



City of Bellingham
Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
August 15th 2023, 6:30 PM

Board Members

Board members present: Daniel Cruz, Gabriela Montenegro, Holly Pai, Sophia Rey, Tara Villalba, Alfredo (Lelo) Juarez Zeferino

Board members absent: Homero Israel Jose Garrido, Jian He, Imanat Kang

Staff and Others Present:

City Council Liaison: Kristina Michele Martens

City Communications Director and Interim Deputy Administrator: Janice Keller

City Council Legislative Staff: Jackie Lassiter

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>

Sophia Rey called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM

Language Justice Process

Sophia Rey went over best practices for speaking while interpretation is occurring.

Roll Call

Announcements

New members Daniel Cruz and Gabriela Montenegro introduced themselves, stating why they were interested in joining the board and explaining their connection to the immigrant community.

Tara Villalba acknowledged that this is the last meeting for Sophia Rey. Sophia spoke to the board about her excitement to see new members joining and her experience on the board. She read a letter to board members, a copy of which is included in the meeting documents.

Lelo Juarez Zeferino reported on a three day, 40 mile march that he and three others completed in California. The purpose of the march was to bring attention to HR 1511, a federal bill that would open a pathway for undocumented community members to achieve legal status after living in the United States for seven years. He asked that the Mayor and City Council to support the legislation. He added that farmworkers he's spoken to are in support of the legislation.



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Daniel Cruz asked Sophia what they can do differently on the Board and what she would have liked to see changed. She responded that they have been advocating for the creation of an Immigrant Resource Center for over a year. She said it has been difficult to get traction on the idea and gave background on the issue. She added that there was not a sense of mutual respect from the City towards the immigrant community. She described her feelings of struggle to have the voices of the immigrant community be heard.

Gabriela Montenegro asked why the original budget amendment didn't pass. Sophia said that her interpretation was that the budget amendment they proposed didn't look like proposals the City is used to and didn't include data in the way that the City is accustomed to. She said the problem is that their data comes in the form of testimonials and conversations.

Daniel Cruz asked Sophia what she thinks it would take for the City to pay attention. She stated that the City needs to take an honest look at facing systemic racism. She said she would call for an intensive reckoning from the City in relation to their processes. She reiterated the struggle to have the voices of the immigrant community heard by the City and urged City leaders to think about why they aren't able to hear those voices.

Public Comment

Community member MB thanked Sophia for her work on the board and expressed her agreement with the statements she had made. MB also asked about the remaining vacancies on the board and what is being done to fill the spots. Tara said that the Process subcommittee didn't have clarity on the status of Sunida's application. She said that she and Janice Keller are having a continuing discussion on that appointment. She added that they have interviewed one other person. She said that her understanding is that those who are not recommended for appointment are welcome to reapply.

Community member Claudia Rey asked if the City has asked for a collaboration between the IAB and a potential RFP awardee. Lelo responded that he hopes whoever is awarded the RFP will collaborate with them. Sophia added that the word "collaboration" had been struck from the RFP in favor of the word "advisement". Council Member Kristina Michele Martens said that while working in the white supremacist system, the RFP is the avenue they have to achieve their goal. She added that Janice Keller is the best champion they could have at the City and she has seen that Janice truly wants to see them succeed.

Process Subcommittee and IRC Subcommittee Member Liz Darrow thanked Sophia for her work and the letter that she wrote. She stated that she feels extremely frustrated by constantly feeling like the rug is being pulled out from them by systemic racism and white supremacy. She relayed background on how the board has grown from its original format and membership to



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what it is today. She said that thanks to board member effort, they have achieved diverse membership and increased awareness of the Board's work. She added that the City has put up roadblocks and setbacks at every turn, but she is confident that the board will achieve their goals.

Community member Jackie Tabone thanked Sophia for her work and expressed agreement with her statements. They said that they look forward to hearing the follow up from Tara's communication with Janice Keller and expressed support for filling vacant board seats.

Subcommittee Reports:

Immigrant Resource Center Subcommittee:

Lelo stated that they have not had a chance to meet regarding the RFP. Janice stated that she has attempted to schedule a meeting with IRC subcommittee members and they have been struggling to find a time. Homero had recommended that they wait until next week. Janice emphasized that it is important that the IRC committee members be present in the meetings. Sophia asked if there could be a sign-up list for folks other than IRC committee members who were interested in being included in evaluating the RFP. Janice responded that she would like to prioritize seated members of the IAB, especially the IRC subcommittee. Tara added that Liz Darrow needs to be included on e-mails on this topic since she is a member of the IRC subcommittee, and Janice agreed. Tara said that every subcommittee member carries the same weight, whether they are a member of the larger Board or not. Federal Contact Data Subcommittee member Scott Powell stated that he thinks he has a good background to be a part of the evaluating committee. Janice and members discussed who would participate in reviewing the respondents. Subcommittee members agreed to add Scott Powell to the Immigrant Resource Center Subcommittee and also agreed that the evaluators for the RFP from the IAB will be comprised of the four current subcommittee members (Scott Powell, Lelo Juarez Zeferino, Homero Israel Jose Garrido, and Liz Darrow).

Process Subcommittee:

Tara stated that there are openings on all subcommittees and that the communications subcommittee in particular will be completely vacant after Sophia leaves. Sophia gave an overview of what the Communications subcommittee has been working on. Members and staff discussed the status of the flyer.

Communications Subcommittee: This Committee did not give a report. A discussion of the status of the flyers was had during the Process Subcommittee report.



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Federal Contact Data Subcommittee:

Holly Pai gave an overview of what the subcommittee is tasked with for new members. She said that she sees that there is increasing detail in the data, however this also highlights the high level of contact between local law enforcement and immigration officers. She said that this level of contact is not normal for any county in Washington, even other border counties. Janice Keller asked what a good next step would be. Holly said that a cease in desist order had been issued in the past to limit the contacts and remain in compliance with the Keep Washington Working Act. That order was met with response from the City attorney's office stating that the City values public safety over compliance with the Act. She said that there are differing opinions on how to move forward.

Lelo stated that farmworkers have told him that they border patrol agents will show up to work sites on the public side of the road and watch the workers all day. Holly asked if there was an increase in activity since the new reporting facility in Ferndale was established. Lelo said that they do not want that facility to be there.

Review and Approval of July Meeting Minutes

Holly said that she had reviewed the minutes and saw that there was a lot of feedback from Board and community members about the Mayor's decision to not reappoint Liz Darrow. She said that she has not seen a response or communication from the City or the Mayor in response to that feedback. Janice Keller stated she did not have an update to give in that regard.

Sophia Rey moved to approve the July minutes. Holly Pai seconded. Motion passed with no opposition.

Adjourn 8:49 PM