



**Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission  
March 2, 2011, 6:00-8:00 PM  
Room CH-370, City Hall**

**Meeting Minutes**

- Commissioners Present:** Devon Alisa Abdallah, Ph.D, Jesus Rodriguez, Lesley Irizarry-Hougan, Yasemin San, Magdaleno M. Rose-Avila
- Commissioners Absent:** Andrea Caupain, Paulina Lopez Bermudez, Cherry Cayabyab, Michael Neguse, Mohamed Sheikh Hassan
- Commissioners by Phone:** Not applicable
- SOCR Staff Present:** Julie Nelson, Glenn Harris, Nolan Lim, Rosalinda Hoskins
- Guests:** Mengstab Tzegai, Ashraf Alazadi, Merri Ann Osborne
- Guest Speakers:** Michael Davis, Seattle Public Utilities
- Call to Order:** Call to order at 6:00 PM
- Approval of Minutes:** February 2, 2011 minutes approved, with edits

**1. Welcome/Housekeeping/Announcements**

- Jesus announced March 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM there will be a multicultural storytelling about Mexican Folktales, featured speaker, Rosa Hernandez at White Center Community Cultural Center – free snacks and refreshments provided. <http://www.wccda.org/home/wccda/1357>
- Jesus announced SB 5407 will be voted on concerning WA State Driver’s license bill, changes proposed are unfair to immigrants and refugees, he asks that you contact your senators to oppose.
- Jesus announced March 4<sup>th</sup> is Latino Legislative Day, follow this link for more info about this year’s priorities  
[http://www.latinocivicalliance.org/wahld/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=214:latino-legislative-day-2011-priorities](http://www.latinocivicalliance.org/wahld/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=214:latino-legislative-day-2011-priorities)
- Devon announced March 26<sup>th</sup> (9AM-4PM) the Arab American Community Coalition is holding a Teachers workshop “Iraqi Refugees in Our Schools” \$20 includes: lunch, beverage breaks, educational materials, and clock/credit hours. Follow link for more info and registration. <http://antiochalumniblog.com/a-teachers-worshop-iraqi-refugees-in-our-schools/>

**2. Action Items**

**Appointments/Reappointments Updates/Commissioner Interviews**

- Rosalinda handed out a current member roster and asked that members update any errors in name spelling or contact info. Since there are 5 vacancies, Rosalinda informed that she is conducting interviews with the help of Jesus and Cherry. One new member was interviewed in October and will be coming on board and interviews are set with six new candidates March 7-14. The plan is to confirm new members and re-confirm members interested in a 3<sup>rd</sup> term by April or May, depending on Council's agenda.

### **SMC Update**

Changes voted by the Board at February's meeting are underway. Rosalinda is working with Law to ensure the changes are made.

### **SOCR Report**

- Julie reported that the 5-Commission Meeting will be held March 9<sup>th</sup> at City Hall. Beth Goldberg from the Mayor's Budget Office will be there to hold a discussion, prior to 2012 decisions are made. Representatives from SPD, HSD, and DPD will also be in attendance to talk about training and use of force policies. Chief Diaz will not be in attendance, but Assistant Deputy Dick Reed will be present. Also on the agenda is Family Zoning requirements and code changes with regards to family housing and family restrooms.  
If you have questions you would like to ask the panel, please forward them to Rose by March 4<sup>th</sup>.

### **3. Seattle LGBT Commission Support for Trans Health Insurance Coverage**

Commissioner Erica Sekins gave a description of transgendered medical needs and why exclusions in health care for these individuals should be eliminated. Erica asked the Board to join support with the Seattle LGBT Commission, Seattle Women's Commission, and Seattle Commission for People with Disabilities by asking City of Seattle to remove the exclusion that prevents transgendered people from getting healthcare and the addition of transgendered and related psychological care. Erica explained that this change was made in San Francisco and it was found that the premium did not increase and far less people accessed the care than the plan had expected. Magdaleno asked for a report or statement of cost differences and wondered how many cities have made this change? Erica stated that there is a Fortune 500 report that she will forward and mostly Universities are supporting this change, naming University of Michigan as one that has done great work in this area.

**MOTION:** Immigrant and Refugee Board to join in support letter for Trans Health Insurance Coverage.

**PASSED**, with an abstention by Jesus.

### **4. City Translation and Interpretation Work Group**

Michael Davis from Seattle Public Utilities gave a detailed overview of what has transpired with the Statement of Legislative Intent regarding Immigrant and Refugee Services. Internally, the city is gathering best practices as well as possible improvements. Externally, the city is looking at what is happening nationally and world-wide and what's working best in those cases. The city is engaging in community conversations, looking at who can help, possibly contracting with non-profits to provide interpretation and translation support. Michael is looking for input/feedback from the Board.

Michael explained that the City's Language Bank is made up of employees who are bilingual and can offer this resource to other departments. The way it works, city employees look up the language needed on the in-web and a list of employees who speak that language are provided. Yemane started this work and they are now looking at ways to improve, Michael asks the Board for their feedback.

