



Minutes

Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

Date: December 13th, 2021

Time: 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

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

<https://zoom.us/j/96749278841?pwd=cGJMZTRsbkhKemlsUEgyM0wwRGh4QT09>

Meeting ID: 967 4927 8841

Passcode: 460504

Call-In Number: (253) 215-8782

I. Call Meeting to Order – Chair Refaei 5:37pm

II. Statement of Purpose – Chair Refaei

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 – Interim Vice Chair Saucedo

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 Refaei

a. Approval of Meeting Agenda (Aye/Nay Votes) - Move Lydia Zepeda, Second Rafael Saucedo

- i. Question: When are we going to discuss the work plan for 2022? Alma Villegas,
Response: It is not on the agenda currently, the subcommittees can meet and discuss and talk about it next meeting. Chair Refaei,

Comment: It would be good to have plans in January and have them approved in February.

b. Approval of October 2021 Meeting Minutes (Aye/Nay Votes) – Did not vote to approve

V. Record of Attendance and Excusal of Absences – Chair Refaei

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emily Calhoun | <input type="checkbox"/> Patricia Flores (Excused) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Perla Gamboa | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emani Donaldson |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hieu Nguyen | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Saiyare Refaei (Chair) |

Commissioners

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

Patricia Flores
Perla Gamboa
Hieu Nguyen
Rafael Saucedo
Alma Vargas

Rafael Saucedo (Interim Vice-Chair)

Sandra Sych (Excused)

Lydia Zepeda

Alma Villegas

Vacant

Alternate Position (Vacant)

VI. City Staff Updates – Liaison Raeshawna

a. Landlord-Tenant Information - Landlord-Tenant Coordinator ChiQuata Elder

Main Points:

- i. As the landlord-tenant coordinator, Elder helps to enforce the WA State Residential Landlord-Tenant Act and Tacoma Rental Housing Code TMC 1.95.
- ii. On May 10th, 2021, WA became a “just cause” eviction state. There are 17 business reasons as to why a landlord can terminate the tenancy.
- iii. The COT rental housing codes are enforceable through more than a civil action. COT Rental housing code can apply penalties to landlords. This enforcement has led to many landlords coming into full compliance with the code.
- iv. Future actions include adding language to the code in regards to:
 1. Shared housing update (HUD is allowing those with section 8 to use room rental/shared housing due to the increased need for housing options).
 2. Tenant late fees (some landlords wait until the end of a tenancy to notify renters of accrued late fees which could become a barrier).
 3. Landlord having to have a business license in order to issue evictions. The business license is used to contact landlords of changes to the codes, policies and ensure compliance.
 4. Notice of sale to low-income tenants. (If a person is low-income it will likely take them longer to relocate).
- v. The city is looking at ways to support proper housing conditions and intervene when necessary, particularly for immigrants and refugees. (For example: if a building utility is off, but there is no formal complaint). This falls under the affordable housing action strategies of the City.

Question: Is the COT looking to partner with the landlord to ask them to offer more affordable housing options? Hieu

Response: COT is doing that in a number of ways through the tax credit, through updates of policies, and through the affordable housing actions to get them to do more affordable housing.

Question: Any upcoming communication to the immigrant community? Hieu

Response: COT does targeted communication, and can provide the information to the staff liaison to send to you if there are community forums and feedback opportunities. ChiQuata

Question: In setting structures or updates in the code – How long does it take? What happens in the meantime? What have you been seeing since the moratorium? How are you finding out if landlords are out of compliance with the “just cause”? How do people know about their rights? Is there a communication strategy? Alma

Response: The just cause eviction came into being in May prior to the end of the moratorium in September. We use our phone calls to know if landlords are in

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compliance. There have been several pieces of training through the state, THA, and our organization. The only recourse is the civil action renters can take in accordance with state law. The first Rental Housing Code passed in seven months. It is a high priority. If we could get it passed by the end of the year would be ideal. ChiQuata

Response: Communication strategy support is coming from the new position we are recruiting – If CIRA can help us identify the trusted messengers in the community that would be helpful. We could partner with CIRA on some of the changes that are being proposed, a consideration for the CIRA workplan of 2022. Lisa

Question: Is there a handout available describing the changes, and in multiple languages? Could not find anything on the website. Links would be great. Lydia

Response: We do not have a handout yet, we are updating the website, we can work on translating materials. We are looking at creating a one-pager though.

Question: How can we contact you for more questions? Saiyare

Response: [Rental Housing Code](#), TacomaRHC@cityoftacoma.org, celder@cityoftacoma.org,

Question: What are some protections for those who fear reporting. Raeshawna

Response: Can go online Or call 253-591-500, Or 311. We do not disclose any identifying information, and there is a retaliation cause in the Rental Housing Code. The only time they are disclosed is when they request an inspection.

