



PRINCETON HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

Reorganization and Regular Meeting Minutes

January 19, 2022

Zoom Meeting * Princeton, NJ 08540

Board Members – Present

Rebecca Balaguer
Ericka Deglau
Leticia Fraga, Council Liaison
Lina Genovesi, Alt.
Khristina Gonzalez
Ming Kuang

John Heilner
Loydes Nieves, Alt.
Larry Spruill, Vice Chair
Veronica Olivares–Weber, Chair

Board Members Absent

Bryan Hill

Staff – Present

Rhodalynn Jones, Director
Soorya Baliga, Chair of Youth
Advisory Committee

Call to Order

The Reorganizational meeting of the Princeton Human Services Commission was called to order by Councilwoman Leticia Fraga at 6:05 pm. She recited the announcement: *“We gather today on the land of the Leni Lenape. As members of the Princeton Human Services Commission, we aspire to show appreciation, respect, and concern for all people and our environment. We honor the Lenape and other Indigenous caretakers of these lands and waters, the elders who lived here before, the Indigenous today, and the generations to come.”*

Councilwoman Fraga stated that going forward the Chair will assign commission members a turn each, to read the Land Acknowledgment at the beginning of each meeting.

Reorganization of the Commission

New Member Welcome and Introductions

Councilwoman Fraga introduced herself and then all present took turns introducing themselves. New member Lina Genovesi was greeted by Councilwoman Fraga. Ms. Genovesi introduced herself and expressed her interest and that she is looking forward to working with everyone. New member Ms. Soorya Baliga introduced herself as Youth Liaison, spoke about her other current position as Chair of the Youth Advisory Committee, and her interests. New Recording Secretary Paula Alexeev introduced herself and was welcomed by Councilwoman Fraga.

Election of Chairperson

Councilwoman Fraga called for nominations for Chair. Mr. John Heilner nominated Veronica Olivares–Weber for Chair. Ms. Loydes Nieves seconded the nomination. Seeing no others, Councilwoman Fraga closed the floor for nominations. All in favor by voice vote. Chair Olivares–Weber accepted the nomination to continue her role as Chairperson and expressed her gratitude and thankfulness to serve in this role.

Election of Vice-Chairperson

Councilwoman Fraga called for nominations for Vice Chair. Ms. Ericka Deglau nominated Larry Spruill for the role of Vice Chair, however, Vice-Chair Larry Spruill respectfully declined the nomination. Mr. Heilner nominated Ericka Deglau as Vice-Chairperson, the nomination was seconded by Chair Olivares–Weber. Seeing no others, Councilwoman Fraga closed the floor for nominations. All in favor by voice vote. Vice-Chair Deglau accepted the nomination to the role of Vice-Chairperson. She expressed her happiness to help and work with everyone as she serves in this role.



The meeting was turned over to Chair Olivares–Weber to lead. Chair Olivares–Weber thanked Mr. Spruill for his work and all his support from the previous year when he served as Vice-Chair. She also congratulated Vice-Chair Deglau in her new role.

Approval of Meeting Dates

Chair Olivares–Weber stated that she will approve the meeting dates for 2022 and keep the scheduled start time as 6pm unless there were any comments or objections to this. Mr. Heilner brought up the discussion to revise the meeting time to 5:30 pm since he has other reoccurring meetings and people are working from home. There was discussion on the proposed time change. The majority of attendees stated they were unavailable earlier than 6pm, so it was agreed to keep 6pm as the scheduled start time. Vice-Chair Deglau made the motion to approve the meeting dates as proposed, with a start time of 6pm, seconded by Mr. Larry Spruill. All in favor by voice vote.

Approval of Meeting Minutes– December 15, 2021

Chair Olivares–Weber motioned to approve the regular meeting minutes dated *December 15, 2021*. The minutes were approved without edits, first moved by Mr. Heilner, seconded by Ms. Khristina Gonzalez, all in favor by voice vote.

Public Comments

None.

