

Immigrant and Refugee Advisory Board Annual Retreat Meeting Minutes

Venue: Chinese Information and Service Center
Date: January 30, 2010
Time: 9:00 am to 1:00 PM

Attendance:

- *Board Members:* Devon Alisa Abdallah, Alaric Bien, Cherry Grace Cayabyab, Paulina Lopez Bermudez, Andrea Caupain, Halima Dahir, Lesley A. Irizarry-Hougan, Shankar Narayan, Muhamed Qatrani, Jesus Rodriguez, Mengstab Tzegai
- *City Staff:* Stella Chao (DON), Yemane Gebremicael (DON), Roxana Norouzi (DON)
- *Facilitator:* Maria Batayola

Summary:

The Board reviewed 1) 2009 Accomplishments, 2) conducted an environmental scanning process (SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) in preparation for identifying 2010 priorities, 3) developed the 2010 Work Plan which includes the 2010 census, city funding, neighborhood planning, city policy and state/federal policy and 4) completed agenda items carried from the January 2010 meeting.

Specifically, the Board discussed the letter to the mayor and city council inviting them to board meetings, changed the monthly board meeting time to 6:00-8:00 pm, pushed back February board meeting to Feb 10th to be held at CAMP, reviewed maternity and family leave absences by-laws to be finalized at February board meeting and elected Lesley and Shankar as the 2010 board co-chairs.

RETREAT PROCEEDINGS:

Shankar, Alaric, Jesus and Yemane opened the retreat with welcome and purpose comments, then turned facilitation over to Maria.

Part 1: 2009 Accomplishments

The board reviewed the 2009 accomplishment handouts and added the following:

1. Most board members stuck it out through adjustment/transfer from Mayor's office to the Dept of Neighborhoods
2. Board members began to know each other more and started to click better
3. Board members met with Seattle City Councilmembers
4. Facilitated exchange of information between city and communities
5. Board members are a connection between city and ethnic/local communities and also bring feedback and information from community back to city
6. RSJI resolution included work of I&R Advisory Board
7. More communication with key areas within city

Part 2: SWOT

Board members noted on flip charts their sense of the board and the environments Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threat, then group discussion ensued with the following results:

Strengths

8. Vision
9. Diverse board member support/expertise ✓✓✓✓✓
10. Connected to I/R communities
11. Seattle is the 5th largest recipient city of I&R populations-very diverse
12. Grassroots connections
13. Few ego trips on I&R board
14. Involved in external issues such as immigration, civil rights, and DSHS
15. Organization and structure
16. Access to city-easy and supportive city staff

Weaknesses

17. We're all really busy and there are sometimes different levels of dedication or follow through ✓✓✓
18. Time-lack of cohesion (sometimes) ✓
19. Subcommittees not well structures and regular meetings not scheduled (time constraints) ✓
20. Few written or documented reports
21. No I&R budget for working on issues
22. Lack of relationship to power structure ✓
23. I/R not seen as politically important or known by community at large ✓✓
 - Visibility/clout
24. Not moving in high speed
25. Absenteeism could haunt us
26. No concrete talent experience list

Ideas that came up to address time as a major constraint:

- ID actual time line ✓✓✓
- ID and access to city resources ✓✓✓✓✓
- Strategic partnering vs tactical (no need to do it yourself)
- No central city vehicle for emerging issues (rapid response)
- Unclear on how I/R relates to RSJI
- City depts don't know how to best work with board
- How to use each other as resources given such a talented and connected group
- During meeting there is no time to bring up general concerns or check-ins

○ Opportunities

1. New Mayor
2. 2 new councilmembers-meetings with city officials
 - Get more involved with different committees and budget
3. Access to city staff information
4. Momentum
5. Partnership/collaboration
6. New refugee and immigrant communities
7. Census

8. Board maturity
9. New relationships with immigrant communities
10. Criminal justice work impacts us
11. New forums to engage community
 - Formalize RSJI
12. New outreach opportunities
 - Boards/commissions
13. Refocus our concerns/issues
14. Expand network
15. Communities to be used to forward issues concerns
16. Website on DON homepage to have more participation from I/R board

17. Mayor's new children and families initiative and planning engagement campaign around this issue for board partnership to ensure I/R gets served
18. RSJI roundtable has identified education as a main priority
19. Neighborhood planning and development for Rainier Beach and Bitter Lake wit significant I/R populations.

