



# Regular Meeting Minutes

## Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

**Date:** Monday, **September 23, 2024**

**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/82877122622?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82877122622?pwd=vzPBsPX1YvQbOS5haBnEEHqdF0YVLd.1)

[pwd=vzPBsPX1YvQbOS5haBnEEHqdF0YVLd.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82877122622?pwd=vzPBsPX1YvQbOS5haBnEEHqdF0YVLd.1)

Meeting ID: 828 7712 2622

Passcode: 98402

**Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call (5:33 pm) - Acting Chair Valdez Castro**

x Maricres Valdez Castro, *Acting Chair*

x Iulia Didkivska

x Natalie Ghayoumi

Eunice Kalembo absent

x Maurice Lekea, joined late

x Andy Mejia, *Youth*

x Hugo Nicolas, *Second Vice Chair*

x Linus Nyaga joined late

Thierry Ruboneka absent

x Alicia Sands

Emmanuella Shasha excused

x Nixon Tenga

x Lydia Zepeda

**Also present: Nancy Shattuck, Vicky McClaurin, Officer Ali, members of the public**

**Statement of Purpose** – Commissioner Tenga

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.”

**Land Acknowledgment** – Commissioner Valdez Castro

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.

**Consent Agenda - Acting Chair Valdez Castro**

a. Approval of September 23, 2024 Agenda

Zepeda moved and Sands seconded. Approved unanimously.

b. Approval of August 26, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Sands moved that accept meetings and seconded by Ghayoumi. Approved unanimously.

**Public Comments**

*All written public comment must be submitted in writing at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.* None

**Commission Affairs**

a. Election of Chair - Acting Chair Valdez Castro

Nicolas was nominated and seconded at last meeting

No other nominations.

Commissioner Nicolas elected unanimously.

b. Review of Deportation Defense Fund proposal - Commissioners Ghayoumi and Zepeda

CIRA requested \$120,000 per year for biennium to cover the cost of one immigration lawyer to provide legal services to detainees because they have no right to free representation and representation is the most important factor in obtaining asylum or other immigration relief.

Phone call with CM Rumbaugh, and Commissioners Ghayoumi and Zepeda, August 28, 2024.

- Rumbaugh stated that the priority of the City was to keep City employees in their jobs given the budget deficit and there was no money for our request. Her tone was angry.
- We reminded her that the City finds money for things it wants to do. We reminded her that CIRA commissioners are all volunteers, we are not paid, and it is our obligation and duty to advocate for immigrants and detainees, who are among the most vulnerable.
- Rumbaugh stated the City was only willing to support initiatives for immigrants that cost no money.

Lakea asked what we can do that does not require money? Nothing.

McClaurin stated that the proposal will be funded at \$25,000 each year for two years.

Commissioners Zepeda and Ghayoumi indicated that is not what Rumbaugh said.

Commissioner Zepeda requested a written response to clarify. Commissioners Lakea, Valdez Castro, and Tenga also indicated the need for documentation about the CIRA requests.

c. Update on Trauma Informed Policing (TIP) proposal - Commissioners Ghayoumi and Zepeda

CIRA voted on Feb 26, 2024 to send the TIP request to the City Council. Instead, it was sent to the police; the chief's letter indicates he received it June 20.

- What happened in between?
- Why was it directed to Chief Moore instead of the City Council?
- We already work with CPAC who approved the proposal.
- We spend a lot of time on identifying problems and solutions and the City does not seem to take us seriously.
- How do we hold them accountable?

Commissioner Ghayoumi indicated appreciation for receiving some response, but why was it sent to Chief Moore rather than Council?

Commissioner Valdez Castro was also surprised that it was directed to the Chief Moore instead of City Council.

Commissioner Zepeda volunteered to draft a letter asking these questions. Commissioners Valdez Castro, Ghayoumi and Sands are willing to review the letter and bring back to full CIRA for full vote. The letter will be directed to the CVS chair, Rumbaugh, and cc PC Moore and full council

Commissioner Nicolas asked about the process, do we get to decide where requests go?

McClaurin: it depends on what we are asking.

Shattuck and McClaurin don't know why it took so long to respond.

Commissioner Nyaga: can we have a chain of command, who the letter went to so we can follow up?

