



City of Bellingham
Immigration Advisory Board Meeting
September 15, 2020, 6:30 PM

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM

Board Members

Present:

Monika Cassidy
Maria Isabel Cortes-Zamora
Liz Darrow
Rick Qualls
Ada Rumford
Danielle Siedlecki
Katie Winkelman
Ramon Barba Torres
Jahn Zuniga Escobar

Absent:

Seth Thomas
Bridget Reeves

Liaison to the City Council: Councilmember Hannah Stone

Spanish Interpretation: Alex Perez

City staff: Mark Gardner, City Council Legislative Analyst

Other City staff present: Brian Heinrich, City of Bellingham Deputy Administrator

There is an audio 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 listen to the recording.

Welcome, Logistics, and Minutes [00:39]

- Roll call; Councilmember Hannah Stone welcomed the group
- Liz Darrow facilitated this meeting
- New agenda item added: Reports from Affected Community Members
- Minutes for the August 18 meeting were approved as written
- The Open Public Meetings Act training deadline for the Board is September 21

- The ordinance creating the Board will be revised to accommodate logistical changes to its structure. These changes will be brought to the Board for review before being presented to City Council.
- Separate from the regularly scheduled Public Comment period, a time will be set aside on meetings agendas for reports from affected community members.

Reports from affected community members [15:00]

- Board member Ramon Barba Torres is the President of Familias Unidas por La Justicia (FUJ) and the organization is currently working to create a farmworkers union in Yakima. Ramon shared that this effort is very time consuming and it would be good if other union members could participate in Board meetings when he is not able to be present.
- Ramon reported that the police say they do not work with immigration authorities but there is cooperation with immigration enforcement, and there are many traffic stops without reason. Ramon further reported that sometimes police use immigration officers as interpreters.
- Board member Jahn Zuniga Escobar works with the group Raid Relief to Reunite Families (RRRF), which provides assistance in finding lawyers, paying legal fees, posting bond fees, transportation to court, assembling needed documents, etc.
- Background information on historical and current immigration issues has been compiled by some members of the Board. These resources can be added to the Board web site.

Discussion of immigration data issues [39:06]

- Brian Heinrich, City of Bellingham Deputy Administrator, discussed documents that provide additional detail on some of the recent local contacts with federal agencies. This new information provides additional detail on law enforcement activities after a 911 call is made. Ultimate outcomes such as jail bookings or transfer to ICE custody, if any, are not included.
- What-Comm (911 dispatch) serves incorporated cities and Whatcom County and interacts with the jurisdictions in a capacity similar to that of an air traffic controller. Once a situation is being managed by one of the jurisdictions, What-Comm is no longer involved. Under the circumstances, the City of Bellingham does not have readily available information on the final outcomes of many law enforcement contacts.
- What-Comm sometimes facilitates a connection to Customs and Border Protection (CBP), usually at request of a local jurisdiction.
- Some of the other cities served by What-Comm may have mutual aid agreements with CBP.

- Suggestion to have someone from What-Comm speak with the Board to better understand how dispatchers decide whether to initiate contact with CBP.
- What-Comm is staffed by City of Bellingham employees. Whatcom County and the other cities contract with Bellingham and pay for the dispatch service provided by What-Comm.
- The overwhelming majority of City contacts involving CBP or ICE involve law enforcement or the 911 system, although there are a few contacts that originate with other City departments.
- Federal form I-9 data, which can sometimes be used for immigration enforcement, is only collected by the City of Bellingham for its own employees as required by law. This data collection does not extend to private employers.

Public Comment [1:34:25]

Members of the public provided comment and posed questions to the board.

Questions presented were:

1. Will the board consider endorsing the Amnesty International resolution on refugees?
2. How can people encourage the City Council to protect immigrant families and their health and safety during COVID?
1. Does receiving funding from the CARES Act for COVID relief trigger the “public charge” rules?
2. How do City police work with Sheriff deputies in the County, where there is a large farmworker and immigrant community?
3. How is information about the board getting out to the broader community? How will information on racial profiling get to the Council so they can hold the Bellingham Police Department accountable?
4. Will the Mayor and the City Council allow the BPD to regulate itself when it comes to racial profiling and cooperation with border patrol?
5. Is the Mayor supporting the IAB, and how? What is the budget for the IAB and how can community members find out what is in the City budget?
6. How often do City of Bellingham 911 dispatchers interact with CBP and when is it appropriate?
7. How do cities and Whatcom County interact with each other and the CBP?

Other business

- Discussion of the Amnesty resolution will be added to next meeting’s agenda.
- In addition to the Public Comment period, the Board can now be reached by email at immigrationboard@cob.org

Meeting Adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

A recording of this meeting with additional details of discussion is posted at:
<https://cob.org/gov/public/bc/immigration-advisory-board-materials>

Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 20th 6:30-8:30 p.m.