○ Threats

1. Budget, economy, funding for HR programs under attack √ √
2. U.S. environment (anti-immigrant) √
3. Isolation √
4. Capacity
5. Too many meetings which prohibit participating fully
6. Many groups want to get to the new mayor
7. Politics
8. Lack of communication vehicles for our community
9. Each other (if we have different opinions)
10. City process not well understood by board

Part 3: 2010 Work Plan

Board members are asked to write down their desired priorities for 2010. Group discussion surfaced:

1. Strengthen board operations/structure
 - i. relationships
2. Network/increased collaboration
 - i. Visibility
 - ii. Coalition building
3. Focused/clear issues priority
 - i. *Concrete issues*: 2010 cuts, funding, 2011-2012 budget, immigration reform, youth/gangs intervention (Mayor's new Children and Families Initiative), new refugees funding, other funding, criminal justice, budget and policy RSJI&R filter, neighborhood planning process
4. Increased I/R involvement

5. Increased policy engagement
 - i. relationships
6. Education campaign to address anti I/R sentiments

Stella observed that the activities were more of an advocacy nature and suggested to the board to add focus to its roles as an advisory board to the City. Jesus commented that this was part of difficulty with the nature of board members being advocates and its role as a board. Maria reviewed the authorizing purpose of the group provides for both – advisory role as noted in section A, B and C and the advocacy role in D.

Maria also noted that the 2010 goals as stated are along the lines of process goals e.g. increased visibility, collaboration, policy engagement. She asked the group what topic areas (content goals) do they want to move towards.

After referring to the SWOT analysis and getting an update fro Stella of current opportunities, the following 2010 Goals were established:

Refer to annual report

- Some concern about if goals match up with policy priorities of action plan
 1. Staff will help board align this after retreat
- 1 page demographic immigrant and refugee break down
 1. Census 2010-need this info for funding, voting power and determining I/R populations of Seattle
 2. Need to push city to pay attention to the issue of getting accurate census data

5 Proposed Main Areas of Focus for Work Plan

1. 2010 census. Accurate census data is key to getting equitable funding for much needed I/R programs. Therefore, the board will:
 - Press release-March 1st Deadline
 - Multilingual
 - Get various orgs to sign press release
 - Trainer's webinar and public education forum opportunities at end of Feb
 - Mid march (mailed items); First Count (April 1st)
2. City Funding The economic downturn is resulting in program cuts and layoffs which has a strong potential for adversely impacting I/R and people of color communities. The board will:
 - Write a letter to Mayor -Early Feb Deadline
 - Address city cuts and establish prioritizes for biennium
 - Use of RSJI budget filter
 - Monitor the Budget process and dollars
 - Obtain budget schedule and content (budget conference info)

- Budget task schedule so know when to take action
 - Invite budget director to meeting-Deadline March
 - Build plan/action items based on info from budget director
 - Suggestion to impact state and city budget committee

- 3. Neighborhood Planning (Rainier Beach and Bitter Lake)
 - Identify recommendations to increase I/R network and involvement
 - Get educated on past plan
 - What are the gaps
 - Advise
 - Oversee process as a board
 - ID neighborhood planning schedule

- 4. City Policy-*Lesley, Cherry, Devon, Halima*

Refer to board policy paper

 - Submit letter to mayor- early Feb
 - Meet with mayor and new councilmembers-Feb/March
 - Talk to key staff on issues
 - Work with departments-Fall/Winter
 - Possible issues
 - Children and families levy
 - Youth gang – expand scope to align with Mayor’s Children & Families Initiative
 - City Annexation
 - Jobs/green jobs