Commissioner Ghayoumi: Is there anything that prevents us from going to City Council and asking questions?

McClaurin, nothing prevents commissioners from doing that, but you have to represent self. For request, you can always cc the city manager Elizabeth Pauli. All city staff report to Pauli who reports to City Council.  
Commissioner Lakea: does it not mean that we should follow this?

Commissioner Nicolas: supports a letter and requests getting it to governance asap. We want the entire support of the commission.

McClaurin - if you are not getting what you need, we report to Alison Griffen and you can contact her.

Commissioner Sands: will CIRA be at the budget meeting, will we get time to speak?

McClaurin - Oct 1 city manager will do a presentation to City Council. Dec 3 budget is approved. Between then they will talk to community about the impacts of the budget

d. Review of NWIPC letter and discussion of formal thank you to City Council -  
Commissioner Zepeda

A copy of the letter was sent to the entire CIRA commission September 12. CM Walker took leadership in drafting this letter to our Congressional Representative Derek Kilmer and cc'ing our Senators Cantwell and Murray, as well as member of Congress Strickland. She got the entire City Council to sign it. As background, Kilmer is retiring and the letter is meant to apprise his staff of the issues facing the NWIPC as they serve whoever is elected to replace Kilmer. The letter highlights ongoing issues at NWIPC of poor living standards, food and water insecurity, insufficient health care, excessive use of solitary confinement, use of force and sexual assault, lack of access to communication, and inadequate legal representation.

Zepeda volunteered to draft a letter of thank you and would like a volunteer to review it.

Ghayoumi, Valdez Castro, and Nyaga volunteered to review it.

Zepeda moved to write a thank you letter and Sands seconded. Approved unanimously.

The letter will be voted on at next meeting.

e. Committee Updates - Committee Chairs

Governance Committee - second Wednesday of the month at 5:30pm  
Valdez Castro: items were already covered in the agenda.

Nicolas: do we have a date for planning session?

Nancy: got very few responses and they are all past. willing to send out dates again.

Will send out a when to meet: Fridays, Saturday or Monday evening.

It will be facilitated.

Will ask how many hours we can meet.

#### Community Safety Committee - second Tuesday of the month at 4:30pm

Meeting August 13, 2024 - Commissioner Zepeda

- Script for Pashto Community about calling Police and slides in English - awaiting translation.
- Policy Priorities - awaiting additions and comments from committee members
- Other- frustration at lack of response/accountability for our initiatives: Civility Campaign, Trauma Informed Policing initiative, TPD translations of blue cards, additional translations of reporting crimes cards, TPD outreach to detainees at NWIPC, Budget request for legal services for detainees. We are concerned about the City providing tangible services to immigrants.
- Summary NWIPC meeting August 26, 2024 with Council member Walker, City staff, and La Resistencia.

Meeting September 10, 2024 - Commissioner Zepeda

- letter from Chief Moore about TIP
- phone call with CM Rumbaugh about Legal Defense Fund
- AIDNW is proposing closure of Hospitality House and Welcome Center; phone funds appear to no longer be available
- Next meeting: October 8, 2024 4:30pm

Invited commissioners to visit the NWIPC.

Commissioners Lekea and Nyaga are interested in visiting. Zepeda will contact them about when.

Commissioner Sands said that AIDNW has a visitation program.

<https://aidnw.org/programs/>

and volunteer form

<https://powerforms.docuSign.net/e74e754a-4c65-455e-9144-487e55f73db9?env=na4&acct=4dc26d4c-40a7-4ba7-aaa6-6a7d8140375d&accountId=4dc26d4c-40a7-4ba7-aaa6-6a7d8140375d>

Commissioner Tenga was detained at NWIPC and was host coordinator for AIDNW for 4 years.

#### Welcome Week/Recruitment Committee - Valdez Castro

Thanks for participating.

Commissioner Sands: it was a really nice event with music and food and Commissioner Valdez and Castro did a nice job MCing.

Commissioner Lakea: met Shattuck in person at TCH.

Shattuck : there was a great discussion about DACA

f. Review of By-laws for Committee formation - Acting Chair Valdez Castro

Each Commissioner shall join one committee

Commissioner Nicolas: currently we have 3 committees, but we can change the number and type of committees. The only one that is required is the governance committee.

