

Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission

July 2, 2013, 6:00-8:00 PM

City Hall, Room 360

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Shree Ram Dahal, Tsegaba Woldehaimanot, Devon Abdallah, Maru Mora-Villalpando, Jeniffer Calleja, Roxana Norouzi, Mohamed Sheikh Hassan, Mariya Kochubey, Habtamu Abdi, Michael Neguse, Natasha Savage

Commissioners Absent: Dori Cahn, Simon Khin

OIRA Staff Present: Leno Rose-Avila, Sahar Fathi

Guests: Holly Miller, Isabel Munoz-Colon, Nhi Tran, Michael Davis, Pierce Murphy, Maythia Airhart, Sonja Lalor

Call to Order: 6:05 pm

Office for Education Presentation (Holly Miller/Isabel Munoz-Colon)

Presentation by Holly/Isabel – the Family and Ed Levy is their big body of work. The main goals are: (1) be ready for school (2) academic achievement (3) graduate from high school. They measure these goals by monitoring data, tracking how kids are doing, and making course corrections. Last levy was first time OFE worked intentionally with immigrant and refugee populations

Isabel began with some guiding questions – What do we know about English language learners in our schools? General population tends to lump English language learners into one category - How do we improve student outcomes? Specific examples to support immigrant/refugee and English language learners. They are also talking a bit about improving outcomes.

People tend to lump English learners into one group – 62% of ELL are in earlier grades (elementary school). Across the grade spans, there is a need to approach the needs of ELL differently. In elementary school, the students are learning basics around literacy. In middle or high school, the content is more rigorous. The strategy for kindergarten in bridging content is different from teaching an 11th grader going on to their next phase in life.

Isabel next posed the question - Who are the language groups? The graphs in presentation look different from other neighboring cities. With the school district, OFE wants to make sure blanket targeting to ELL students does not dilute resources. Further, OFE knows that students in the program do not meet standards because it is an assessment of how well they know English. Once they exit ELL, they do better. Language is no longer the issue. Largest groups not meeting standards are Spanish/Somali.

Isabel pointed out that standards in reading score better –the same pattern repeats in terms of who is meeting standards and who is not. There are a large number of students who are languishing in certain levels – not sure why. Students who are not getting basic English are probably not getting adequate content.

15% of ELL are co-enrolled in Special Education – this is disproportionate. This causes OFE to ask - What is happening? Is student misplaced in special education program?

In the end, it is not enough that kids graduate, they need a pathway. This program serves kids who are struggling – focused on those kids who have been failed by the system.

For innovation schools, there is an RFQ process – designed to help those programs that have worked with students. They also developed an RFI process for both schools – i.e. Step Ahead, Grants, etc.

In Step Ahead – several organizations are language programs: Spanish, Somali, and Vietnamese. They are trying to support English language development and native language of students. OFE is now thinking about how to do meaningful parent engagement.

They will be coming back. Sahar will also send electronic versions of documents. Sahar will coordinate smaller meetings.

Office of Professional Accountability Director Introduction (Pierce Murphy)

Sahar will send the questions/answers from Pierce’s confirmation. The Office of Professional Accountability (OPA) is a civilian/community-member oversight office of the police. There are community oversight agencies around the country. Pierce led a similar organization in Boise, Idaho. He has a lot of experience in the field of police accountability.

OPA advocates for change, improvement in policies, communications, and for the community-at-large. Pierce hopes to bring positive change in how the police department provides service to the entire community regardless of color, economic status, etc.

Mohamed asked, the police have already been trained with the previous mentalities – how do you change this? He believes that one has to start with the curriculum and the way they treat the community.

Pierce agreed with Mohamed’s observation. He noted that his background was in human resources, he has worked in corporations inside and as a consultant to work in high functioning places. The questions need to be around what kind of people you recruit, their values, qualities, mindset, etc. Training is key. The problem is that Washington State mandates that new police officers go to the state academy. There may be some issues if you want to change basic training officers get – might have to work with other jurisdictions. The good news is that Pierce knows and respects the new director of the training academy.

Devon asked and Pierce confirmed that it is a requirement for all of SPD to do RSJI training.

Habtamu asked and Pierce confirmed that Pierce is accountable to people of Seattle.

Maru asked - is there a complaint process? Are you hoping for input?

Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission

July 2, 2013, 6:00-8:00 PM

City Hall, Room 360

Pierce explained that OPA has existed for 12 years, but he is open to improvement in the complaint process. Every system should be looked at for improvement. Community police commission has the responsibility to eventually look at the OPA/complaint handling process and make suggestions.

