

OIRA Minutes 10\_2\_2012

Taken by: Sahar Fathi, Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

Present – Michael Neguse, Devon Abdallah, Tsegaba Woldehaimanot, Mohammad Sheikh Hassan, Jesus Rodriguez, Shree Ram Dahal,

Present via phone: Ashraf Alazadi, Cherry Cayabyab

Guests - Natasha Savage (Eastern European Chamber of Commerce), Maria (youth nominee)

Absent – Andrea Caupain, Magdaleno Rose-Avila, Bincy Jacob

### **1. Welcome and Housekeeping/Approve September Minutes**

Send photos of commissioners to them from OIRA Event

No September Minutes – sorry!

Jesus will give Sahar his written notes for September meeting.

### **2. OIRA Report**

Safe communities – Michael Neguse feels they haven't been doing a good job (poels). Jesus hasn't been contacted yet. Sahar will follow up with him.

Sahar email website. Put up rules around I and R commission.

Jesus says each new group changes the rules. Jesus would like to know to what extent will their voices be heard. Legislation doesn't have details. The people should be appointed regardless. Jesus's understanding is that it was left up to them to recommend and do out reach for new commissioners. Send them to mayor to appoint or not appoint. Is OIRA an equitable role with commission? Devon said they have been involved in resumes and interviewing since the office started.

Jesus and Yemane did their jobs and submitted to commission. How far do they want to go back?

Commission wants clarity on the process. From both council and mayor. Find out from Harrell.

Devon will contact "yes" people and send to the commission for charter schools. Can ethics write a formal piece on what commissions can do?

### **3. Charter Schools**

Melissa Westbrook –charter schools get public funds, operated by nonprofit. Only state to bring ballot, 3 times, 3 times said no. 41 states have them. WA doesn't fund our public schools to national average. How does bringing more underfunded schools when we have already struggling schools going to help? Lists supporters included in packet (see attachment). No language to address at-risk kids or transportation. No oversight by any elected official.

This initiative will do harm to the district. Legislature has passed in last two years two innovation school laws. Tacoma has closed achievement gap, it can be done. Ninth straight year WA is at top for SAT scores. We need to talk about fully funding. Family and Ed Levy will help, but we need to do more for our kids. Initiative doesn't have anything in it for at-risk kids, but it does have "conversion charter" – as

part of proposal they take petition to any existing public school and they can take over the school. Asking you to go out to your communities and talk about this.

Devon asked for clarification on “conversion charter.” Melissa gave a response indicating that jurisdiction would be with district to decide. Most charter schools come from outside state. While nonprofit has to start out charter, they can contract out any service except operations.

Mohammad asked who drives the campaign for charter schools. Melissa responded that key funders are Bill Gates and Paul Allen and some other families from Microsoft and Amazon. Under this initiative – all charter schools get money from capital initiative, other schools go through different prioritization process.

Jesus asked what do you say to refugee or immigrant parent who feels the system already failed? Melissa responded that she has been working on this for 15 years. Working on the “World School.” Because legislature has passed more innovation school laws there will be more schools that address special needs. She feels as though the community will be more disillusioned than ever. Doesn’t want to minimize the community’s experience. Some charters do very well with ELL students but the problem is that there aren’t enough of them, they may not want the students that you are hoping to help. They consistently screen them out. Agrees that traditional schools have not done enough.

Maria asked how students are screened out of the process. Melissa responded that they might respond they can’t afford certain luxuries. KIP does very well with African American students, but very strict discipline. Big attrition rate. For some kids it’s too much.

Per Ethics suggestion, Devon will contact the Yes on 1240 people and ask them provide information in support of I 1240. Devon will email out both the Yes on 1240 and the No on 1240 information to the rest of the commission.

#### **4. 2012 Retreat**

10 AM on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> at Centerstone. Sahar will send out reminder.

#### **5. Committee Report Back**

Devon reported for protocol meeting – did nothing. Most things on workplan are complete. SPD Committee (Jesus) is complete. 20/20 report was part of their committee. Policy committee – things changed a lot (Tsegaba) hasn’t had a chance to connect with Michael and Cherry. Michael is still working with Yesler Terrace and SHA to make people understand the issues/outreach.

End of the year gathering suggested by Jesus. Jesus, Ashraf, Cherry and Maria will help plan.

#### **6. Facebook Administrator**

Tsegaba and Shree will be working together to administrate the Facebook page in Bincy’s absence. Jesus will forward pictures.

#### **7. Co-Chairs**

Need new co-chairs. Jesus leaving as of January 1. Devon wants to step down. Cherry was nominated for co-chair, she will think about it. Voting in November meeting. Devon will appoint people if they don't step up.

## **8. ADWA**

Yemane not present. Shree spoke on behalf of it – the letter is a follow up from two meetings ago. Commission had been asked to send a letter to encourage DON to follow due diligence. Devon expressed concern about endorsing specific organizations. Jesus would rather send a letter of appreciation to DON – Devon assigned it to him.

## **9. Announcements & Adjourn**

Actively outreach for commission spots. On interview committee Jesus would like at least 1-2 commissioners, mayor rep, and OIRA rep. Shree can help with interview process. Would like one block and to do them back to back.

Next meeting is Tuesday, November 6. Devon proposed rescheduling, Mohammad Sheikh Hassan seconded. Majority agreed.

November 8 was confirmed 6 pm. Sahar will get this room.

Devon - Budget hearings on 4<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> – number of things in mayor's budget for I & R communities. MSH – for last three years he has been told to come and support, in the real sense he hasn't experienced support. Two years ago, \$150k put in for youth employment training and that went to \$300k in the budget. Mohammad Sheikh Hassan feels that RFP or RFI disqualifies most I & R, esp east African communities. They may get one organization who gets a small amount of money. Horn of Africa didn't get very much money. The rest goes to organizations who don't lobby or advocate, who have friends in the office. Winners in community are friends with committee members. Family & Ed levy – none went to immigrant and refugee community. Lobbied in and out. Mohammad Sheikh Hassan might go to meeting and testify against the item. Mohammad Sheikh Hassan has expressed to mayor's office.

Devon would like OIRA to make sure application process is friendly and equitable to I & R communities. Shree wanted to make sure we don't kill the funding, want to fix the process.

Maria and Nee have been given to Leno, I received the rest of the applications from Jesus for commission.

Wing Luke Museum – Race Exhibit. February of next year. Anyone who wants to have display/participate/sponsor, Michaela is contact. Jesus will email number. Beyond Talk, Redrawing Race in Seattle. (see attached email – Sahar will forward to list). Sahar will find out if Commission can endorse. Jesus moves to endorse. Devon seconds. Everyone in favor. Commission will be community partner.

Cherry is involved in candidates forum with political candidates. October 20 8 am-3 pm. Legislative day and community of color candidate forum. Nonpartisan candidate forum. Education, Economic justice, criminal justice. Jesus moved to endorse. Michael seconded. All in favor to endorse nonpartisan candidate forum. Cherry will email information.

Trusted Advocate storytelling hour every Friday 6 pm. Free.