



PRINCETON HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes

September 20th, 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
Khristina Gonzalez
Rebecca Balaguer
Nakia Barr

Staff – Present

Rhodalynn Jones-Ex Officio
Salum Hur Bukhari-Board Secretary

Board Members Absent

Call to Order:

The Regular Meeting of the Princeton Human Services Commission was called to order by Chair Veronica Olivares-Weber at 6:02. Commissioner Larry Spruill 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. Students from the Corner House Student Board were present.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Meeting Minutes for the month of July 2023, were approved unanimously after a motion was started by Commissioner Jean Durbin and was seconded by Commissioner Greg Sarjeant.

Public Comments:

- Maria Juega was present to present her own thoughts regarding the recent development plans on a section of the Witherspoon Street that is affecting several residents of the Princeton community.
- Commission Chair informed the member of the public that her letter to the town is profoundly appreciated, however, the Commission cannot get directly involved in the matter due to privacy issues.
- Council Liaison, Director Jones, and Chair Olivares - Weber all responded to the queries made to the best of their capacity. The individual was made aware of the limitations of the Commission in relation to this matter. Director Jones directed Ms. Juega to contact the Department of Human Services to get more information about the resources that were present such as legal aid, relocation, and other housing stability solutions.

Director’s Report:

Director Jones informed the Commission that:

- **Summer Youth Employment:** Director Jones informed the Commission that the SYEP has come and gone. She noted that even during her years as a SYEP coordinator it was rare to see all students finish the program, however, she is excited to inform the Commission that this year all students who started did finish the SYEP program.
- **Backpack Drive:** Director Jones stated that the Summer Backpack Drive also came to an end in August and accumulated 268 bags through this program, which is a way higher number than last year’s. She



stated that this program is designed specifically for the youth, especially those lower income families whose children are anywhere between kindergarten and 6th grade. Backpacks of all different kinds are being collected by the community, along with other stationary supplies. She highlighted that the Department has the remaining backpacks and will give them out to children who might need them, especially if they are new to the community. She requested the Commissioners to spread the word.

- **Loteria Event:** Director Jones briefed the Commission on the tremendous success of the Loteria event that was scheduled for the previous Saturday. She noted that the venue at the Suzanne Patterson Center was perfect for the event as it was easier to control the traffic. She informed the Commission that she has a few pictures that she will share soon with everyone. She further informed the Commissioners that a Voters registration was set in one part of the venue and a significant number of people registered there.
- **Electronic Social Services directory:** Director Jones updated the Commissioners on the progress that has been made on the electronic directory, which was pivotal to the discussions of last year's Needs Assessments Sub-Committees. She noted that the Human Services has partnered with the University and the interns will be working on this digital directory for the next school session.
- **Holiday Drive:** She informed the Commission that the Holiday drive for this year is just around the corner and will begin in early October. The Department is seeking donors to support a child or a family.
- **Princeton Senior Living:** Director Jones noted that they have 80 affordable housing units. They have received only 50 applications so far, therefore, the need to spread the word is crucial.
- **Corner House:** She noted that Corner House's Youth Prevention Programming will be integrated under the Human Services Department. She expressed her excitement regarding this integration and stated that it will start from January 2024. For the behavioral health services the municipality will partner with Catholic Charities.

Discussion:

- The Council Liaison thanked Rebecca for her participation and help in the Loteria.
- Answering Commissioner Wahman's query, Director Jones noted that the program will run from the same building as the where the Department of Human Services is and in terms of eligibility both Medicaid and private insurance will be accepted.

Council Updates:

Council Liaison Leticia Fraga reported:

- **Loteria:** The Council Liaison informed the Commission about the tremendous success of the Loteria event that was hosted in collaboration with the Senior Resource Center. She noted that for the first time, names and contact information were gathered for outreach efforts.
- **E-Commuter Fest:** Council Liaison added that on coming Friday at 4:00 pm in the Princeton Shopping Center the commuters-fest would take place. The event will be hosted in English and Spanish, and the focus will revolve around equity in transportation.
- **Sustainable Princeton:** She further noted that on the following Saturday Sustainable Princeton will be hosting a workshop on landscaping in Spanish and will be based on green infrastructure. Family activities will be incorporated in the event to encourage people to joining.
- **10TH year Anniversary of Consolidation:** Princeton will be hosting this event in the 400 Witherspoon Hall on Thursday, September 28th. Music, refreshments, and former and current elected officials will be in attendance.



Subcommittee:

Community Needs & Food Security: no report.

Communication & Outreach: no report.

Immigration & Welcoming Week: no report.

- Commissioners Maya and Greg requested more clarification over the extents and limitations of their roles and duties.

Discussion:

- Discussion evolved around the extents and limitations of the roles of the Commissioners.
- Council Liaison Leticia Fraga shared her own experience as a Commissioner for the Princeton Human Services Commission and demonstrated how the current Commissioners can utilize their roles in transforming policies for the public.
- As an example, she noted that she and her colleagues had approached the then Chief of Police and worked around clarifying details regarding the practice of being stopped by police and being asked about immigration status. She noted that due to the efforts of the immigration subcommittee, then Chief Sutter issued a written directive so that both the Princeton Police officers and the public were made aware of the legalities surrounding this matter and instructed officers that going forward, no officers were to inquire about the immigration status of individuals during the course of a stop.

PHSC Retreat:

- The Commissioners suggested that they can meet outside of the regular monthly board meeting to get to know each other better.
- The Council Liaison informed the commissioners that if they have a quorum, the meeting would need to be duly noticed and minutes of the meeting would need to be recorded.
- Commissioner Khristina informed the Commission about her desire to take a step back from her position.
- All Commissioners expressed their gratitude to Khristina for her services.

Adjournment

The motion to adjourn at 7:10 p.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.