

**Princeton Human Services Commission Minutes**  
Monthly Meeting  
**February 19, 2015**  
Monument Hall – East Meeting Room  
One Monument Drive, Princeton, NJ 08542

**Present:**

**Board Members:**

Elizabeth Bidwell Bates  
Laura Encinas  
Leticia Fraga  
John Heilner  
Stacey Mann  
Robert Hackett  
Thomas Parker  
Larry Spruill  
Ross Wishnick, Chairman

**Staff:**

Elisa Neira, MSW  
V Bea Snowdon

**Liaison & Guests**

Stephanie Chorney, PEC  
Heather Howard, Council  
Ryan Stark Lilienthal, Esq.  
Bainy Suri, Sustainable Princeton

**I. Open Public Meeting Statement and Call To Order**

At 7:05 PM, Chairman Ross Wishnick called the meeting of the Princeton Human Services Commission (HSC) 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”. Chairman Wishnick introduced and welcomed the guests in attendance.

**II. Public Comments/Guests**

**Bag Ordinance**

Bainy Suri of *Sustainable Princeton* and Stephanie Chorney, Vice Chair of the *Princeton Environmental Commission (PEC)*, gave a detailed presentation of the proposed bag ordinance. The ordinance calls for charges for carry out bags. It is intended to create a consciousness about single use paper and plastic bags, to encourage the use of reusable bags, to be merchant friendly, and to provide outreach and community education. Reasonable exemptions in the ordinance were reviewed. The ordinance seeks to remind Princeton residents and visitors “we have borrowed the earth from future generations” and should seek to protect it.

A summary of the bag ordinance will be emailed to all Commission Members and questions can be sent by email. The actual ordinance will not be released until it has been reviewed and approved by the Mayor.

Questions arose about charges to those receiving public assistance. Mechanisms to provide exemptions from charges, while maintaining the privacy and dignity of *TANIF* and *SNAP* recipients, were discussed.

**Welcoming America**

Ryan Stark Lilienthal presented information on *Welcoming America.org*. As a coalition of business stakeholders, *Welcoming America* seeks to create a network of welcoming communities, for immigrants. John Witherspoon, Albert Einstein, and other immigrants who have contributed to our community were discussed. A question and answer period followed.

Stacy Mann shared her knowledge of the history of the birth of the *Welcoming America* program and the organization’s progress. Should Princeton join *Welcoming America*, it will be the first NJ municipality to do so.

### **III. Civil Rights Presentation**

HSC's Vice Chairman and Chair of the Civil Rights subcommittee, Leticia Fraga, reviewed the research and work of the civil rights subcommittee. Subcommittee members joining Ms. Fraga for this presentation included Elizabeth Bidwell Bates, John Heilner, Thomas Parker and Larry Spruill.

Princeton's *Joint Commission on Civil Rights (JCCR)* was established in 1968, pursuant to a resolution of the Borough and Township of Princeton. The JCCR operated as a stand-alone Commission until 1998, then Princeton Human Services was established and assumed responsibility for the JCCR. Civil Rights became a subcommittee within the Human Services Commission. A sampling of civil right concerns, and complaints lodged with the Princeton JCCR and Civil Rights Subcommittee, was presented. Violations alleged to be based on race, sex, national origin, and employment were found in the archives. These include concerns regarding perceived discrimination by municipal departments, landlords, merchants, and the public school system. Within this historical perspective, the actions of the *JCCR and CRC* were also presented. An open question and answer period followed Vice Chairman Fraga's detailed PowerPoint presentation, which facilitated much discussion.

