



Special Meeting Minutes  
Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

Date: December 19<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** Meeting was called to order by Chair Donaldson at 5:36 PM

**II. Record of Attendance and Excusal of Absences**

- Emani Donaldson (Vice-Chair)
- Natalie Ghayoumi
- Stacy Kowalski
- ~~Samantha Le~~
- Maurice Lekea
- ~~Hieu Nguyen~~
- Hugo Nicolas
- Thierry Ruboneka
- Maricres Valdez Castro
- Alma Villegas
- ~~Leena Vo~~
- Lydia Zepeda
- Alternate (Vacant)
- Youth Position (Vacant)

Quorum was present at roll call  
City Guests: Kenny Coble and Bradley Loetzke

**III. Statement of Purpose** Read by Vice Alma Villegas

**IV. Land Acknowledgment –** Read by Commissioner Zepeda

**Commissioners**

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

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

**V. Consent Agenda**  
Chair Donaldson

**a. Approval of December 2022 Meeting Agenda**

Motion made by Commissioner Zepeda  
Second was made by Commission Nicolas  
The ayes have it and the December 19 agenda was approved.

**b. Approval of the October and November 2022 Meeting Minutes**

Motion made by Commissioner Valdez Castro  
Second made by Commissioner Villegas  
The ayes have it and the October and November 2022 minutes approved.

**VI. Public Comment**

No member of the public was present (virtually or in person) for public comment.

Chair Donaldson closed public comment.

**VII. Commission Affairs**

**a. Commissioner Spotlight – Commissioner Hugo Nicolas**

- Experience with Immigration Reform Organizing in Oregon on a federal level (specifically DACA).
- Briefly pivoted career to working in banking but is back doing policy work.
- Currently working for Governor’s Office of Regulatory Information and Assistance (business regulations).
- On the Board of Directors of Mi Centro.
- Also volunteers with search & rescue for the Sheriff’s Office.

**b. Annual Report and Work Plan**

- Do not have a final date set of when CIRA will present to CVS. We were hoping for the end of January.
- In annual report, CIRA will focus on what the vision for 2023 is, and what the City of Tacoma’s role will be as well.

**c. Committee Updates and Overview of Work**

Community Safety Committee (CSC)

- Next meeting is Wednesday December 21st at 11AM
- CSC has a draft of their report for the annual plan. Draft plan priorities:
  - (1)Trauma Informed Policing.
  - (2) Promote trust of TPD with immigrant communities.
  - (3) Continue to with TPD on “Blue Cards”
  - (4)TPD jurisdiction of NWIPC.
  - (5) Dealing with Hate Crimes

**Commissioners**

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(6) Planning visit to the NWIPC; working with City staff & City Council.

(7) Urge City Council to address affordable housing as it relates to immigrant and refugee communities.

(8) Analyze survey results and make recommendations based on immigrants' perceptions of community safety.

**c. Committee Updates and Overview of Work (Continued)**

Governance (of CIRA) Committee

Continued conversation about the budget overview timeline and process (from presentation last month).

- Commissioner Nicolas had an idea of creating a cohort of CIRA members who will do more community outreach, and dedicate energy to going to events, etc., to introduce community members to CIRA.
  - o Specifically, how we use CIRA funds to do more outreach to community.
  - o Also suggests creating an outline of events that CIRA would be to be present at, so we can consider how to use certain funds.

Commissioner Villegas notes that 2023 is a good opportunity for us to spend more time together. Invest in elevating our presence and building capacity within.

- Commissioner Castro: is it possible for us to email events to Staff Liaison to update a calendar? Can people sign up to receive updates from the Office of Equity and Human Rights?
- Kenny Coble: Works as a Community Engagement specialist with Media & Communication Office and would be happy to connect CIRA members to community events.
- Commissioner Zepeda: in budget, we should emphasis more than just events; addressing community needs as well.
- Commissioner Castro: budget dollars allotted to legislative issues.

Governance Committee had detailed discussion about Annual Report Presentation, including:

- Advocating for more City provided training.
- How CIRA can contribute to community development.
- Asking very specific questions to the City Council about continued issues. CIRA wants to be consulted on issues that effects immigrant and refugee communities. Creating a better system of reporting and accountability (from the city to the CIRA).

**Committee Updates and Overview of Work (Continued)**

**Commissioners**

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Governance (of CIRA) Committee (continued)

Governance Committee continued discussion about joint TPD, CIRA, and other CBCs meeting, including:

- Proposed date is currently February 23<sup>rd</sup> depending on Chief Moore.
- Community Safety Committee will help lead this discussion and are working questions to give TPD in advance of the meeting.

Governance Committee discussed upcoming recruitment efforts.

- Recruitment is starting in February and March.
- We would like to make an edit to the agenda to include commissioner terms.
- Many current commissioners are currently filling a vacant position, so term might be shorter than expected, and we will need to work with Staff Liaison to work on re-appointments.
- Strong interest in recruiting the youth position and people who can commit to the three-year commitment.

Commissioner Villegas has reached out to city staff Maria Gamez to get an update on Language Access Plan, which are forth coming.

- Kenny Coble: works closing with Maria Gamez, and informed CIRA those updates are coming very soon, and will work with her to get the implementation plan going.
  - o Additionally, many CBCs are looking to recruit youth and Mr. Coble has outreach planned to different high schools. CIRA is welcome to join

**VIII. City Staff Updates**

Bradley Loetzke subbing for Staff Liaison Raeshawna Ware.  
Kenny Coble also helped answer questions.

**a. CIRA Recruitment**

- Staff Liaison will reach out to current commissioners who
- Please let Staff Liaison know if you are not able to fulfill term going into 2023.

Commissioner Questions:

- Commissioner Villegas: if our term is up, we need to reapply and be interviewed again? Would I be recommitting to another 3-years? What if I only want to serve an additional year?
  - o Kenny Coble believed that an incumbent commissioner would have to go through the full recruitment process again.
- Commissioner Zepeda: questioned if there was a change in the process. We have commissioners who have been on CIRA since it's inception, and never had to reapply to the position.

**Commissioners**

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City Staff Updates (continued)

- Will work with Staff Liaison to get an in-depth response to our questions about term limits, and recruitments.

**b. TPD, CIRA, and CBC joint meeting.**

- Pending date is February 23<sup>rd</sup>. More details to come.

**c. Welcoming Interactive**

- Conference is April 26-28 in San Jose, CA/
- We need to decide by our February meeting who and how many commissioners want to attend.
- Reminder that funds will not come from CIRA but from the Office of Equity & Human Rights.

Questions, Comments, Discussion on Welcoming Interactive:

- Discussed giving preference to those in leadership roles (chairs of subcommittees, etc.)
- Commissioner Lekea is interested in attending.
- Commissioner Zepeda is not comfortable going, would rather the funds go immigrant and refugee communities.
- Commissioner Villegas is also tentative to sending representatives. Would like to have a conversation about intention, goal, or outcome of sending CIRA commissioners. How will the
- Can we send four people?
- Commissioner Nicholas: Can we look at a schedule of events to assess the value of sending commissioners.

**Other items of discussion**

Commissioner Valdez Castro provided information about a community grant for small business for \$25,000. Information about the grant can be found here: [\\$25,000 Grants for Your Small Business - Hello Alice](#)  
Applications are due January 6<sup>th</sup>.

**IX. Items to consider for Next Meeting**

Chair Donaldson will follow up with Staff Liaison with questions. Please reach out to her if you have other

**X. Adjournment**

Chair Donaldson adjourned meeting at 6:44 PM

**Commissioners**

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