



# PRINCETON HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

Monthly Meeting Minutes

May 19, 2021 by Zoom

Monument Hall, East Meeting Room, Princeton, NJ 08540

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## **Board Members – Present**

Moriah Akrong  
John Heilner  
Bryan Hill  
Monique Jones  
Loydes Nieves, Alt.  
Veronica Olivares–Weber, Chair  
Larry Spruill, Vice Chair  
Leticia Fraga, Council Liaison

## **Board Members Absent**

Ericka Deglau  
Khristina Gonzalez  
Jorge Narvaez, Alt.

## **Staff Present**

Melissa Urias, Director, Ex-Officio  
Gary DeBlasio, Corner House

*Minutes Submitted by:*

Julie Moy, Board Secretary

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## **Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the Princeton Human Services Commission was called to order by Chair Veronica Olivares–Weber at 6:02 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.”* Chair Olivares–Weber recited the Land of Acknowledgement for Indigenous People pledge.

## **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The motion to approve the regular meeting minutes dated *April 21, 2021* was first moved by Mrs. Jones seconded by Mr. Hill, all in favor by voice vote.

**Public Comments:** None

## **Community Presentation**

*Connie Mercer, Founder & CEO, HomeFront*

Ms. Mercer provided an overview of HomeFront programs and services offered to the community. She provided information on how their services benefit the community and how contributions are a major help to their participants. Ms. Mercer’s contact is: [conniem@homefrontnj.org](mailto:conniem@homefrontnj.org).

## **Director’s Report** – Melissa Urias

Ms. Urias reported that the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) received 39 applications. There was a virtual orientation with students and parents. Their first activity will be resume writing workshop and interviewing techniques in preparation for the job fair on June 1, 2021, in person at PUMS. Ms. Urias reported that she hired two new SYEP Coordinators. She provided the list of job sites participating in the program. Ms. Urias had to turn down job sites; not enough funding for students.

Ms. Urias reported that *Arm In Arm* is offering four financial fitness workshops to the students in addition to our Job Readiness Program. Students will receive an incentive from *Arm In Arm* for attending 3 out of the 4 workshops.

## **General Assistance**

Ms. Urias reported that General Assistance has six open cases. Pandemic waivers remain in place.

Ms. Urias reported that TK Oluwafemi, Outreach Coordinator, has been volunteering at Mr. Rogers' Neighbors Kindness Project once a week. She will participate in other activities throughout town. Ms. Urias explained how vaccine clinics are marketed.

Meredith Hodach–Avalos, MD, Chair of Princeton's Board of Health was available to answer vaccine related questions. There was discussion on vaccine for the children 12 and older; they are receiving the Pfizer vaccine.

### **Council Liaison Report** – Leticia Fraga

Councilwoman Fraga reported that the Council adopted resolution in support of the Medicare for All Act at the May 10, 2021 meeting. She provided additional details.

Councilwoman Fraga reported that in support of the Civil Rights Commission (CRC), the Juneteenth Annual Celebration resolution commemorating has been drafted and will be heard at the May 25, 2021 Council meeting.

Councilwoman Fraga reported that there is a resolution to form a Community Center Feasibility Task Force; this will be heard by Council at the next meeting. Chairwoman Olivares–Weber expressed her concerns that Human Services Commission was not included in the resolution draft. Councilwoman Fraga explained the issue. Discussions regarding task force continued. Mr. Spruill asked who would be selecting members of the task force; Councilwoman Fraga provided list of participants. The meetings will be open to the public.

### **Committee Reports**

#### *Food, Larry Spruill*

Mr. Spruill reported that the subcommittee met May 4, 2021; he found that people are getting too much food. They want to figure out how to stop wasting food and get it to those who also need food. He reported that Ms. Urias gave Mr. Spruill an updated food calendar. He provided a list of groups distributing food. Ms. Urias stated that an internal spreadsheet is being created for the food providers and will be in Google Docs for everyone to see who is distributing what. Councilwoman Fraga commented that the families have issues with food storage.

#### *Housing, Veronica Olivares–Weber*

Chair Olivares–Weber reported that they met with Connie Mercer, HomeFront and others to discuss housing issues and resources available.

