

**Princeton Human Services Commission Minutes**

Monthly Meeting

**January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

Monument Hall - East Meeting Room

One Monument Drive, Princeton, NJ 08540

**Present:**

**Board Members:**

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

**Staff:**

Elisa Neira, MSW  
Michael Soto

**Liaison & Guests:**

Jasmine Charles (Student  
Board at Corner House)  
Katie Vazquez (Student  
Board at Corner House)

**Absent:**

Robert Hackett  
Stacy Mann  
Heather Howard, Council  
member

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

At 7:13 PM, Ms. Neira 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." There was no response to his request for public comment.

**II. Reorganization of the Board - Nominations**

Mr. Heilner nominated Mr. Ross Wishnick to be Chairman of the Human Services Commission. Ms. Bates seconded this motion. All voted in favor of the nomination of Mr. Wishnick as Chairman.

Ms. Bates seconded Mr. Parker's nomination of Ms. Leticia Fraga to serve as Vice-Chairman. All voted in favor of the motion to appoint Ms. Fraga to the post of Vice-Chairman of the Human Services Commission.

**III. Approval of November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 minutes**

Mr. Heilner motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Bates. All eligible members voted in favor of this action.

#### **IV. Public Comment**

There was no response to the Chairman's request for public comment.

#### **V. Director's Report**

##### **1. General Assistance:**

Ms. Neira asked if there were any questions about the General Assistance report. There were no questions.

##### **2. Bilingual Parent Liaison School and Municipality Position:**

In November 2015, the school approached Gary De Blasio and Ms. Neira to partner on a new position that the school was creating. Ms. Neira and Mr. De Blasio met with school officials to learn more about this new position and it seemed to be a good fit for the Department of Human Services to share these services with the school. The Board of Education and the Council approved the position, which will be funded by the schools.

The person that was hired for this position is Liliana Morenilla, who started as Teacher Aid at Johnson Park and is very familiar with many of the families there. She will be at the school three days of the week and two days at Princeton Human Services (Tuesdays and Thursdays). This gives her an opportunity to see families outside of her office and have expanded hours to facilitate access, since the school's hours are from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm. Her role and responsibilities will continue to evolve as needs arise.

As Ms. Morenilla is very familiar with the school's registrations, one of her main responsibilities will be to help unaccompanied minors to register at the schools and connect new students with resources, relieving Elisa from these responsibilities. This month there were two registrations that Ms. Neira and Ms. Morenilla worked on together. Ms. Neira indicated that she is looking for best practices on working with unaccompanied minors at school and she is hoping to include Ms. Morenilla in this research.

In short, Ms. Morenilla will work with key staff at the schools to coordinate communication with families, guide them on how to access key resources, and she will also translate key material to Spanish.

Ms. Neira mentioned that Ms. Morenilla was instrumental to spreading the word of the immigration info session through the schools.

Ms. Morenilla will be invited to the next meeting.

#### **Well Baby Clinic**

Ms. Bates mentioned that during the Health Board meeting Jeff Grosser (Health Officer) had highlighted Ms. Neira's role in helping to improve the Well Baby Clinic. Ms. Neira and Mr. Grosser have had regular meetings with the clinic's Director in order to address concerns about the services and identify areas where personnel should receive further training. These meetings have also served to exchange information between the different

parties involved and have had excellent results as many of the identified areas of concern have been improved.

Finally, Ms. Neira said that they are still waiting to get last year's Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program report.

## **VI. Human Services Committee Reports**

### **Send Hunger Packing - SHUPP**

Thanksgiving in January project - one hundred thirty \$25 Shoprite gift cards were bought two days ago, on January 18th. Mr. Wishnick indicated that a two-part flyer will be sent to SHUPP families via the schools explaining the process. The first flyer will inform them that a \$25 Shoprite gift card will come in the mail. The following week Mr. Wishnick will take the stamped envelopes to the school, for it to send to the families. The cost of the gift cards was \$3,000.

Mr. Wishnick also mentioned that SHUPP was awarded an unsolicited grant for \$25,000 from Bob Carr.

