



Date: June 5, 2023

Time: 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

Location: Hybrid Tacoma Municipal Building

747 Market Street  
Conference Room #243  
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

I. Call Meeting to Order Meeting was called to order by Chair Donaldson at 5:33 PM

II. Record of Attendance  
and Excusal of  
Absences

Chair Donaldson

- Emani Donaldson (Vice-Chair)
- Natalie Ghayoumi
- Maurice Lekea
- Hieu Nguyen (absent)
- Hugo Nicolas
- Thierry Ruboneka
- Maricres Valdez Castro
- Alma Villegas
- Alicia Sands
- Lydia Zepeda
- Samantha Le
- Vacant
- Vacant
- Alternate (Vacant)
- Youth Position (Vacant)

Was a quorum present?

Guest Attendees: Office of Equity & Human Rights Director Lisa Woods, Council Member Dias, and Councilmember Ushka.

III. Statement of Purpose– Read by Commissioner  
IV. Land Acknowledgment Read by Commissioner

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 the June 5 Special Meeting Agenda**

VI. **Public Comment** No members of the public were present

VII. **Commission Affairs**

**Certified Welcoming – Chair Emani Donaldson**

- Review Certified Welcoming program (ppt)

- Chair Donaldson explained the certification process, which includes an audit, review, and evidence gathering every four years.
- The audit involves a team visiting the city and conducting a mini-conference with stakeholders and decision-makers.
- The purpose of the audit is to verify information, gather additional evidence, and understand the local welcoming and immigrant integration efforts.
- Welcoming America provides guidance and expertise in the certification process.
- The certification team produces a detailed final report with findings on compliance, strengths, and growth opportunities.
- The report serves as a roadmap for identifying priorities and next steps for continuous improvement.

Remarks made by CIRA Staff Liaison Raeshawna Ware

- Raeshawna discussed the background of the initiative and the need for city support in addressing the influx of refugees and immigrants. Her attendance at the 2022 Welcoming Interactive in North Carolina sparked the idea of becoming a Welcoming City.
- The goal is to develop a welcome plan and work towards certification.
- Raeshawna emphasized the importance of city leadership and support from Welcoming America.

Remarks made by Director Woods

- Director Woods expressed gratitude for the opportunity to respond and provide context.
- Certification is a way to identify areas for improvement and develop concrete programs.
- Becoming certified is not the only path; there are other ways to identify gaps and make progress.
- The certification process requires budget actions and ongoing commitment.
- Director Woods emphasized the need for collaboration and partnerships with

**Commissioners**

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community organizations.

- Discussion on primary concerns

- Vice Chair Villegas stated that she supports the vote made by CIRA in May to bring forward a recommendation to CVS to become Welcoming Certified, but wanted to clarify that she hopes:

- the recommendation to become Welcoming Certified originates from the City (not CIRA), and that CIRA would act as an advisor.

- Commissioner Lydia raised concerns about the cost of certification and Welcoming America's role in holding cities accountable.

- Questions were asked regarding the cost and differences between core and premium memberships.

Remarks made by Council Member Ushka:

Councilmember Ushka highlighted the necessity of understanding the costs, equity impact, and long-term value of the proposed policy. She expressed the intention to include the commission's voice in the policy document and deferred to the commission's expertise on the matter. However, she acknowledged that Councilmember DS might also have expertise in this area.

Councilmember Ushka addressed the vice chair's concerns regarding power imbalances and mentioned efforts to fundraise to address these issues. She invited the commission to suggest changes and expressed a willingness to work together.

- Decision on the next steps

## VIII. Adjournment

**Time?**

### Commissioners

Emani Donaldson  
Natalie Ghayoumi  
Stacy Kowalski  
Samantha Le  
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