



City of Bellingham
Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
June 15, 2021, 6:30 PM

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM

Board Members

Present:

Liz Darrow
Holly Pai
John Baker
Maria Isabel Cortes-Zamora
Bridget Reeves
Australia Tobon
Ada Rumford
Danielle Siedlecki
Monika Cassidy
Marciano Sanchez Lopez

Absent:

Ramon Barba Torres
Jahn Zuniga Escobar
Katie Winkelman

Liaison to the City Council: Hannah Stone, President

Spanish Interpretation: Marcela Rey

City Council Staff: Nalini Margaitis

There is an audio/ 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 listen to the recording.

Welcome, and Board Business [00:00]

- Nalini Margaitis welcomed the group.
- Nalini Margaitis facilitated this meeting.
- Minutes for the May 18, 2021 meeting were approved as written.

Announcements [2:18]

- Nalini: Bios for website and OPMA training reminders

- Hannah Stone: in communication with CBP Chief and shared information about a visit from the Board (they will send dates for August or Sept); Mayor will be issuing reappointments to the Board on 6/21/2021 (will be shared at following meeting)
- John Baker asked: who is the Board Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission? (Board formed to accommodate for co-facilitators) – add this to the agenda item for the 7/20 IAB meeting

Review of the Federal Contacts Data [11:59]

- Bridget Reeves: June 6, 2021 clarifying call – what does “CSI” stand for? (CSI Whipple): why was a call made to CBP for the license plate? (Response: Mellissa Whipple is an Investigator for the Bellingham Police Department)
- Liz Darrow: Results column? (Response: this is on the Board, Liaison and Council Staff to obtain this information)
- Three to follow up: CSI Whipple, last month’s ICE (Danielle requested)
- Holly Pai: Set up a group to ask specific follow-up questions
- Monika Cassidy: What happened to the letter written to the Mayor?

Reports from Impacted Community Members [29:46]

- Marciano Sanchez Lopez: In Lynden, there were three farmworkers were detained (possibly by ICE) on their way to work – detained on the 10th of June, unknown facility – agencies unable to provide detention location information (online, just states that they were detained with no further information) – for two days, the family member did not know where they were. Frustrating that community members disappear to unknown location.
- Danielle Siedlecki: Why is this information not on the Federal Contacts Data?
Response: Because the federal contacts data only includes the city of Bellingham interaction, nothing beyond that. If notification of the County, it will likely go to the WCSO.
- Response: the Board could identify ways to locate community members at all times, but reminder that this is a federal system and there is only so much a municipality can do
- Australia Tobon: important to have a transparent system to locate loved ones, even as a municipality should be able to identify where these loved ones are, right to know where they are, can talk to a loved one before they go, etc.
- Liz Darrow: agreed with Australia and reminded the Board members of its purpose
- Danielle wanted to know what can be done right not
- Response: reaching out to other groups and recognizing the City’s limitation – e.g. Holly, Hannah and Dept of Homeland Security (Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties) – they Board can identify solutions on how to locate loved ones

- Holly Pai: can be a resource between community and the organizations to identify the structure of these agencies, but also understands the limitations and realities on the ground
- Liz Darrow: could we organize a community event this summer? (with Marciano, Australia as well as others who know the structure of the agencies); Any way to communicate to the Tacoma Center to express how the Board feels about what happened? (Holly clarified: now that they are with ICE, they are under Federal Immigration Law and therefore the outcome is dependent on each person's immigration history).
- Response: long overdue for a community clinic (outreach information) – Marciano and Australia please advise the group how to proceed with this
- Bridget Reeves: writing letters to influential members (congressmen, ICE, etc.) and delivered to the lawyers by whom they were represented
- Response: this is helpful, but each person's options are different – they all need legal Counsel. Other Cities have immigrant defense funds that help pay for Counsel (Liz added: City's with these funds have a line item in their budget for this)
- Going forward: Liz will reach out to Australia and Marciano to find out the best communication method for this

Presentation: Information Gathered from the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs in NYC and the Immigrant and Refugee Affairs Office in Denver (Liz Darrow) [55:24]

- Denver: 7th City Liz, Australia, and Danielle have met with -Office of Immigrant Affairs in different quadrants of the country
- Offices started and funded by the City, but the process was led by the people
- NYC (began in 1993 with one person), today with 22 field organizers (who find out the needs of the community) – instead of a non-profit structure, it is a government led, community supported processes (via community engagement to learn about better understand the processes of civic engagement); Civic ID program (de-coupled from the federal program) – avoids federal database (that can be subpoenaed)
- Denver Star program: unaffiliated emergency response separate from Police (Bellingham is looking into this too)
- Overall observation: Mayor and City Council support has been fundamental
- Denver: Office was established by executive order by the Mayor (NYC: strongly encouraged and supported by Mayor)
- Difference: agricultural community (stronger in Whatcom Co)
- Recommendation to City Council: to figure out a way to establish and fund the Board and then allow the community to construct (via an immigrant and Refugee Resource Center)
- Biggest support: Cities for Action

Presentation: Refugee Resettlement Office in Whatcom County by World Relief (Steven Shetterly) [1:10:14]

- Presentation included background information on the global refugee crisis
- Goal: Interest to open a refugee resettlement office in Whatcom County that would offer the following: providing a ride from the airport, preparing culturally appropriate meal, connect with social services that would assist with housing, helping adults connect with ESL classes, providing training and vocational support, provide avenues of friendship, paths to citizenship and entrepreneurial for those interested to start a business, housing (Whatcom county is lower than other western WA counties)
- Note: areas that accept refugees have experiences positive economic impact
- Timeline: applying for federal recognition for Whatcom County to be a resettlement site (hopeful to receive this approval fall of 2021, followed by a period of training with first refugees arriving in the spring of 2022)
- Request that World Relief be added to the resolution
- Contact: sshetterly@wr.org
- QA responses: Catholic Community Services now only receive resettlement if you have family ties in Whatcom County (sub-office of another larger office in Snohomish county), World Relief would request that Whatcom County be recognized as a primary resettlement location by the Federal Govt (allow for increased resettlement, once federal recognition is received) , Resettle NW (work alongside other agencies)
- Funding is coming from: federally funded (every refugee has a certain amount – covers resettlement and administrative costs), other funding: private sources, grants, state sources, local abilities to raise money (>50% federally funded)
- The Board feedback included questions about how this presentation made it on to the agenda

Report from Immigration Resource Center [1:46:21]

- Danielle read aloud the updates in the current document
- Hannah Stone added that the City Attorney has stated that he will not review the ordinance until the City Council provides guidance
- Danielle asked if it would be possible to set up a meeting with the Mayor and City Attorney before the next IAB meeting
- Bridget asked if it would be possible for the Board members to be added to a subcommittee report during a City Council meeting
- Hannah will share the document with Council on Monday (and this is the version that Legal will view it) and will report out on the result
- Updated ordinance was emailed to the Board

Old/New Business [2:00:52]

- Hannah: regarding the letter re events on 1/26 (letter brought to Council on 4/26 meeting), May 7th meeting the letter was discussed (outlining the policy concerns/items for discussion) – suggestion to Council for agenda item re Mutual Aid agreements to be presented during the 7/12 meeting (looking specifically at mutual aid agreements between the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County)

Public Comment Period [2:06:12]

The meeting adjourned at 9:13 PM.

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