



City of Bellingham
Immigration Advisory Board Meeting
November 17, 2020, 6:30 PM

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 PM

Board Members

Present:

Monika Cassidy
Maria Isabel Cortes-Zamora
Liz Darrow
Bridget Reeves
Ada Rumford
Danielle Siedlecki

Absent:

Ramon Barba Torres
Katie Winkelman
Jahn Zuniga Escobar

Liaison to the City Council: Councilmember Hannah Stone

Spanish Interpretation: Alex Perez

City staff: Mark Gardner, City Council Legislative Analyst

There are audio and video recordings 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, and Board Business [00:00]

- Councilmember Hannah Stone welcomed the group
- Hannah Stone facilitated this meeting
- Minutes for the October 20 and November 2 meetings were approved as written.
- Revisions to the ordinance creating the board. The ordinance is currently being reviewed by the City's legal department. The new ordinance will allow Whatcom County residents living outside of Bellingham to also apply for membership on the board.
- Board vacancies. Previous applicants living outside Bellingham will be reconsidered. New applicants are encouraged.

Immigrant Support in Other Cities: San Antonio and Seattle [13:21]

- **Tino Gallegos**, Immigration Liaison, City of San Antonio, reported on that city's efforts to assist immigrant communities.
 - San Antonio is the second largest city in Texas and the 7th largest in the U.S., with a population of about 1.5 million. About 250,000 people are foreign-born, and about 85,000 are undocumented. There are high levels of poverty and inequality.
 - His position oversees immigrant legal services and provides issue expertise to the City. The City falls under a state law, SB-4, which prohibits any city in Texas from enacting sanctuary city policies. A number of other Texas cities have similar offices, including Dallas, Austin, and El Paso.
 - In San Antonio legal services are funded at \$150,000 annually. Other services include citizenship preparation and workforce development.
 - The City provides information and support in multiple languages at City departments.
 - Some services are provided to immigrants transiting through the City. Services have expanded over time; for example, the migrant resource center helped set up hubs to find housing for the homeless.
 - There are national programs that are available to support cities that want to provide immigrant services. For example, the Vera Institute of Justice has set up a network to support immigrant legal assistance. The organization New American Economy documents the positive economic impact of immigrants. In December 8 -9 there will be a national immigration integration conference sponsored by National Partnership for New Americans.
- **Joaquin Uy**, External Affairs Manager and Policy Advisor at the Seattle Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA), described immigrant services in Seattle.
 - The office grew out of an Immigrant and Refugee Action Plan and was established in 2012. An Immigrant and Refugee Commission was created next, followed by creation of the OIRA. Efforts initially centered around supporting specific immigrant populations such as those in DACA status. The office expanded in 2014 with a new Mayor, with staff increasing from 3 to 9.
 - The office does not provide direct services but instead partners with community groups.
 - Foreign-born populations in King County have been tilted toward those of Asian origin, but more recently immigrants are hailing from Latin America.

- OIRA supports an immigrant integration process that operates along a continuum, ranging from supporting those without documentation, to supporting those who are new citizens.
- For the undocumented a legal defense fund has been established along with a support network including legal clinics. Immigrant defense also supports those with DACA status.
- There is also a new citizen program/campaign, with workshops and one-on-one consultation. Activities include media and outreach work, language classes, job placement services, and community events.
- There are a number of national coalitions that provide support to cities on immigration issues, including Cities for Action, Cities for Citizenship, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors.
- A Seattle COVID-19 disaster relief fund for immigrants has been created, including a small business fund, rental assistance, and emergency grocery vouchers. Information about the program is provided in 7 languages.
- **Discussion.**
 - How can a city gain support for and build a program when it is majority-white? These programs are being created in many parts of the country, even in some rural and conservative areas, to provide needed services to immigrant populations.
 - How can cities build trust with immigrant communities? The process takes time. Show up, listen, follow-up and then return to communicate actions.

Discussion of Amnesty International Welcoming Refugees Resolution [1:37:09]

- The Board discussed a Welcoming Refugees resolution. The resolution was sent to the City Council early in 2020 and was referred to the board as something appropriate for its consideration. The City passed a resolution in 2017 (2017-2-008) that has much of the same general language in support of immigrants, although it does not focus on refugees. A question arose over whether the IAB should endorse such resolutions when they don't contain specific action items. Hannah Stone will provide information to the Amnesty group regarding the content of the 2017 resolution.

Old/New Business [1:56:45]

- The board discussed the three open positions on the board. Current applicants are being reviewed and selection will occur as soon as possible.

Public Comment [2:02:47]

Members of the public provided comment and posed questions to the board. Questions and comments were:

1. Could Bellingham fund services for immigrants by repurposing money that has been spent on the police?
2. The community-based data collection on racial profiling is valuable. How can the board help community members hurt by the police and ICE? There should be a shift of money from police to immigrants.
3. A church is partnering with Community to Community to support immigrants. What are the next steps for the church to take?
4. Money should be shifted from the police to this project.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Recordings of this meeting with additional details of discussion is posted at:

<https://cob.org/gov/public/bc/immigration-advisory-board-materials>