



PRINCETON HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes

April 20, 2022

Zoom Meeting * Princeton, NJ 08540

Board Members – Present

Rebecca Balaguer

Leticia Fraga, Council Liaison

Lina Genovesi, Alt.

John Heilner

Loydes Nieves, Alt.

Veronica Olivares–Weber, Chair

Larry Spruill

Board Members Absent

Ericka Deglau, Vice Chair

Khristina Gonzalez

Ming Kuang

Staff – Present

Rhodalyne Jones, Director

Soorya Baliga, Chair of Youth

Advisory Committee

Guest Speaker

Paula Alekson

Cory Dunn

Gina Pisasale

Call to Order:

The Regular Meeting of the Princeton Human Services Commission was called to order by Chair Olivares–Weber at 6:07 pm. Loydes Nieves recited the announcement: *“We gather today on the land of the Lenni 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: March 16, 2022

Chair Olivares–Weber addressed the minutes from the March 16, 2022 Princeton Human Services Commission (PHSC) Regular Meeting. After review, no proposed changes were made. Rebecca Balaguer motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Nieves. All were in favor. Chair Olivares–Weber approved the minutes without opposition.

Public Comments:

No comments were made.

Community Presentation: McCarter Theatre Center–Paula Alekson, Artistic Engagement Manager

Chair Olivares–Weber thanked Paula Alekson, Corey Dunn and Gina Pisasale for being present tonight and for all of their work through the McCarter Theatre Center. Ms. Alekson then introduced herself, before starting her presentation and sharing information on the work done by the McCarter Theatre Center in the community. She explained that the center is a Tony Award winning, independent, not-for-profit, performing art center, located on Princeton University’s campus, operating as both a professional producing theater, and presenting venue as well. Mr. Dunn, the Artistic Line Producer, gave a brief introduction, followed by Ms. Pisasale, the new Director of Equity and Organizational Culture.

They spoke briefly about the struggles that the new director, Sarah Rasmussen, and the entire organization, went through during the COVID-19 pandemic. They then shared that the center’s mission, vision and values, include creating stories and experiences that enliven minds, expand imaginations, and engage communities via the performing arts. Their purpose is to unite the ideals of joy and justice, beauty and belonging, to spark curiosity and creativity and conversation among us all. They work with audiences, artists, avid thinkers and active learners to explore new stories and perspectives with relentless curiosity; champion a more equitable, diverse, inclusive and accessible future; open hearts and



minds to the truths in ourselves, communities and society; and share ideas and innovations that expand opportunities to engage with the performing arts.

Centered between New York City and Philadelphia, and alongside Princeton University, the center is a creative and intellectual hub that inspires conversations, connections and collaborations in our communities and for society. To be at the center of curiosity, creativity and conversation by connecting artists, audiences, and communities to limitless possibilities -the possibility of learning something new, being inspired and forging new friendships, that moves us all forward.

The center's values on justice include bringing together diverse perspectives, voices and generations. Whether it is on stage, behind the scenes and with audiences, they champion a fairer future for us all. Ms. Pisasale further shared that the center's values on joy include the way they work together is as important as the work they make. We center generosity in all we say and do with each other to create life affirming experiences that celebrate our shared humanity and help us make meaning of our world.

On the value of beauty, we value the multitudes of lived experiences and histories, and pursue art that is expansive, essential and exhilarating. Participating in that which is infused with beauty makes us feel more alive and move deeply connected to one another. And on the value of belonging, we strive to bring out the artist in all of us by opening minds and opportunities through the performing arts. We listen to learn and create spaces, places and programs, that empower everyone to be part of our creative community.

Ms. Alekson shared some of the different performances that were offered during the 2021-2022 season, which included programming, classes at summer camp, a workshop for writers, comedy, cultural dance experience and more. Ms. Pisasale spoke on the power of storing telling and communities coming together, and how theaters help us connect with one another. Chair Olivares-Weber thanked them for their amazing and energetic presentation, and again expressed appreciation for all of the work done by the McCarter Theatre Center. Councilwoman Leticia Fraga also expressed her gratitude for the center's work, and shared her own personal experience of attending performances there with her family. She added that many families in the community are not aware of what is available to them, including the Princeton University's Art Museum. Mr. Dunn elaborated on the center's outreach to the community. PHSC Director Rhodalynn Jones and Larry Spruill expressed their appreciation for the McCarter Theatre Center offering free tickets every year to low-income students, and thanked them for their work.

