



**Meeting Minutes**  
**Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs**

**Date:** July 24<sup>th</sup>, 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=d31yYW44Tm8wT1NrNIU4ekRsWERnQT09>

Meeting ID: 967 9184 0410

Passcode: 264285

<b>I. Call Meeting to Order</b>	Meeting was called to order by Chair Donaldson at 5:36 PM
<b>II. Record of Attendance and Excusal of Absences</b> Chair Donaldson	<input type="checkbox"/> Emani Donaldson (Vice-Chair) - Present <input type="checkbox"/> Natalie Ghayoumi - absent <input type="checkbox"/> Maurice Lekea - absent <input type="checkbox"/> Hieu Nguyen - Present <input type="checkbox"/> Hugo Nicolas - Present <input type="checkbox"/> Thierry Ruboneka – absent <input type="checkbox"/> Maricres Valdez Castro - Present <input type="checkbox"/> Alma Villegas - Present <input type="checkbox"/> Alicia Sands - Present <input type="checkbox"/> Lydia Zepeda - Present <input type="checkbox"/> Samantha Le - Present (in person) <input type="checkbox"/> Vacant <input type="checkbox"/> Alternate (Vacant) <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Position (Vacant)
<b>III. Statement of Purpose–</b> <b>IV. Land Acknowledgment</b>	<p>Read by Commissioner Chair Emani Donaldson</p> <p>Read by Commissioner Hugo Nicolas</p>

<b>V. Consent Agenda</b> Chair Donaldson	<b>a. Approval of July 24, 2023, Meeting Agenda</b>
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**Commissioners**

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Natalie Ghayoumi  
Stacy Kowalski  
Samantha Le  
Maurice Lekea  
Hieu Nguyen

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

	<p><b>b. Approval of June 26, 2023, Meeting Minutes</b></p> <p>Motion made by Commissioner Zepeda to approve the meeting agenda and minutes Second by Vice Chair Alma Villegas The ayes have it and the July 24 agenda was approved.</p>
<b>VI. Public Comment</b>	Two youth supported the Free food during the summer program. It would be nice if we could provide advertisement in different languages.
<b>VII. Presentation</b>	None
<b>VIII. Commission Affairs</b>	
	<p><b>a. Commissioner Spotlight! – Lydia Zepeda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lived in many countries and she also speaks Spanish fluently.</li> <li>- Background in Academia as a professor.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>b. Commissioner Election Announcement - Chair Emani Donaldson</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elections will be next month in August for Chair, Vice Chair, and Second Vice Chair during the next scheduled Regular CIRA meeting in August.</li> <li>• Reviewed bylaws on elections process.</li> <li>• Commissioners can self-nominate or nominate others</li> <li>• Called those who are interested to review article III of the bylaws</li> <li>• Can email Chair and Vice Chair for questions and next steps.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>c. Bylaw Discussion - Vice Chair Alma Villegas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The full commission was sent the updated bylaws voted on in June’s CIRA Regular Business Meeting.</li> <li>• Reviewed additional areas in the bylaws related to attendance.</li> <li>• The focus is on discussion not decision making.</li> <li>• Governance will take the feedback and propose language based on the full commission discussion.</li> </ul> <p><u>Discussion &amp; Concerns:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The primary proposed changes related to attendance 1) Adding a probationary period for absences and reviewing forfeiture of attendance. 2) The governance committee involvement in the reviewing of a commissioner's participation should a commissioner have unexcused or more than allotted excused absences to make a recommendation to the full commission to vote 3) Defining what an unexcused</li> </ul>

