



Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission
June 1, 2011, 6:00-8:00 PM
Room CH-370, City Hall

Meeting Minutes

- Commissioners Present:** Devon Alisa Abdallah, Ph.D., Jesus Y. Rodriguez, Yasemin San, Ashraf Alazadi, Tsegaba Woldehaimanot, Shree Dahal, Cherry Cayabyab, Mohamed Sheik Hassan, Pradeepta Upadhyay
- Commissioners Absent:** Lesley Irizarry-Hougan, Andrea Caupain, Michael Neguse, Bincy Jacob, Magdaleno M. Rose-Avila, Paulina Lopez Bermudez
- Commissioners by Phone:** N/A
- SOCR Staff Present:** Julie Nelson, Glenn Harris, Rosalinda Hoskins
- Guests:** Emily Tess Johnson, Yemane Gebremichael
- Guest Speakers:** Councilmember Tim Burgess, Shefali Ranganathan, Dawn Schellenberg
- Call to Order:** Call to order at 6:00 PM
- Approval of Minutes:** May 4, 2011 minutes approved

1. Work Plan Presentation to Mayor McGinn:

Immigrant and Refugee Youth Services – Ashraf Alazadi

- 26,000 students are Immigrant/Refugee, representing over 50% of the total student population. Expansion of the Youth Program is needed, Human Services Department to present the proposal at July's Board meeting. Mayor McGinn suggests identifying the challenges and to demonstrate how data outcomes make a difference in success rates.

Interpretation and Translation – Yasemin San

- A Statement of Legislative Intent was submitted by the Office of Civil Rights indicating areas where improvements were needed. A workgroup led by Michael Davis and Desiree Tabares, met with city departments to identify specific areas for improvements and to gain information on best practices and performance measures. Mayor McGinn is supportive of translation and interpretation work being accomplished and in his experience with neighborhood town hall meetings, suggests the trusted advocate method. The Mayor encourages obtaining feedback on effective outreach from Deputy Mayor Darrell Smith.
- Mayor McGinn encourages research in how funds are spent in printed source communications and suggests more on-line resources be used – i.e., dollars spent publishing legal notices in the

Journal of Commerce whereas ethnic media is not being considered. On-line is the best resource since information is easily translated into other languages.

Improve Communications and Accountability between Seattle Police and Seattle Police Guild and Immigrant and Refugee Communities and Community-Based Organizations – Jesus Y. Rodriguez

Follow-up to the November 2010 Commission meeting with Chief Diaz is needed, the Commission would like give feedback and assist with input on the recruitment efforts of officers and the cultural competency training they receive. The Commission would like to get an update and review of RSJI trainings and use of force incidents, as well as possible immigration status incidents.

Mayor McGinn supports improved relations between SPD and immigrant and refugee communities and promotes open discussions toward training and a commitment to addressing behavior. A meeting with Chief Diaz and the Commission is encouraged.

2. Welcome / Housekeeping / Announcements

Introduction

- Rosalinda introduced Guest, Emily Tess Johnson, AmeriCorps Member from West Africa, interested in the medical field and volunteers at Neighborcare Health and the Refugee Adolescent Empowerment Group.
- May Minutes Approved
- Announcements:
Seattle Central Library – World Refugee Day – June 19th
Learn to Say Hello in a Different Language – Kent 6/11 & 6/12, Renton 6/18, Shoreline 6/18
Redistricting Hearings – Seattle-June 13, Federal Way-June 14, Yakima-June 8
People of Color Local Candidate Meet & Greet – June 21

SOCR Report

Julie sends out the full report via email, but touches on some highlights of the report.

- Call to Support Paid Sick Leave, SOCR and Women’s Commission is working with Council.
- Transgender Healthcare benefits – The Mayor wrote a letter of support for the proposal to include transgender medical benefits in City employees’ health care plans. Four Council members wrote a letter to the Health Care Committee supporting the proposal. The LGBT Commission and Commission for People with Disabilities met with representatives from the Coalition of City Unions to discuss the proposal.
- The Office for Civil Rights’ RSJI Unit is conducting Race: Power of An Illusion training for Seattle Police Department command staff.
- The 2nd RSJI Employee Survey was conducted, there were 48 questions – over 5,000 employees responded, 50 percent of Seattle Police responded. Next month there will be a full report.
- RSJI 3-year plan: The steering committee for the RSJI assessment and 3-year plan met for the first time to lay out steps to gather information from key City and community stakeholders. Julie and Glenn will be on the Commission’s July Agenda to get feedback on the plan. The steering committee is open about the challenges, but eager to get going on the new plan (2012-2014).
- The Five Commission Meeting in City Hall is Wednesday, June 8th.
- PRIDE Parade is Sunday, June 26th.

MOTION: Vote for New Co-Chair – PASSED

Jesus Rodriguez was nominated at last month's meeting, a vote was taken and it was unanimous the Commission would like him to serve in this position. Jesus accepted and will serve as Co-Chair with Devon Abdallah.

3. Wage Theft Legislation – Councilmember Tim Burgess:

Mr. Burgess provided an overview of the Legislation and explained that the victims who are taken advantage of are usually poor and sometimes immigrants and refugees who are trying to establish their families. The legal protections were weak and civil remedies can drag on for months and the victims are left to fend the legal and financial ramifications on their own. City Council voted 9-0 to make legal remedies easier by making wage theft a gross misdemeanor crime and the Mayor passed the legislation which takes effect in a week. If convicted, an employer faces up to 1 year in jail and the City can deny or refuse to renew their business license for up to 10 years. The protection includes penalty for retaliation.

The Commission would like to see more outreach to community leaders and trusted advocates. The Commission would also like to assist in outreach to see wage theft protections put on the State Legislative Agenda so the offending employer may also be denied their State business license.

Mr. Burgess indicated that there are other states that are considering this protection and refers to Austin, Texas doing some proactive work in this area. (Follow this link for other states' info) <http://www.wagetheft.org/nda.html>

Employees who believe they are victims of wage theft can report to Seattle Police by calling 911, or they can call the Wage Theft Hotline at 206-816-5824.

4. Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) III – Dawn Schellenberg

Shefali Ranganathan from the Transportation Choices Coalition explained that the Advisory Committee was established in January 2011 to advise City Council and the Mayor on transportation priorities and funding alternatives. In development of a project list and spending plan for revenues generated from the new \$20 vehicle license fee and whether there should be a ballot measure asking voters to fund additional transportation investments. The Advisory Committee is seeking feedback on what the longer term needs might be of the Immigrant and Refugee communities, visit www.seattle.gov/transportation/ctac.htm for more info and http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/ctac_involved.htm to submit your input/comments online.

Some considerations the Commission would like the Committee review:

Maintain or Increase Bus/Transit system services, (no more reductions)
Light Rail in SE Seattle needs more stops and better access for community and elder riders
Make bus system more efficient, (less crowded and empty buses)

The Meeting Adjourned at 8:15 PM