

Princeton Human Services Commission Minutes

Monthly Meeting

July 20th, 2016

Monument Hall - East Meeting Room

One Monument Drive, Princeton, NJ 08540

Present:

Board Members:

Leticia Fraga, Vice Chair
Elizabeth Bidwell Bates
Laura Encinas
John Heilner
Thomas Parker
Larry Spruill

Staff

Elisa Neira, MSW
Michael Soto

Guests

Wilma Salomon

Absent:

Stacy Mann
Heather Howard
Robert Hackett
Ross Wishnick, Chairman

I. Open Public Meeting Statement and Call To Order

At 7:10 PM, Vice Chair Leticia Fraga 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." Vice Chair Fraga introduced and welcomed the guests.

Approval of June 2016 Minutes

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

II. Public Comment

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

III. Director's Report

General Assistance

No questions were asked of Ms. Neira about the General Assistance Report.

Summer Youth Employment (SYEP)

Ms. Neira gave an overview of the meeting that The Princeton Human Services Department had with the Princeton Area Community Foundation (PACF) regarding Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP).

The meeting was a success, with 7 of the 10 PACF Board Members present and Jeff Vega, CEO of PACF. Ms. Neira gave a presentation about the program with 2 SYEP participants and 1 alumnus speaking about their experiences. Ms. Neira reported that Mr. Vega subsequently sent an e-mail to Mayor Lempert congratulating her for the excellent program and presentation. He also said that the presentation had been very well received by the Board Members, and he is hoping that the Princeton Human Services Department will present a proposal for a PACF grant in the Fall. Ms. Neira and Ms. Alvarez (Human Services Administrative Assistant) met with Mr. Vega and other PACF staff to learn more about which grant will better suit the SYEP needs and requirements. Ms. Neira will send the proposal to the commissioners before the submission in mid-September. The Princeton Human Services Department is working on the guidelines and will also reach out to Camille Bloomberg, Corner House's Grant proposal writer.

The additional funds could be used in a number of ways to expand the program. There is a need for more recruiting, both students and employers. Ms. Neira also said if there was more funding and someone that could focus on the program throughout the entire year, there was ample room for growth.

Ms. Bates asked whether it was possible to expand program to include private employers, as there is currently a restriction to only permit nonprofit and government entities. Ms. Neira said this was a possibility and potentially the business would contribute to part of the student's wage.

One question that was raised during the PACF meeting was regarding undocumented participants. It was stated that one possibility could be to pay them through grant money as stipends.

In preparation for the meeting, it had been identified that for the first time, 98% of the youth now have bank accounts. Last summer only 3-4 students (of 37) had direct deposit. A document detailing the requirements for youth to open accounts in local banks was included in each student's packet, and this was key in substantially increasing the proportion of students who opened accounts. This information can be expanded to include adults and uploaded to the website.

As a separate SYEP update, Johnson and Johnson will be hosting a free coding and computer programming workshop for up to 17 SYEP students the last week of July, on a first come first serve basis. They will also host another workshop in August.

Welcoming Week

Participation in Welcoming Week is highly encouraged by Welcoming America and was a big part of the Interactive that Ms. Neira attended in Georgia last April.

Ms. Neira met with the Princeton Public Library to explore partnering and decided to highlight the contributions of immigrants to the Town during the entire week. The tent outside of Hinds Plaza will be up the entire week and will give an opportunity to host events.

Among the events being considered are:

- Town Topics will do a story on welcoming week
- The Library is organizing a game night to bring together all the ESL classes together.
- An Albert Hinds Walking tour by the Historical Society of Princeton
- A walking tour of local businesses started by immigrants (from other countries or other parts of the States)
 - Mr. Heilner suggested including the Little Chef pastry shop
 - Ms. Fraga suggested Morning Glory
 - Ms. Bates suggested Ya Ya Noodles

Ms. Neira will send out a Doodle for a group of Commissioners to meet and begin planning the logistics behind these proposed events.

Human Services Committee Reports

Civil Rights

Ms. Fraga expressed her surprise at hearing at the YWCA Board meeting that the Municipality had reached out for their assistance with mediation.

The Committee met with Mayor Lempert and Council President Lance Liverman on the 28th of July to discuss the concerns around Open Public Records Act (OPRA) and the impact on insurance. At the meeting, the Mayor clarified that the discussion with the Y was an inquiry on their perspective on the program rather than requesting they take on the program.

Ms. Fraga indicated that the meeting went well. In the end, it was agreed that they would be introducing an ordinance to establish the commission that would include the education, outreach, and would include collaborating with Community Partners. The Commission would also take the lead on doing the conflict resolution. The Committee requested that they be able to review it before it was presented to Council.

Ms Neira reported that Mr. Dashield had said this will be introduced the first meeting in September and the Committee will be able to review it in August.

Ms. Neira also indicated that it had been raised that the Committee has five members and if they all meet, the meetings are required to be noticed following Sunshine law.

Immigration

Ms. Neira has put together a press release regarding the Supreme Court decision on DACA and DAPA. Much of the press release came from the very useful toolkit put out by Cities for Action.

A proposal was presented to organize a 'Rights and Responsibilities' meeting which could focus on topics such as sexual harassment, force, abuse, domestic violence, landlord tenant, etc.

Last month, there was a legal lunch provided by Human Services to the Princeton High School English Language Learners class. Santos Flores, a community lawyer from American Friends Service, spoke to close to 20 students and has offered to speak to four or five of the seventeen on a one on one basis.

Send Hunger Packing (SHUPP)

Mr. Wishnick was not present to provide an update on SHUPP, but the Commission discussed areas where it would be helpful to have more information on a regular basis.

Ms. Bates asked for an update on the summer numbers for SHUPP, and she also asked for an update on the logistical challenges mentioned at the last meeting.

Ms. Fraga reported that Ms. Morenilla had raised \$3,000, and Ms. Bates asked why she needed to raise additional funds considering SHUPP's existing resources.

Mr. Parker suggested that SHUPP provide a monthly financial report as well as an update on the number of meals distributed and to whom (schools, programs), when (weekend/weekday).

Student Fund

Ms. Mann drafted the letter to the superintendent regarding the Student Fund and shared it with the Commissioners. The purpose of the letter is to determine how to help students who cannot afford to participate in school trips, field trips and extracurricular activities. Since there are currently no formal processes to secure funding, each affected student has different responses, from setting up a GoFundMe to simply deciding they cannot go.

The letter is meant to express a desire to be a part of a solution, and also to advocate for these youth.

Corner House and the Police Benevolent Association are also interested in signing onto this letter. Mr. De Blasio expressed an interest to expand the scope to include college students, since he has heard of cases where students have received this type of assistance but then when they get to college are having trouble paying for books and other things.

Ms. Neira will resend the letter to the Princeton Human Services Commission Members for final approval.

Community Night Out

Community Night out is on August 2nd and Elisa will send out a Doodle for volunteers to sign up.

Ms. Bates asked how much money Human Services spends on Community Night Out in terms of staff time and materials. She expressed the need to consider what trade offs are. Ms. Neira said the Community Relations budget for the entire year is about \$2,000. She regularly presents budgets to administration and will check whether it is required to be presented at the Commission as well.

Joint Effort – Princeton Safe Streets

Ms. Neira spoke with John Bailey and he suggested that rather than joining this year and concentrate activities in a single week, Princeton Human Services should continue with its other programs such as the Clay Street Block Party.

IV. Adjournment

Mr. Parker seconded Ms. Bates' motion to adjourn. With no further business to discuss, all voted in favor of this action. The meeting adjourned at 9:25 PM.