



# PRINCETON HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes

March 16, 2022

Zoom Meeting \* Princeton, NJ 08540

## **Board Members – Present**

Rebecca Balaguer  
Ericka Deglau, Vice Chair  
Leticia Fraga, Council Liaison  
Lina Genovesi  
John Heilner  
Ming Kuang  
Veronica Olivares–Weber, Chair  
Larry Spruill

## **Board Members Absent**

Bryan Hill  
Khristina Gonzalez  
Loydes Nieves

## **Guest Speaker**

Adam Welch

## **Staff – Present**

Rhodalynn Jones, Director

---

## **Call to Order:**

The Regular Meeting of the Princeton Human Services Commission was called to order by Chair Olivares–Weber at 6:03 pm. Larry Spruill recited the announcement: *“We gather today on the land of the 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.”*

Roll Call was completed.

## **Approval of Meeting Minutes: February 16, 2022**

Chair Olivares–Weber addressed the minutes from the February 16, 2022 Princeton Human Services Commission (PHSC) Regular Meeting. After review, no proposed changes were made. John Heilner motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Vice-Chair Ericka Deglau. Chair Olivares–Weber approved the minutes without opposition.

## **Public Comments:**

No comments were made.

## **Community Presentation: Arts Council of Princeton - Adam Welch, Executive Director**

Adam Welch gave a brief introduction before he began his presentation. He spoke about the Arts Council of Princeton (ACP) and gave details on the services and classes currently offered. This year marks the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary for the ACP. In addition to the hundreds of classes offered in the arts, from literary to craft; painting, drawing, plain air painting, spoken word, and music, classes are offered for 5-year-olds through 90-year-olds. Besides fee-for-services classes, there are also many free programs offered to the community, including cultural events and outreach programs. He covered programs currently offered for children then began his presentation.

Seven pianos were donated by community members to be transformed by local and regional artists. Starting April 1<sup>st</sup>, pianos will be placed throughout town for the community to enjoy, and will be celebrated with a Happy Hour kick-off outside of the ACP at 5:30pm, which will include piano performance. All are welcome to attend.



Throughout April, there will be dozens of arts and culture events presented by ACP and local businesses and organizations. April 23, 2022 is the Princeton Porchfest event. These are individual concerts that are coordinated on people's porches around town. There are over ten participating porches around Princeton, with five in the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood. This event is free and open to all, with emphasis on a safe and fun day for Princeton locals as a walkable and easy-to-bicycle-to event. These decentralized concerts will provide more opportunities for people to gather without congregating to one space. A schedule of performers and their locations will be available at [artscouncilofprinceton.org](http://artscouncilofprinceton.org).

Chair Olivares–Weber thanked Mr. Welch for his presentation and asked him to speak on the offered programs for seniors. He elaborated on ACP's senior outreach. Particularly, ACP worked with the Girl Scouts and other organizations to send art-care packages to several senior centers to let them know they are being thought of and to reduce feelings of social isolation during the current COVID-19 pandemic where loved ones may not be able to see them as often.

Councilwoman Leticia Fraga also thanked him, asked about whether the embroidery project will be continued. Although Mr. Welch does not currently see a continuance of this project, he highlighted other fiber art projects, such as textiles -felting, weaving, knitting, quilting and more. Rhodalynn Jones also thanked Mr. Welch for his presentation and expressed excitement for the Princeton Porchfest. She then inquired about ACP's partnership with HomeFront. He explained HomeFront is a program provided by ACP since 1993. It is one of the longest running outreach programs. Children in transitional housing come from HomeFront offices to the Arts Council and receive homework help, dinner (provided through Olives of Princeton), and an art project. Ms. Jones further asked Mr. Welch whether ACP offers art therapy. He explained in the past many classes were offered which were referred to as art therapy. He elaborated how art is a transformative experience in itself, though ACP is looking to have licensed staff at a medical level to be more specific in this aspect.

Chair Olivares–Weber mentioned the ACP's partnership with the Mayors Wellness Campaign (MWC), and also brought attention to other board members to start thinking about collaborating with the ACP in the future, also for Welcoming Week in September.

### **Director's Report – Rhodalynn Jones**

Director Rhodalynn Jones gave a brief update on the 2022 Summer Youth Employment Program. Applications are now available, and the deadline to submit them is April 29, 2022.

The utility moratorium ended yesterday, though PHSC is still pushing to advertise other offered services for people who had their utilities turned off. She gave a reminder that the Excluded New Jersey Fund ended at the end of February. PHSC continues to promote the rental assistance program, tax program, and emergency rescue mortgage program.

