



# Minutes

## Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

**Date:** October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**Time:** 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

**Location:** Hybrid Tacoma Municipal Building  
747 Market Street  
Conference Room #243 and #220-A (Interpretation Room)  
Tacoma, WA 98402

**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  
Meeting was called to order at 5:31 PM
- II. Statement of Purpose** – Vice Alma Villegas (Time Stamp, 2:37)
- III. Land Acknowledgment** – Lydia Zepeda (Time Stamp, 3:05)
- IV. Consent Agenda** – Chair Donaldson (Time Stamp, 3:40)
  - a. Approval of October 2022 Meeting Agenda (Aye/Nay Votes).  
Commissioner Zepeda made motion to approve, Commissioner Le seconded. The Ayes have it, and the October 24<sup>th</sup> Agenda was approved.
  - b. Approval of September 2022 Meeting Minutes (Aye/Nay Votes).  
Commissioner Zepeda made motion to approve, Commissioner Le seconded. The Ayes have it, and the September 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes were approved.
- V. Record of Attendance and Excusal of Absences** – Chair Donaldson (Time Stamp, 6:00)
 

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emani Donaldson (Vice-Chair)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thierry Ruboneka
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natalie Ghayoumi	<input type="checkbox"/> <del>Maricres Valdez-Castro</del> Absent
<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 type="checkbox"/> Hieu Nguyen Absent at roll call	<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  
Maricres Valdez-Castro  
Alma Villegas  
Leena Vo  
Lydia Zepeda

## **VI. Commission Affairs (Time Stamp, 7:34)**

### **a. Proposed meeting changes for Holiday schedules**

November & December Special Meeting proposals: November 21 and December 19. OR one meeting in December 12/5.

Chair Donaldson proposes to keep November 21 meeting to prepare for CVS Council Committee.

Commissioner Kowalski made motion to cancel the regular CIRA meeting on November 28 and move it to November 21st.

Commissioner Ghayoumi seconded the motion.

Commissioner Zepeda opposed – but will stand aside.

The Ayes have it, and the regular CIRA meeting on November 28<sup>th</sup> is Canceled and a Special meeting will take place on November 21, 2022.

Commissioner Zepeda made motion to cancel the regular CIRA meeting on December 26 and move it to December 19.

Commissioner Kowalski seconded the motion.

The Ayes have it, and the regular CIRA meeting on December 26<sup>th</sup> is Canceled and a special meeting will take place on December 19, 2022.

### **b. Committee Updates and Overview of work. Please include the next meeting date and time. (Time Stamp, 14:55)**

#### **Community Safety Committee**

(Time Stamp,

Commissioner Zepeda sent seven (7) item report to the Chair and Liaison Ware.

1. Community Business not getting police response & lack of follow through from Tacoma Police Department (TPD). We would like to know why.
2. We want to know what has been done with the Department of Justice (DOJ) “Burn Grant” in Tacoma.
3. North West Immigrant Processing Center (NWIPC): GEO has refused to offer a Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department (TPCHD) sponsored booster clinic inside the detention center. TPCHD is looking to offer clinic outside the center for family and friends, including testing kits. TPCHD is also checking to see if testing kits can be sent inside the facility.
4. TPCHD + AidNW to facilitate visitation in NWICP by health department staff to help staff.
5. Question for full commission: interested in touring the detention center as a group, and/or visiting individuals in the in the detention center? We can make a request to GEO for a group visit. (Discussion to follow report).
6. Seattle CID – number homeless shelters and in construction on 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. Commissioner Castro is drafting a letter of support for CIRA to review.
7. Walk for Reconciliation this weekend on Saturday 10/29.

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Next meetings: November 16 at 11AM and December 21 @ 11AM

Discussion RE: Visiting NWICP (Item 5 in report)

-Commissioner Villegas & Chair Donaldson are interested in touring the NWIPC.

Questions:

Can we get a time frame for when the visit can happen?

Do we need special permission?

Yes, we need to ask the Warden for permission to tour as a group tour (they could deny us). As individuals we can visit detainees during visiting hours, you just need name of detainees.

Do we need permissions from the City of Tacoma to make the trip?

Liaison Ware- Will investigate if there are special permission. One option would be to get City Council support for the visit in the upcoming CIRA Annual Plan.

Commissioner Zepeda – will ask Councilmembers Walker & Ushka at next NWICP meeting.

Commissioner Zepeda made motion for CIRA to formally visit the NWICP; Commissioner Villegas seconded the motion. The Ayes have it.

Discussion RE TPD Response Times (Item 2 in report):

(Time Stamp, 31:17)

Chair Donaldson: Could we have Police spokesperson come and speak to CIRA about police response time?

Officer Ali – Can get in touch with Wendy PIO Officer. She coordinates any & all police engagement.

Liaison Ware: HRC, CPAC are also interested in communicating with City Manager & Police. Would CIRA be interested in partnering or making a joint meeting to address police concerns?

Officer Ali responding to response times: staffing shortages, call volume, and new state law 1310, requires more time per call & requires two officers at a time. (Time Stamp, 34:53)

Q. What is the reason for staffing shortage?

Officer Ali: Smaller applicant pool, after law changes a lot of people left dept., retirement, etc. Applicant pool is very small.

Q. Why is applicant pool smaller?

Officer Ali: After law changes a lot of people left dept. and the state., and retirements, etc. Shortage is not due to budgeting. It takes 18-months before new officers can be on the streets. Interest in being an officer has decreased, but not sure of the exact reason(s).

Q. What is the process around providing transparency to business or community about missed contacts around filed complainants? Is there documentation of the outreach that the PD makes; is this being shared directly with community members?

Officer Ali: Anytime you make a report, you can track how TPD responded.

