



Minutes

Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

Date: August 22nd 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 Donaldson, [Meeting Called to Order at 5:47](#)
 - II. Statement of Purpose** – Vice Alma Villegas
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** –Lydia Zepeda
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 Donaldson
 - a. Approval of August 2022 Meeting Agenda – [Commissioner Zepeda moved, Commissioner Le Seconded, Approved](#)
 - b. Approval of July 2022 Meeting Minutes - [Commissioner Zepeda moved, Commissioner Valdez Castro Seconded, Approved](#)
 - V. Record of Attendance and Excusal of Absences** –Chair Donaldson.
[Quorum Present. Absent: Ruboneka, Nguyen.](#)

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

Record of Attendance, Continued:

Emani Donaldson (Vice-Chair)

Natalie Ghayoumi

Stacy Kowalski

Samantha Le

Maurice Lekea

Hieu Nguyen Absent

Hugo Nicolas

~~Thierry Ruboneka~~ Absent

Maricres Valdez Castro

Alma Villegas

Leena Vo

Lydia Zepeda

Alternate (Vacant)

Youth Position (Vacant)

OEHR Staff Present: Lisa Woods, Rita Moore, Drena Sellers, and Indira Santiago (Human Resources)

VI. Commission Affairs

a. Welcoming Week Proclamation Discussion (with guest) and Vote

Guest speaker was not present. Could we reschedule representative from Ethiopian Community (Sophia) to come and speak at next CIRA meeting?

Proclamation Discussion:

Commissioner Villegas made motion to pass proclamation.

Commissioner Valdez Castro: motion to amend. If possible, would like more time to discuss the word “genocide” in reference to turmoil in Ethiopia, as it is very sensitive/political depending on the ethnic group people belong to. Suggests using “horrific turmoil” in place of genocide to describe ongoing political issues.

Commissioner Villegas: Seconded using horrific turmoil

Commissioner Zepeda: Secondary amendment to say, “ongoing suffering of the people in Ethiopia.”

Commissioner Kowalski: noted correcting “Afghani Refugees” to “Afghan Refuges”

Chair Donaldson: Call to vote on Proclamation as amended.

The ayes have it; the motion passes, and commissioners will add “on going suffering” to the Proclamation.

Welcoming Week Proclamation to be presented to Tacoma City Council September 13th, 2022.

b. Welcoming Week Event Discussion: What are the Tacoma Refugee Choir, 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?

- o Tacoma Refugee Choir is creating a music video/video testimonial to be presented for welcoming week.

Commissioner Lakea: We would like to have contributions from City Council Members on *What Welcoming Week means to you*. **How can we send an invite to Council Members to ask them for a contribution to the video?**

If commissioners can send details to OEHR staff (Lisa Woods & Rita Moore) will help coordinate communicating the request the Council.

Video Recording happening September 10th 4-8 p.m. Any community members are welcome to attend. Location is still TBD.

- o Korean ChuSeok Festival at APCC, September 10th & 11th..

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- c. Committee Updates and Overview of work. Please include the next meeting date and time.

Community Safety Committee:

- o Community Safety had a successful meeting, where Council Members Ushka and Walker were present.
- o Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department (TPCHD) claims not to have jurisdiction over Northwest ICE Processing Center (NW ICP) . Concern for health & safety of people detained continues. Washington State Health Department & Attorney General have all written letters to GEO Group without response.
- o Tacoma Police Department (TPD) does have jurisdiction over NW ICP facility and have responded to crimes reported in the center. The people detained cannot call 911, but only the non-emergency line. Police response times to crimes can take weeks.
- o TPD Community Liaison suggested that the legal department of TPCHD speak to the legal department of the TPD about jurisdiction of NW ICP because it's owned by GEO group. Both legal departments (TPD & TPCHD) seem to have different understanding of jurisdiction and should speak to each other.
- o People detained at NW ICP are charged \$1 a minute for phone calls. Federal mandates require free 1-800 numbers to report sexual assault and other crimes, but calls go unanswered. Council Member Rumbaugh was present & asked how she might elevate the issue of reports to 1-800 numbers going unanswered.
- o Committee intends to connect with US Representative Kilmer to address on-going concerns at detention center. Rep. Kilmer has the authority to request a visit of the center.
- o **Next committee meeting:** Monday September 12th at 3:30 p.m. (2nd Monday of the Month). Council Members expressed that Community Safety committee is the best platform for community members to voice concern about NW ICP centers.

Governance (of CIRA) Committee:

- o Governance is newest committee; working on getting new members acclimated.
- o Primary focus of last committee meeting was to work on the Welcoming Week Proclamation.
- o One goal of the Governance committee is to vet agenda ideas and guest speakers and bring to the committee of the whole.
- o **Next committee meeting:** <insert date>

Language Justice Committee (LJC):

- o Working on drafting language for Language Justice Resolution. Council intends to pass the resolution sometime in the Spring of 2023. Expectation is that LJC will give input into the resolution and draft plan, and present proposals for Language Justice plan.
- o **Next committee meeting:** September 21st, 2022 (third Wednesday of the month). OEHR Staff, Rita Moore, will assist in creating reoccurring Zoom meeting.

VII. City Staff Updates – Liaison Lisa Woods filling info Raeshawna as OEHR facilitator

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- a. Staff Introduction: Office of Equity and Human Rights new Office Administrator and new CBC Coordinator
Raeshawna on leave until October
Drena Sellers is new CBC Coordinator; Rita Moore is new Office Administrator.
- b. Media and Communication Office Social Media Response.
OEHR staff will provided resources and act as liaison to Media and Communication Office to help CIRA with social media.
For Welcoming Week, commissioners expressed interest in being able to post a video from an immigration lawyer regarding one’s rights, and information about Ethiopian New Year (celebrated on September 11th) and the stigma the Ethiopian community faces celebrating on 9/11 in the context of United States history.
In general, Commission would like to have more of social media presence so immigrant communities can learn about CIRA, so guidance on how to put their work content on the web.

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

- a. Meet and Greet – answer the following question
Activity skipped due to time constraints.

IX. Public Comment – No Public Comment

X. Items to Consider for Next Meeting:

- a. Guest Sustainability.
- b. Guest Perla Gamboa.

XI. Adjourned 7:31 p.m.

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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