



# PRINCETON HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

Monthly Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2021 by Zoom

Monument Hall, East Meeting Room, Princeton, NJ 08540

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## **Board Members – Present**

Moriah Akron  
Ericka Deglau  
Khristina Gonzalez  
John Heilner  
Bryan Hill  
Monique Jones  
Veronica Olivares–Weber, Chair  
Larry Spruill, Vice Chair

Leticia Fraga, Council Liaison  
Daniela Molina, Rutgers Intern

## **Board Members Absent**

Jorge Narvaez, Alt.  
Loydes Nieves

## **Corner House Student Board**

Shirley Xie and Lia Bull-Krieg

## **Staff Present**

Melissa Urias, Director, Ex-officio

*Minutes Submitted by:*

Julie Moy, Board Secretary

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## **Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the Princeton Human Services Commission was called to order by Chair Veronica Olivares–Weber at 6:04 pm. She recited the announcement: *In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act: “In compliance with Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975, adequate notice of this meeting has been provided as required by the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice was provided of the date, time and location of this regular meeting by posting a copy with the Clerk’s Office and by emailing copies to the Princeton Packet and the Town Topics.”* Chair Olivares–Weber recited the Land of Acknowledgement for Indigenous People.

## **Public Comments**

Nick Shire introduced himself and why he is viewing the meeting.

Ms. Urias introduced new Outreach Coordinator, Talitha-Koumi “TK” Oluwafemi. **Roll call** was taken along with their introduction to Ms. Oluwafemi. She then introduced herself, provided her background, credentials and what her role and responsibilities as the Outreach Coordinator will be.

*Princeton Mutual Aid (PMA) Presentation* – Mika Kelley and Ali Mctar

Ms. Kelley shared her screen, explained what PMA is doing in with the community and what their goals are to assist the Princeton community. She explained how their Direct Ask Team raises fund to support their activities.

Ms. Kelley explained PMA’s services to the community, their fund raising efforts and how they are working with other organizations in Princeton. Ms. Kelley shared a copy of their expenditures and funds raised. PMA’s motto is “*solidarity not charity*”; goal is to provide holistic care and creatively helping residents. Mr. Mctar explained PMA’s advocacy goals and how they are working with the community.

Councilwoman Fraga asked Dr. Meredith Hodach–Avalos if she knew if the Community ID is acceptable as identification for the Covid testing offered by the Health Department; she is not sure and will speak with Dept. of Health Director, Jeff Grosser. Mr. Heilner stated that the Immigration Subcommittee will be meeting with Ana Pasmio from Unidad Latina en Accion, to discuss immigration issues they are working on; he would like PMA to assist with outreach. Ms. Kelley also works with ULA and is working on the wage thief issue and would like to work with Mr. Heilner. Jacqueline Shire, resident, feels that there is lack of awareness of what PMA is doing in certain Princeton areas that may have pockets of money; what mechanisms are being used to reach these residents who can financially assist their mission? Mr. Mctar explained how he believes they are getting

out more by word of mouth by those who they assist. Getting word out to other circles has been a challenge. Ms. Shire suggested an article in Town Topics which is delivered weekly to residents. Ms. Gonzalez asked what PMA's utopian's future look is like; what is pathway to addressing the existing gaps. Ms. Kelley responded, connect the town and build power by connecting all groups together. Mr. Mctar explained his vision for the Princeton community. Chair Olivares-Weber explained what the mission and goals of the Human Services Commission is.

#### *Needs Assessment Subcommittee*

Dr. Deglau explained the background of the Needs Assessment Subcommittee project that started prior to COVID and how the subcommittee is moving forward to assist the community. There are a number of people they do not have access to. She explained that the subcommittee hosted a number of listening sessions which ended up with the creation of a survey. They worked with Princeton Research Survey Center on getting out the survey to service providers and volunteers in the community. Dr. Deglau explained the current status of the survey. She continued to describe the topics of the listening sessions. Ms. Jones, Ms. Gonzalez and Ms. Molina worked together on the listening session's preliminary report. Ms. Jones provided a summary of the listening sessions, topics and findings from the sessions. Ms. Gonzalez found the information helpful to hear about the information and figure out where the overlaps were. Councilwoman Fraga told the subcommittee to let her know when they would like to present this information to Council and if funding is needed. She also reported that through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding, the Municipality will be able to provide free internet services to Affordable Housing residents. The Municipality is working on identifying the cable provider. Dr. Hodach-Avalos commented that there is overlap in services with the Board of Health. Dr. Deglau invited Dr. Hodach-Avalos to attend a subcommittee meeting.

#### **Approval of Meeting Minutes Approval – January 20, 2021**

The motion to approve meeting minutes dated January 20, 2021 was first moved by Dr. Deglau seconded by Ms. Jones, all in favor by voice vote.

#### **Director's Report – Melissa Urias**

Ms. Urias reported on the Summer Youth Program; she explained how the program works. Currently she is finding it difficult to secure work sites to accept the students. She reached out to 20+ organizations; she received 15 yes or maybes, 2 not willing to participate and waiting to hear from 9 additional organizations. She did receive some new worksites and explained what organizations they are. Ms. Urias explained how the 2020 program was competed virtually. She is working with the Dept. of Health to ensure implementing safe work place practices to prevent the spread of COVID. Applications will be available by the end of March and close by end of April. Students will be required to have working papers. Program will run July 5 – August 27, 2021; students will be paid \$11.10 p/h 25 hrs p/w for 8 weeks. Summer Youth Program offers students' great work experience; some students have been offered part time positions following their participation. Arts Council will place six students. There were suggestions on other organizations Ms. Urias may be able to contact.

