

Princeton Human Services Commission Minutes

Monthly Meeting

September 17, 2014

Monument Hall – East Meeting Room

One Monument Drive, Princeton, NJ 08542

Present:

Board Members:

Elizabeth Bidwell Bates
Princeton

Laura Encinas

Leticia Fraga

Robert Hackett

John Heilner

Heather Howard

Thomas Parker

Larry Spruill

Ross Wishnick, Chairman

Staff:

Elisa Neira, MSW

V Bea Snowdon

Guests:

Nick Sutter, Chief of Police,

Absent:

Paul Rorem

I. Open Public Meeting Statement

At 7:00 PM, Chairman Ross Wishnick 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". A public comment period was announced, with no response from those in attendance.

II. Guest

Nick Sutter, Chief of Police, spoke about the work of the Princeton Police Department. In light of the recent episodes of excessive police force, used by some Departments in the United States, he shared a sincere interest in ensuring that quality service is provided to all residents of Princeton community.

According to Chief Sutter, "diversity is a major piece of (Princeton's) officer recruitment plan." Mr. Sutter distributed a demographic report of Princeton's population and sworn officers: Princeton is comprised of a 73% "Caucasian" population. 77% of the Princeton's police officers are "Caucasian".

While 10% of the sworn officers in Princeton are "African American", Princeton has a 5.5% "African American" population. Hispanics represent 4.8%* of Princeton's population (according to PPD statistics). In contrast, 12.9% of the sworn officers in Princeton's police department are Hispanic. There are 51 male sworn officers and 9 female sworn officers serving the community, along with other departmental personnel**. HSC Board members requested a complete and detailed report of the correct race and gender and of all police department personnel, listed by rank and job title. *(The 2010 census notes an 8.4% Hispanic population in Princeton.) **(race code and gender not identified).

Regarding complaints lodged against the department, Chief Sutter feels that "the most robust" internal investigation policy exists in Princeton. This investigation process has three parts. In the last three years, from approximately 105,000 citizen contacts, only 2 citizen complaints of "racially influenced policing" have arisen from officer contacts. In these episodes, people claimed the police were "profiling". Both complaints have been determined to be "not sustained", which means they have been neither proven nor disproven, and that no definitive decision was ever made regarding whether profiling occurred.

All officers have a dashboard camera, Viewing the dash cam film is the first step in assessing a complaint. To date this year, there have been 11,111 "stops" in Princeton. Officers "call out", to label all persons stopped immediately, identifying suspects with one of eight "race codes": White Hispanic, White Non-Hispanic, Black Hispanic, Black Non-Hispanic, Native American/Eskimo Hispanic, Native American/Eskimo Non-Hispanic, Asian Hispanic, Asian Non-Hispanic. Suspects are also labeled by one of two genders: Male or Female.

A *Ride-Along-Program* is offered in Princeton, to accommodate those wishing to experience the work of the officers in the department.

Chairman Wishnick asked if Princeton's officers openly dialogue with citizens about their efficacy. Chief Sutter cited a survey that Princeton has distributed randomly. On reflection, Mr. Sutter shared that this may be a very good time to again circulate a survey.

Chairman Wishnick suggested an open forum featuring Chief Sutter and Dr. Eddie Glaude Jr., renowned Princeton University Professor and Chair of Princeton's Center for African American Studies. This could be held to discuss community, perceptions, and communication, in light of recent National events. All present supported the idea of this forum.

For transparency's sake, recording cameras are desired by Princeton's Police Officers. Issues regarding personal privacy, that may arise when police enter a private home, were discussed.

In response to a question posed by Mr. Heilner, Chief Sutter shared that adequate equipment is easily available for emergency and crisis. Ms. Neira inquired about training for the handling of emergencies and or threats in the municipal building.

Mr. Spruill thanked Chief Sutter for all he has done for Princeton's youth.

III. Approval of July 2014 minutes

Mr. Heilner submitted revisions to the draft minutes of the July 16, 2014. Ms. Bates' motion, to approve minutes incorporating these changes, was seconded by Mr. Heilner. All present voted in favor of this conditional acceptance.

IV. Directors Report

Upcoming Events

Mr. Sutter and Ms. Neira will participate in and represent Princeton, in an event sponsored by the League of Municipalities. They will also be featured in a live webinar, on December 16th, regarding wage theft. Mayor Lempert and Council Woman Heather Howard will appear and participate in this webinar as well.

On Monday, Ms. Neira is attending an educational seminar on wage theft, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Representatives from many municipalities will attend forums on strategies for addressing wage theft, in this event sponsored by Mayor Betty Hodges.

General Assistance Report

41 cases were open, at the beginning of August. 4 cases were resolved or closed, leaving 37 active clients. New clients are pending and are going through the registration process.

Ms. Neira will attend a State meeting with other municipal directors on September 17th, to review issues encountered with General Assistance (GA) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Revised public policy now states that clients can only receive GA, TANF, or a combination of both, for a maximum of 5 years.

Food stamp delays are still a big problem, for those in need. Ms. Neira requests referrals of anyone who reports a delay in receiving assistance. She will help people receive support more rapidly. Mr.

Heilner suggested review of this problem by Andrew Koontz, Chairman of the Mercer County Board of Freeholders.

