

Immigrant and Refugee Commission
Seattle City Hall, Room 370
July 7, 2015

Present: Jeniffer Calleja, Riddhi Mukhopadhyay, Michele Ramirez, Luis Ortega, Tsegaba Woldehaimanot, Simon Khin, Farhiya Mohamed, Kianoush Naficy and Veasna Hoy.

Absent: Roxana Norouzi, Dori Cahn, Mindy Au, Mohamed Adan and Marilena Morales.

Meeting Notes

Meeting called to order at 6:10 pm

Housekeeping

- Michele Ramirez reported on the Seattle Pride parade and Pride Flag raising events. Food assignments for the upcoming meetings was finalized.

OIRA Report by Mohamed Sheikh Hassan

Mohamed was a commissioner like us and is very pleased to be back.

-OIRA started with two full time staff, now the office has seven full time staff. OIRA is sitting at the table with many City Departments. Joaquin has been brought on as the new Ethnic Media Specialist.

-The Ready to Work Program launched. OIRA gave a grant to Home Sight with the federal dollars received, subcontracted to ACRS and partnered with five small organizations. There are 15 students in the first cohort. Next cohort starts in September at New Holly. Being a Seattle resident is a requisite. Commissioners asked if there will be certification for these groups.

-By March 2017 if the in-house childcare providers can't be certified, they will lose their licenses. OIRA will have a meeting with Department of Early Learning to see what needs to be done to support these providers.

- OIRA has a new assistant, Linh, who has become full time.

-Mohamed reported about meeting with Seattle Parks and Recreation. There is a new Superintendent. He discussed access issues for immigrants and refugees. Parks is working hard to try and make change. He encouraged commissioners to invite people to the community centers.

6:15-7:00 Subcommittee Updates All

Executive Subcommittee:

- There was discussion about appointing Michele Ramirez as Co-Chair in training for when there is a vacancy.
- City getting ready for 2015 Comprehensive Plan. Commission reviewed recommendations by HRC and LGBT Commission. Riddhi will send public draft to everyone and the Planning Commission will be consulted about next steps.
- Reviewed handout with meeting guidelines for presenters. Feedback was that it should be simplified. There was discussion around the relevancy of department presentations to the

Commission. Commissioners wanted more time for internal work discussion and the process for recommending presenters was discussed.

Education

- Met last month with Sahar over the phone to reassess the work plan. There have been challenges finding time to meet. The group is thinking of doing one item instead of three.

Economic Justice

- The subcommittee has had challenges meeting. The focus will be in homelessness and affordable housing. There was feedback on the shelter project that Tsegaba worked on with interns from the Mayor's office. They came up with list of 40-45 shelters and developed 19 questions. With their help and the subcommittee they reached out to all shelters. 5-6 shelters answered questions. They might write findings with what they have.
- U-Visas: they drafted a letter and got a little stuck on the process, they are learning more about what we need to focus on to request an increase the number of U-Visas available. Meeting with U-visa person indicated that instead of writing our representatives, the commission needs to urge the city, police department and prosecutor's offices to take a public stance on this.

Immigration

Luis will join this subcommittee. The group has put DAPA and DACA on hold because of national policies/litigation and will focus on the Detention Center visit.

Cambodian Genocide Memorial Proclamation - Veasna Hoy

Commissioners voted yes to reviewing Proclamation and voting on final draft via email. Deadline to Commissioners for comments is Tuesday July 13th.

Emerging Trends and Issues in the Community All

Jen reported attending the Community Centers Mini-Summit at Seattle Center and distributed paper survey given at the event. Jen will return the surveys to Parks. Event had good turnout of immigrants and refugee community members and advocates. The takeaways were to invest more in outreach to under-represented communities, to increase partnerships with CBOs, to improve customer service, and to meet the community where they are.

Luis reported on United We Dream, more undocumented youth are becoming vocal. Celebration of graduates at El Centro de La Raza was great. WA Dream Coalition stepping up their organizing.

Adjourned at 7:35pm