Director's Report – Rhodalynn Jones

Director Rhodalynn Jones gave an update on the 2022 Summer Youth Employment Program, which is underway though we are still seeking more applications, and the deadline to submit them is April 29, 2022. The Women, Youth and Children Program (WYC), which has been on a hiatus for over 2 years, is back and will resume on May 20, 2022. This is a program through the partnership of the health department and human services commission, along with the Children's Home Society. This program may be expanded to also include Doula Care and Education for low-income women of color, which would also see a start in May 2022.

The PHSC partnered with the Bayard Rustin Center for Social Justice to bring awareness to Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) prevention and care. This past Monday, free HIV testing was delivered to the community. This will be an ongoing service, as PHSC targets populations who are most impacted



by HIV, with the hope to expand this outreach to include delivery of free testing for sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) and Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) medicine education as well.

Regarding COVID-19, the PHSC will be giving around 100 free COVID-19 rapid tests to those in the community who are uninsured. Ms. Jones shared that she is going on maternity leave next month, and Kimberly Figueroa-Martinez, Community Outreach Coordinator, will be the point of contact for the PHSC and will coordinate the meetings in Ms. Jones' absence. Chair Olivares-Weber thanked Ms. Jones for her great work.

Council Updates

Councilwoman Fraga reported that there were families who were in need of COVID-19 testing but were uninsured and unable to get testing done at the local sites. The federal government is no longer funding testing and insurance is needed to cover the cost. To help with this, the Health Department is offering free at home tests, which will be available starting April 21, 2022. She encouraged everyone to subscribe to the municipal newsletter since it is a great resource for what is going on and what is available in our community. Additionally, there are also PCR tests available to everyone in New Jersey, which can be ordered through: <https://learn.vaulthealth.com/nj/> New Jersey and Vault Medical Services have teamed up to offer at-home COVID-19 saliva testing for any person who believes they need to be tested, with or without symptoms, at no cost. There are also free at home rapid antigen tests offered through the United States Postal Service, which can be ordered at: <https://faq.usps.com/s/article/At-Home-COVID-19-Test-Kits>

COVID-19 testing is also available at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). As per their website, these centers provide health care and COVID-19 testing without cost to all people without insurance and without regard to immigration status. Please call your local Federally Qualified Health Center ahead of time for availability and instructions. A list of Federally Qualified Health Centers can be found at: <https://www.nj.gov/health/fhs/primarycare/fqhc/> Capital Health Primary Care – Princeton, also offers testing to existing patients for residents who uninsured.

On Saturday, April 23, 2022, the Princeton Wheels Rodeo, sponsored by the Princeton Police Department and the Princeton Human Services Commission, will be held from 10am-1pm. Councilwoman Fraga shared that she will be participating with face-painting during this event and offered to share her supplies if anyone wishes to volunteer. Mr. Spruill expressed interest in participating in this, and asked about the local COVID-19 testing by the health department, and whether a flyer will be available. Councilwoman Fraga explained that the announcement on testing will go out on April 21, 2022.

Subcommittee Reports and Updates

Immigration

Mr. Heilner spoke about the subcommittee's meeting last week, that they are now focusing on another event for low-income immigrants. This broad outreach event is being planned for June 5, 2022 (not yet confirmed) at the local public library, from 3pm-5pm. It will cover topics on knowing your rights, wage theft (Ms. Figueroa-Martinez will cover this in Ms. Jones' absence), New Jersey Special driver licenses (Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund (LALDEF) will speak on this), Chair Olivares-Weber will find a speaker on housing assistance and protections from eviction, ways to improve one's immigration status (covered by Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund



(LALDEF) and Solidaridad), and perhaps local police officer Luis Martinez will also be available to speak at this event. Gwendolyn Krol, from the Health Department will also be involved, speaking on the COVID-19 test availability and other topics for low-income immigrants. Students from the English as a Second Language (ESL) Program might also be available. A flyer is being put together for this event. Ms. Balaguer offered to help with any assistance that Mr. Heilner may need for this event.