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	<p>and excused absence is for CIRA. 4) Confirming who tracks attendance – likely staff. 5) What is the process of forfeiture or notice to commissioner(s) who go into probationary period. 6) What does it mean if someone has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added reappointment</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Committee Updates</b></p> <p><u>Community Safety Committee</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Safety Committee met and discussed the tour of NWIPC. Six or seven ICE officials gave the tour; GEO official were not present. Saw check in area, pod, hallways, empty legal consultation areas.</li> <li>• Contradicting information given from ICE and differing from those being detained. ICE seemed not to be able to provide many answers to questions and deferred many to “the discretion of GEO providers”</li> <li>• CSC attended the workgroup headed by DM Kristina Walker and CM Ushka to discuss requests for copy of contract, financial information, clarity on medical services, mental health, health, laundry, food diet and more.</li> <li>• Chair of CSC invited anyone in the commission or city officials who would like to meet with those being detained to contact her and she would accompany them. VC Alma Villegas would like to do this.</li> <li>• Commissioner Nyugen shared the witnessed experience of those being detained for 2-4 years and the vile conditions that are heart wrenching.</li> <li>• Affordable Housing. - The waitlist of THA is cumbersome to get on to especially for immigrants. Korean Womens Association and Commissioner Nyugen worked with about 14 people and only 1 made the list. Commissioner Nyugen is going to seek out someone who may be willing to share their experience with CIRA about their difficulties. CSC Ask: If we do get someone willing to share their experience, can we have professional interpretation. RW: Yes.</li> <li>• Kids and Summer Safety – summer lunches, information was shared in the chat.</li> <li>• CSC would like to update CIRA on the meeting with DM Walker and CM Ushka</li> <li>• RW will ask DM Walker and CM Ushka to provide more formal high-level notes that CIRA can use.</li> </ul> <p>Discussion: Vice Chair: What is the accountability to get answers? Commissioner Zepeda: It is up to GEO and NWIPC as to when and how they respond.</p> <p><u>Governance Committee</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working formalizing the process to share out information with the full commission and committees such as announcements, updates, etc. The process is under development</li> <li>• If you are using your name of a commissioner, social media, meeting on your own, please send notice to Chair and Vice Chair.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time stamps will be used on the agenda to allow CIRA time to get through the topics in a timely fashion. Please propose topics of discussion to Chair and Vice Chair.</li> <li>• Monthly meeting minutes request to be sent out a few days after the CIRA meeting to prepare Governance Committee on the development of the next meeting agenda.</li> <li>• The Friday before the Governance Committee meeting, we are asking to have all items the commission wants to discuss to be submitted to Chair, Vice Chair, and Staff Liaison.</li> <li>• Use the agreed upon presenter questions previously created to expedite deciding on presenters.</li> <li>• Request Staff Liaison to attend August Governance Committee</li> <li>• Request CSC meeting minutes to all commissioners.</li> <li>• August onboarding retreat, or another time. Annual retreat discussion items relevant to CIRA for example – proclamation, resolution training, how to represent the Commission, capacity of commissioners.</li> </ul>
<p><b>City Staff Updates</b></p>	<p><b>Staffing:</b>  New Assistant Director - Mariama Suwaneh, she will likely be attending an upcoming meeting to meet with you all.  New Human Rights Manager – Nancy Shattuck, she is also the Human Rights Commission</p> <p>RW will be taking some time off which will mean that CIRA may see new or existing staff members stepping into support.  Request: VC requested more orientation for anyone coming in to support CIRA in RW’s place.</p> <p>Presentations to CVS about Welcoming Interactive and the TPD Convening has been postponed in that staff will be sending a memo with information.</p> <p>We will be working with Tacoma Community House on Welcoming Week, more information is forthcoming.</p> <p>Citizen’s Academy that was sent to the full commission. I posed the question to TPD to consider if that name was available to changed. Lt Katz brought that forward we may have opportunity to provide input in the future</p>
<p><b>IX. Items to consider for Next Meeting</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CIRA Leadership Elections</li> <li>• Announcement; How to help undocumented veterans. Commissioner Nicolas</li> <li>• Announcement: Philippine Consulate booking – dual citizenship, passport renewal. Commissioner Castro</li> </ul>
<p><b>X. Adjournment</b></p>	<p><b>7:02 PM</b></p>

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