



**City of Bellingham**  
**Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes**  
February 21, 2023, 6:30 PM

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### **Board Members**

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

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

*City Council Legislative Staff:* Jackie Lassiter

*Russian, Spanish, and Punjabi Interpreters*

*\*City Council Liaison Kristina Michele Martens was not in attendance*

**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>***

### **Language Justice Process [00:00:25]**

Legislative Assistant Jackie Lassiter called the meeting to order at 6:38 PM. Australia Tobon reminded participants of the best practices in regards to allowing time for interpretation while speaking and the conduct of the meeting.

### **Roll Call [00:03:23]**

All members were present.

### **Review and Approval of January Meeting Minutes [00:04:29]**

*Sophia Rey moved approval of the January meeting minutes and Liz Darrow seconded the motion. Motion carried with no objections.*

### **Announcements [00:05:27]**

- Justice in sentencing policies: This item was not discussed.
- SB5 476 (State Senate Bill regarding overtime for farmworkers): Tobon said that about two weeks ago, a group of farmworkers went to Olympia to defend overtime regulations. She summarized the proposed law and the impact it would have, making 12 weeks out of the year exempt from existing overtime laws for each employer. Many farmworkers testified in opposition to the bill and the bill did not progress in the legislature. She asked participants to call legal assistance at 360-399-9670 and ask for Lorena Perez if the existing overtime laws in place are not working for them.



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**Public Comment/Community Report [00:16:47]**

Christian Sanchez asked about the process of creating a subcommittee. He stated he wanted to create a subcommittee dedicated to the prevention of criminalization of Latin American youth. He is currently working with a community member whose primary language is not English or Spanish, which has made things difficult for this community member. Tara Villalba and Liz Darrow summarized the process for subcommittee creation. Committee members discussed the possible creation of the subcommittee, including:

- A suggestion that Sanchez work with another board member to clarify the vision for the new subcommittee and come back to the board with more information.
  - Sophia Rey expressed interest in working with Sanchez on this and gave some examples of injustices occurring at her school against Black and Brown students.
- It was decided that Sanchez and interested board members would take time to discuss the potential subcommittee and bring it forward at a future meeting.
- Villalba stated that members of the community could be a part of a subcommittee even if they are not a member of the board.

Rey stated that a friend of hers recently experienced the death of a spouse, whom the friend was financially dependent on. She reported that the friend is struggling with housing and legal responsibilities in the wake of her husband's death. The legal documents this friend has been sent are in English, which is not this person's primary language. Rey is attempting to help her friend, but stated that this is an example of how immigrants face difficulties in accessing the legal system in their native language.

Tobon announced that on April 12<sup>th</sup> from 4 – 6 PM there will be a community Know Your Rights Workshop hosted by public defenders and other community groups. This workshop will be focused on knowing your rights when approached by law enforcement. Interpretation will be provided and the location will be announced at the next IAB meeting.

Tobon stated that she was approached by two immigrant families who did work for which they were not paid. Those community members wish to take the case to small claims court, but there are no interpretation services available at small claims court in Whatcom County.

Sophia Rey stated that at the hearing in Olympia for Senate Bill 5476, there was not interpretation services available for those wanting to testify about the bill. A community member added that she was there and had a friend to interpret for her, but there were many people there who did not have any interpretation services. She said that there were agricultural



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company leaders there who were telling the workers what to say. The interpreter who was present at the IAB meeting volunteered her time to accompany people to Olympia and to provide interpretation services.

Villalba reported on State legislative efforts to slow rent raises and the status of those bills. She advised that if anyone wanted to help in the effort to pass those bills, they should reach out to the Bellingham Tenants' Union.

**Subcommittee Reports [00:55:47]**

*Process Subcommittee:* Darrow reported for the Process Subcommittee. She stated that the committee had come up with a list of characteristics that they thought the board would want to see in a facilitator for a board retreat. Villalba stated that they need to come up with a list of suggested people before they choose someone. Members discussed the timeframe of the retreat and how best to go about selecting a facilitator. It was decided that the Processes Subcommittee would gather suggestions and come back to the board with a proposal at the next meeting.

*Federal Contact Data Subcommittee:* Villalba said that members of the committee had met with the Attorney General's (AG) office to ask about the Bellingham Police Department's (BPD) compliance with the Keep Washington Working Act. She explained what the law does and how it is enforced. The BPD's compliance plan has not yet been submitted to the AG's office.

Holly Pai described a letter that the committee had drafted from the board advising the City to advocate for new language to be included in the interlocal agreement with WhatComm that would require all signatories to abide by the Keep Washington Working Act. The letter was read into the record. *Darrow moved to change the date and send the letter. Villalba seconded.* Members discussed possible additions and intricacies of what the letter addresses. Pai emphasized that the letter was requested by the City after many conversations about the Keep Washington Working Act. The Deputy Administrator is in support of adding this language, but needed a letter to present to the WhatComm board. Members agreed to add a reference to the relevant RCW. The motion carried without opposition.

*Communications Subcommittee:* Tobon stated that the committee had met and that they are working with Janice Keller and the city on updating the IAB website. The committee is preparing to go out in the community with invitations to participate in the board.

*Immigrant Resource Center Subcommittee:* Lelo Juarez Zeferino presented the subcommittee's summary of the Request for Proposals (RFP) process. He said that they had met with the Mayor's office and had received a draft of the RFP. He explained what the RFP contains, what can be changed by the IAB, and some key points the subcommittee had chosen to highlight:



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- The subcommittee feels it is important for IAB members to be a part of the evaluation committee tasked with selecting who is awarded the contract.
- The City can modify the contract at any time, including directing the awardee to be advised by the IAB.
- Evaluation criteria used to select the awardee can be changed and the IAB should work to decide which criteria is most important.
- Whoever is selected should have experience so that they do not have to spend a lot of time learning.
- The IAB can add further terms and conditions to the exhibit attached to the contract.

Members discussed the presentation and the RFP process. Homero Israel Jose Garrido emphasized that it is vital that IAB members participate in the process. Darrow stated that the subcommittee would meet and come up with a proposal for the IAB to vote on at the next meeting. If approved, that proposal would then be presented to the city. She encouraged members of the community to give input as well.

**Old and New Business**

*This item was not discussed.*

**Adjourn 8:50 PM**