- 5. Policy State/Federal-*Lesley, Paulina, Cherry*
 - Comprehensive immigration reform
 - ESL
 - Jobs (stimulus, Green jobs)
 - Letter to city on funding for New Americans (CTD) to include in justice issues-Deadline Feb(by session end)
 - Outreach to allies collaborating on coalition building to identify common advocacy areas
 - Meeting with director of Seattle’s Dept of Intergovernmental Relations to get update on legislative priorities and specify I/R policy priorities
 - Outreach to allies
 - Update to policy letter
 - Engage with I/R legislation
 - Engage in 2011 session

2010 Work Plan Next Steps:

1. Have board members sign up for committees.

2. The Board to review Shankar suggestion to streamline to 3 committees: Policy (City, State, Federal), Budget and Neighborhood Planning as other items can be handled by the whole board during meetings.
3. DON staff to align and format 2010 work plan to be consistent with City documentation.
4. Follow-up on board operational improvements that were identified during the SWOT discussion:
 - a. Establish common ground on issues
 - b. Establish rapid response protocol to handle issues in between meetings
 - c. Establish talent/resume bank so can use each other more effectively as resources
 - d. Add to the regular meeting 15 minutes for board members roundtable to catch up on community issues

SWOT & 2010 Work Plan Assessment

What worked	What Didn't	Desired Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Great facilitation o Charting o Knowledge of group and that need taken into consideration o Group dynamics o Facilitator synthesizing group ideas and listening o Stella's knowledge o Starting on time o Good turn out o Knowledge of inter workings-good information o Wonderful accommodations o Speedy o Homework to read before o Alaric 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Colors of pens need to be brighter o More decisions made instead of waiting until next meeting o Parking o Rushed conversation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Consider longer retreat

Part 4: Follow-Up on Agenda Items from January 2010 Meeting

Announcements

- Seawall Briefing-Wednesday Feb 3rd 5pm-6pm Bertha Landes Room in City Hall
- Budget Conference -Seattle Center 12-5 pm Sunday Jan 31st

Action Items

Letter

- Review of letter inviting city councilmembers/mayor to board meetings
 - o Bullets regarding goals/work plan will be added as specified above
 - o Also send list of 2009 accomplishments along with letter
 - o Lesley will send letter to city staff to distribute to board for review
 - City staff will then submit to Stella to deliver to Mayor and councilmembers
 - o Board also needs to fill out form through online system to request mayor's attendance

- Paulina has volunteered to do this and will suggest 3 Wednesdays in March for potential meeting

Board Meeting Time

- Board members voted on three options for changing meeting time
 - Present members unanimously vote to change time to 6:00-8:00 pm
 - Suggestions to try to arrive by 5:45 so meeting can start promptly at 6:00
- Shankar suggests to move meeting to Wed Feb 10th as opposed to Wed Feb 3rd
 - Board votes: 10 vote for Feb 10th and 2 for Feb 3rd
- Next board meeting will be held on Feb 10th from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at CAMP
 - Directions and more info will be sent via email

Subcommittee assignments

- Deferring subcommittee assignments to next board meeting

Bylaws

- Review of bylaws regarding medical and maternity/family leave
 - Concern about maternity and safety around absences and board participation
 - Paulina and Alaric volunteered to meet and bring back revised bylaws to next meeting

Election of New Co-Chairs

- Nominations-board members nominate Shankar confirm nomination for Lesley and Jesus
 - Shankar accepts nomination
 - Lesley accepts nomination
 - Jesus states that he will step down and let someone else take over leadership role
- Alaric moved to elect Lesley and Shankar as co-chairs
 - Jesus seconded this motion
- 9 board members vote in favor of electing Lesley and Shankar as 2010 board co-chairs with Shankar and Lesley abstaining
- Shankar and Lesley officially will start co-chairing the board effective February 2010

Retreat/Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully Prepared and Submitted by: Roxana Norouzi with Maria Batayola

