

Princeton Human Services Commission Minutes

Monthly Meeting

July 16, 2014

Monument Hall – East Meeting Room

One Monument Drive, Princeton, NJ 08542

Present:

Board Members:

Elizabeth Bidwell Bates
Laura Encinas
Leticia Fraga
Robert Hackett
John Heilner
Thomas Parker
Paul Rorem, PhD
Larry Spruill
Ross Wishnick, Chairman

Staff:

Elisa Neira, MSW
V Bea Snowdon

I. Open Public Meeting Statement

At 7:02 PM, Chairman Ross Wishnick called the meeting of the Princeton Human Services Commission to order by reading: " This is to affirm that the regularly scheduled meeting of the Princeton Human Services Commission has been duly notified and is being conducted in compliance with all provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meeting Act". A public comment period was announced, with no response from those in attendance.

II. Approval of June 2014 meeting minutes

Draft minutes of the June18, 2014 Board meeting were reviewed. Elizabeth Bidwell Bates and Bea Snowdon suggested additions, for incorporation in the draft. John Heilner's input refined notations regarding the Civil Rights Subcommittee. Thomas Parker proposed that minutes be accepted with the additions and refinements offered. Elizabeth Bidwell Bates seconded Mr. Parker's motion, with all present voting in favor.

III. Director's Report

Summer Youth Employment Program 2014

Employment began on July 7th, for the 29 youth program participants. They have set individual goals for their summer experience. Participant's goals are being well supported, by the Human Services department. A special workshop, providing personal financial management education, was offered to the group. Officer Thomas and Councilman Lance Liverman have also presented special educational programs. Mr. Liverman shared strategies for starting and running a business. He distributed calculators to the youth in attendance. Overall, the summer program is progressing well.

Health Services Program

TV Channel 30 will interview Heather Howard and Elisa Neira, for a program on Princeton's Health Services. This will be produced and available for viewing in the near future.

Backpack Drive

A Backpack Drive is in progress. This drive helps area students with back to school needs.

New Intern

Marshall Williams is now the Human Services Commission intern. Ms. Williams will work 8 to 10 hours a week on special projects. She will also contribute time to the Financial Literacy project.

Financial Literacy Program

The Financial Literacy program will be offered to any Princeton resident who wishes to learn more about budgeting and personal financial management. Ross Wishnick invited Lisa Bergson, a Princeton math teacher, to contribute to program development. He discovered that The National Financial Educators Council offers a Teen education packet. For a small fee, this packet might be used in the literacy program. Thomas Parker added that developing creditworthiness and financial skills are important needs for all ages.

IV. Human Services Committee Reports

Newsletter

Laura Encinas reported good progress on the upcoming edition of the newsletter. She expressed thanks to all commission members, for their contributions and support of the newsletter. Ross Wishnick

suggested an online format for editing and creating the newsletter. Laura is also designing the Princeton Human Services brochure.

Send Hunger Packing Princeton

An event to support Send Hunger Packing Princeton (SHUPP) will be held at Community Park School, on September 14th. Festivities will begin at 3 PM. Leticia Fraga described the "Celebrity Chef" theme for the event. The HSC needs assessment revealed food budget concerns in Princeton's working families. These concerns defined the chef's challenge of cooking affordable nutritious meals, to meet family needs. Recipes are requested to support the event. Donations will be collected at the event host table.

Civil Rights Subcommittee

Leticia Fraga reports that the mission statement of the Civil Rights Subcommittee has been completed. A timeline for committee work has also been created. Client intake forms, a referral directory, and a handbook for new committee members are projects currently receiving attention. Good progress in furthering all goals has been made thus far, by committee members Elizabeth Bidwell Bates, Leticia Fraga, John Heilner, Thomas Parker, and Larry Spruill.

Immigration Subcommittee

John Heilner reports that Craig Garcia has joined the Immigration Subcommittee. As a labor organizer, Mr. Garcia did an excellent job ensuring community participation in the June Town Council meeting.

