



Minutes

Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

Date: July 25th 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.

I. Call Meeting to Order – Vice Chair Donaldson, [Meeting Called to Order at 5:37pm](#)

II. Statement of Purpose – Vice Chair Donaldson

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 – Commissioner Natalie Ghayoumi

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 – Vice Chair Donaldson

- a. Approval of July 2022 Meeting Agenda – [Lydia moved, Natalie Seconded, Approved](#)
- b. Approval of June 2022 Meeting Minutes – [Alma moved, Lydia Seconded, Approved](#)

V. Record of Attendance and Excusal of Absences – Vice Chair Donaldson

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emani Donaldson (Vice-Chair) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thierry Ruboneka |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natalie Ghayoumi | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maricres Valdez Castro |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stacy Kowalski | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alma Villegas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Samantha Le | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leena Vo |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maurice Lekea | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lydia Zepeda |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hieu Nguyen | <input type="checkbox"/> Alternate (Vacant) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hugo Nicolas | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Position (Vacant) |

Commissioners

Emani Donaldson
Natalie Ghayoumi
Stacy Kowalski
Samatha Le
Maurice Lekea
Hieu Nguyen

Hugo Nicolas
Thierry Ruboneka
Maricress Valdez-Castro
Alma Villegas
Leena Vo
Lydia Zepeda

VI. Group Get-To-Know-You Activity – Alma Villegas

- A. Share one gift or tradition your relatives or ancestors have passed down? (summarizations listed below)

Commissioner Villegas- Grandparents have passed down their love of music and performance

Commissioner Ghayoumi- Celebrate the Persian New year which is the first day of Spring.

Commissioner Zepeda- Celebrate and honor the Day of the Dead.

Commissioner Valdez-Castro- In the Philippine culture we greet our elders with a blessing by bowing and taking their right hand and pressing the back of the hand to our forehead saying “mano po” asking for the blessing of their presence.

Commissioner Lekea- Grew up in village didn’t have lights so we used fire all sat around it and played music and storytelling.

Commissioner Ruboneka- Celebrate and Honor Breath of Life.

Commissioner Donaldson- Sunday Dinner at granny’s growing up was a huge family event.

Commissioner Nguyen- Family Heirloom that gets passed down to the oldest girl when she gets married starting from great grandmother.

Commissioner Nicolas- Went back to Mexico to learn more about how life and death are honored for those that passed.

Commissioner Vo- Tradition, Confucius, honoring death in family, lighting incense, presenting gifts on graves every year.

VII. City Staff Updates – Liaison Raeshawna

- a. Reminder Commissioner Required Training <https://www.atg.wa.gov/open-government-training>
- b. Reminder Commissioners need to select at least on CIRA committee to support.
- c. Process for supporting community events. 1) Through CERC and if necessary 2) Through a Council Action Memorandum or Council Contingency Request. Guest from the City and CERC.
- d. [Welcoming Week - Welcoming America](#) Sept. 9-18

VIII. Commission Affairs

- a. Chair Position **VOTE**: Does anyone want to step in as Chair? If not, Vice Chair Donaldson can step into the role and ask that someone step in as Vice-Chair. **Commissioner decided to vote on Emani Donaldson as Chair** Commissioner Zepeda called the question. Commissioner Villegas seconded the motion. It was put to a vote, the ayes have it. –Approved 7:30PM
- b. Vice Chair position is now vacant- Commissioner Nguyen made a motion to place Commissioner Villegas to Vice Chair, and Commissioner Villegas obliged. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Zepeda. It was put to a vote; the ayes have it. –Approved 7:32PM
- c. Community Events: Are there any events we would like the Tacoma City Council to support in the community this year? For example, UW Tacoma Latinx Celebration Awards 2022? **Tabled for next meeting.**
- d. Welcoming Week Discussion: What are APCC, KWA, LUSS, Tacoma Community House, and others doing around this time we can elevate as a recommendation for the City of Tacoma to support Welcoming Week. If none, do we want to partner to create an event? **No official motions**

