

Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission

February 4, 6:00-8:00 PM

City Hall, Room 370

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Tsegaba Woldehaimanot, Roxana Norouzi, Simon Khin, Jeniffer Calleja, Mariya Kochubey, Dori Cahn, Shree Ram Dahal

Commissioners Absent: Michael Neguse

OIRA Staff Present: Aaliyah Gupta, Sahar Fathi

Call to Order: 6:11 pm

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

Shree made a motion to approve the January minutes and Mariya seconded. The vote was unanimous in approval. Sahar announced that Maru resigned from the Commission.

Shree opened the discussion on volunteers for new commissioner interview . All of the commissioners were interested in participating in the process. Shree suggested a doodle calendar be circulated and that each commissioner take one interview.

Aaliyah announced that the transition was going to delay public posting of the call for commissioners. This means that the retreat would officially be moved to May. Sahar explained the statutory requirements to recruit new commissioners. Aaliyah suggested thinking about skill sets and strategy when discussing possible new recruits. Jeniffer stated that she would like to work on health equity issues in the next work plan.

Jeniffer volunteered to be the Five Commissions meeting representative.

Emerging Trends and Issues in the Community (Shree)-

Shree moved to amend the agenda. Skill building brainstorm session was removed and a new topic “emerging trends and issues in the community” was added. The purpose of the new section is to make space for emerging issues and trends in the community. This section will be incorporated into future agendas. Aaliyah said it was a great idea because OIRA is not covering the ground and territory that the commission is covering. If someone wants to come to the commission to present an item, they should default to the process already in place. Jeniffer asked if the commission should have a public comment section – 10 minutes of public comment. Sahar will follow up with Ethics to see if it is required.

Shree opened up the slot for topics/issues of concern. Roxana updated the Commission on the Washington State Dream Act. It has been in the legislature for 5 or 6 years. One America got it

through the Senate last Friday. Most likely it will go to the governor's desk. There are some local implications – large number of students who did not qualified for state based need will get it now. She thought it could be something that the Commission could look, in terms of helping with implementation.

Dori stated that on the national front the House Republicans may support a pathway that is different than citizenship. She was conflicted because it is an alternative to legal status that is not citizenship. Roxana clarified that the House has just released a series of bills. Dori state that the flip side is that undocumented people might just take it for a sense of security. Roxana added that the immigrant community is split on this. People are fatigued. These are people's lives. Shree suggested that it could be a divisive topic.

2013 Work Plan Subcommittee Reports (Committee leads)

Comprehensive Immigration Reform (Jeniffer) - Jeniffer suggested that the Commission look for a candidate who is an expert on immigration reform.

Education subcommittee (Roxana) – Roxana reported that the subcommittee has lost a couple people. Universal Pre-K has taken off and the Commission could have significant influence to make sure the architecture of program is inclusive of needs of immigrant and refugee communities. The subcommittee has been in communication with Rachel from OFE. Roxana attended Monday's council briefing about the benefits of universal pre-k and low income communities of color. OneAmerica has done some work around bilingualism, including a bill on the seal of biliteracy which will put a seal on student transcripts. If it does pass, the commission could emphasize how Seattle has embraced bilingualism and what significance it will bring to students. She is not sure if it will apply to students this year. As for Pre-K, a couple different studies show that every dollar spent early is a \$7 savings in the backend. One thing the US is learning from European countries is that universal access is good for everyone. Some of the impacts persist because of the institutional inequities in the K-12 system. The city is adamant about high quality and evidenced-based methods – but the commission should ask who the quality is defined for and what the indicators are. There are promising practices that are emerging and impactful, but not necessarily “evidenced based.” She is concerned that it doesn't always mean the best things for immigrant populations.

Homelessness/ACA (Tsegaba/Mariya) – The discussion focused on the ACA Feb 28 Q&A panel. Mariya stated that she will send out the list of questions again. There was discussion around inviting people to the event. The goal is to have it recorded, translated, and then sent out. Shree wanted to make sure that if the panel were opened to the public for questions, that the questions were properly screened. They could be posted on a web page or could be summarized, as long as they engaged the public. Mariya suggested that they could post the questions on facebook and ask for suggestions. Shree thought there could be a transcript provided to the public after the taping. Mariya asked if anyone on the commission had specific people that they would be interested in inviting to the taping. Shree stated that the folks he knew would be at work, they probably can't attend. There are very few people who can actually make it. Having a large audience is not realistic. Mariya said she was thinking 5-10 people at most. The idea was that these would be people from organizations that work with the immigrant and refugee community that have an interest in this professionally.

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After some discussion as to whether there would actually be enough time for more questions, it was decided that they did not have enough time for more questions. The goal would be to do a lot of follow up and generate the excitement after the event. Aaliyah agreed that OIRA could work with ethnic media to get the video covered and draft communications to share the taping with as many people as possible.

Brainstorm for 2014 Retreat (All)

The discussion was skipped due to time constraints and reserved for the March meeting.

Announcements (All):

Jeniffer announced that Tuesday is Immigrant and Refugee Legislative Day for REWA. They will be able to take people on buses from Yesler Terrace, High Point, Kent and White Center. They are training people to talk to legislators.

Simon stated that the Burmese community has a couple events coming up. All the events are free.

Roxana announced that there is a neighborhood association coming from Chicago on Thursday, they work with low-income and immigrant and refugee families. They will be presenting/talking about work and how south king county can integrate strategies locally.

Adjourn

7:50 pm.