Michael Neguse noted that the community always gives input, the city talks about inclusiveness – but the relationship seems to be when something “happens.” Pierce responded that SPD is actively recruiting, and asked if they were in Michael’s community. Natasha responded that SPD has 80 spots, and that they are working very hard. Sahar noted that OIRA has been involved with ethnic media. Pierce stated that he would like to follow up, he requested that Michael get his contact information. He would like to have a follow up meeting and go to the community and get a better personal experience. Mohamed stated that they were at his disposal.

Sahar will get their information exchanged.

Mohamed stated that this does not exist in his community, if they could have east Africans working – that might bridge the gap. Pierce stated that he wanted to follow up as to how we can do this better. There is no magic answer. Natasha stated that this is the same for all immigrants. She wanted to clarify it was not just the African community.

Guest (Cambodian) stated that there should be accountability in having a panel. She fled her country from people who had power, and she wants to be clear that these people are not in power again. Sahar will send this to Chief Pugel and MO Staff.

Seattle Public Utilities Presentation

Michael Davis/Maythia Airhart – ESJ happy to come back and do presentation on their office.

Michael Davis stated that he has met with some of them before, he sees new faces. Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) is creating a strategic business plan that will guide their work – normally strategic business plan is done in-house. SPU is going out to the community and asking the community what they think the priorities should be. SPU is taking that into account with other input processes to help them inform what the plan should look like. This is the first time SPU has done this as a utility, it’s the first time during Michael Davis’s career in city government, he is really excited.

This is a preview – SPU wants people to know that in the Fall of 2013 they will be doing outreach to residents/businesses of Seattle. There are financial constraints. It is important to be clear on what people consider as priorities. SPU has 1400+ employees and a \$800 million budget. They focus on drainage, solid waste, wastewater, drinking water.

The second round of outreach is in the Spring of 2014. They want to make sure to get input and then share again to make sure they did not miss anything. They want to identify people from the community to facilitate dialogues in the community.

SPU wants to create communication tools that work for the audience – not always using printed materials. For example, it might be story-based, etc.

SPU is asking for help in outreach and creating lists of names. Sahar will send out feedback/involvement and double-check to see who wants to help out. She will also take names of who else SPU should talk to about the plan.

Habtamu asked if SPU is doing business partnerships with minority businesses. SPU has contracted with big companies, but not necessarily minorities. Habtamu owns a shop – would the plan look into this? Michael Davis said yes. There is a women and minority business enterprise focus area, looking at what can be done with current contracts, whether consultants can provide technical assistance, and folks who are building facilities like the south transfer station. The ESJ division looks for those opportunities. With regards to Habtamu's shop, they might need to look further. It is a priority that resources being spent are available for different communities. SPU does not want just one community to have access.

Jeniffer asked if the strategic business plan includes utility assistance. Michael Davis stated that it deals with drainage, solid waste, etc –utility assistance programs, assistance for newly arrived folks to this country, not just communication strategies for larger community. SPU wants to meet the needs of diversity of community. They want to do this work as a partnership instead. Jeniffer stated that people get behind on their water bills, she knows a woman who owes \$2k and makes \$200, and something is not working. Immigrants and refugees do not know how to get help. They would like to have input. Michael Davis stated that he would love to have this conversation. One of the things Michael has been working on is how to best communicate and/or engage customers early. The customer does not find out about problem with bills until it is received and they come every 2 months – so there is a lot of usage before one knows there is a problem. He wants to know what kinds of things can SPU do proactively and if there things they can do earlier. How does SPU connect conservation with utility assistance? Concern is to show opportunities to get out of these situations. Leaks are a big problem – this translates to a water consumption issue in the bill. It is important to help people understand how to detect/fix leaks. How to work with apartment owners to make sure they have info they need.

Tsegaba asked if SPU connects with orgs that provide utility assistance? Michael Davis stated yes, in collaboration with City Light. He noted that people should know the assistance is from people paying rates. Tsegaba commented that different organizations know about assistance, and it is a great route to connect.

Mohamed asked if there are any small ethnic orgs that SPU contracts with around this topic. Michael Davis stated no, this is close to his heart – it is a lot of work trying to figure how to partner more with community based orgs, particularly smaller ones. He acknowledged that we have a lot of work to do. Mohamed asked if an organization with \$800 million was asking them to volunteer. Michael Davis clarified – they are not asking for volunteers. This is a partnership. There will be an understanding – very few examples where he asks for volunteers. He wants to make sure people are compensated.

