



**Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission
August 2, 2011, 6:00-8:00 PM
City Hall, Boards and Commissions Room-L280**

Meeting Minutes

- Commissioners Present:** Devon Alisa Abdallah, Ph.D., Michael Neguse, Tsegaba Woldehaimanot, Shree Dahal, Cherry Cayabyab
- Commissioners Absent:** Jesus Y. Rodriguez, Yasemin San, Lesley Irizarry-Hougan, Andrea Caupain, Ashraf Alazadi, Mohamed Sheik Hassan, Magdaleno M. Rose-Avila, Bincy Jacob, Paulina Lopez Bermudez, Pradeepta Upadhyay
- Commissioners by Phone:** N/A
- SOCR Staff Present:** Julie Nelson, Glenn Harris, Rosalinda Hoskins
- Guests:** Yemane Gebremichael, John Argerious
- Guest Speakers:** N/A
- Call to Order:** Call to order at 6:00 PM
- Approval of Minutes:** July Minutes to be edited and approved at August meeting

1. Welcome / Housekeeping / Announcements

Introduction

- July Minutes to be edited and approved on August Agenda
- Announcements:
 - * The Mayor's African Diaspora Meeting with the Community on July 28th was a well-received event attended by Commission members
 - * The Redistricting Committee United for Fair Representation held meetings in July to present three redistricting proposals. Cherry, Mohamed and Yemane were in attendance and provided feedback. <http://fairrepresentationwa.org/2011/07/13/for-immediate-release-people-of-color-lead-redistricting-coalition-advocates-for-three-majority-minority-king-county-council-districts/>

2. SOCR Report

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

- Paid Sick Leave – The city has held meetings in supporting local business to see the need, the law will be introduced in September. SOCR will investigate any charges.
- Enforcement Division has seen a huge increase in charges – 94, to date.

For a copy of the full report, contact Rose or Julie.

3. RSJ Development Plan Workshop

Julie and Glenn held a workshop to assess current efforts and gather feedback from the Commission for the development of the RSJ 3-Year Strategic Plan. The workshop was also held to help the Commission identify what works best and how to build capacity in eliminating racial inequities.

A description of the Race and Social Justice Initiative and Immigrant and Refugee Action Plan was given along with a description of the current plan and an overview of the planning process.

An overview of the vision and mission of the Race and Social Justice Initiative was given and 3 main goals were identified in the plan for moving forward:

- **End racial disparities internal to the City** (workforce equity, contract equity, and training)
- **Strengthen the way the City engages the community and provides services** (inclusive outreach and public engagement, Racial Equity Toolkit, Immigrant and Refugee Action Plan)
- **Eliminate race-based disparities in our communities by working in partnership with community members and stakeholders**

Accomplishments and outcomes were discussed regarding the following points so in moving forward, the Plan can build on its successes:

- Contracting equity (increasing efforts throughout City departments)
- Upward mobility (interdepartmental teams working on ways to increase opportunities)
- 9,000+ City Employees trained in RSJ (marked increase in participation from 2005 results)
- Immigrant and Refugee Engagement and Services (interpretation and translation services improved and offered for top six languages throughout all City departments)
- Measurement of data collection (Youth and Families Initiative has improved the process but collection of certain data still requires improvement)
- Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement (Roundtable created to include community in decision-making processes)

Questions were:

- Is the community aware of the Race and Social Justice outcomes and how are they being engaged? *There is a draft plan being presented in September with regards to doing outreach and engagement with contractors in an effort to create equal access to contracting work with the City.*
- The Initiative was founded on the race disparity gap and started internally to gather information in an effort to help people hold the disparities in their communities. The impacts

and measures with regards to contracting were available because the government tracked this information. Other areas where this data could be useful for tracking purposes would be in criminal background checks and low graduation rates - we would like to see these gaps closed as well.

What is your organization doing and can you offer any expertise?

People are becoming more and more selfish – it affects all of us. Such as people who aren't supporting education because they don't have children? It has an effect on everyone's future because these same children will be the ones who are running the country! I would suggest gathering the development of I-200, how it was carried out and the steps to its success.

How does a white person see this working? We will all benefit from racial equity, but does everyone see it this way? Building in what inspires people with a firm foundation is what I would suggest. 3,000 City employees are trying to do this in their jobs, RSJ training should be mandatory for everyone.

Influencing youth is very critical I suggest implementing RSJ in the school district.

My community still feels as if they are outsiders. They need to know how to navigate this country. The State DSHS was difficult when I came here years ago, who are we sponsoring now? Communities are not considering colleges or jobs beyond Columbia City. Immigrants and refugees are settled in New Holly and other locations in Seattle, but after that, they move North or South of the City to more affordable neighborhoods such as Everett, Kent, and Burien. I believe people are moving to those cities because housing is less expensive and they are providing a welcoming atmosphere by creating the programs that have helped the Immigrant and Refugee communities. These cities are smaller, but the housing and shelters are more culturally sensitive. I have seen great successes when the City goes to these communities directly to find answers to homelessness and mental issues.

When collecting data for measuring Seattle's minority population, include gentrification and affordable housing, it's considered a racial and economic issue. The population of people of color in Seattle has decreased over 2000-2010, I think this is mainly because Seattle is not affordable for these communities.

What would you like to be doing to eliminate inequities in the community and what would you need to be able to do it? What are the opportunities for us to collaborate more in the future?

Support from the U.S. Government in making bank loans to people of color more realistic.

Bring people together to have conversations, mentoring our children instead of creating divides, come together and reach beyond the government's help. Engage in the political process. Volunteer and organize within communities.

Working with schools, Limited English-Speaking students have an even higher drop-out rate than children of color.

Mayor's Civic Engagement program is good, looking for ways to get youth with both non-citizenship and citizenship to serve and learn, but outreach could be better.

Services for pregnant women who are new to the country – prenatal and young child support.

Bring more politicians to New Holly, they have a great meeting room and why not engage with the community where they live? They have interpreters on hand, as well.

The community is ready will help with the outreach just give us the tools!

Different organizations providing services would serve the community better if they worked together and reserved or used accumulated resources. For instance, grant money becomes available and everyone is vying for that bit of resource to make things better, we are all doing great work, but only one of us gets the grant money. This competition for resources can also create problems when community partners are trying to work together.

Hold a City Forum – all organizations offering programs, together in one place!

Look for alternative meeting places, such as Parks, any non-profit organization within the City should include immigrant and refugee outreach meetings free of charge.

For measuring successes, ask the community what that would look like.

The Commission then focused on two questions:

1. Assess our current RSJ efforts
2. Brainstorm ideas that will help to develop the next 3-Year Strategic Plan.

Each Commissioner completed their answers to these questions and handed them to Julie.

Next Steps:

Meetings will be held with other key stakeholders to assess the current efforts and opportunities for the next phase. A draft plan will be completed by September 13. In late October or early November, Julie will share the final draft plan.

The Meeting Adjourned at 8:00 PM