

Princeton Human Services Commission Minutes

Monthly Meeting

August 19, 2015

Monument Hall - East Meeting Room

One Monument Drive, Princeton, NJ 08540

Present:

Board Members:

Ross Wishnick, Chairman

Stacey Mann

Elizabeth Bidwell Bates

Thomas Parker

Laura Encinas

Leticia Fraga

John Heilner

Larry Spruill

Robert Hackett

Staff:

Elisa Neira, MSW

Liaison & Guests

Absent:

I. Open Public Meeting Statement and Call To Order

At 7:00 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. There was no response to his request for public comment.

II. Approval of July 15, 2015 minutes

Mrs. Leticia Fraga's motion to accept the minutes with no corrections was seconded by Ms. Elizabeth Bidwell Bates. All eligible members voted in favor of this action.

III. General Assistance.

The monthly General Assistance report is available on request. The caseload is fairly level month to month, ranging from 25 to 30 cases. Diane Hirko from Family Guidance Center came on August 3rd to meet with the GA clients to begin to build trust with them. Ms. Hirko is in charge of helping people at risk of becoming homeless or are homeless to submit their SSI applications. Ms. Hirko has been very successful in reducing the backlog of cases that we have with Legal Services of New Jersey. Princeton Human Services and Ms. Hirko will be working on two more SSI cases: One is going to be an appeal and the second one is a case that involves mental illness, alcohol and drug abuse. Ms.

Neira is also working with Home Front in order to provide transitional housing to the latter case.

IV. Human Services Committee Reports.

Summer Youth Employment Program

The Summer Youth Employment Program is in the newspaper today. This week is the last week of the program. This was the first summer that there were no terminations. The program will culminate in an award night on August 20th where the students will receive certificates of completion, school supplies and a sweatshirt. The coordinators have been doing a great job; nevertheless, Ms. Neira has had to help them a lot because the number of students participating this year increased.

Ms. Neira is looking for a possible grant through the African American Chamber of Commerce to expand the program during the school year from October to April. The program would focus on job development and job readiness and could expand significantly during the summer. In response to feedback received from the students, Human Services Department will speak with the counselors at the school to improve the program's outreach efforts.

Book Bag and School Supplies Drive

Friday, August 21st is the last day of distribution. In addition to individual donations, the major donors have been by Christine's Hope, Stone Hill and the Police Department. The book bag drive has been well received; the students have enjoyed being able to choose their own backpacks.

Transportation to The Hospital

Ms. Neira distributed a flyer in English and Spanish about the on demand taxi service that the hospital will provide residents that live within walking distance of the old hospital site that have an appoint or do not need emergency care. The clinic staff will be responsible for the calling center and they will provide a report on its usage. Tiger Transit will also stop at Palmer Square Monday to Friday from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm, with buses running every 50 minutes. This service will benefit anyone who wants to go to the hospital or to the fitness center, including the hospital employees.

Civil Rights

Ms. Neira will start planning a meeting with Marc Dashfield and Gary DeBlasio about the Civil Rights Committee. The administration has questions regarding:

1. How the committee's structure effects liability
2. Best practices on handling complaints against employees
3. Determining Ms. Neira's role amidst her other responsibilities

4. The need to hire a coordinator to work with citizen volunteers to handle the process

Immigration

On July 24th the Immigration Committee met with Unidad Latina en Acción (ULA) in Hightstown. ULA does not have a center to dispatch workers to employers. But it is trying to empower workers to get them more involved. The membership is \$20 dollars a month per person. On August 26th, Jorge Torres from ULA will meet in Princeton with the Immigration Committee and local workers to decide what they would like from an organization.

Last week there was a successful rally and protest against the Elizabeth Detention Center.

Last Monday, August 17th, the Community ID Cards event was well received. Most of the Community ID cards were given to men up to 29, but there were some families too. Human Services will give a training to the Recreation Department about the Community ID so that staff are familiar with the ID and accept it to enter to the Community Pool.

There will be a LALDEF workshop on Saturday, August 22nd from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm at YWCA to help people fill out their citizenship application forms and DACA forms. Community ID cards will also be issued.

Task Dinner

Ms. Elizabeth Bidwell Bates gave a short update where she recognized the group's incredible dedication. The program has room to grow, and is exploring ways to incorporate more Spanish speaking people in the program.

Send Hunger Packing (SHUPP)

The Hunger Banquet is coming on September 20th. Over \$55,000 has been raised towards the goal of \$60,000. Mr. Wishnick reported that it has been a success to add produce to the weekend packages this summer. Terhune and other organizations have been immensely helpful in this respect.

Block Party

The event will be held September 12th, with a rain date of September 13th. The YMCA will help with food. There will also be a bus provided for transportation. Other co-sponsors include Princeton Community Housing (PCH), Christine's Hope, the Fire Department and First Aid.

V. Adjournment

Ms. Elizabeth Bidwell Bates seconded Mr. Ross Wishnick's motion to adjourn. With no further business to discuss, all voted in favor of this action. The meeting adjourned at 8:39 PM