

Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission

June 4, 2013, 6:00-8:00 PM

City Hall, Room 360

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Shree Ram Dahal, Tsegaba Woldehaimanot, Devon Abdallah, Maru Mora-Villalpando, Jeniffer Calleja, Roxana Norouzi, Justin Chan, Dori Cahn, Mariya Kochubey, Simon Khin, Habtamu Abdi

Commissioners Absent: Natasha Savage, Michael Neguse, Mohamed Sheikh Hassan

OIRA Staff Present: Leno Rose-Avila, Sahar Fathi

Guests: Julie Nelson, Mike Fong, Wes Gonzalez

Call to Order: 6:09 pm

Welcome and Approval of Minutes

The minutes were reviewed, the agenda was changed to reflect that the minutes were from May – and the minutes were changed to reflect that Dori took notes. Devon moved to approve. Maru seconded. All approved except for abstentions by Simon and Habtamu.

OCR's RSJI Work with Seattle Public Schools (Julie Nelson)

Big community forum last Saturday on disproportionality and school discipline. Handout included. Community roundtable's vision is to eliminate all inequities. When roundtable first convened – was daunting. Had conversation around how to go about it, started with education. It would have greater impact later in other systems that a person interacts with. Systemic reasons why kids leave school, district's policies and practice are one of those reasons. Goal last Saturday was to pull together all the different bodies that were working on disproportionality and discipline. There is a lot of focused effort/attention on this topic. District has convened two advisory committees – equity and race, positive climate and disciplinary. Department of education has begun initial steps of audit. School board passed policy ensuring racial equity. Additional efforts at LEV, Garfield PTSA, etc. Incredible amount of attention being put on the topic primarily because it is such a big issue. Focus on Saturday was to pull together constituents, school district reps, and present framework for call to action. Call to action focused on eliminating racial inequity and discipline.

Event on Saturday polled participants – first question was around racial inequity. Plan to end racial inequity within the next 10 years. Also asked what the most important thing for collective impact to happen? Develop a common agenda with shared vision and agreed upon actions.

What is important in partnerships is aligning strategies – if we are moving towards a shared vision, strategies have to be aligned and complimentary. Transition points for students like going from middle school to high school are weakest points.

Expand RSJI social justice committees – need to support existing efforts. People wanted focused attention on specific topics in breakout sessions.

Graph looking at percent of students suspended or expelled for each year – when kid is not in school, they are not learning. If kid is being suspended, especially for repeat suspensions, this is the system's failure. 3% white, 15% African American. Difficulty with API data is that there are significant differences in aggregating data from different ethnicities. Advocating with district for better data.

Julie believes there are severe data challenges because data is not consistently collected across schools - some don't use the data collection system and those might be the ones with the highest discipline rates. Another data challenge is that this is for out of school suspension and expulsions, often students get disciplined at school and that is not taken into account.

Five things common across all groups working on this:

1. Changing policies – looking at policies that are driving outcomes
2. Classroom/school culture
3. Hiring/supporting/retaining qualified teachers of color (85% teachers white, 40% of students white) – many kids can go through entire school process and have only white teachers
4. Professional development for teachers
5. Promote statewide leg agenda

They will be looking for endorsements on the final product.

There is not good data for immigrant and refugee populations. Devon asked if there were any thoughts about complete elimination of suspensions – OCR would love to push for no suspensions. Roxana wanted to know if there was still opportunity to give input to the strategic plan – OCR will forward draft. June 15 will be formal vote.

Budget 101 (Mike Fong)

Mike Fong explained that central staff works on 14-15 different policies issues every year. The budget is adopted right before thanksgiving. They work for all 9 councilmembers, each councilmember has legislative staff that work on different issues specifically for their councilmember.

General fund is discretionary dollars across the city for different policy objectives. Usually about 950 million dollars. The rest are utility revenues, grant funds, other fees and specialized funding. Council's emphasis and public's interest is on general fund.

Every year in the budget process – no one starts from scratch. Starting point is how to keep things whole and is there anything left over?

Council doesn't get budget until end of September. Mayor and department staff are working on budget in the beginning of February.

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Approve biennium budget – so in fall of 2012 we adopt budget for 2013-2014. Fall of 2013 we review the budget proposed for 2014. Every fall we review the next year's budget top to bottom. Don't assume that everything is locked in for two years when a biennium budget is approved – technical term is "endorsed budget."