Outreach/Needs Assessment

Chair Olivares–Weber explained that Vice-Chair Deglau is not available tonight, but she provided her with a report. The subcommittee met on March 23, 2022 to discuss the next steps which are currently completed or in process. The community partners were sent an email regarding the survey on the municipality website. The target of completion for a report on this will be June 2022, along with a presentation.

Ms. Deglau's report included that she is working now with the new subcommittee for the Community Needs and Social Equity on this effort. As a commission, we need to refocus our efforts on problem solving, to include services, service access, and other range of service areas for underserved members of our community, and to better identify needs as they arise, as well as potential solutions. Regarding communication and coordination, Ms. Jones will be undertaking implementation of efforts to facilitate communication with community partners. As an additional result of the survey, the human services department agreed we need to have an updated services directory. The director will work on developing a new directory of services which is accessible to the community members for the Fall of 2022.

Given the results of the needs assessment survey, the subcommittee came to the decision that, from what we gather from this organization, there is a lot of disconnection with communication and how to reach out to people and how to collaborate. The subcommittee is asking the PHSC to vote for the approval to present to Mayor and Council, to ask to put together an annual social services summit. To further communicate and coordinate among community partners, the subcommittee proposes that the PHSC initiate an annual social services summit. They would like the commission's approval of this project, as it will foster the participation of the members and subcommittees in planning of which and engagement with community partners.

Councilwoman Fraga asked whether this subcommittee has a plan on what will be presented, and whether there is consensus from the commission that they agree with what is going to be recommended. Chair Olivares–Weber explained that the presentation will entail exactly what was already done for the community partners. It was already shared and is public. After the presentation, other details would be finished, though it is not a new presentation. She gave examples of what the subcommittee is planning on including in the actual social summit, and other steps they are taking to solidify this project, including a timeline that is ready.

Chair Olivares–Weber asked if anyone had any questions on this or would like to vote on it now. A motion to present to Mayor and Council regarding the proposed annual social summit (Princeton University and community partners are sponsoring the project), with a planned date to present on July 11, 2022, was moved by Chair Olivares–Weber. Ms. Balaguer asked if the subcommittee can present a more precise outline before voting on whether to go to Mayor and Council yet. Chair Olivares–Weber explained this subcommittee would be providing the same information that was already made available. She offered to share this information to the board members via email. After further discussion, Chair



Olivares–Weber again asked for a motion to present to Mayor and Council regarding the proposed annual social summit. This motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Spruill asked to have a meeting in early May to go over the actual presentation again to be on the same page. Chair Olivares–Weber offered for him to meet with the subcommittee. Mr. Heilner added that what Chair Olivares–Weber explained is envisioned and what the presentation’s objective is, is very good, and he asked for it in writing.

Community Needs and Social Equity

Chair Olivares–Weber noted that this subcommittee already put together work for the presentation noted above. They met with Ms. Jones, who added that she hopes the subcommittee ensures that the objective of the summit meets the needs of the community partners. Ms. Jones recommended doing a survey with them to see what information they are in need of and how to strengthen the collaboration by educating them on different platforms or outreach methods.

Welcoming America

Chair Olivares–Weber explained that the immigration citizenship program will hold the naturalization ceremony on Princeton University’s campus this year, as opposed to the local public library. Help with planning will be needed for this event, and a meeting is needed to see what else can be held during Welcome Week, as Ms. Jones will not be available to help with the planning.

Discussion

Social Services Summit

This was already discussed.

Mental Health and Well-being

Chair Olivares–Weber stated that Ms. Balaguer is collaborating with her, Vice-Chair Deglau and Mr. Spruill on the subcommittee for community needs. The idea is for Ms. Balaguer to attend the Corner House meetings as a liaison. Chair Olivares–Weber thanked Ms. Balaguer for volunteering. Soorya Baliga asked to be included in the Mental Health and Well-being efforts, to which Chair Olivares–Weber agreed and thanked her.

Corner House Liaison

This was already discussed.

Immigration Event

This was already discussed.

Adjournment

The motion to adjourn at 7:30 p.m. was moved by Chair Olivares–Weber, seconded by Mr. Heilner, and affirmatively carried by all those present.

Respectfully submitted by:

Paula Alexeev



Recording Secretary
Princeton Human Services Commission