

Princeton Human Services Commission Minutes

Monthly Meeting

May 18th, 2016

Monument Hall - East Meeting Room

One Monument Drive, Princeton, NJ 08540

Present:

Board Members:

Ross Wishnick, Chairman
Leticia Fraga, Vice Chair
Elizabeth Bidwell Bates
John Heilner
Larry Spruill
Thomas Parker
Stacy Mann

Staff

Elisa Neira, MSW
Michael Soto

Liaison & Guests

Heather Howard, Council Member

Absent:

Laura Encinas
Robert Hackett

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 introduced and welcomed the guests in attendance.

II. Approval of March 2016 minutes

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

III. Public Comment

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

IV. Director's Report

General Assistance

Ms. Neira reported that at the beginning of the month there were 25 cases opened, two new cases were opened during the month and one case was closed, ending the month with 26 cases open.

Ms. Neira is going to her first Fair Hearing on May 31st. When a client does not agree with the decision made by the DFD on their case they can call the Fair Hearing line to request that it be reviewed. Ms. Neira explained that many Municipal Welfare Directors are

displeased at having to attend these Fair Hearings since the Division of Family Development (DFD) is making the decisions to approved or terminated emergency assistance.

Ms. Bates inquired about the case listed at failure to cooperate with WFNJ requests. Ms. Neira explained that when a client is employable they have to complete a workforce training and in this case this client failed to assist 3 times and for this reason his case was closed.

Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)

Last week's Parent/Student Orientation was very successful. This year there are students coming back and new applicants, with a total of 35 applications received. This year the program can fund up to 40 participants.

Tomorrow, May 19th, will be the first Job Readiness Workshop. This workshop focuses on interviewing skills, and resume writing, in order to prepare the students for the Job Fair that will be held on June 7th at John Witherspoon School Cafeteria. Filomeno Cuino and Rhodalynn Agyeman will be the coordinators. Two new employers are participating this year, Stone Hill Church and Historic Preservation.

V. Human Services Committee Reports

Civil Rights

- **Mediation, OPRA and Insurance**

Mr. Lou Maltby is currently doing research for the Commission on mediation, OPRA (Open Public Request Act) exceptions, and liability insurance. Ms. Fraga said that she is also doing research on these matters and asked the board if these items are the only points of concern to move forward. Mr. Heilner said that Mr. Maltby is expected to report back in about two weeks. Ms. Fraga said that they would like to have a sense of the timeframe for the next steps after the research is done.

Mr. Heilner has been in touch with a civil rights lawyer, who will introduce him to civil rights chairs in other localities. Mr. Heilner will ask them about the number of cases that they have mediated and whether their insurance rates went up when they created a civil rights commission.

Ms. Neira will ask Marc Dashield what the Joint Insurance Fund (JIF) said about the change in insurance due to creating civil rights commission.

- **Light quarterly Plan – Community Outreach, Education and Community Dialogues**

Mr. Wishnick suggested that Civil Rights Commission plan a series of speakers and community dialogues for the next quarter, coordinating with other boards and the schools

to address topics that may concern the community in terms of civil rights and inequality. The Commission discussed different issues that have been identified in the school curriculum and also the case of some minority children hiding their heritage. Ms. Fraga informed that she would participate in an initial meeting to review the social studies curriculum in order to make it more inclusive. She will keep the Commission informed about the progress and the outcome.

Mr. Wishnick informed that he has been in conversations with the Department of Justice of New York and they offered to come to Princeton to talk about best practices and suggestions about how to start a community dialogue and other events that may have a positive impact in the community. Ms. Bates said that The Princeton Human Services Commission should be a voice for inclusion for all communities and that it is important to include communities that represent minorities such as Muslims and Asians.

Ms. Neira highlighted the importance of including the youth in these dialogues and this is an opportunity to have conversations about their experiences and help them to overcome these issues. Mr. Spruill agreed that this is an important part of building a sense of community. The Commissioners talked about different events and community dialogues that have happened previously in Princeton, they also said that is a key to include in these conversations organizations or entities that have a big impact in the community such as Princeton University, the Seminary and Police Department.

Mr. Wishnick suggested thinking about the following questions to organize the dialogues, in order to discuss a plan at the next Commission meeting:

- What is going on in our community that a dialogue in race will address?
- If there were a dialogue on race what would be its goals?
- What should be the dialogue on?
- What format should we use?

Mr. Wishnick will send the questions by e-mail to the Commissioners, so they can come up with ideas for the next meeting. The Commission would like to have another event in fall, probably in the month of October.

Immigration

Mr. Heilner informed that the Department of Homeland Security would step up raids again this month going through June. Mr. Heilner said that the Subcommittee should schedule a meeting with Ms. Neira to address this issue and to find ways and partnerships to educate the community about their rights and the Executive Order in case the Supreme Court approved it. Ms. Neira said that she has been in conversation with Johanna Calle from New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice to see if the Navigator training for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) is something Human Services Office would like to use, not as legal assistance but as guidance.

Mr. Heilner also informed that Mercer County Freeholders would support Driver's License for undocumented immigrants.

Send Hunger Packing (SHUPP)

Ms. Morenilla, Ms. Segovia and Mr. Wishnick set up a schedule for the distribution of food during the summer. Most of the distribution will occur at Community Park. There will be kids from Jump Start, LEAP (Learning Enrichment in the Arts Program), a developmentally disabled organization, Recreation Department and Princeton Nursery School. The Koko Fund will pay for hot meals for Jonson Park kids attending the summer programs. Mr. Wishnick informed that the Farmers Market would provide fresh produce for these kids and also have a chef to provide cooking/tasting demonstrations since many families are not familiar with the produce available. The Commission discussed if it is viable to distribute the Farmers Markets leftovers to the community in general and not restrict it to focus on SHUPP participants.

The Commissioners highlighted the importance of having community gardens/forests around the town and discussed ways to make it possible.

VI. Updates

Bike Master Plan

Ms. Howard said that the Bike Master Plan that has been under development is starting public meetings and looking for support from the boards and commissions. Ms. Howard said the master plan took into consideration biking to go work, to schools and for recreational purposes. Ms. Howard will send the master plan to the commission so they can learn more about it and decide whether to write a letter in support.

VII. Adjournment

Mr. Heilner seconded Mr. Parker's motion to adjourn. With no further business to discuss, all voted in favor of this action. The meeting adjourned at 8:32 PM.