



**City of Bellingham**  
**Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes**  
December 13, 2022, 6:30 PM

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### **Board Members**

*All board members were present:* Christian Sanchez Alvarez, Monika Cassidy, Liz Darrow, Homero Israel Jose Garrido, Von Ochoa, Holly Pai, Sophia Rey, Ada Rumford, Australia Tobon, Tara Villalba, Alfredo (Lelo) Juarez Zeferino

### **Staff and Others Present:**

*City Council Legislative Staff:* Mark Gardner, Jackie Lassiter, Nalini Margaitis

*City Council Liaison:* Kristina Michele Martens

*Russian and Spanish Interpreters*

**There is a video recording of this meeting. Times in brackets [] indicate the start time on the recording for each section. See <https://cob.org/gov/public/bc/immigration-advisory-board-materials> to view the recording.**

***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>***

### **Welcome**

Board members and community members introduced themselves.

### **OPMA Training (City Attorney, Alan Marriner) [00:4:59]**

Because of difficulties with the hybrid format and translation, board members determined the best path for this meeting would be for City Attorney Alan Mariner to conduct a question and answer session instead of a formal presentation. Topics included:

- Quorum issues and when a quorum of member can meet. If a quorum of members is invited to an event by a third party where board business will be discussed, it must be properly noticed and be open to the public. If members are invited to a social event where business is not being conducted, it does not need to be noticed or public.
- Definition of quorum, which is defined by the board rules or in code.
- The Public Records Act and what kind of communication is subject to it.
- Serial meetings and the rules pertaining to electronic communications

Darrow suggested that staff figure out how to go ahead with Alan's planned presentation in Spanish at a later meeting.

**2023 IAB Meeting Schedule (this item was moved from the Sub-committee Reports section of the agenda) [00:40:19]**

Members discussed the meeting schedule for the upcoming year.

*Darrow moved that the IAB will meet on the third Tuesday of each month in 2023. Tobon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**Announcements and follow-up on public comment from the November meeting [00:54:08]**

Darrow explained that the meetings had been conducted in a co-facilitator model with herself and Rumford facilitating. She and Villalba introduced the idea of using the stack method for future meetings in which discussion items are opened by a facilitator and a stack keeper keeps track of who wants to speak and in what order they will speak before discussion starts. Stack will be taken throughout the discussion for responses, which means that people will be responding to topics that were brought up earlier in the discussion. The purpose is to give everyone who wants to speak a chance to participate.

**Public Comment/Community Reports [01:03:45]**

- Tobon reported that she has helped three Bellingham residents with issues in the Whatcom County Court system who have did not receive notices in a timely manner from the Public Defender's office. She said that language barriers are still a fundamental issue when it comes to accessing services and that the court is failing to understand how language and cultural customs prevent people from fulfilling their obligations to be at court and attend hearings. There is also a fear that immigration will be called if a person fails to appear at court.
- Tobon added that she recently had a conversation with Ukrainian immigrants, who told her that they did not know where to deliver their ballots for the election. Those Ukrainian immigrants said that they get information through social media, not governmental websites. They also reported that they had difficulty accessing information about childcare.
- Community member Susan Ryan said that she was disappointed to see that the recently passed city budget did not include funds for the Immigrant Resource Center (IRC) and instead funds were being used for a Request for Qualifications (RFQ). She asked for clarification on the timeline and process for the RFQ.
- Darrow reported that the IAB received a letter that was sent from Peace Health Chief Executive Charles Prosper to Mayor Seth Fleetwood. Darrow read the letter into the record. The letter thanked the Mayor for his support of immigrants and creation of the IAB and urged support for the IRC.
- Community member Melida asked about further involvement in the IAB and involvement in the creation of the IRC. Melida also asked what the current sub-committees of the IAB are.

- Community member MB asked if committee members felt that the RFQ was a good way to move forward with the IRC. MB asked if there was interest in pushing back against the RFQ, as it may feel redundant given the work that has already been done and may also delay the creation of the center. MB also asked for clarification on what the IAB would be looking for in an ideal respondent to the RFQ.
- Juarez reported that he had received communication from a farm worker who needed to go to the emergency room for chronic pain. This community member is relatively new to the area and did not know who could accompany her to the emergency room to help with translation. Juarez assisted with translation and he emphasized that this is the type of service that the IRC would be able to assist with.

### **Subcommittee Reports [1:34:39]**

Rumford answered a previous question about the subcommittees by stating that she is a member of the Communications Subcommittee and there is also a Federal Contact Data Subcommittee, a Processes Subcommittee, and an Immigrant Resource Center Subcommittee. Darrow added that there is an inactive Policy Committee. Darrow said that they would need to strategize on methods of engaging the public.

Pai reported for the Federal Contacts subcommittee. She said that the Committee has been inactive for some time, but there is increased interest and they plan on re-starting operations.

Rumford reported on the Process Subcommittee:

- Process to create agenda and facilitate. Villalba proposed that the agenda for each meeting be created by the Process Committee and that each subcommittee would have an opportunity to contribute to it. The agenda would then be shared with City staff who would share it with the full group. They also suggested that the Process Subcommittee be responsible for facilitating the meetings of the full group.
  - *Darrow moved that the Process Subcommittee will create the agenda from this point on and that members of the Process Subcommittee will facilitate the meetings. Rey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*
- Process to join a subcommittee. Pai proposed that if a member is interested in joining a sub-committee, that person should reach out to express interest. The sub-committee would meet with the interested party and would make a recommendation to the full board on whether they should be made a sub-committee member. Darrow added that ideas for new subcommittees can be brought to the IAB and members will vote on creation.
  - *Rumford moved to create and formalize the process as described above. Rey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*
- Strategic planning session for the week of January 9th. Darrow stated that they wanted to hold this meeting to discuss the work they wanted to take on in the coming year. She proposed three possible dates and said that she will poll members via e-mail.

Garrido reported on the Immigrant Resource Center Subcommittee. He stated that they had met with the Immigrant Refugee Center in Seattle. The group advised them on how they were created and how they operate. Zeferino added that the subcommittee also had a meeting with the Mayor and Martens. At that meeting, it was decided that the Mayor's office would draft an RFQ and would share it with the subcommittee.

Darrow responded to a question from the Public Comment session, by reporting that the Board has asked for different alternatives to funding the center other than conducting an RFQ and have been told no in response to all the ideas presented. She stated that she thinks it is important for the Board to stay involved in the process.

**Old/New Business [02:05:34]**

Members discussed logistics of the planned strategy session for early January.

**Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 P.M.