#### **Council Updates, Leticia Fraga**

Councilwoman Fraga reported that Jeff Grosser, Director for the Dept. of Health has informed her that the Community IDs are an acceptable form of identification for the vaccine; we need to encourage people to apply for the identification card.

She reported that Ross Wishnick has stepped down as a Human Service Commission member. Council appointed Loydes Nieves as regular member and will complete Mr. Wishnick's term. We currently have one alternate vacancy.

Councilwoman Fraga reported that there is a warming center located at 400 Witherspoon Street until 6 pm. If need anyone requires assistance after 6 pm, they can contact the Police Department's non-emergency number.

Councilwoman Fraga reported on the Youth Advisory Committee, will be working in collaboration with the Civil Rights Commission to host community dialog between the youth and Police Dept. on Feb. 25.

Councilwoman Fraga reported that the Municipal is forming a Cannabis Task Force to be headed up by Councilwomen Eve Niedergang, Michelle Pirone Lambos and herself. Applications are currently being accepted for the task force.

Councilwoman Fraga reported that the Council has agenda setting minutes that are open to the public. This allows BBCs to make recommendations to Council for documents they would like to have addressed and placed on the agenda for discussion. She asked this Board to contact her if there is anything s/he would like see addressed.

### **Subcommittee Reports**

#### *Food Insecurity*

*Subcommittee members:* Mr. Spruill will Chair, Chair Olivares–Weber and Ms. Akrong

Mr. Spruill is willing to chair until someone else is available. Ms. Urias provided an update of activities; they meet once a month, collaborate with other groups and update food calendar that can be found on the Human Services' site. Mr. Spruill reported that the *Mr. Rogers' Neighbors Kindness Project* is doing a lot for the community and activities are not listed on our calendar. He would like to invite Blair Miller from Mr. Rogers' so she can let us know more of what they are doing in the community. Ms. Urias contacted all the organizations'; this specific group has not yet provided information. Per Mr. Spruill, they are willing to participate.

Klee Dixon, Food Service Director for Princeton Public Schools, stated any student can get food. They are delivering 7 breakfasts and 7 lunches. There are five pick up locations and seven buses going around on their routes to deliver food. She will provide information to Mr. Spruill on what they are doing.

#### *Housing, Veronica Olivares–Weber*

Chair Olivares–Weber reported on the activities and groups the Housing Subcommittee is working with; Affordable Housing, Civil Rights Commission and Human Services. There are three area of interest: advocacy and legislation, best practices and financial counseling program. She explained the financial counseling pilot program and who will be eligible.

Mr. Spruill stated a number of people lost power over the weekends; warming centers are closed, who should they call. Councilwoman Fraga is aware of the problem and described the steps taken to address the issue. They are having issues in getting word into the community especially if they are experiencing power outage. The continued the discussions on how they can better communicate the information to those in need.

*Outreach and Needs Assessment, Erika Deglau*

Dr. Deglau reported earlier in the meeting.

*Welcoming America, Moriah Akrong*

Ms. Akrong reported that they have not had the opportunity to meet. She did some research on the program to learn more about it. Ms. Akrong would like to begin planning for the next event; she has some ideas and will schedule a meeting shortly.

*Youth Matters, Khristina Gonzalez*

Ms. Gonzalez reported that the subcommittee will meet next month.

*Immigration, John Heilner*

Mr. Heilner reported the subcommittee met on February 16. Members include Chair Olivares–Weber, Mr. Narvaez, Ms. Nieves and himself. They discussed the topic of wage thief. Human Services has been working on this issue since 2014. There is an intake form available. There is more fear within the community due to former federal administration. Mr. Heilner explained that the DMV has not issued the requirements for standard driver’s license to undocumented and homeless residents. He will look into getting the Community ID to be an acceptable form of identification.

Mr. Heilner announced that Mr. Narvaez will no longer be able to participate on this Commission, however would like to continue working the Immigration Subcommittee. Mr. Heilner reported that they will be reaching out to the University for assistance. He reported on the number of other topics the subcommittee discussed.

Mr. Heilner will join Sustainable Princeton’s Steering Committee. They are looking at ways to reduce landscaping noise and emissions.

Councilwoman Fraga announced that at the end of 2020 students were working with Civil Rights Commission (CRC) to assist in creating an Affordable Housing Map. Stacy Mann, School of Public and International Affairs, Office of Population Research, is creating an 8 week long course, “*Race and Housing in Princeton*”. They will present to the Mayor and Council on March 8.

Chair Olivares–Weber brought up the past discussion about creating a 501-3(c) for fundraising purposes. When Councilwoman Fraga officiates weddings, fees are given Human Services. If fund is created, it would be titled “*Friends of Human Services*” to help raise funds. Chair Olivares–Weber asked for Board volunteers to assist with fund raising.

Maria Juega announced that the United Ways is offering its free tax preparation via drop off/pick up program. She added the link in the chat. LALDEF will be an additional site for the United Way program; there will be Spanish speaking preparers; she provided additional details for the program. Ms. Juega suggested to explore opening a dollars fund at the Princeton Community Foundation; may eliminate the need to create a 501-3(c).

**Adjournment**

The motion to adjourn at 7:50 pm was first made by Mr. Heilner seconded by Mr. Spruill, all in favor by voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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*Julie Moy*  
Recording Secretary