**Presentation from AIDNW - Lynette Crumity ED**

She showed a video of AIDNW.

She explained the mission of AIDNW as serving immigrants while detained and upon release from NWIPC.

She listed the services provided: visitation, letters, yarn, books, and that they will start ESL classes. She described the location of the NWIPC as being deserted with no buses or people. AIDNW began in 2009. They provide transportation, clothing, backpacks. They provide long-term and short term housing. She is the only full-time paid employee, there is one part-time employee and over 200 volunteers. AIDNW received a \$10,000 grant from the City for phone funds, she credits CM Walker as the main sponsor. She showed data on number of releases, rides, bags, coats, and volunteer hours by month for 2024.

She related a story about woman from Somalia who described the NWIPC as safe, there was food and a bed, versus a story of a woman from South Africa who was detained 6 months; she went on a hunger strike over being in detention. She used this to say that detainees have different perceptions of NWIPC.

She stated AIDNW is going through some transition: closing the Hospitality House. She said there will be no changes in program of Welcome Center, but described it as tents and did not mention the sale of the RV.

Ghayoumi: I have questions from the community. AIDNW was given \$10,000 in phone funds for detainees in a bill-back system to ensure the money was only used for phone calls. Volunteers are complaining that detainees are no longer receiving phone funds. Has this money been spent? What guarantees are there that AIDNW has the capacity to continue operating this program?

Crumity: We could triple the budget but would not have enough. The \$10,000 was used in the first five months. We have a monthly budget of \$2300 for phone funds.

Ghayoumi: Suppose the city paid 1/3 to 1/2 the bill-back and AIDNW was asked to raise the rest to ensure greater availability of funds for detainees?

Crumity: We have received the entire \$10,000. We are currently fundraising for all services. There is a donate button on our website.

Zepeda: How does your relationship with GEO and ICE work? How do they inform you about how many people will be released and at what time?

Crumity: We have a working relationship with ICE and GEO, every day we call them or they call us, and they tell us how many will be released and names.

Zepeda: How do you get names of people to send letters to and offer visits?

Crumity: We get names from releases, they call the office if they want a phone card, and we ask them if they want letter or visit.

Mejia: Elaborate on the objective of your organization, does it include the eventual shutdown of NWIPC?

Crumity: No, that is not part of our mission. Our mission is to support them while in detention and when they leave.

Mejia: How do you get permission to send items to people who are detained when the rest of the public and other groups cannot?

Crumity: Through negotiation with the leadership team. Yarn is no longer allowed because people were sending yarn that was soaked in drugs that detainees would dry it out and use the drugs

Mejia: What are you doing to coordinate with and improve relations with La Resistencia?

Crumity: We are not affiliated with La Resistencia.

Ghayoumi: Do you have an immigrant story yourself?

Crumity: No I am not an immigrant, I am from Pittsburg.

Ghayoumi: What percentage of 2023 AIDNW revenues were used for programs vs administration and fundraising?

Crumity: I started in May, the 990s are on line. I am happy to provide numbers to Nancy as a follow up

Crumity Verifies that Olgy Diaz was the sponsor of budget request for phone funds for AIDNW.

Zepeda: What information do you gather from people who leave detention and what do you do with it?

Crumity: We do not gather information, we do not take their stories. La Resistencia does that.

Commissioner Tenga stated he was part of AIDNW for four years and offered to provide her with history.

### **Items to consider for next meeting and announcements**

Tenga encourages people to join AIDNW

Zepeda noted the email invitation from Mona Baghdadi chair of the Human Rights Commission in support of immigrant protections and asked if anyone was going to follow up?

### **Next meeting October 28, 2024 -**

Commissioner Zepeda will not be able to attend, can someone volunteer to take minutes?

No one volunteered so Commissioner Nicolas asked Commissioner Didkiviska to do it. She agreed.

Commissioner Sands: volunteering tomorrow from 3-7 at Welcome Center. she stated that La Resistencia are advocates to close NWIPC and that the mission is complementary to the mission of AIDNW.

Maclaren: invited commissioners to join the meeting in person next meeting and that the City would pay for pizza.

### **Adjourned at 19:40.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Lydia Zepeda  
Secretary  
CIRA