Citizenship Presentation

The Human Services Department (HSD) funds 14 nonprofits to provide free naturalization/citizenship to low income refugee and immigrant residents in king county/seattle. They have served over 15,000 participants since the program's inception and have naturalized over 7,000 people. HSD's agencies

Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission

July 2, 2013, 6:00-8:00 PM

City Hall, Room 360

screen for eligibility, citizenship instruction, tutoring, preparation, assistance with applications as well as filling out disability waiver forms. Nhi noted that one has to be a legal permanent resident for 5 years, of good moral character, low-income, and a member of a vulnerable population.

She passed out a handout that includes benefits of naturalization. The most attractive benefit is to sponsor a family abroad. In addition, with naturalization one receives the right to an attorney, freedom from removal, being able to take trips without being deported, and the protection of the US Embassy wherever you go.

There is an RFI opening in 2014 – she wants to make sure agencies reflect the need in the changing populations. Please spread the word.

There are naturalization ceremonies twice a year, coordinated by OIRA, great for folks to attend. Inspiring.

Roxana asked what department runs these contracts and Nhi stated the Human Services Department.

Mohamed thanked Nhi for information – they are going to advocate for more people to apply, but he believes no one will get the funding. Majority of organizations on list are not people who are immigrants. People getting contracts are serving immigrants in communities. Small organizations are not on the list of RFI recipients. They will never get the contracts. No Somali/Ethiopian/Eritrean orgs providing services. MSH provides services without contracts. Maru stated that she agreed, but noted that HSD has created new system in doing grants for community based organizations. Small organizations are now getting fund. She thinks that as a commission they should look at how to apply to this program. Nhi stated that she did not know about this issue. She does not know why new organizations would not be considered. She wondered if it might be the application process. Leno stated that he has raised this issue before. The Mayor has asked for more equity in the way contracts are handed out. There was a lot of criticism – people petitioned city council and the mayor.

Approval of June Minutes

Jeniffer noted there was need for a revision, “small number” on page 5.

Motion was made by Maru.

Second was made by Tsegaba.

Aye – Devon, Maru, Mariya, Tsegaba, Jeniffer, Roxana

Nay - none

Abstain: Mohamed, Natasha, Michael

OIRA Director Report

Leno reported on the Naturalization event on July 4 at Seattle Center from Noon-1. This year the city added the Flag Day event for naturalization on June 14 with OneAmerica. This was the first time it was done in City Hall.

Leno noted that he was presenting Memorandum of Agreement with USCIS to the Mayor – Leno has been in communication with all departments in city, someone from USCIS will come out to sign with Mayor. USCIS will put information around citizenship in all offices.

On June 25 there was an ethnic media reception with the mayor. 40+ media came. An announcement was made with FAS that everyone who does contracting with city has to do ethnic media outreach. The purpose is to prove that they did good outreach.

Leno is also making a push to ethnic media to become Women and Minority Business Enterprise - certified with the city. This should be done with all contractors in the community.

Maru noted that the WMBE process is very difficult. She suggested that the commission should look at it.

Leno noted that OIRA will have a summer fellow – Siwan. She is on a Presidential fellowship from Harvard.

Leno also noted that community groups are fasting to ask the government to stop deportations.

Committee Reports

Sahar will email out monthly form, committee lead will fill it out and email it back to Sahar, Shree and Devon.

Mohamed will be joining the education committee.

Maru spoke about a letter for Comprehensive Immigration Reform from the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Committee to be sent to Councilmembers to call for a Resolution on their behalf for immigration reform. Maru went to the LGBT Commission meeting to discuss this letter as well. If commissioners have feedback, they have until July 3 at 5 pm. Then the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Committee will send to the other commissions. Then the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Committee will send to City of Seattle. Maru mentioned this in the commission meeting with the Mayor. They have been discussing in conjunction with work plan. The specific ask around utility bills with more than one name on it went to Godden. Maru noted that on July 1 the City of Burien called for a presentation because they already had a resolution.

Announcements

Everyone on commission has to do RSJI training – next is July 13. Maru will be there.

September meeting is going to be moved to September 10.

Devon will be out of town extensively through July and August – Shree will handle August meeting.

Looking for two new commissioners – ideas for youth would be helpful.

Mohamed noted that July 9 will be first day of Ramadan.

Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission

July 2, 2013, 6:00-8:00 PM

City Hall, Room 360

Michael noted that there is a garden where seniors are growing food. He invited people to visit. It is in Rainier. Michael will email the address. Fridays they cook from the garden.

Jeniffer noted that the Parks Department's superintendent invited her to a meeting around outreach. She will email the date, if other commissioners would like to join her let her know.

Leno noted that Ivonne will be working with OIRA as ethnic media coordinator.

Adjournment

Adjournment: 8:00 pm