



# PRINCETON HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes

**July 19th, 2023**

Zoom Meeting \* Princeton, NJ 08540

## **Board Members – Present**

Leticia Fraga, Council Liaison  
Veronica Olivares-Weber, Chair  
Ari Meisel, Vice-Chair  
Larry Spruill  
Greg Sarjeant  
Ming Kuang  
Maya Wahrman  
Jean Durbin

## **Staff – Present**

Rhodalynn Jones-Ex Officio  
Salum Hur Bukhari-Board Secretary

## **Board Members Absent**

Khristina Gonzalez  
Rebecca Balaguer  
Nakia Barr

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## **Call to Order:**

The Regular Meeting of the Princeton Human Services Commission was called to order by Chair Veronica Oliver Weber at 6:01. Commissioner Ming Kuang then recited the acknowledgment: *“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 with those present indicated. No member of the public was present.

## **Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

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

## **Director’s Report:**

Director Jones informed the Commission that:

- **Summer Youth Employment:** Director Jones informed the Commission that the SYEP has kicked off and is proving to be a huge success. She stated that the program is already in its’ 3<sup>rd</sup> week out of the 8 weeks. Director Jones highlighted that the Department of Human Services has the privilege of receiving two interns this summer, through this program, and that other students are working across the town with various other employees in diverse industries. She further informed the Commissioners that the students were receiving free breakfast from a local restaurant through Send Hunger Packing Princeton (SHUPP) and lunch through a state operate food service program, as all students fall under the income-eligibility criteria.
- **Backpack Drive:** Director Jones reminded the Commission that the Summer Backpack Drive has started and elaborated further on the nature of this program. She stated that this program is designed specifically for the youth, especially those lower income families whose children are anywhere between kindergarten and 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Backpacks of all different kinds are being collected by the community, along with other stationary supplies. She highlighted that the Department keeps the backpacks sometimes to assist those who come later during the year.



- **Food Insecurity Task Force Meeting:** Director Jones updated the Commission that the meeting for the Food Task Force for the month of July was cancelled, as it fell on the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday. She continued by emphasizing that the Community Outreach Coordinator, Kimberly, has been actively working on updating the Food Resource flyer and has been regularly updated the food pantry calendar.
- **Princeton Senior Resource Center:** Director Jones informed that on June 29<sup>th</sup> the Department of Human Services partnered with the Senior Resource Center to deliver a food access workshop at the Princeton Housing Authority's Redding Circle community room. Diverse range of topics were covered during this workshop, such as the senior nutrition program, SNAP benefits, free food pantries etc. She highlighted that the program was a success, and she has had a wonderful time working with the new Director of the Social Services Department, Johanna Peters.

#### **Discussion:**

- While answering Chair Veronica's query, Director Jones shared with the Commission that the students were being provided healthy/nutritional meals both by the restaurant identified by SHUPP and the state.
- Commissioner Jean enquired about the deadline for the Backpack drive, upon which Director Jones informed the Commission that the Department carries these school supplies at the department and individuals can drop in anytime to get them. Furthermore, she stated that occasionally school Liaisons contact students directly and provide them with the needed supplies.
- Chair Veronica asked if the Department received applications after the talk & tea workshop. Director Jones responded by saying yes.

#### **Council Updates:**

Council Liaison Leticia Fraga reported:

- **Loteria:** Council Liaison Fraga informed the Commission about her recent meeting with the Director of Social Services, Johanna Peters, along with Ana. She noted that the meeting was regarding the Loteria event which will be held during the Welcoming Week on Saturday, September 16<sup>th</sup> from 2:00 pm-4:00pm. She stated that details of the event were discussed profoundly. She highlighted that the new location for the PSRC is located on Poor Farm Road and is extremely impressive.
- **BBQ:** Council Liaison added that the Princeton Housing Authority is hosting a BBQ at the Redding Circle on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Apart from the BBQ there will be other activities for the guests to enjoy too, such as face painting. She asked Commission members to volunteer for the face painting, as help would be required for that due to the high number of children who would come.
- **Welcome to Princeton Sign:** The Council Liaison further informed the Commission on the recent appeal that had been made by the Civil Rights Commission pertaining to the language used in the "Welcome to Princeton" sign. She added that the CRC created a presentation for the Council and the Council's response was extremely optimistic. The meeting was concluded with a consensus on the need to change the language. Short- and long-term decisions about the sign were made and future decisions will be based upon extensive historical research.
- The Councilwoman acknowledged the hard work of Director Jones and appreciated the efforts that she puts in the community.

#### **Subcommittee Reorganization/Goals & Priorities:**

##### ***Community Needs & Food Security:***

- Commissioner Jean shared her ideas about the general topics which she and her team would like to cover under this subcommittee, for instance how to aid the distribution/packaging of food under the food



security aspect. She noted that she has been working on getting familiarized with the food calendar and is working on utilizing it along with her team.

- Commissioner Jean also informed the Commission that her, Commissioner Larry, and Chair Veronica are looking into helping people have access to easy travel to a nearby Shoprite in Lawrence or Montgomery. She noted that McCaffrey's, as good as it is, is not easily affordable for all. Therefore, they believe that there should be a transportation source that would make travel more feasible for residents to cheaper grocery stores. She added that Commission Larry had highlighted the idea about introducing a voucher for the freebee rides. He suggested that the vouchers could be valid once a week or even twice a month.

*Communication & Outreach: no report.*

***Immigration & Welcoming Week:***

- Commissioner Maya briefed the Commission on the projects that the sub-committee is working on. She noted that the sub-committee is excited to host another housing tenant-landlord rights workshop during the Welcoming Week. She further added that the sub-committee is actively working on reaching out to local businesses to see if and what they can contribute to welcoming week.

**Discussion:**

- Council Liaison asked Commissioner Larry if Tiger Transit goes to Mercer Mall and if not, then the Commission can advocate to add Mercer Mall as one of their stops.
- Commissioner Ming encouraged everyone to consider the use of services like "Share my Meal."
- Director Jones added that during the recent workshop about Food Access, a lot of tenants, especially senior citizens) of the Housing Authority were concerned about applying for SNAP as it would affect their housing ability. She reaffirmed that it was not true.

**PHSC Retreat:** Discussion around the retreat meeting was conducted. Commission members decided to volunteer as a group at the Loteria event on September 16<sup>th</sup> instead of pursuing a retreat. Serving as volunteers at the event will offer commissioners the opportunity to strengthen their bond and their commitment to serving the Princeton community.

**Adjournment**

The motion to adjourn at 6:50p.m was made by Commissioner Larry, seconded by Commissioner Jean, and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted by:

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*Salum Hur Bukhari*

Recording for Princeton Human Services Commission.