



Minutes

Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

Date: May 23, 2022

Time: 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

Location: Zoom (Click the following link to join the meeting):

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/91791840410?pwd=d3lyYW44Tm8wT1NrNIU4ekRsWERNQT09>

Meeting ID: 967 9184 0410

Passcode: 264285

Real-time Spanish translation will be available during the meeting.

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- I. Call Meeting to Order** – Chair Sych
Meeting called to order at 5:53 pm, due to technical difficulties.

 - II. Statement of Purpose** – Chair Sych
Statement read.
“We convene this meeting to advance the City of Tacoma’s mission to “reducing barriers to access and participation in Tacoma’s economic, cultural, and civic life for immigrants and refugees.” This Commission aspires to help “make the City more vibrant, inclusive, and welcoming for all.”

 - III. Land Acknowledgment** –Vice Chair Donaldson
Acknowledgment read.
“*The Commission acknowledges that the meeting is being conducted on Indigenous lands of the Puyallup People, who cared for their ancestral lands before the Medicine Creek Treaty of 1854 removed native peoples to clear way for colonial settlement. It is important to this Commission as settlers here, aspiring to care for immigrants and refugees in this place and to call it home, that we acknowledge and send gratitude to the Puyallup Tribe of Indians who continue to be leaders for justice in our community today.*”

 - IV. Consent Agenda** – Chair Sych
 - a. Approval of Meeting Agenda (Aye/Nay Votes)
Meeting Agenda approved

 - b. Approval of January - March 2022 Meeting Minutes (Aye/Nay Votes)
Commissioners did not receive March 2022 Meeting Notes. Therefore, those notes not approved.

 - V. Record of Attendance and Excusal of Absences** – Chair Sych
X—Commissioner present

Commissioners

Sandra Sych (Chair)
Emily Calhoun
Lydia Zepeda
Emani Donaldson (Vice Chair)
Alma Villegas

Perla Gamboa
Hieu Nguyen
Rafael Saucedo

X Emani Donaldson (Vice-Chair)
X Natalie Ghayoumi
X Stacy Kowalski
X Samantha Le
X Maurice Lekea
X Hieu Nguyen
X Hugo Nicolas

X Thierry Ruboneka
X Sandra Sych (Chair)
X Maricres Valdez Castro
X Alma Villegas
X Lydia Zepeda
 Youth Position (Vacant)
X Leena Vo - Alternate Position

VI. Group Get-To-Know-You Activity - Vice-Chair Donaldson

- a. All commissioners introduce themselves and say why they joined the commission
- b. City staff introduces themselves and gives an overview what's their role in supporting CIRA

Each Commissioner shared:

Commissioner Donaldson said both grandparents are refugees/immigrants. She is first generation in US.
Commissioner Villegas said she is new to Tacoma and is a Racial Equity worker.
Commissioner Nicolas said he is from Mexico. He loves Tacoma. He was a “Dreamer”.
Commissioner Lekea said is from the Republic of Congo. He is a member of Tacoma’s Refugee Choir.
Commissioner Valdez Castro said she is a Scientist working on COVID-19 matters. She was in the Peace Corp.
Commissioner Vo said she is an immigrant from Viet Nam. She is a student of Ethnic Studies
Commissioner Zepeda said she is an Economist. Her grandparents are immigrants from Mexico.
Commissioner Ghayoumi said she is an immigrant from Iran. She is an Administrative Law Judge with WA.
Commissioner Nguyen is a refugee from Viet Nam and works at Tacoma Community House.
Commissioner Kowalski is an Immigrant Attorney of a Non-profit, representing interest of her clients.
Commissioner Ruboneka said he is from the Republic of Congo and Uganda and a child of the world.
Commissioner Sych is from an Eastern European country and resigns her Commissioner post this month.
Commissioner Le is a Vietnamese Refugee. She works in economic development and wants to make things better for others.