Presentation of the Need Assessment Survey Results by Oscar Torres-Reyna, PhD., Data Statistical Consultant at Princeton University

Mr. Oscar Torres-Reyna spoke about his professional background and explained the survey. He then gave his presentation. He shared the screen with all present and elaborated on the Need Assessment Survey Results, accompanied by detailed slides. Vice-Chair Deglau summarized the second part of the survey, which included open-ended questions, and she stated that one of the intentions of the survey was to broaden information to the needs-gathering people.

Chair Olivares–Weber and Mr. Heilner thanked Mr. Torres-Reyna and Vice-Chair Deglau for their efforts. Councilwoman Fraga also thanked them for putting together this detailed presentation, and stated that when the subcommittee is ready to present to the public, this presentation can be added to the council agenda. Vice-Chair Deglau also thanked Ms. Gonzalez for her hard work on this project.

Mr. Heilner stressed the importance of outreach, not just from the results of this survey, but also from all he has seen in his position. He said outreach should be the highest priority, should the commission receive more funding. Ms. Gonzalez weighed in on this matter, and added that one of the issues is how do you make sure that people who need service can get access to that service. She further expanded on this issue and the question of coordination. Mr. Heilner expressed to Chair Olivares–Weber his idea of having somebody on a community-wide basis available to facilitate more time to providing needed sources, and this may be the resource that is needed to help with this problem. Councilwoman Fraga weighed in on this issue and advised collaboration. She also mentioned directories to post online may be a helpful resource.



Mr. Oscar Torres-Reyna gave a short summary of the purpose of the survey and also what it could be used for. Ms. Kuang asked for a copy of the PowerPoint slides and a copy of the original survey questions.

Director's Report – Rhodalynn Jones

Director Rhodalynn Jones gave a brief update on the recently held holiday gift-drive. Three hundred and fifty-one children in the Princeton area were successfully given gifts received from the gift-drive, and all of their families were also provided grocery store gift cards. She expressed her gratitude to all of the donors and recognized how helpful their donations and support are for these families, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic.

The Human Services Department continues to promote the excluded New Jersians Fund. This funding is for one-time direct cash for eligible individuals and households who suffered economic hardship as a result of the pandemic, and were not able to benefit from the federal economic relief checks or unemployment assistance. This includes undocumented individuals and people who are reentering the community from the justice system, along with anyone else who did not qualify. The application is still available. New Jersey received \$40 million in funding and continues to be open to receiving and processing applications until all funds have been exhausted.

The Human Services Department is working with Affordable Housing and the Health Department to identify and strategize how to use the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). Last year, around \$300,000 was utilized from this grant, with more still remaining to be allocated to help communities impacted by the pandemic. Allocation is being considered towards child care, vision and dental, utility assistance and COVID-19 personal protection equipment (PPE). Ms. Jones will keep the board updated.

The Human Services Department continues to work with Volunteers of America to help address the issue of homelessness. They are beginning to expand in central New Jersey. Ms. Jones expressed who gratitude to work with them. Chair Olivares–Weber thanked her and all of the staff their hard work on the back-pack drive. Ms. Jones also gave credit to the community outreach coordinator.

Council Updates

Councilwoman Fraga gave a brief update of what the council has been working on. The council is off to a good start, working on some hot topic issues, which include the issue of permit parking. This meeting had about 180 member of the community present, and it went well, however, the conversation must be continued at another meeting. Additionally, they will be covering the cannabis issue. A Cannabis Taskforce meeting will be held on 03/29/22 to address legalization of cannabis in Princeton.

Councilwoman Fraga further reported that COVID-19 rapid tests are being provided by the local YMCA. The Princeton Health Department is partnering with Ridgewood diagnostics to provide testing at another location, 237 North Harrison Street, in addition to those being provided at the local YMCA.

She also addressed whether students would be allowed to serve on other Boards, Commissions, and Committees (BCC's), which is possible, it is just a matter of whether the BCC is interested in having a youth prospective serve on their committee.

