market the SNAP program. She will meet with those directly who need housing assistance. Ms. Oluwafemi reported on food distributed from the Y. She met with Jenna Brooks, whose organization's goal "*At Your Table*" is feed a thousand children who are caught in the middle. She reported on activities she is involved with in the Jackson-Witherspoon area and senior community. Mr. Spruill asked for a status of the free bus; Councilwoman Fraga and Ms. Urias provided an update. Issue needs to be discussed with Transportation Committee. There is a survey out; Ms. Oluwafemi is working to get the survey to the right people. Ms. Oluwafemi is working with Emergency Management and the cooling site information. There was discussion on how to get the cooling center information out to the community who needs it. Mr. DeBlasio commented that this information is on website and organizations are working in those communities to get this information out to those in need.

Council Updates, Leticia Fraga

Councilwoman Fraga reported that an ordinance will be introduced to the Council regarding the cannabis to opt out, however the Cannabis Task Force has not made a final recommendation to the Council.

Sustainable Landscape Princeton will host a public meeting on July 14, 2021.

Community Center Feasibility Task Force will reach out to the BCCs to make a request for representatives from their BCC to participate on the Task Force.

Committee Reports

Food, Larry Spruill

Mr. Spruill reported that the Food and Security Committee (FSTF) met; biggest change was in the delivery since school ended. He explained the food delivery schedule. He noticed that Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood has increased food distribution. He sent some residents to the Y to get fresh produce. Councilwoman Fraga commented that the Food and Security Task Force is responsibility is to assist in the coordination of the food distribution, however, not obligated to change delivery. Per Ms. Urias, the FSTF was created for organizations to collaborate and communicate amongst each other. This Commission has no authority to tell the organizations when to distribute food.

Community Presentation – Khristina Gonzalez

Ms. Gonzalez shared her screen and played the outreach video for the Commission to view. This video was presented June 3, 2021 to community partners and service providers.

Housing, Veronica Olivares–Weber

Chair Olivares–Weber reported that the subcommittee has not meet. They met last month with Central Legal Services of NJ and they put us in contact with a number of other organizations. The rent moratorium expires on July 31, 2021. Per Ms. Urias, there is no update from the Housing Stability Coalition; they continue to meet weekly to discuss cases. Mr. Heilner asked if the Housing Coalition has enough money to support the demand or is the demand going down; does the renters know they have to pay the back rent? Ms. Urias responded that the Housing Stability Coalition, pre-COVID, provides one-time payments, not monthly. Ms. Urias explained the CDBG grant for rental assistance and its requirements. Princeton has assisted some families with their rents.

Welcoming America, Moriah Akrong

Chair Olivares–Weber stated that the event will be forthcoming; this subcommittee needs to meet soon. Ms. Urias reported on some of the activities she is participating on.

Health Subcommittee, Bryan Hill

Mr. Hill reported that he will be attending next week’s Board of Health meeting. He reported on the vaccine summer schedule and to share with those looking for vaccine. The Mobile Unit will begin July 15, 2021; he provided the schedule and vaccine locations for the Mobile Unit. Councilwoman Fraga reported that there is a new staff member in the Health Department; she will be working under the NJDOH grant, *Strengthening Public Health Capacity* grant through June 2023. She will primarily be focusing on community vaccination clinics and supporting existing staff with COVID related responsibilities.

Community Center Feasibility Task Force

Chair Olivares–Weber stated that Mr. Spruill and Dr. Deglau are interested in joining the Task Force as representatives for this Commission. Mr. Spruill applied as an At–Large Member and Dr. Deglau would represent this Commission as a designated liaison.

Mr. Heilner made the motion to approve Dr. Deglau as the official representative of this Commission on the Community Center Feasibility Task Force, seconded by Mr. Spruill, all in favor of voice vote.

Mr. Heilner reported that Jorge Narvaez has resigned from this Commission, so we need another Commission Member to be on the Immigration Subcommittee. At the last subcommittee meeting, Ms. Nieves stated she will try to help with the work Mr. Narvaez has done at St. Paul’s Church.

Mr. Heilner commented that some of the information the presenter at the last meeting gave may not have covered all sides of the story; maybe due to the many changes to the landscaping ordinance.

Councilwoman Fraga acknowledged Ms. Urias for all the work has done for this Commission and the Human Services Department. Mr. DeBlasio also acknowledged her for in all the work she has done for the Municipality.

Adjournment

The motion to adjourn at 8:00 pm was first made by Mr. Spruill, seconded by Mr. Heilner, all in favor by voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Julie Moy, Recording Secretary