Councilwoman Fraga mentioned a refugee family from Poland that PHSC is currently assisting. Efforts are being worked on to help future anticipated refugees settle with as much ease as possible. The discussion on refugees and other immigrants continued and Mr. Heilner added how Solidaridad has an established process for assisting asylum seekers with their preliminary paperwork.



### **Council Updates**

Councilwoman Fraga gave an update of the council's annual meeting with Princeton University's President Christopher Eisgruber. Princeton University updated the council on their contributions and services offered to the community, among other things. She also asked for more opportunities to collaborate and get details on what services are available to the public, so that the community can be made aware of it and connect to these services. She inquired about the University allowing students to use their meal cards in local establishments, and discussed the ongoing laundromat issue for the residents of the John Witherspoon neighborhood.

### **Subcommittee Reorganization/Goals and Priorities**

#### *Immigration*

Mr. Heilner spoke about a local immigration attorney who was recently charged by the Department of Homeland Security with multiple counts of immigration fraud. He expressed concerns in this matter with outreach and in assisting those harmed by their documents being accessed by this attorney. Councilwoman Fraga weighed in on the outreach offered by PHSC.

Mr. Heilner further added that the subcommittee is beginning to plan a broad outreach event and hopes to have it at the ACP, with topics on housing, protections from eviction, ways to improve one's immigration status, what are your rights' as residents even if you are undocumented, and perhaps have an immigration attorney on the panel, in addition to covering where we are with the New Jersey special driver license, wage theft, and more topics.

Councilwoman Fraga encouraged signing-up for the municipal newsletter which goes out weekly and has links and other important information to share with the community.

#### *Outreach/Needs Assessment*

Vice-Chair Deglau gave an update that the subcommittee had its presentation to community partners at the end of February. She thanked Ms. Jones for coordinating this, and added over fifty people were in attendance with discussion afterwards. The subcommittee is considering sending out a post survey for more feedback, and is also working on producing a written report. She also thanked Ming Kuang for attending the event and looking over all of their things, and for providing feedback. Chair Olivares-Weber spoke about making a presentation for mayor and council for the next meeting in April.

#### *Community Needs and Social Equity*

Chair Olivares-Weber noted that this subcommittee covers housing, food insecurity, and education, and discussed integrating the Mental Health Wellbeing subcommittee into this one. She asked for comments and for more members on this subcommittee. Vice-Chair Deglau added that mental health and wellbeing are related, especially during the current pandemic, and it is critical for PHSC to be involved in this. Additionally, there is a connection to social isolation and economic insecurity. Rebecca Balaguer weighed in on this topic and added that there is a need to rid the stigma of mental illness. Mr. Spruill asked whether Corner House will also be involved with this subcommittee. Ms. Balaguer asked for the Mental Health and Wellbeing subcommittee to be merged with the Community Needs and Social Equity subcommittee. Chair Olivares-Weber officially merged the two subcommittees, and Ms. Balaguer is now part of the Community Needs and Social Equity subcommittee.



### *Welcoming America*

Chair Olivares–Weber spoke about how to integrate services from other organizations for Welcoming Week, which is September 9<sup>th</sup> through September 18<sup>th</sup>. She also asked for volunteers for this subcommittee to help with this effort and explained what efforts would be needed, which includes the need for someone to put together a list of what organizations are offering for services that can be used for Welcoming Week. Councilwoman Fraga volunteered to coordinate the cultural exchange night, and also mentioned the local library and ACP are some of the organizations offering services that can be used. Ms. Jones mentioned that if board members could reach out to local partners and report back to Human Services, they can include this information in their welcoming week calendar.

Chair Olivares–Weber asked for at least three more members to volunteer. Vice-Chair Deglau suggested having the Welcoming Week discussion under the Goals and Priorities section for each upcoming meeting.

### *Goals and Priorities*

No discussion was held.

### *Mental Health and Well-being*

This was already discussed.

### *Health Department Liaison*

Chair Olivares–Weber stated that Bryan Hill is no longer the Health Liaison for this subcommittee. He resigned and there are two openings now for the position. Chair Olivares–Weber asked for volunteers. Ms. Balaguer volunteered to be a liaison. Chair Olivares–Weber thanked her and asked her to consider also being a liaison for Corner House. Councilwoman Fraga commented that she is the liaison to the BOH, and gave a brief update on the recent BOH meeting.

### **Adjournment**

The motion to adjourn at 7:25 p.m. was moved by Mr. Spruill, seconded by Vice-Chair Deglau, and affirmatively carried by all those present.

Respectfully submitted by:

---

*Paula Alexeev*

Recording Secretary

Princeton Human Services Commission