The work to improve services is on-going and the work group is in the demographic information gathering stage, they will be providing a report SOCR by April 29<sup>th</sup>.

Jesus asked if cost comparisons were being made, Yemane had previously worked on a schedule of costs per department. Michael said that they were looking at that information to get an idea of what departments were spending and where the need was most. Currently, the work group is looking at the successful work that has occurred in other cities and internationally, the UK and Australia are doing great work in this area. Jesus commented that because of the State making cuts to programs, is the work that the City doing a challenge? Michael explained that the city is looking for a plan that can be effective ASAP, so they are looking at the needs and resources and asking the community, so they can provide the Council with numbers to make informed decisions with regards to what will be sustainable. Devon stated that she is concerned about the sources of information, such as, with regards to collecting demographic information, the Census is not accurate and it excludes Arab-Americans as well as others due to the short form that was used in data collection. Michael stated that they would also be looking at school district information, since it is a bit more accurate. Jesus suggested a closer look at interpretation services also, such as when a Spanish interpreter is requested, the interpreter will sometimes speak Castilian, this language form is not used by all Spanish-speaking individuals. Michael said that the group is working on an expanded language list in an effort to come back to access. Ashraf suggested using local DSHS records for demographic info gathering and agrees that there is a problem with interpreters not translating well to native speakers.

##### **5. Proposal to add Arrest/Convictions to City Anti-Discrimination Ordinance**

Nolan Lim explained that the idea for this proposal originated at Sojourner Place, where women in transition are provided housing and employment assistance. Women who used the resources were finding that too many housing providers were excluding them from applying for housing and employment due to criminal background checks. The proposal is important to end disparities in communities of color. There are other jurisdictions that provide this protection, such as New York, where individuals cannot be denied employment due solely to a criminal record. Sojourner Place also recognized that women were being denied housing due to past drug convictions, even after paying their dues for the crime. SOCR has done outreach to housing providers. The proposal would prevent employers from denying individuals employment and housing providers denying individuals housing based solely on their conviction histories.

Nolan provided a handout listing the concerns and responses. Nolan believes this change has already made a positive impact on the community, especially with regards to public housing. Denial of employment would only exist if employment of an individual would be deemed a safety risk.

Nolan urged the Board to attend the Community Forum on March 16 at City Hall 6:00-8:00 PM – Prohibiting Discrimination against People with Arrest and Conviction Records to address racial disparities and policy change.

Jesus asked if the proposal would be submitted to Council this year. Julie said that the SHRC and other advocates plan to work with both the Mayor and City Council to get it considered this year. Outreach made to landlords and housing associations has helped strengthen the proposal. 30% of King County residents have criminal records and to screen out those possible renters would not be a wise business choice.

**MOTION:** Immigrant and Refugee Board to endorse Prohibiting Discrimination against People with Arrest and Conviction Records Proposal. **PASSED.**

##### **6. April 6, 2011 Immigrant and Refugee Advisory Board Work Plan Presentations**

For the presentation: Need to make quick points for work plan goals – prioritize the three main goals. Make suggestions on how to use the funds to expand the Youth program. Rosalinda will contact Marie Kurose to obtain copy of HSD's proposal for youth programs. Lesley will contact Michael Davis to get the latest info on the city's interpretation and translation policy work. Yasemin agreed to work on the youth proposal piece.

Please RSVP Rose if you will be attending the City Council Presentation at (2:00 PM) on April 6<sup>th</sup>, and also if you plan to attend the regular Commission Meeting that evening (6:00-8:00 PM) for the Mayor's presentation of the work plan, Commissioners are asked to be there by 5:45.

Goal 3 – Police Accountability: Move from just tracking to development. Jesus will develop a more detailed outline and submit to work group. SPD data may not be accurate due to people who either do not want to report crimes or are afraid. Training and literature needs to be developed and provided – an on-going process – but there needs to be some improvements in a positive direction. Glenn offered a suggestion to make the connection between safety concerns with academic success, linking it to the Youth and Family Initiative.

**Guest Announcement:** Merri Ann Osborne, Commissioner, Seattle Human Rights Commission, gave an overview of the SHRC Work Plan for 2011, in an effort to share ways to collaborate across Commissions.

The following are some of the areas the SHRC is looking to collaborate or get feedback:

**The development of a Human Rights Tool**, similar to the RSJI toolkit with a lens on human rights, SHRC are looking to partner with University of WA and community stakeholders.

**Public Safety Task Force:** Criminal Records protections, SPD issues, Immigrant and Refugee issues.

**Food access** – Communities have been working with the City on this project, SHRC would like to expand that work to discover better cultural connections and the needs of people who are disabled and elders to provide better resources. The City is moving to the next phase, input is crucial.

Julie encourages the cross collaboration of all commissions and will suggest a Co-Chair List Serve be set up so that Commission Co-Chairs can meet prior to the 5-Commission meetings, either by email or ½-hour prior to the 5-Commission meeting to discuss their work plans together.

***The Meeting Adjourned at 8:10 PM***