Subcommittee Reorganization/Goals and Priorities



Chair Olivares–Weber asked board members to make suggestions that meet the needs of the community, and the goals and mission of the Commission. She asked all present to submit their goals to her. She then asked Ms. Jones to share the subcommittee’s description of goals. Chair Olivares–Weber spoke about different committees and gave a summary of the Housing Stability’s purpose.

Chair Olivares–Weber stated that now is good time to review the goals and see which ones are not working, need changes or may overlap. She also stressed why the Needs Assessment is very important. She asked the board members to review the shared document see which committees may actually not be needed and could be merged into another committee. Chair Olivares–Weber suggested that the Food and Housing Subcommittees are both a needs-committee and maybe would benefit from being combined into one. She then explained the benefits of having the same people involved in both subcommittees.

Food Insecurity & Housing Stability

Subcommittee members: TBD

These two subcommittees were combined into one subcommittee. No motion was needed. Chair Olivares–Weber will work on naming this new subcommittee at the next meeting. Mr. Spruill will step down as Chair of the Food Insecurity subcommittee, though he will still work as a part of it. He had nothing to report at this time.

Immigration

Subcommittee members: Mr. Heilner will remain Chair, Chair Olivares–Weber, and Ms. Nieves.

Mr. Heilner spoke about the Immigration subcommittee goals and spoke about adding one more member. He will remain Chair of this subcommittee. Ms. Genovesi joined as a member, followed by Ms. Baliga as a youth liaison.

Mental Health and Well-being

Subcommittee members: TBD

Vice-Chair Deglau proposed a Mental Health and Well-being subcommittee. She mentioned that she would be on it and Ms. Baliga also asked to join. Vice-Chair Deglau made a motion to form this subcommittee and name it the Mental Health and Well-being subcommittee, seconded by Mr. Spruill. Vice-Chair Deglau will reach out to others to see who would like to join.

Councilwoman Fraga suggested sharing more information with other board members and giving them time to review the information. She also mentioned giving more time for them to come up with the mission statement, goals and needs.

Outreach/Needs Assessment

Subcommittee members: Ms. Deglau, Chair Olivares–Weber, and Ms. Gonzalez

Vice-Chair Deglau will remain Chair of this subcommittee. Ms. Kuang joined.

Health Department Liaison

Chair Olivares–Weber stated that Mr. Bryan Hill is the Health Liaison for this subcommittee, in addition to Councilwoman Fraga, however, it would be helpful to have an alternating person available in case Mr. Hill is unavailable. She proposed to all present to think about joining in this role.

Welcoming Week



Subcommittee members: Vacant, Chair Olivares–Weber, vacant

All current members will remain the same. Chair Olivares–Weber explained this subcommittee and what is usually involved. No further discussion was held.

New subcommittees can be suggested/formed throughout the year.

Discussion

Goals & Priorities

No discussion held on this topic.

Mr. Heilner noted his concern about the new Omicron surge in Princeton, and more people being quarantined as a result, including parents who cannot work from home. He wanted any suggestions for what the PSHC can do at this time to help.

Ms. Jones stated that the Community Outreach Coordinator is being used to attend the vaccine and soon to be testing clinic, and she will be sharing masks, PPE and COVID-19 care packages. She also added that the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is one area where a large portion of funding is planned on being allocated to childcare services. She is meeting with the YMCA to discuss how to use the funds to support local low-to-moderate income families covering their child-care costs, and perhaps include summer camp programs as well.

Mr. Spruill asked for the PHSC to do mask distributions. Ms. Jones and Councilwoman Fraga responded. An order was placed but has yet to be received, and will be first distributed to the local vulnerable population.

Adjournment

The motion to adjourn at 8:09 p.m. was moved by Vice-Chair Deglau, seconded by Ms. Nieves, and affirmatively carried by all those present.

Respectfully submitted by:

Paula Alexeev
Recording Secretary
Princeton Human Services Commission