Commissioner Villegas – this puts the impetus on community members to do the follow up if Officers/TPD don't follow up with letters or calls.

Q. Does TPD collect data on response times to incidents?

-Not information that Officer Ali has on hand but believes TPD is tracking that.

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Staff Liaison Ware investigate issue about reporting back to community RE TPD follow up processes; if there is not a process, possible that CIRA can took into creating a recommendation to TPD to have proactive reporting community members.

### **Governance (of CIRA) Committee** (Time Stamp: 53:38)

1. First combined Governance + Language Justice.
2. Discussed Annual Calendar: what are the best items to include (legislation, budget, vetting events, etc.).
3. Finalizing workplan & presentations to CVS Committee.  
Working on creating PowerPoint presentation; Chair, Vice Chair will present.  
Are commissioners able to attend to support, or want to be part of the presentation planning?  
Time Frame for CVS presentation: December 22, 2022, is the time offered by Council Liaison.

#### **Discussion:**

Commissioner Villegas – disappointed by lack of equity in processes, RE Council scheduling. Lack of consideration for volunteer time; puts us in a position to react to Council versus of engaging in a true dialog.

Liaison Ware: in annual plan CIRA can drive home in a recommendation that Council needs to prioritize CIRA's time.

Chair Donaldson next steps: will share last year's presentation as example.

4. Discussed inviting chairs from other committees to come to Governance Committee, so we can get additional input on agenda items, or guest speakers.
5. Hybrid Meetings: we don't expect in-person attendance but suggested the possibility of coming in quarterly. Does meeting once every three months work for commissioners?

#### **Discussion:**

Meeting in person allows for more community building.

Concerns that in-person adds another hour.

Can the in-person meetings be scheduled in advance?

### **Governance + Language Justice Committee** (Time Stamp, 1:15:31)

Maria Gamez shared updated Language Access Plan; much improved from the original plan that included TPCHD & Metroparks. New plan is now more specific to COT.

- New Plan includes 10 elements with actionable items. Each element outlines a clear process of accountability.
- Ms. Gamez wants plan to go forward before the end of the year so COT can start working on implementation plan.
- Commissioner Villegas shared plan for feedback in a Google Doc for input. It might take about an hour to get through the entire plan. Feedback is due Monday 10/31/2022.
- Possible that LJC will resume after the first of the year.
- The Language Justice Plan intersects with everything that CIRA does.

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**VII. City Staff Updates – Liaison Raeshawna (Time Stamp,1:20:44)**

a. Returning to Hybrid Commission Meetings

All meetings from here out are required to have an in-person element, but Commissioners are not required to attend in person.

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

Think about what you did last year & look ahead. For example: CIRA recruited 8-new commissioners last year; this is an unprecedented number!

CIRA recruitment: we will be sending out recruitment information to the two vacant positions early in the year. If commissioners are interested in being more involved in the process, please check in with Staff Liaison so she knows how to prepare.

c. Other items:

- Chief Equity Officer asked if CIRA has had any discussion around creating a Welcoming Plan for the City of Tacoma; is CIRA interested in potentially working with City Council in creating one? An example would be the Tacoma Age Friendly Action Plan.
- Raeshawna will be meeting with Welcoming America Network and will be bringing back more information; to see if this is a viable resource for CIRA to work with.
- Last year, Raeshawna & Lisa attended Welcoming Interactive. In 2023, the workshop is happening April 4/26 - 28 in San Jose, CA; are two (2) commissioners interested in possibly attending with OEHR Staff in 2023?

Discussion:

Commissioner Zepeda: There are issues in CIRA that we want to work on & then we are being told what actions we should take (RE: Welcoming Interactive, etc.), and then it becomes a capacity issue. Also, concerned that we have budget for travel, but not a general budget for CIRA.

Staff Liaison Ware: creating a Welcoming Plan could potentially bring all of CIRA's ideas from committees, to create framework of responsibility.

OEHR Staff Mia Navarro (RE, Budget): Money that we have right now for CIRA mostly goes to interpretation. Navarro can bring more budget information to the next meet. OEHR has Budget authority, but the commissions do not. We can work together to request budget allocations. Budget will be approved by City Council on Nov. 21.

Chair Donaldson: CIRA has never seen the CIRA budget. It would be good to know how much money CIRA has annually. We want to make sure that the travel doesn't come out of CIRA monies.

Commissioner Nguyen: Can we see the itemized budget or line items from past budget?

- We should have budget for food items (it's a long meeting during dinnertime).
- Budget for parking validation (we are paying out of pocket if we come to in-person meetings).

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Staff Liaison Ware: we can help inform budget asks within CIRA annual plan.

**VIII: Open Discussion** (Time Stamp 1:52:57)

Commissioner Ghayoumi, bringing awareness to issues in Iran. It's a women led movement is receiving global attention.

COT Council & City Mayor have not made any comments on the issue.

Iranian community is often not recognized often, because middle eastern is often not included in most data collection as a race choice

Will CIRA join me in writing a letter to council, asking for support & acknowledgement?

Staff Liaison Ware: what is the type of recognition are you hoping Council will make? (Proclamation, etc.),

-Anything is better than nothing, but like what was done for Ukraine in expressing support.

Chair Donaldson: can we write an endorsed letter and proclamation?

Commission Kowalski – should we start drafting a proclamation, so we don't write a letter & a proclamation?

Staff Liaison Ware: Pierce County also has immigrant commission, and I plan on going to help build network. Commissioner Ruboneka is also on this commission

**IX. Public Comment**

No members of the public were present for public comment.

**X. Items to Consider for Next Meeting:**

OEHR will bring more budget information & numbers.

**XI. Adjourn** - Meeting was adjourned at 7:30.

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