



Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

Date: September 26th, 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 – Chair Emani Donaldson

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 September 2022 Meeting Agenda (Aye/Nay Votes) –
Commissioner Zepeda made motion to approve, Ghayoumi seconded the motion. The Ayes have it, and the September 26, 2022 agenda was approved.
- b. Approval of August 2022 Meeting Minutes (Aye/Nay Votes) –
Commissioner Zepeda sent changes Staff Liaison Ware regarding the minutes and would like the following corrections made to the Community Safety Committee report details:
 - “GEO/ICE detention center” is Northwest ICE Processing Center (NW ICP); please make correction for accuracy.
 - Tacoma Pierce County Health Department (TPCHD) claims not to have jurisdiction over NW ICP.
 - Third bullet point, makes changes about police response times being prompt. It can take several weeks for Tacoma Police Department (TPD) to respond to reported crimes.
 - Add a bullet point that TPD Community Liaison suggested that TPD and TPCHD legal teams’ communication to each other regarding jurisdictions.

Commissioners

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Stacy Kowalski
Samatha Le
Maurice Lekea
Hieu Nguyen

Hugo Nicolas
Thierry Ruboneka
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Motion to approve the minutes made by Commissioner Zepeda and 2nd by Stacy
The ayes have it & the minutes are approved.

V. Record of Attendance and Excusal of Absences – 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stacy Kowalski | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alma Villegas |
| <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Hugo Nicolas Absent at role call | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Position (Vacant) |

VI. Commission Affairs

- a. Welcoming Week Debrief – Proclamation, Tacoma Refugee Choir, APCC, Social Media Campaign

Welcoming Week proclamation was edited to be 300 words. Proclamation was read by Deputy Mayor Blocker at the September 13 City Council Meeting; Members of CIRA & Tacoma Refugee Choir accepted the Proclamation.

Commissioner Castro: edits about adding Hispanic Heritage Month did not get added to the Welcoming Week website. In the future would like to be mindful of the celebrations that are happening in Tacoma & make sure they are seen too.

Commissioner Lekea: Tacoma Refugee Choir (TRC) Music Video. Wanted participation from Council Members to pre-record message for the video; this did not happen, but Councilmembers were present at the event. Next year would like to have the TRC record at the Tacoma Municipal building – but that would require Mayoral permission.

Commissioner Castro: Would like to partner with the City on how to highlight events that are happening around the city, even outside of Welcoming Week. It would be helpful to have a calendar of timelines & deadlines for submitting information about how to share events.

Question: Would it still be possible to have interview from Ethiopian community member about Ethiopian New Year that happens on Sept. 11th?

Staff Liaison Ware: agrees that it is important to elevate the story of the Ethiopian Community. Perhaps this can be included in the CIRA annual report to Community, Safety & Vitality Committee.

In the past CIRA did not want to be responsible for planning events – but CIRA could work as an advisory board on what welcoming week should look like for the City of Tacoma. CIRA should consider what a nominal figure on what it would look like to make Welcoming Week a robust celebration. Thinking about welcoming week early to champion the work and make a recommendation to the Council/City.

Commissioner Thierry: not to limit events to just non-profits around town; how might we include businesses run my immigrant and refugee communities?

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Commissioner Villegas: in Governance committee we talked about having a calendar of annual activities on how we can get ahead of deadlines and timelines. Could have a calendar that lays this out?

- Staff Liaison Ware: I could lay out some important upcoming dates if that would be helpful. Will work on this in the background to provide to CIRA.
- Commissioner Castro: could this calendar also include state legislature session dates, so we know when to advocate for certain issues.

