

OIRA Minutes 12_4_2012

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

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

Welcome and housekeeping + Minutes

Two changes – (1) We did not cancel the meeting (2) Shree's wife's name. Motion to approve by Andrea Caupain to approve with changes and Shree seconded. All in favor unanimously.

OIRA Report

Sahar spoke to tech matching fund deadlines coming up. Leno thinks it's exciting to be convening at this dinner. A lot of people want the Office to do almost everything. People want representation in immigration hearings, people who have interests far outside the scope of the office. We are trying to explore what more we can do to excite people about becoming a citizen and finding ways for them to have citizenship classes. We are in discussion with libraries, hsd, don, parks to expand services for citizenship. Conversations also being had by USCIS. They are willing to do naturalization ceremonies in various communities. There is one at 9 am at REWA on Dec 10.

You can also as commissioners encourage people about becoming commissioner. Tea times –Programs so people can learn about the services at the city. Now doing them twice a month – once in the office and once outside. If a community would like to host, Ivonne Riverra Martinez will book.

Mohammad expressed concerns that HSD won't fund all of the organizations. He will follow up with Leno.

December 13 is human rights day – Rita Zwaideh got an award. United for Washington for Marriage is getting an award well.

Sahar spoke about #IAMANIMMIIGRANT.

Leno presented outgoing letters to Jesus, Andy. Sahar presented one to Leno.

Strategic planning notes were skipped, not as robust as Devon thought they would be.

Commissioner recruitment update

Interviews scheduled for 10th and 17th. These are only for mayoral slots. Sahar also presented the final memo for selection of commissioners. Retreat in March with all 15. Mohammad Sheikh Hassan will check schedule for the 10th. 11:30-1:30.

Bylaws

Devon reviewed changes to bylaws as presented. Term limits, changes to specific language, added co-chair responsibilities, added removal of co-chairs policy. Devon added how to petition to get back onto the commission. 2 unexcused and 3 excused absences. Voting by proxy is not allowed. Added about electronic voting, but might need to tighten that language. Added about staff responsibilities.

Devon went through every change with the commission members to hear their thoughts. Jesus indicated that there should be an alternative to Robert's rules in order to be culturally sensitive – including consensus models. Gives community more empowerment. Devon suggested removing parliamentary procedure. They left it unresolved and came back at the end of the discussion. Rules were taken out altogether.

On the attendance policy – MSH asked for amendment. Jesus was more concerned about enforcement of rules. Devon explained that three absences are a quarter of the meetings. Jesus said three unexcused absences should result in being kicked off commission. Shree indicated that attending commission events should not be an unexcused absence – it is not an absence.

Devon will send Sahar an updated draft. Vote on final bylaws will be in January.

Reminders

No January commission meeting, rsji trainings on 29th and 31st – Sahar will send a reminder in January. Michael Neguse and Shree will attend as well. The ½ day training on the 12th got moved to the 12th from 1-5. Sahar will organize. First I and R commission meeting will be Feb 5.

Announcements

Michael Neguse announced a community meeting on Sunday from 2-5 at Garfield community center.

Devon made an announcement that there are thousands of Syrian refugees in Jordan who are not prepared for winter, Rita Zawaideh is gathering warm clothing to ship over. Devon will email this. Sahar offered to take donations at city hall if that is an easier location for drop off. Mohammad Sheikh Hassan spoke about charitable organizations and making sure they are trustworthy.

Jesus announced storytellers time in white center – representing trusted advocates. He would like anyone who can tell a story. Sahar will get the name of a DACA youth to Jesus.

Leno announced calling in on the radio on Friday at 12-1 around people who don't have bank accounts.

This was the last meeting for Jesus – he was asked to give a statement because of his long history with the commission. He spoke to enforcement of rules and making sure people sign up to do the work. Wants to make sure people are committed to providing voices. Everyone on the commission is a leader. The commission needs to be stronger for the future. For Jesus, it was a hell of a ride. This group is only as strong as we make it. Appreciate people like Cherry – because she did some things that have never been done with regards to minority representation. As far as the future is concerned, make sure we get more representation for people who think like the group and act like the group. Leno pointed out that there are a lot of people to thank in the process of this commission – he wanted to recognize Yemane who fought for the commission. Yemane did the work even though he didn't have the legislative authority to do so. Wanted to recognize that history. Devon wanted to recognize Yemane publicly.

Michael Neguse spoke to his attributes. Cherry pointed out the work by Yemane to phone bank for Jay Inslee and how much unprecedented work was done. He is a super volunteer. Michael neguse pointed out that we need to work with all of the elected officials. Jesus said to keep this group going, you have to be involved in politics, you have to be on the forefront for funding, and do a short history because that's the easiest thing for people to forget. MSH spoke about east African immigrants and their role in politics – doing fundraising, phonebanking, voting for the elected folks. Wants to make sure elected come back and ask immigrants as to what they need. Everything matters and this is a group of collective power. Jesus also spoke to the importance of the multicultural center the Mayor is pushing. Jesus also recognized Andrea for all of her strong work – she has been crucial to keeping the group together. Leno remembered that Candace and Darryl would be invited to a future meeting.

Cherry spoke and thanked everyone for their support for the work she had done with Census 2010, redistricting, voter registration and get out the vote. 87% unprecedented voter turnout. She is really excited about her new role at the city in the department of neighborhoods, she is replacing the amazing Dr. Sebhat Tenna and he managed the public outreach and engagement liaison program and she is excited to help continue with that program. There is so much work in the community – there is a lot of opportunity to bridge and connect. There is still room for relationship building and connecting.

Andrea agreed with all the comments around growth. She would ask that there always be a space for people to bring their passion to the work – making sure procedure doesn't get in the way. She is incredibly proud of the work accomplished, she is one of the original commissioners and cannot believe they are still here. Cherishes this group. Leno noted that Jesus and Andrea have been here from the beginning and they have really weathered the storm. MSH noted how important the multicultural center is and wanted to thank Nora Liu and Sebhat Tenna with the help of the community.

Adjourned by Jesus at 7:45 pm.