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have been made or approved regarding welcoming week. Chair would like to continue this conversation in the governance committee, and asked for additional time that would work for those who would like to participate in the conversation and to send follow up email following the meeting. (Additional comments in the note section below)

- e. Committee Discussion: Guest of Alma Villegas, Maria Gamez the Language Access Coordinator in the City of Tacoma, would like to brief commissioners interested in Language Justice Committee on upcoming activities CIRA could advise on. They are working on drafting a working document for language access to become Language Justice. To make sure that in the COT other languages are offered and have proper interpretation.
- f. Committee Updates and Overview of work. Please include the next meeting date and time.
 - Community Safety Committee- Is Concerned about High levels of Covid, and sanitation in the detention Center, there were 58 cases in June. We are concerned that entire pods are being quarantined and hence detainees are at risk of being re-infected. Are the detainees receiving adequate medical care? CSC calls for an investigation by the TPCHD and/or the WA state Department of health. This was moved by Commissioner -Vo and Seconded by Commissioner -Valdez Castro and passed CSC unanimously. CSC would like for CIRA to take this concern and promote/present to Council committee. Motion made by CSC, Seconded by Commissioner- Ghayoumi, called to vote; the ayes have it and has been approved.
 - Governance (of CIRA) Committee- The Governance Committee has more to discuss and still need more to join the committee.
 - Language Justice Committee- The Language Justice Committee has just restarted, there are only a couple people on the committee and are looking for more participants.

IX. Public Comment- *No public comment*

X. Items to Consider for Next Meeting:

- *Having an annual CIRA kick off. Introduce new Commissioners and get to hear from the community of how we can support them.
- * Monthly newsletter that elevates and highlights incredible organizations in our community and upcoming events within our city.
- *What about CIRA having own Facebook, Instagram or Twitter to be a part of more community engagement?
- * Committees still need to be filled up or de-filled as you cannot have more than 6 on a committee.
- * What is the Process for getting support for Community events?

Adjourn- 7:43pm

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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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NOTES

(Comments/Discussion Surrounding Welcoming Week and other events)

*Gathering information and promoting within networks on Social media. CIRA should be supporting others and elevating efforts and refugee/immigrants. Avoid Tokenism

*Don't have enough manpower, time or funds to put on a separate event. COT shouldn't make us do everything.

*Lets make sure that this isn't just a token event. Needs to be a real partnership amongst all.

*If COT took more ownership and properly funded event, it would be easier to partner and execute.

*Ethiopians celebrate their New Year on September 11th, and it was frowned upon because to others who aren't apart of their community it looked like they were celebrating the 9/11 attacks. They do not want to celebrate their new year in fear of being branded as terrorists. Awareness and partnership is needed in our communities.

*Getting all leaders in COT together and asking what the community needs.

*Newsletter highlighting organizations who already do the work. More community engagement.

*COT looks to the boards, commissions, committees for feedback on how things are going. When you have something important you want to celebrate. We need to know one another more. Take time to figure out what is important and pick maybe 3 things to focus on first. Start with your networks.

*CIRA asked for staff support and a budget and was told COT could provide up to \$5k. Which is not enough to put on an event.

*Who do you trust to represent your communities?

*What is Welcoming America? Answered: From Lydia Zepeda My understanding is that Welcoming Week is not a CIRA event, but a commitment that the City made and then asked CIRA to do for them. What we have said is that we do not have the capacity to organize an event, especially without a budget.

From Alma V - Welcoming week is an opportunity to spotlight community efforts and create awareness about the challenges that our communities face

Link was provided for what Welcoming America is all about: [Welcoming Week - Welcoming America](#)

Need to knows: *New office person should be coming to do Admin work for CIRA starting in August.

*Once a quarter council members should be on this meeting going forward. There was misinformation surrounding meeting times etc.

*Committees cannot have quorum which is 7, under guidelines. So a good number for a committee is 4-6 members.

*If you have not took the required training please do so, if completed please send copy of certificate to Liaison Raeshawna.

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