

# Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission

May 7, 2013, 6:00-8:00 PM

City Hall, Room 360

## Meeting Minutes

**Commissioners Present:** Shree Ram Dahal, Tsegaba Woldehaimanot, Michael Neguse, Mohamed Sheikh Hassan, Devon Abdallah, Maru Mora-Villalpando, Jeniffer Calleja, Roxana Norouzi, Justin Chan, Dori Cahn, Mariya Kochubey

**Commissioners Absent:** Simon Khin, Natasha Savage, Habtamu Abdi

**OIRA Staff Present:** Leno Rose-Avila

**Guests:** Karen O'Connor, Wes Gonzalez

**Call to Order:** Call to order not recorded

### Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Devon opened the meeting with a basic introduction to the commission, a quick round of introductions, and an explanation of how the commission works administratively.

The minutes were reviewed, Shree moved to approve and Michael seconded. Minutes – Shree moved to approve. Michael second.

Minutes were approved by Shree, Michael, Devon, and Tsegaba. Maru, Roxana, and Jeniffer abstained.

### OIRA Report – Leno

Leno highlighted his trip on the Immigration Conference in NY hosted by Mayor Bloomberg and other mayors of Alabama, Atlanta, Memphis, Nashville, etc. Leno shared that he has some booklets on the NYC Immigration Integration projects and stated that Mayor Bloomberg is aggressively pursuing immigration reform, recruiting for a diverse police force and providing immigrants with job search and assistance services. Leno also gained good information and obtained quality professional contacts from the conference.

Leno shared that Siwen Zhang, a Ph.D student and a Presidential Scholar from Harvard University, will be coming to work in OIRA for the summer. She is interested in DACA reform and will conduct research on barriers to immigrants and refugees in accessing City services.

Other announcements:

It was also announced that as of May 1, all new commissioners were approved by City Council and the Mayor.

Simon's father, Saw Aung Khin, has recently passed away. There will be a proclamation from the Mayor and the memorial service for him will be held on Saturday, May 25.

Leno will be out of the office from May 16 – 27.

## **I. OIRA Work Plan Discussion**

Goal 1: Immigrant and Refugees to have a voice.

- Ethnic Media – will do trainings, do social media, etc.
- Strengthen Immigrant and Refugee Commission
- OIRA website – Commissioners should send things they want posted on the website
- Educate city staff as well

Goal 2: City services – improve engagement

- Surveying all departments, compile information
- 3 city services
- Medical examiner – could have different communities meet with the Medical Examiner's office about cultural needs of different immigrant and refugees
- Provide concrete recommendations

Goal 3: Maintain consistent participation with RSJI

- Interpretation and translation services – reach out to members of the community, small businesses, retired employees for translation of RSJI programs i.e. conduct training on "benefits of being an American".
- Promote and identify opportunities for community engagement
- Next Community Tea is at the Seattle Aquarium.
- Conduct workshops on grant and proposal writing with Renee Bourque from UW/extension who has volunteered her services. I and R Commission could set this up. Interpretation may be needed.
- Andrea Smith has volunteered to do organizational development workshops.
- OIRA has an agreement with USCIS and will be expanding naturalization services. OIRA is also working to have more citizenship info at all city offices, etc., and do outreach to communities.

Goal 4: Community Partners

- Work/Engage with youth and women
- Continue providing legislative analysis as requested
- Develop a 3 year plan

A discussion ensued on why is utility assistance underused? Some people don't know about the program, information is not out in specific languages. Ethnic media does not do outreach beyond clientele. A great model of successful outreach is College Bound. Does city utility shut off line shift people to language bank when they call? Jeniffer will follow-up with her agency. Shut off notices are all in English.

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### **II. Karen O'Conner – Parks Legacy Plan**

There is a draft plan for Parks Legacy project. This plan is going to the public, then will go to committee and then to Council. This plan is an I/R issue because teen programs and afterschool programs should be thought through and determine if they should be free. Community centers are operated on revenue-generating programs and there is consideration for raising rates. Question was posed as to whether rates would be increased for picnic shelters.

- Flyer is online in 8 different languages
- May 22 mtg did not have calls for interpreters, what to do? Outreach to ethnic media, neighborhood blogs, twitter?

Maru – media will pick up announcements more if they are translated first – most media don't have resources to do the translation.

- Café style for meeting, will have interpreter work with language groups together
- Should weigh in on swimming pools; youth programs. Outreach was suggested for swimming lessons for adults and to get parents to bring their kids. The question was posed if there be scholarships to cover some of that cost. Applications for scholarships are based off of 1040 IRS tax returns which are a challenge for non-English speakers. The question was asked as to how the scholarship program applies to those who do not file taxes. The Parks department suggested they would follow up to see where the money comes from - federal or local.

### **III. Approved March Minutes**

### **IV. Commission Work Plan**

Education:

- How are levy monies spent? Look to appoint an I/R member to committee
- Parent engagement
  - Goal is to get SPS information translated
  - Create good relationships with Superintendent Banda
- Pre-K to K
  - Get info out through community gathering places, advocates, etc.
- Address disproportionality
- Retain multi-linguality

OFE – Office for Education, separate from SPS, administers levy money and works on early education.

SESEC - the fiscal sponsor is Vietnamese Friendship Association. The group has identified ELL as major issue. Represents a broad group of people.

## **Immigration Reform**

Historic!

- In a short timeline, ask City Council to pass resolution to keep families together and this needs to happen before CIR moves through Congress.
- Inclusion - will have a lot of different statuses, need money for ESL, technology trainings
- Need to understand what I/R Commission has already done
- For more money, we will need to start earlier, briefing in July
- Trainings on city process on funding should be a Y2 goal.

Maru is working with organizations to gather a "wish list," which will be the basis for writing a resolution and memo for council.

Phone bank on May 15 – maybe have presentations on CIR at the next meeting.

Roxanna is interested in joining.

## **Homelessness and Mental Health**

- Decided to split focus only on ACA, there is not capacity to do all mental health.
- Need information about shelters and culturally relevant places for homeless
- How much does Council know on this issue?

(2 "sub-committees") but will communicate and work together

- Wing Luke currently has a homelessness exhibit
- Sahar may have information from her work in O'Brien's Office

ACA

- Research on resources – complete
- Research on current services for affordable care. Compile to 1 pager and translate.
- Host community meeting. Sahar is on county (city?) cabinet on ACA
- Also Healthy Washington Coalition WA State Exchange Board has an outreach task force

Move to approve plan I/R Commission with change that CIR sub goal two, change briefing to July

## **V. Commission work habits**

- Should there be bi-weekly check ins?  
All committees can ask for more help  
Leads are not responsible for all the work
- Each group should set time to check-in or phone call for discussion figuring out scheduled way to move work forward
- Put "ACTION" in email title if an action item is needed, or "URGENT", something to distinguish

The meeting adjourned.

Notes taken by Dori Cahn and transcribed by Thao Tran.