### **Civil Rights**

Last Wednesday, January 13<sup>th</sup> at the Planning Meeting, the Civil Rights Committee was identified as a high priority but also as an area of high difficulty. Ms. Fraga highlighted that it is not clear to her why it is perceived as difficult since there is a model and an ordinance ready to go.

Marc Dashield provided an update to Ms. Neira and Ms. Howard that he has an initial draft, including the necessary objectives, to prepare an ordinance and he needs to identify an affirmative action officer. He wanted to meet internally to review the drafted language and then will meet with the Committee.

### **Immigration**

With the start of ICE raids in January there has been a lot fear and discomfort in Princeton. There have been two incidents in nearby areas:

1. An incident in New Brunswick, ICE grabbed one young man who has Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) status and detained him
2. An incident in Hightstown that was brought up to Human Services by Unidad Latina en Accion NJ

With the help of Ms. Neira, some Commission members, and community members a document was compiled of useful information on "Know your rights," specific to Princeton. The document also included a statement from the Princeton Police Department and Police Commissioner and Human Services Liaison Heather Howard.

These materials have been used at three community events:

1. A small meeting with workers at the Pannell Center with Unidad Latina en Acción (ULA) and Human Services, as part of ongoing meetings that have been held every couple weeks since September. The material was presented to the audience and every recommendation was explained.
2. Ms. Fraga and Ms. Neira went to the High School to speak to the English Learners Class, in which 16 students participated. Ms. Fraga gave a PowerPoint presentation and the students were very engaged. Questions were answered and informational material was left with the teacher. There was one student that had been talking about dropping out of school because he didn't see the point of going to school if he was just going to be deported, but as a result of the presentation he changed his mind.
3. A large event at Saint Paul's was held with approximately 90 people in attendance. This event was a larger version of the event held at the school. It had a 'Know your Rights' PowerPoint presentation, a video and a role-play activity with volunteers as well as a Q&A session with attorney Ryan Lilienthal which went nearly until 10:00pm.

Mr. Heilner highlighted the importance of starting to do outreach and communication in parallel with preparing another ordinance for the restaurant industry, as has been done for landscape workers. He also gave an update on the case that New Labor won against a local restaurant. He mentioned that Lou Kimmel checked with the workers to see if they had received the amount of \$3,500 each and found out that they only received \$2,800 each.

Last Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Heilner and Lou Kimmel from New Labor met to discuss this case and decided that New Labor will speak to the media about the case and refer to a statement put together by the Human Services Commission reiterating its position on wage theft. Mr. Heilner distributed a draft of the statement to be approved by the Commission. All eligible members voted in favor of this action. Ms. Neira will send the statement to Marc Dashfield for his approval.

Mr. Heilner also said that it is important to again consider reaching out to the merchants' associations to educate employers.

## **2016 Objectives**

Three new initiatives will be added the Princeton Human Services Commission:

1. Landlord and Tenant Education (in conjunction with other departments)

The Department of Human Services has been informally helping people with tenant's issues, in some cases reading the *Truth in Renting* book or helping to translate letters. But there is a need to address the larger group of residents that are facing these type of issues and do not know their rights and responsibilities. There is a need for getting out into the community to do educational workshops and letting them know there is a place where they can come for assistance.

Ms. Neira would like to create a group that can reach out to community partners that would like to be part of this project, including the House Inspection Office, Fair Housing Coordinator and Princeton Housing Authority.

2. Resource Guide:

A resource guide available to everyone in English and Spanish.

3. A Community Network Analysis

This would show who is connected to whom and by what channels, with the aim of improving communication strategies.

**VII. News and Upcoming Events**

Ms. Encinas announced that the citizenship classes held at the library would be displaced for 8 weeks while the second floor is being remodeled. She said that they are looking a temporary place and Ms. Neira and Ms. Fraga suggested reaching out to the Panell Center to check if it could be used for this purpose.

**VIII. Adjournment**

Ms. Bates seconded Ms. Fraga's motion to adjourn. With no further business to discuss, all voted in favor of this action. The meeting adjourned at 8:43 PM.