City Staff shared their primary City responsibilities:

Lisa Woods, Chief Equity Officer with Office of Equity and Human Rights
Mia Navarro, Assistant Chief Equity Officer with Office of Equity and Human Rights
Andreta Armstrong, Human Rights Manager and Staff Liaison to Human Rights Commission

VII. City Staff Updates – Liaison Raeshawna

- a. What is CIRA
- b. Founding documentation Resolution and Bylaws
- c. Roles and Responsibilities and Role of CIRA leadership
- d. Roberts Rules of Order and Voting

- e. Public meetings and the OPMA
- f. CIRA recruitment process
- g. How the commission should communicate with city government
- h. Commissioner Required Training <https://www.atg.wa.gov/open-government-training>

VIII. Commission Affairs (50 min)

Commissioners
Sandra Sych (Chair)
Emily Calhoun
Lydia Zepeda
Emani Donaldson (Vice Chair)
Alma Villegas

Perla Gamboa
Hieu Nguyen
Rafael Saucedo

- a. Committee Updates and Overview of work
 - Community Safety Committee
 - Governance (of CIRA) Committee
 - Language Access Committee
- b. Discuss Annual Work Plans– Chair Sych
- c. Additional Orientation and Onboarding Needs – Chair Sych
- d. Talk about the potential of creating more committees
- e. Discuss with new commissioners on which committees they would want to join
- f. New CIRA commissioners small group meeting

The role of CIRA: Advance the concerns of immigrant and refugee populations in Tacoma. Help forward agendas of City Council and City Manager related to immigrants and refugees. Example: To bring proposals to City Council to change the circumstance of children acting as interpreters for their parents.

OEHR is intentional regarding on-boarding Commissioners. New Commissioners will learn about what needed to be an effective Commissioner.

CIRA will get information on budget process; what services the City offers.

Recruitment & Training of Commissioners: Applicants want to know more about role, responsibilities, Commissioner Training/Orientation. Commissioners asked to share the gaps in their knowledge about being a Commissioner. The Commission is learning more about process of communication to forward concerns to City Council.

Chair and Vice Chair are the Commission’s connection to the City, not individual Commissioners.

Committees for CIRA expected to have Work Plans & Goals for the year.

Commissioners were encouraged to forward any question about their post to their Staff Liaison, Raeshawna Ware or the Chief Equity Officer, Lisa Woods.

CIRA Committees and meeting times:

Governance	Every third Thursday of the month at 5:30 pm
Language Access	Every second Thursday of the month at Noon
Community Safety	Every third Wednesday of the month at 11:00 am

Commissioners were encouraged to review information about current committees to discuss possible new committees at upcoming.

Commission Recruitment- Elected Officials are, according to City Charter, responsible for Commission recruitment. CIRA can however could share suggestions to CVS.

Detention Center Issue:

A Hunger Strike started on May 13, seemed to relate to concerns of food, healthcare, and COVID-19.

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 Rafael Saucedo

Community Safety Survey is in multiple languages. Partners in effort include Korean Women’s Association and Tacoma Community House.

Blue Card update. A big issue—Blue Cards are only in English.

Washington State does not collect data on hate crimes.

U.S. Representative Adam Smith asked to attend CIRA’s next meeting.

Language Access Committee: The group may be renamed to Language Justice Committee

The Commissioners agree to extend meeting for additional 10 minutes.

Committee Leads asked to email work plans to all Commissioners, through Staff Liaison Raeshawna Ware.

New Commissioners asked to share with Raeshawna which committee(s) they are interested in being a part.

Chair Sych will pair Commissioners and each pair is asked to connect to get acquainted. Chair Sych will send out who the pairs are.

Adjourned at 7:46

IX. Public Comment No public comment.

X. Items to Consider for Next Meeting:

XI. Adjourn

Why do we recognize the land?

To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honoring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is important to understand the long-standing history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history. Land acknowledgements do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation. It is also worth noting that acknowledging the land is Indigenous protocol.

–<http://www.lspirg.org/knowtheland>



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