Subcommittee recommendations, regarding the *CRC's* reach and activities include, but are not limited to,:

- Revitalization of the *Civil Rights Commission* as a standalone commission.
- Allowances for the provision of *CRC* mediation, conflict resolution, and investigative processes.
- An open/town-wide member nomination process, for 9 or more *CRC* members.
- Professional training for *CRC* members, in civil rights, mediation, and conflict resolution.
- Provision of outreach and education programs on civil rights.
- Collaboration with other organizations, to co-sponsor relevant programs and events.
- Monthly meetings to plan public outreach activities and events.
- Processes to ensure that persons seeking assistance are apprised of all avenues/options to air complaints.
- Hearing complaints and concerns in closed session, to ensure confidentiality.
- Processes to ensure that reported complaints/concerns are addressed in a timely and reliable manner.

John Heilner shared his experience with these matters, in the municipality and with groups such as the University. He noted the subcommittee's recognition of the importance of municipal processes. He emphasized that dialogue does resolve things.

Thomas Parker shared his experience, as an active member of the Civil Rights subcommittee and *JCCR*. Giving historical accounts of very positive and successful mediations and interventions, Mr. Parker shared a report of the good work accomplished to support citizens. Mr. Parker reviewed the *JCCR's* mission: to promote and to protect civil rights. He also noted that civil rights education has been a very important and valuable community service, facilitated and offered by both the JCCR and Civil Rights subcommittee.

Upon review of the subcommittee's progress in analyzing the role of a *Civil Rights Commission*, it was suggested that input from individuals who had experience with, or been part of the JCCR or CRC, (such as Marvin Reed, Lance Liverman, and Roger Martindell) might help to complete and compliment the research done. The Civil Rights subcommittee will schedule meetings with these individuals and others.

### **IV. Reports**

#### **General Assistance Report**

It was noted that the January General Assistance Report was previously distributed, in the February 4, 2015 Human Services Commission meeting. A Director's Report of 2.18.15, which summarized information sharing and referral tracking, was distributed (see attached).

## **Director's Report- Hospital Relations**

Director Neira attended a meeting, tour, and luncheon hosted by UMCPD President and administrative staff. It is hoped that this exchange will improve hospital community relations and strengthen UMCPD support, for those with human service needs.

Logistics to effectively facilitate the distribution of transportation vouchers are being analyzed, by Director Neira and Health Officer Grosser. In lieu of bus transportation, vouchers provide transportation services after hours to UMCPD. The most convenient/accessible locations in Princeton to distribute vouchers were discussed. Offering voucher access in the police station was discussed, since it is open 24 hours a day.

A special meeting was conducted, at Princeton University, with groups interested in reviewing data about the challenges of Princeton's unemployed. Better ways of providing job search support, for those on public assistance, will be considered. Ways to improve gaps in the current system may be created.

## **V. Business**

The topic of membership in *Welcoming America* was reintroduced, for consideration. Laura Encinas seconded John Heilner's motion that Princeton join *Welcoming America's* national community network. All present voted in favor of this action. With hopes of furthering this positive National movement, HSC's support and recommendation for membership will be communicated to Mayor Lempert and Council.

## **VI. Approval of February 4, 2015 minutes**

Thomas Parker motioned to accept the minutes as submitted. Elizabeth Bidwell seconded this motion, with all voting in favor of acceptance.

## **VII. Human Services Committee Reports**

### **Immigration Subcommittee Report**

Wage ordinance outreach meetings continue to be offered. A meeting is scheduled with Princeton University Dreamers, to discuss the next steps in spreading word of the ordinance throughout the community.

## **VIII. News and Upcoming Events**

It was announced that a panel discussion entitled: *Princeton Immigration Issues* will convene in the Community Room of the Princeton Public Library (PPL), on February 25<sup>th</sup> at 7PM. This event is sponsored by PPL.

A *Financial Literacy and Affordable Housing Workshop* will be held in Witherspoon Hall, on Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup> from 8:30AM to 12:30PM. This public event is a joint offering of Princeton's Human Services and Affordable Housing department.

An formal acknowledgement of Black History month was discussed.

## **XI. Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by Laura Encinas. When seconded by John Heilner, all voted in favor of adjournment. At 9:25PM, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted, V Bea Snowdon

Cc: attachment: General Assistance Program Report of 2.18.15