#### *Immigration, John Heilner*

Mr. Heilner reported that the subcommittee met last week; they are working on a flyer for outreach. Mr. Heilner spoke about the Community ID flyer for Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund (LALDEF). He provided organizations that received the flyer.

#### *Outreach Needs Subcommittee, Erika Deglau*

Mrs. Jones reported that the subcommittee met with other community providers and are creating a needs assessment from the information. She provided details of activities and upcoming presentation.

#### *Immigration, John Heilner – Continued*

Mr. Heilner reported that Mr. Narvaez is working with St. Paul's Church to meet with them again to discuss immigration issues the parishioners may be experiencing. The subcommittee opined that Human Services, Police, LALDEF and Solidaridad should meet and discuss better collaboration amongst the group.

Mr. Heilner reported that the subcommittee discussed issues with rental and utilities relief fund program. Mr. Heilner reported on Sustainable Princeton Landscape Project; he and Ms. Urias are working with the group. He explained what Sustainable Princeton's goals are. They met with landscapers on May 21, 2021 to talk over the issues the small companies will experience with tighter regulations. They met last Sunday, with Mayor Freda and Councilwoman Niedergang along with about five landscapers and crew members; discussions regarding hours of operations and other details, gas powered leaf blowers during certain times of the year. Ms. Nieves asked if funding and cost to change from gas powered to electric leaf blowers was discussed for small family owned landscapers; yes. Dr. Hodach–Avalos stated that they also came to the BOH; the BOH's concerns are the noise levels for the workers. Felicia Spitz, resident commented that many of the landscapers do not live in Princeton.

#### *Welcome America, Moriah Akrong*

Ms. Akrong reported on what the subcommittee's activities; she described the potential events planned and celebration activities.

#### *Youth Matters, Veronica Olivares–Weber*

Chair Olivares–Weber reported that it was discussed at the last meeting to merge the Youth Matters with Youth Advisory Committee (YAC). Councilwoman Fraga stated that YAC is willing to work with our representatives. Councilwoman Fraga announced that the YAC created an ad hoc committee for outreach.

Councilwoman Fraga announced that Gary DeBlasio will retire in September.

Chair Olivares–Weber reported discussion on the review of sub committees and how Corner House students will work with Human Services. Ms. Urias explained the students' activities. Chair Olivares–Weber would like to see more activities among the subcommittees to work with the youth. Mr. Spruill suggest we also invite high school students. It was suggested we discuss with Mr. DeBlasio prior to recruiting additional students.

#### *Community Center Feasibility Task Force*

There was continued discussion regarding the Community Center Feasibility Task Force. Information was previously provided in the meeting. Mr. Spruill asked how long the study will take place prior to publicizing information. The proposed Community Center is included in the Master Plan.

Councilwoman Fraga provided additional information on the Cannabis Task Force and Permit Parking Task Force. Permit Parking will be heard at the next Council meeting.

#### *Juneteenth Event*

Chair Olivares–Weber reported she has been approached by Princeton University students to see if the Human Service Commission is willing to sponsor. She recited the list of participating organizations. Chair Olivares–Weber is not sure what kind of support or participation is requested. Mr. Spruill stated that the University just made it an official holiday; Municipal is doing the same. This Commission is in favor of supporting the event with clarification on what the responsibility to co-sponsor event entails.

#### *Adjournment*

The motion to adjourn at 8:05 pm was first made by Mr. Spruill seconded by Ms. Nieves, all in favor by voice vote.



Chair Olivares–Weber re–opened the meeting. Mr. Hill suggested adding a Health Subcommittee and explained his ideas and how we can contribute to public health. Dr. Hodach–Avalos stated that in the past there was a liaison from Human Services attending the BOH meeting; she is here on behalf of the Board of Health. She asked if HSC is interested in sending a liaison to BOH’s meeting. She brought up to Dr. Hodach–Avalos that the YAC would like also collaborate with the Board of Health specific to behavioral health issues. Councilwoman Fraga suggested a meeting to discuss collaboration between Human Services Commission, Youth Advisory Commission with the Board of Health.

**Adjournment**

The motion to adjourn at 8:12 pm was first made by Mr. Spruill seconded by Mr. Heilner, all in favor by voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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*Julie Moy*  
Recording Secretary