

PRESENT: Tsegabe, devon, Michael neguse, shree, msh

1. November did not need to be approved
2. December moved by Tsegaba and approved by shree. Unanimously approved.
3. Leno report – death of Somali in community – MSH was very helpful as community member. Thao will have a copy of an emergency card by the end of the week. Thao will also be doing a summary of the different cultural practices as well for when someone is deceased. Also need to do important work around organ donation and immigrants/refugees. Want to do some work to make sure people know all their financial options for burial, as well as a trusted person in the community to assist with burial process. Also doing community teas – Abdullahi has been working on outreach. Had a successful event with Horn of Africa. People have given a lot of feedback about things they want to learn. We will be hosting an event at the Seattle Aquarium in May. Shree had worked with the Zoo in the past and they discounted tickets for the community – a lot of people didn't take advantage of it, but he suggested we revisit this option. Good response on safe communities – in March they will be doing the third phase with people who self selected as leadership. OIRA will try to recruit new volunteers from this community to help build capacity – Abdullahi has been doing a lot of work. Sahar reported on College Bound, free scholarship for tuition if in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade you qualify for free and reduced lunch and you are 2.0 gpa. OIRA will be working extensively to ensure 100% participation. MSH enrolled his son when he was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade – the problem is that people don't know about it. MSH suggested gift certificate to get people to enroll. He also suggested CBOs receive money for every child signed up. Leno wants to explore the idea for certificates. OIRA workplan was approved by Mayor, will transmit to commission soon. Mayor would like to do a report back in June (about one year since Leno was hired). Would like to work jointly with commission. Sahar has taken on ethnic media for the entire city. Sahar will also be in charge of translation and interpretation policies. Will be training ethnic media and doing access for the mayor.
4. New commissioner report – 4 new commissioners – paperwork sent down to council. The next round is coming from council for the final 6 slots. Sahar will download all of the work plans for the retreat for background.
5. Bylaws: Will go over the bylaws at the retreat. Shree moved to pass, Tsegaba seconded. Unanimously approved.
6. Guest Speaker: Toby Guevin, One America – immigration related legislation and budget issues in Olympia. Two major priority policy bills in the upcoming legislative session that OA has taken lead on – Washington State Voting Rights Act – at large election systems in WA, 99% of elections in at-large capacity. Also have polarized voting. Clearest example in Eastern and central Washington. Yakima is 45% latino but has never elected latino to city council. Slim majority voting block not willing to support a minority candidate in an at-large system, they dominate elections. Requires a change in election system so it goes to district-based elections. Working with aclu-wa, league of women voters, seiou 775, faith action network, etc. More than 45 orgs supporting the effort. Making sure every vote accounts. Major pushback is around costs.

Washington State Dream Act is the other piece of legislation – expand financial assistance to undocumented students. Right now these students get in state tuition rates. Biggest pushback is that there are citizen students not receiving funds, why should undocumented get this funding? OA is also supporting ELL students. Recs made by quality education council – increase funding for additional hours of instruction and accountability issues.

7. Tsegaba: Immigrant/Refugee community and mental health – works on a project that focuses on getting refugees connected to mental health services. Higher rates of mental distress. Difference between the experiences in both immigrant and refugee stories. Refugees live in camps, resettled, stress. Immigrants generally make the choice as opposed to being forced. Knowing they have higher rates of emotional distress – very underrepresented. The biggest reason is the stigma associated with mental health. Many communities think of mental health condition as “insanity.” People are worried about labels and the ramifications on their family. Education is helpful to combat this – Tsegaba has done a lot of education around the concept of mental health in the US. People connect to specific symptoms like sadness, having trouble sleeping, not able to concentrate. A lot of providers don’t know how to talk to refugees about mental health or they don’t feel they have the capacity to work with this community. The way you talk about mental health plays a huge role in whether folks will enter the mental health system. Piloted an evaluation with public health to ask every refugee when they come into the US to be asked about symptoms of mental health. Ideas were volunteered to work with Harborview, with general community awareness. Tsegaba suggested the community based mental health assistance organizations. Could also do a community forum or a story with ethnic media. Screenings are age 14+. Michael Neguse works with refugee kids in particular at Garfield High School. Possibly add to workplan.
8. Brainstorm for Work Plan – discussion postponed.
9. Set March Retreat Date: Sunday, March 31<sup>st</sup> – 10-5.
10. Adjournment by Shree at 8:05 pm.