Community Needs Assessment

The upcoming HSC Community Needs Assessment will include the following the focus groups: English Speaking under 62, Spanish Speaking - All Ages, and Senior Citizens. Each group will be questioned about housing, job training, health care, and legal help. HSC has started advertising to recruit participants for this assessment. To be in a focus group, people can contact the Human Services department.

Ms. Neira hopes this assessment process will give the department a direction defined by the needs of those in the community. She would like to offer more services, better existing services, and seek grants to support new initiatives to serve Princeton residents.

Mr. Wishnick and Ms. Fraga report that, in an upcoming Town Council, more volunteerism will be encouraged throughout the community and at the Board and Commission levels.

Summer Youth Employment Program 2014

The *Summer Youth Employment program* ended well. 26 of the 29 participants finished the program. Several of the youth participants have since received, or have created, paid and unpaid jobs in our community. Sharing the youth experience was beneficial for everyone involved this summer, staff and youth alike. Ms. Neira expressed concern about a deficit in critical thinking skills in the youth population and her desire to further empower Princeton youth.

V. Human Services Committee Reports

Marketing Newsletter & Public Relations

Laura Encinas reported that the July newsletter was well received. She requested suggestions for the upcoming edition. Ms. Bates suggested meal-planning notes, for those facing food budget challenges, in line with the recent SHUPP event. An update on how SHUPP has evolved, notice of the Christmas holiday drive, and inclusion of Chief Sutter's demographic and police activity reports were also suggested. The "Director's Message" will likely include news of Ms. Neira's trip to Minneapolis, the *Summer Youth Employment Program*, and the *Backpack Drive*. The *Mercer Street Friends Food Delivery Program* is now serving those in the Princeton Housing Authority communities. This news will also be reported. Ms. Encinas requests graphic design assistance, for the HSC brochure.

Princeton Public Library's *Currents* program wants to create a series of dialogues, about the current events that impact the Princeton community. The first *Currents* program will focus on immigration. The involvement of the HSC staff will enrich HSCs outreach and public relations efforts.

Open Enrollment for the ACA is another public event that will be offered this fall. The Human Services Commission staff is working with Shelly, Jeffrey Grosser, and ENROLL AMERICA on this offering.

Send Hunger Packing Princeton

Chairman Wishnick reported the success of the September *Send Hunger Packing Princeton* event. Everyone had an enjoyable time, while learning and helping a good cause. Over \$25,000 was raised to support SHUPP. The SHUPP Board is comprised of very committed people. Logistics of the SHUPP website were discussed. Bill Schofield has been helping with the SHUPP FACEBOOK page. Lists of current donors will be distributed. Mr. Wishnick would like to see the program continue to grow by increasing outreach, participation, funding and meal quality.

Ms. Fraga suggested that the Human Service Commission's practice of giving service awards, to those providing exceptional community service, be reinstated.

Civil Rights Subcommittee

Ms. Fraga and her committee, comprised of Ms. Bates, Mr. Parker, Mr. Spruill, and Mr. Heilner, are presently fine-tuning the Civil Rights committee Mission Statement. Focus groups sent comments that have helped committee members create sound recommendations. These comments are also helping the Committee refine the intake process for clients. As the Committee makes observations and provides recommendations, on policy and procedures, this project will keep moving forward.

Immigration Subcommittee

Community ID cards have been reintroduced. Mr. Heilner feels more outreach is needed for this program. Libraries, hospitals, banks, local schools, and the police department accept this form of ID. The ID program is listed on the HSC website. ID cards are also distributed in Princeton on the 2nd Tuesday of the month in Princeton, from 12-2PM and 5-7PM at Nassau Presbyterian Church.

The Human Services Commission and the Princeton Police Department will host a Q & A about Immigration, on Sunday September 28th, in St Paul's community Room.

Efforts to establish comprehensive Wage theft enforcement in Princeton will now focus on the local restaurant industry. Mr. Heilner met with the Mr. Grosser, Princeton's Public Health Officer, to discuss ways to incorporate this initiative into Health department restaurant inspection policies.

Financial Literacy Project

A program addressing budgeting, credit repair, and personal finance is now being created. All agreed that education on credit repair will be very helpful, to those seeking more opportunity and advancement.

WIC

The September clinic is 90% booked, with only 4 places available. There is hope that recent promotional efforts have made, and will continue to make, a difference. The *WIC* clinic can service 40 families each month.

VI. Chairman's Report

A color-coded, updated service chart, detailing all resident support services offered in Princeton, will soon be published. Ross Wishnick feels it will be an excellent resource, after needed revisions.

VII. News and Upcoming Events

Ms. Encinas reports that PPLs *Ask-A-Lawyer* event was well attended and is very popular. The program offered advice from three lawyers expert in immigration and general law. Citizenship classes will begin in the Princeton Public Library on October 1st, and are offered again in the spring. Princeton Adult School is also offering immigration classes.

There will be a *Latinos en Progreso* Dinner at the YMCA, on September 22nd, at 6PM.

Diana Forero has been hired as the new Administrative Assistant to support the Directors of Affordable Housing and Human Services.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business Mr. Hackett, motioned to adjourn. Mr. Parker seconded that motion. With all in favor, the meeting adjourned at 9:11PM.

Respectfully submitted, V Bea Snowdon