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

- Community Safety Committee (44:06)
 - Committee last met on Wednesday 9/21.
 - No updates on “bluecard”s, outreach, or “the survey”
 - Update about Northwest ICE Processing: property owners are GEO Group. Property tax is \$713,000 annually. Land Use category is “exempt;” it is unclear what that means but we committee is trying to obtain more information about the facility and the contract.
 - Thierry is researching trauma informed policing & wants to work with the police to develop workshops.
 - Information from WAISN (Washington Immigration Solidarity Network) – launched WA Immigrant relief fund to receive \$1000 in state funds who had not received covid relief funds due to being undocumented.
 - Next meetings are: 10/19, 11/17, and 12/21 at 11 AM. We have concerns about quorum being met at committee.
 - Emergent community concerns. In the meeting three issues came up:
 1. Safety of Ride Share drives and passengers. There have been incidents of violence against drivers & riders who are immigrants or perceived as. There is a need for safety and training protocols.
 2. Interactions between immigrant communities and unhoused communities. There is compassion, but also some fear. There are feelings that shelters & encampments are concentrated in immigrant neighborhoods. There is compassion and immigrant communities have done outreach to see how they can help.
 3. Concern about increasing crime & hate crimes against refugee & immigrant Communities. Feeling that the Tacoma Police Department (TPD) is not being responsive.

Commissioner Le Provided Examples:

- There was an attempted break in at her house & it took 45 minutes for police to arrive. Person who tried to break into house was possibly experiencing mental health episode or was using. Police told her that they couldn’t arrest perpetrator unless there were two incidents in one evening & they could only move him. immigrant communities around her as there are barriers on how people can communicate instances of break-in, etc.

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- Another instance of violence against API community. When at a gas station someone told Commissioner to go back to her county and spat on her. Other ongoing issues of people yelling racial slurs at her; increasing anxiety that she must live with. Has been told at Home Depot to take her “Chinese Virus” home with her.

Chair Donaldson – recalls a letter that CIRA wrote to TPD about what constitutes hate crimes and how to promote awareness within the police department in. What can we do more than write letters & have conversations? How can move beyond conversations & create systemic change? Do we need to invite Chief of Police to come talk to us? Can we organize a talking session that is CIRA/TPD/Mayor?

Officer Ali: Hate Crimes are more serious than a misdemeanor. Wendy Hadal is PIO is a great person to reach out to about engaging with Chief of Police.

Commissioner Castro: regional issue of homeless shelters being built in immigrant communities. Echo’s the Chair’s comments moving from pleasantries of developing legislation to defend our communities.

Commissioner Le: Why are communities that are already so disparaged the location for tiny home villages? Who does the development of site planning for the tiny home villages?

- Governance (of CIRA) Committee) (1:04)

- Governance Committee took place on 2nd Wednesday (9/14 from 5:30-7:30).

- Discussion on Welcoming Week.

- Vetting guest speakers for CIRA. Idea would be to submit speaker requests two months in advance, with bullet points of their topic, so CIRA can prep and tailor presentation to the commission. Would like to gauge what the intentions, actions, and follow up plan after guests have spoken with CIRA. We need to highlight involvement from the community (rather than city officials) & giving more opportunities for the community to engage with CIRA.

Commissioner Castro Question: can CIRA create graphic to share on social media or have the COT share notice about meetings.

Chair- as CIRA we do not have social media, but there can be some help from OEHR.

- Commissioner Zepeda – Perhaps more substantive than public comment, we can invite community members to participate in committee meetings.

- Considering having a deadline for agenda submissions, so CIRA can have control over setting the agenda. Sending out the minutes of subcommittee meeting to the Governance Committee.

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- Language Justice Committee (1:17)
- Language Justice Committee met on 10/19/2022 at 3:30 PM. In attendance Maurice & OEHR Staff Rita Moore.
- Language Justice Committee has been requesting participation in LJC, but we have not seen it.