Mayor presents his budget to council in September – Council receives the budget on that date that he speaks. There are a few days of high level cursory review. There is a budget presentation that the director of the budget office gives. Talks about motivations, areas of emphasis for mayor, how the budget came together.

Typically there are two major public hearings in the budget process – this is when constituents come out in droves to highlight priorities for council consideration. Council is inherently reactive. Council is responsive to what they hear. Human services coalition is a powerful constituency because they are well organized and they understand the budget process.

The next couple of weeks have council staff doing analysis. Then they present budget issues – programs that have been cut, things that are of interest, at the request of a councilmember, etc. Round 1 is effectively when councilmembers need to try to tee up specific budget actions they want to make happen. Every budget action requires a green sheet – transactional document that shows they are going to add or cut the monetary piece of the budget.

City council's total modifications to budget usually come out to \$5-\$10 million. 1-2% of changes. If you want some body of work to be done in the city, you want it in the base budget – it is as important to consult with the mayor and departments.

OIRA Report – Magdaleno Rose-Avila

[Report attached]

Leno also reviewed absences and time commitment to the commission. He also noted that Justin was resigning. Leno welcomed back Simon and spoke to his father's absence.

Habtamu noted that circumstances changed after his appointment – Devon asked that they talk offline.

Commissioners Update

Presentation to Mayor will be on June 11 at 11:30 – Shree will be present, Maru also volunteered to attend. The commission has until June 5 at 5 pm to decide if anyone else wants to attend. The briefings will be updated at every meeting, and the briefing sheet will be passed out. Justin Chan will be resigning. Commissioners will be asked to pick 3 councilmembers to whom they would like to be liaisons for the commission.

Committee Reports

a. Education

Made progress on hearing how RSJI and education comes together. They signed up to be organizational member/supporter of SESEC. They are doing some scans to see what's out there for parents to navigate the system. Asking about translations, individuals to help navigate.

Co-host event with school district – Roxana passed out flyer. Migration Policy Institute recently did a report – highlighted Seattle/Kent on bright spots. Event will allow for commissioners to meet Banda.

b. Homelessness/Healthcare

Tsegaba and Habtamu have been working on shelters/resources for homelessness. The immigrant/refugee communities not aware. Looking at more nontraditional resources – language barriers.

ACA – Mariya and Justin have been working hard on this. Goal was to create a one-pager on the important information, they have looked into all resources. They have a two pager.

Will look for someone to fill in for Justin.

c. CIR

Working on memo to council to educate them on how Senate bill will impact Seattle residents. They have a 7 page summary. Reduced it down to three pages. They have met over the weekend, trying to finalize the memorandum.

They will email it to the commission before sending to commission. The message to ask council to support immigration reform, but they want them to really look at the bill and address some of the serious problems in it.

Sahar to set up meetings with council – end of June in time for July.

Washington State Human Rights Commission Community Meeting

Maru attended. Brief introduction from each of the board members – they explained why they joined the commission and their experience with civil rights and discrimination. Several folks mainly spoke on LGBT issues. Maru spoke about the intersection of LGBT community and integration.

Women's Commission Meeting

Mariya attended – they had someone from “We Belong Together.” They wanted to write a letter about employment verification provisions in CIR, in particular because of the impact for the women's commission.

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Announcements

Justin spoke about his resignation. He is leaving in a bittersweet way – good role for him in city of Seattle, wanted to thank his fellow commissioners.

Maru mentioned an article she circulated about the Center School – wanted to know what the Education committee might do in response. Maru will re-send.

Mariya wanted to know if there should be a briefing by “We Belong Together.” Maru thought it would be helpful to have a copy of the women’s commission’s letter. Sahar will touch base with Marta and talk to other commissions about their letters, community tables – coordinate plans with LGBT and women’s commissions.

Jeniffer attended the Parks meeting – disappointed by the attendance. There were not many people there, they had spent quite a bit for different interpreters. Was not impressed by their outreach.

Sahar will mention the complaint to Parks.

Roxana mentioned a movie in SIFF – Devon is in it, it’s called Barzan. There may be a community screening. Possibly in late June.

Adjournment

Adjournment: 8:00 pm