Town Council approved a new Landscape Registration ordinance, after testimony from those attending. Mr. Heilner explained that this creates "leverage" in enforcing fair employment and wage theft laws. Ms. Neira discussed a case that she mediated involving \$1400 withheld from a local working immigrant. Her call to the employer quickly resolved the case. Separately, the Princeton Police Department resolved a second wage theft case that resulted in the restoration of \$1,800 in back pay.

The July 13th OSHA training was very successful. Craig Garcia reviewed wage theft protection and OSHA requirements with his assistant, Edson. Bill Charo reviewed the Community ID card program.

In conjunction with Nassau Presbyterian Church, Bill Wakefield and Charo Juega are working hard to revive the ID card program.

III. Chairman's Report

Affordable Housing

The third phase revisions of the NJ Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) regulations, governing affordable housing, have been released. The public comment period for COAH regulation revisions is now open. The Town Council will review local comments on July 28th.

According to COAH officials, Princeton has already fulfilled its affordable housing unit provision requirement. Princeton is now only required to rehabilitate 153 units, under COAH rule.

Princeton has a local 20% Set Aside ordinance, which requires the provision of new affordable housing units in all developments. Mr., Heilner gave a presentation on the current status of affordable housing in Princeton and the 20% Set Aside ordinance. Group discussion revealed support for the preservation of the development ordinance at 20%. John Heilner moved that Commission support be expressed to Town Council in writing Paul Rorem seconded his motion with all member present voting in favor.

A letter in support of affordable housing will be crafted and distributed to all Board Members, for review and comment by email. Once it is approved, it will be submitted to Town Council before the due date.

In response to the case of a John Witherspoon neighborhood resident needing emergency housing, Mr. Heilner requests that a one-page sheet of emergency resources be compiled and made available to help those needing assistance.

Discussion Period

Working protocols of the Commission were discussed, with an emphasis on email voting and public comments from Board Members.

Regarding email voting, Ross Wishnick stated that it is "vital to every decision that we have conversation". Group discussion determined that email voting is appropriate only when time is of the essence, for a public need. In that case, sufficient email exchanges will be required to answer all concerns and question. A majority will also be required before any final action is taken.

Public comments in local publications are sometimes necessary, in response to articles or public need. Again, time and public need were discussed as significant factors that might influence the rapid release of such comment. Laura Encinas discussed the importance of "restraint" and "neutrality" when addressing

issues. John Heilner added that response might be more robust when misinformation is published. Regardless of the tone, Elizabeth Bidwell Bates stressed the importance of sharing notice to all Board Members, whenever public comment will be made.

Ross Wishnick felt that a special meeting must be convened for sufficient discussion on serious public issues, prior to public comment from those representing the Human Service Commission. Robert Hackett suggested three categories for responses. Mr. Hackett would like all Board Members, desiring to comment publically on an issue, to share their desires and opinions with the Chairman before taking action. This will allow for the coordination of any special meetings needed.

Laura Encinas added that there is a need for legal vetting on some issues prior to public comment. Thomas Parker stressed the mission of the Commission, in representing the interests of and protecting those in need.

After pertinent sections of the Board Member Handbook were read. All present agreed that individual Board Members may comment publically only as individual Princeton residents, on local matters. Reference to the Human Service Commission in individual comments must not suggest that the Commission, the opinion of all Board Members, and the Town of Princeton are reflected in any Board Member's personal viewpoint. Special meetings will be called for all discussions, in the event that a need for public comment or action is time sensitive.

VII. News and Upcoming Events

Paul Rorem will be on sabbatical in 2015. His last day of service to the Commission will be December 31st. Mayor Lempert has appointed Stacy Mann to serve as his replacement.

A reminder was shared that ***Community Night Out*** will be held on Tuesday, August 5th from 5pm-8pm. There are 3 slots for Board Members to serve at the Human Services Commission table, during this event: 5PM to 6PM, 6PM to 7PM, and 7PM to 8PM. All Board Members are encouraged to attend this summer gathering in Princeton.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, Elizabeth Bidwell Bates motioned to adjourn. John Heilner seconded her motion. With all in favor, the meeting adjourned at 9:05PM.

Respectfully submitted, V Bea Snowdon