



City of Bellingham

Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

December 19th 2023, 6:30 PM

Board Members

Board members present: Homero Israel Jose Garrido, Jian He, Imanat Kang, Tara Villalba, Alfredo (Lelo) Juarez Zeferino

Board members absent: Daniel Cruz, Gabriela Montenegro, Holly Pai

Staff and Others Present:

City Council Member: Hannah Stone

City Council Legislative Staff: Jackie Lassiter

City Council Liaison, Kristina Michele Martens, was absent

Russian, Punjabi, and Spanish Interpreters

To submit an application to serve on a City Board or Commission, please visit the following webpage: <https://cob.org/gov/public/bc/Boards-and-Commissions-Application-Process>

Liz Darrow called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM

Equity Reminders

Liz Darrow made a land and border statement, acknowledging the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe, and that the border between the US and Canada is not part of the traditional lands of the peoples who were here prior to colonization. She announced that there is an upcoming holiday bazaar at the Silver Reef Casino.

Liz went over best practices for speaking while interpretation is occurring.

Roll Call

Approval of minutes

Liz requested that City staff send out the minutes to the Board before the meeting for review and feedback.

Homero Israel Jose Garrido moved to approve the November minutes. Imanant Kang seconded the motion. Motion passed with no opposition.

Public Comment

A community member, Atul Deshmane, thanked Liz for inviting them to the meeting.

City of Bellingham Updates



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City Council Member Hannah Stone stated that she was there to address the growing tension between the Board and the City. She said it was important to her to come to the Board as an individual councilmember in order to engage with them before the Council's reorganization meeting in January. She stated that she felt that the Board was in need of changes, listing several issues that she sees, including logistics regarding the ordinance, how business is conducted, the scope of work of the Board, lack of budget, and the role of the Board. She said the Board has done significant work that she does not want to downplay, but she is not seeing the work move forward. Council member Stone continued, saying that she is considering suggesting a pause to the operations of the Board. Board members and community members discussed. Topics included:

- The importance of alignment between the Board and the City
- Frustration with the slow progress of the Immigrant Resource Center (IRC) and the feeling that the City is purposefully delaying the work
- The role of the Board and the scope of work:
 - Several people spoke to the relation between the City and the County and pointed out that many people live in one jurisdiction but work in another
 - The role of the Board as an information source for community members
 - How board members can know how to assist and advise the Council and Mayor
 - The Board often acts as a place to facilitate more direct communication between the community and the City and to provide a place for community members to express concerns
- The importance of respect, honesty, and transparency in interactions between the Board and the City
- Systemic issues, including systemic racism and the distribution of resources
- Acknowledgment that the Board works differently from other City boards and commissions, which is reflective of the desire of Board members to do something different and give a higher level of access to members of the public
- Several people spoke directly against the idea of pausing the operations of the Board, stating it would silence the voices of immigrants and send a message that the City does not care about the immigrant community
- The opportunities that could be seen with a new Mayor in place, and what a pause in the IAB's work would mean for that relationship
- Council Member Stone's suggested that she meet with certain Board members before the Council's reorganization meeting on January 2. Purpose and logistics of that potential meeting were discussed
- Frustration over lack of transparency and poor communication from the City



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County Community Updates

This item was not discussed

Community Updates

Lelo said that January 23, 2024, the non-profit he works with will be participating in a lobby day in Olympia representing farmworkers.

Subcommittee Reports:

Immigrant Resource Center Subcommittee:

Lelo said that he had asked Janice Keller, Interim Deputy Administrator, for a final meeting to select a winning respondent to the RFP and has not heard back. Homero said that he had also reached out and hadn't heard back.

Process Subcommittee:

Tara passed around a proposed retreat agenda and reviewed it with Board members.

Federal Contact Data Subcommittee:

Scott Powell said that members are finding it difficult to interpret the limited information that they have access to and that they felt the need to have a conversation about the committee's scope, role, and goals.

Outreach Subcommittee:

Imanat Kang discussed the fliers. She said that they have a flier ready to print, but, due to time constraints, it was not shared during the meeting. Committee members agreed that it should be distributed via e-mail by Jackie Lassiter, Council Legislative Assistant, for review and feedback before being printed.

Old and New Business

Review Action Items:

Liz asked Jackie about social media for the Board. Jackie responded that she had inquired with the Communications Director and the City Attorney and found that no City board or commission currently has social media. She stated that it would need to be a project for the City to work on and summarized the considerations that would be made in relation to the records created, who would administer the page, etc.



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Calendar Approval for 2024 IAB Meetings

Homero moved to schedule 2024 IAB meetings for the third Tuesday of each month in 2024.

Tara seconded the motion. Motion passed with no opposition.

Adjourn 8:47 PM