- b. Commissioner Recruitment – Liaison Raeshawna Ware
 - i. Will be contacting the commissioners for questions regarding needs and transition.
- c. Website Updates – Liaison Raeshawna Ware
 - i. Samantha is the webpage manager.
 - ii. Did send governance committee requests to Sam which requests an updated photo, workplan, and pertinent CIRA information be uploaded to the webpage.
 - iii. About 90% of agendas and minutes are uploaded to the website.
 - iv. The next step is to have telelanguage work on translating the material, which is going to be a long process.
- d. Other Relevant Updates
 - i. Thanks for the willingness to participate in the Police chief recruitment Alma, great question. Raeshawna. Comment: The person selected was the one who responded most interesting to the question about causing harm to the community, although the response was satisfactory. Would like a follow conversation about that. Alma

VII. Group Get-To-Know-You Activity: Interim Vice-Chair Saucedo

- a. Question: What's your favorite thing about Tacoma?
 - i. Saucedo: Great food is always within arms reach. Love the diverse food. Taqueria de Grande on 72nd street
 - ii. Alma: The music scene. I love going to listen to live music. A lot of diversity, local musicians, and the art scene.
 - iii. Lydia: Gorgeous mountain view that towers over us.
 - iv. Emani: I love the mountain view – Ruston and Point Defiance area. Love the 5mi drive. Been outdoors a lot.
 - v. Perla: I love all the places you mentioned, something to add I appreciate the museums in the city – History, Glass, Art – Lucky to have all you have said and the culture.

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- vi. Saiyare: The community I have met here. Been able to meet all different kinds of people who allow me to be my full self
- vii. Hieu: Love the location, 15-20 minutes away from things. Can go to the mountain, parks, etc. Affordable comparable to Seattle, less busy.
- viii. Raeshawna: I love the hills of the Tacoma. I grew up in the church culture here. Different places of worship service are amazing. It is close-knit everyone knows each and yet the culture is distinctive.
- ix. Lisa: I love the culture, the sense of family in Tacoma. This place feels like home.

VIII. Commission Affairs (60 min)

- a. CIRA Meeting Changes – Chair Saiyare, Raeshawna Ware
 - i. Keep the regularly scheduled meetings as is.
 - ii. Would like to change the December 2022 meeting as it happened this year. Can defer to the 2022 commission to vote next year to change the end-of-year schedule.
- b. Community Safety Letter – Chair Saiyare, Lisa Woods
 - i. Provided updates on legal and police’s position on the community safety letter:
 - 1. Direct advertising for fundraising could pose a concern. Can make a specific request to CVS is to support a particular organization.
 - 2. Advise the commission to address the letter to CVS as the reporting council committee or the full council.
 - 3. There is an invitation to attend a CPAC meeting and have the letter read into the record of the meeting also.
 - 4. Liaison will send the letter via email and ask for the commissioner to review it.
 - 5. Alma (Lead), Lydia, Emani will review the letter and send the revision to Liaison.
- c. Leader/Chair Interest - Chair Saiyare
 - i. Nomination for Chair and Vice-Chair happened.
 - ii. Move (Lydia) to elect Sandra Sych as Chair of CIRA, Second (Rafael)
 - iii. Move (Lydia) to elect Emani Donaldson as Vice-Chair of CIRA, Second (Rafael)
 - iv. Gratitude for Rafaels service and interim Vice-Chari and Saiyare’s service as Chair.
- d. Committees, Boards, & Commissions (CBC) Training Opportunity – feedback and information
 - i. Been in conversation with CM Walker, looking to gather recommendations and feedback from commissioners
 - ii. Leads of CBC’s are looking to improve many things. 1) Based on the pilot training feedback a new training video is going to be worked on that will be inclusive of the Latine/Hispanic perspective 2) CIRA may be invited to help support the larger CBC effort in recruitments updates, etc.
 - iii. CIRA could look to support and participate in all CBC’s that are part of the immigrant and refugee community. Perla.
 - iv. If you have anything to share about the CBC meeting, I am happy to take it to the next meeting when I attend with CM Walker. Rafael.
- e. Committee Updates (30 min)
 - Community Safety Committee (Lydia)
 - 1. CSC moved the meeting to Wednesday, at 11 am to accommodate Officer Ali.
 - 2. Having conversations with TPD about streamlining the connections between CBC’s who have similar needs as CIRA. It is helpful to know if there are specific questions CIRA may have so we can reduce the turnaround time. Option to have

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a joint meeting with CPAC because they have been reviewing policy, etc. There may be others ways to gather information, data, and share questions that may not require attendance at the regular meeting. Can check to see if we can get a representative to be present at the CSC meeting? Lisa

3. Setup their own link for the committee meeting.
 4. CPAC liaison would like CIRA and CPAC to meet about the survey. Raeshawna
 5. Schedule a meeting with CPAC and CIRA immediately. Lydia
 6. Can we pull information from other surveys from other organizations that are doing similar work to avoid the frustration of going and asking people similar things? Alma
 7. Resend survey questions to Lisa Woods. Send CPAC liaison info. Raeshawna
 8. Clarify why some incidents are not considered hate crimes. Lydia/Ali
- Governance (of CIRA) Committee (Saiyare, Rafael, Sandra) No update
 - Language Access Committee No Update
 - NW Detention Center Committee (Saiyare)
 1. 64 people were brought into the detention center.
 2. People trying to advocate for their release using something called prosecutorial discretion. Some people have been able to get released. Trying to challenge denied cases, in some cases, they are not reviewed before being denied.
 3. If anyone would like to join, please send me information.
 4. Requested committee meeting calendar dates, times, and links. Alma
 5. Committee leads should send their meeting information to the Liasion. Saiyare.

IX. Public Comment

X. Items to Consider for Next Meeting:

- a. CBC Connections

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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