

Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission

October 1, 6:00-8:00 PM

City Hall, Room 360

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Shree Ram Dahal, Tsegaba Woldehaimanot, Maru Mora-Villalpando, Jeniffer Calleja, Roxana Norouzi, Mohamed Sheikh Hassan, Mariya Kochubey, Dori Cahn, Devon Abdallah, Simon Khin

Commissioners Absent: Habtamu Abdi, Michael Neguse

OIRA Staff Present: Sahar Fathi

Guests: Randy Engstrom, Lara Davis, Patrice Frank, Sola Plumacher

Call to Order: 6:00 pm

Welcome and Housekeeping/Approve September Minutes (Co-Chairs)

Shree submitted motion to approve September Minutes.

Mohamed seconded.

Simon Abstained.

Agenda unanimously approved.

Creative Advantage (OAC)-

Talking about arts education partnership – creative advantage. Irene Gomez was here previously. Lara was hired to manage this program. Office is 42 years old. Does grant making to nonprofit cultural orgs – fund about 300 orgs/artists per year. Maintain the city's 1% for the arts program. Maintain portable collection.

Randy saw a need to invest in young people, affordability is an issue that permeates across communities, and wanted to focus on the waterfront of Seattle. Today just here to talk about the creative advantage. OAC funded school district for past 6 years. Made a decision to fund arts. Arts education is essential to kids succeeding in the job market. The skills that it takes to do those jobs are tied to arts. Wallace Foundation gave city and school district a big planning grant – so that every kid has access to arts from k-12.

Arts education organizations don't qualify under the Family/Ed levy. He also heard from OFE that they needed to see data and outcomes. Nonprofits that do this work don't have capacity. OAC hired the evaluator – aggregates information from student data – and does the in-between part with

larger institutions. This is an opportunity to bridge disproportionality and academic issues. It is also empowering principals to own arts plans that they build with teachers, parents, students, and community partners.

OAC is still developing materials. There has been a dearth of creative opportunity. Some of the responses to historical problems have been things like PTAs fundraising. That creates further disparity within given district of schools. Opportunity varies across the board.

They are also building a roster of community organizations and teaching artists that will be aligned to the goals of creative advantage. Schools will then draw from this list and support them in the matchmaking process in order to have artists who can meet the goals matched with them. The types of programs that will be funded – integrated arts partnerships, cultural bridge partnership – are launching this fall.

There is also a professional development piece – many people are already in the community but they will draw upon this work to build a comprehensive development track.

Dori asked if there was resistance to artist partnerships in schools. Randy said they are working with 14 schools and they have seen no resistance.

Mohamed noted he is a father of six, all of his kids go to public schools. He asked if there is a plan to do outreach to the community – he believes they have misperceptions about art – the community often does not support it because they are looking for education outcomes. Lara indicated that they are partnering with a number of CBOs that have the skills and relationships to do this. Randy stated that art should not be viewed as a privileged experience – OAC talks about arts as the how, it is how we invest in kids and how we can build economy. It is a way by which we do things.

Maru asked how schools are chosen. Lara stated that by 2020 the plan will go district-wide. Wallace Foundation decided not to fund implementation, and OAC has been focusing on the central pathway.

Shree asked if there was anything the commission could do to be supportive. Randy indicated that he had asked Leno to sit on the community leadership team. The Arts commission carried this work for six years. Randy offered that it be a conversation. They would share opportunities.

Immigrant and Refugee community and homelessness (HSD)

Patrice started the presentation – HSD prepared a report for Councilmember Rasmussen. They brought data from the homeless management information system for the county and a dataset from family housing. The report covers January-August of this year. Immigrant and refugee data is not required for local homeless related contracts. Safe Harbors doesn't require it because OH/HUD don't require it. Patrice walked through the information in the report.

Sola explained the difference between emergency shelter, transitional housing, service only and rapid re-housing.

Mariya asked about outreach to homeless immigrants and refugees. Sola responded that 211 is the primary referral call for anyone in the community looking for services. There was a big outreach effort around it. FHC does a two hour assessment with every household that calls their line, and identify immediately if someone needs an interpreter. The staff speaks different languages.

Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission

October 1, 6:00-8:00 PM

City Hall, Room 360

Mohamed believes 211 is a failure. The waiting list is 4-5 months. Prior to 211 there were individual relationships with housing providers – he believes that worked well. Furthermore, he believes the information was collected from people who could read/write, but believes immigrants can't all read/write.

Sola responded that FHC is managed by CCS. King County is the planning agency for Family Housing initiative. They have heard the same thing repeatedly – it is challenging. System transformation is painful and takes a long time. Families wait two weeks for assessment, and have no immediate access to anything. No basic needs are met by calling 211. It is a placement list – the system was designed intentionally this way.

Sola stated that they are looking at diversion and rapid re-housing programs. These are strategic, concrete solutions. While there are barriers – the system is taking into account what we can be planning for in the future.

Devon asked where the API languages are. Sola thought it was probably missing from the list because of ACRS's good work.

Simon asked about the specific process after calling 211. Sola spoke to general points – strength based assessment to identify barriers to housing, credit debt, landlord debt, utility debt, family connections. They create a score/matrix and then all housing providers providing housing options for families identify through the database when they have a unit available and how it would match the family need. FHC calls the families on the list – generally 8 calls are made for every unit becoming available. It usually takes 1-2 tries before the unit is connected to family. Then the housing agency takes responsibility for moving family into the house.

Mohamed talked about specific needs of East African immigrant/refugee family – predisposed to be homeless. They need at least 3 bedrooms. Systematically, he believes these people become homeless. Mohamed suggested converting the rest of sand point to homeless housing.

OIRA Report (Sahar)

Sahar reported on the mayor's adds to budget and the budgetary process. She said she was very proud of the hard work the commission has been putting into their work items. She discussed the participation at the Aquarium Tea Time and that Leno was still on medical leave.

She discussed the Voting Taskforce and mentioned their first meeting, and then discussed the development of an Immigration 101 training for the city.

Restaurant Tipping (Shree)

Discussion held for next meeting.

Sub-Committee Updates (All)

Education subcommittee – Roxana reported – started with the fact that the news around universal pre-k is an exciting opportunity. It is important for commission to be voice around this. The Education committee has been a voice around the dual-strategy model around early learning. They are trying to infuse the needs of immigrant system. They had a meeting with CM Burgess and staff. Roxana went to an additional meeting today with CM Burgess for additional input. Roxana will represent the commission on the taskforce. There is an 8 month planning phase and then they have to figure out how to fund it. The group is meeting with Seattle Public Schools and the World school on Friday. They are continuing to build communications and collaboration with OFE to give input to all the levy dollars – who gets funding, who is eligible.

Homelessness/ACA – Tsegba met with CM Licata’s staff for resources/support and was given background on 10 year plan to end homelessness. There will be a public meeting on Oct. 23. She knows immigrants/refugees not accessing shelters and there is a lot of work still to be done. They are still gathering information. Mariya submitted a final draft of the ACA memo and Sahar sent to county. The committee is still discussing to see whether there should be Q/A

Comprehensive Immigration Reform – Maru noted that the meeting had not been set up yet for council.

Announcements (All)

Mariya responded on women’s commission request to work on I/R issues

Roxana announced citizenship day on Oct 26

Devon announced Arab festival on Oct 12

Saturday at noon, walk for immigration reform in Columbia City

Saturday – Nepali festival in October 5

Adjournment

8:03 pm.