Making Motion to: Put Language Justice Committee on pause until we move through the adoption of the Language Justice Resolution (Spring of 2023). Language Justice Resolution policy review might interface well with the governance committee. Proposing that LJC work get rolled into the Gov committee. the logic to the merge is to have fuller participation, higher functioning, but fewer committees, so we can be more strategic. Once the LJ Resolution is adopted, it would create a clear work plan for a Language Justice Committee to hold the City of Tacoma accountable to the implementation of the plan.
- Language Justice Resolution is being reviewed by the city Attorney's office but will be available in October to us in October.
- Commissioner Lekea – there are challenges to being in two committees. Would be great if the commission would consider merging the policy work of Language Justice to the Governance Committee.
- Discussion on if committees are public meetings and need to be notices. Can CIRA put out continuous notice about subcommittees on our website? Staff Liaison will check that.
- Commissioner Villegas Questions: What is the official total number of CIRA commissioners? Are all commissioners assigned to a committee and actively participating? Then what would constitute a quorum for a committee?
 - Staff Liaison Ware: There are 12 commissioners on the roster; all have been assigned a committee; we do not have attendance of committee. If there are two committees, quorum would be seven (7) commissioners. If there are 6 people on each committee, quorum will not be reached.
- Commissioner Natalie: Agree that joining the committees are fine – but wants to make sure that the Gov committee meeting stay at the same time.
- Staff Liaison Ware – will check on rosters to ensure even membership if everyone agrees about the dissolution of the Language Justice Committee. I don't know if there needs to be a vote on the dissolution on a committee.
- Zepeda – according to our bylaws, the only committee that we are required to have is the Governance committee, so we do not need to have a vote.

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VII. City Staff Updates – Liaison Raeshawna

a. Returning to Hybrid Commission Meetings

As of 10/10 CBS are required to return to in person. We are starting a hybrid meeting. CIRA Commissioners are welcome to attend in-person or stay hybrid.

Commissioner Hugh – can we get parking passes for the return to in person meeting? Staff Liaison will check on that issue.

b. Annual Report to the Community Safety and Vitality Committee due

Required to create an annual report & a look ahead for the coming year and will present to your Council Committee. A chance for CIRA to report & get direction from the council as well. We can move out the date to the November.

c. Guests who would like to connect with CIRA – Previous Commissioner Perla Gamboa, the Office of Environmental Policy and Sustainability

Staff Liaison will reach out to Governance committee to coordinate

d. Holiday Calendar

Think about how you want to proceed as we approach the next coming months.

Commissioner Castro: In October – can we acknowledge Filipino Heritage month? Yes – we can add any acknowledgment at the top of a meeting.

Chair Donaldson – Proposes that we move the November & December meeting a week earlier. Dates would be: 11/21 and 12/19, rather than 11/28 and 12/26. CIRA can vote now, or next month.

e. Other Issues:

Commissioner Nguyen – in the past year there was a community calendar. Is there a way to make this more accessible?

Would like to see more events around “no crime” events, that we can partner with schools, libraries, and the police department to promote more public safety events.

Commissioner Zepeda – there are a lot of other safety events happening around the city (like slowing speed) that we can organize around.

Chair Donaldson – will bring these issues back to the Governance Committee for consideration. Next GOV Committee is: 10/12 from 5:30-7:30.

Commissioner Ghayoumi: bringing awareness of what is happening in Iran.

Demonstrations/protests that are happening after a 22-year-old woman died in custody for not wearing “proper clothing.” Media tried to cover it up & there is a lot of outrage in Iran. Want to address that it’s not just about police brutality, it’s about women’s rights. Bring a reminder to bring kindness to the Iranian community.

Staff Liaison – read recently: to help people suffer less, to listen with out intention, or giving advice. Just listen.

Celebrando Comunidad/Latinx Community Award – CIRA elevated this to City Council last year and they sponsored the event. They are asking if we would like to have booth at their event.

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Is anyone from CIRA interested in hosting a table? 10/14 at UW at 6p.m. Will share the information with the rest of CIRA.

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

a. Meet and Greet Question

Skipped in lieu of other announcements.

IX. Public Comment

No Public Comment.

X. Items to Consider for Next Meeting:

XI. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 6:58 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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