



City of Bellingham
Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
October 19, 2021, 6:30 PM

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM

Board Members

Present:

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

Absent:

Ramon Barba Torres
Jagwinder Gill (excused)
Holly Pai (excused)
Australia Tobon

Spanish Interpretation: Martha Salazar

Russian Interpretation: Alfia Logunova

Punjabi Interpretation: Manjit

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 New Board Member Introduction [0:00]

- Nalini Margaitis welcomed the group.
- Nalini Margaitis and tri-facilitators facilitated this meeting.
- Minutes for the September 21, 2021 meeting were approved as written [1:42:30].

Review of Agenda [4:45]

Announcements: Opening on Board [6:12]

- Ada announcement that there is one opening on the Board
- To apply: <https://cob.org/gov/public/bc/Boards-and-Commissions-Application-Process>

Public Comment/Community Reports [7:02]

- Community member expressed concern re federal contact data, where CBP was involved without a warrant, in a situation where it would have needed a warrant

Special Report (Rosalinda Guillen, Community to Community Development) [11:21]

- Rosalinda is the founder of Community to Community Development in Bellingham
- Rosalinda expressed the importance of this type of Board and explained the background of founding the organization: Latino immigrants that work mostly in agriculture and the service industry in Whatcom County (illegal aliens and people who are being treated by immigration as criminals)
- Rosalinda referenced Alfredo Juarez - police stop and subsequent lawsuit
- Central to the Board: dignity and recognition to humanity
- Critical that this Advisory Board is part of the City – to be recognized as equitable members of the community, and can still be part of the people/part of the government (paying taxes, working, trying to live a responsible life) – asking to be recognized as people as part of the City
- Goal: to establish a governance process, in order to serve and protect, have recognition of dignity that immigrants deserve
- Rosalinda stated that IAB has been focusing less on the racial disparity that exists in government and the recognition of disparity in immigrants of color and she does not believe it is properly serving her community – she urged that racial inequity in the enforcement of law in Whatcom County must be recognized
- Rosalinda is upset that Alfredo Juarez has been applying to serve on the Board and that his application has been sitting somewhere and has not been appointed to the IAB – he is a high school graduate and type of leader that be on this Board – Rosalinda also mentioned that Homero's application has been sitting somewhere too – she requests that these applicants should serve on the Board
- Rosalinda is hoping that the ordinance will be improved

Presentation (Oksana Bilobran, Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, Seattle) [27:45]

- Oksana Bilobran discussed the history of the Immigrant and Refugee Affairs Office
- Background: Immigrant and Refugee Advisory Board in 2007; Position within the Office of Civil Rights, and later the Department of Neighborhoods; Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs established in 2012 once ordinance passed; Executive Office with an Executive-level Director and a seat on the Mayor's Cabinet; currently 11 staff members
- Why the City has a separate office: immigrants and refugees have particular and varied needs across multiple sectors (education, employment, job security) and income brackets (varied socio-economic needs); the City realized that simply allowing access to

City-led services and programs will not lead to equitable outcomes for immigrant and refugees on a large scale (important realization); equitable outcomes for immigrants and refugees in our education, workforce and social service systems requires dedicated funding, the institutionalization of targeted program models, community-based access and support; the need to increase understanding and awareness among funders, policymakers and systems leaders by identifying, documenting and articulating the particular and varied needs of immigrants

- Mission: to facilitate the successful integration of immigrants and refugees into Seattle's civic, economic, and cultural life; to celebrate diverse cultures of immigrants and refugees and their contributions to Seattle; to advocate on behalf of immigrants and refugees; to promote a citywide culture that understands and values the benefits that all members of our society receive when immigrants and refugee communities are successfully integrated into our civic, economic, and cultural life
- The organization is not just here for immigrants and refugees, here for the whole City
- Ongoing programs in the office: free citizenship and ESL services; language access program; Immigrant Family Institute partnership with SPD to help immigrant youth and their caregivers gain skills to self-advocate and navigate city, legal and educational systems; legal representation of people in deportation proceedings; Ready to Work classes for adult language learners to gain job readiness skills; advocacy on a local and national level
- Top issues and programs: one-time programs include: DACA legal clinics and fee scholarships, Public charge education and advocacy campaign, cash assistance to most vulnerable immigrants impacted by COVID and not eligible for stimulus checks, digital equity, immigrant inclusive emergency planning, COVID-19 vaccinations

Summary of meeting with Mayor Fleetwood (Danielle Siedlecki and Liz Darrow) [49:10]

- Danielle explained that overall it was a successful meeting – he wants to meet again and spend the next 4-6 weeks to figure out the next steps
- Next meeting with the Mayor: November 18
- Liz mentioned that she and Holly are trying to get on to the City Council agenda & mentioned that it would be important to meeting quarterly with the Council

Memo update from Mayorkas, Homeland Security (Liz Darrow) [51:49]

- Liz discussed the new policy memo from Secretary Mayorkas
- DHS is changing their strategy – there will be fewer workplace raids
- Emphasis in the memo of the criminality of crossing the border (clarification: it is legal to seek asylum at the Southern or Northern border) – increased drone technology used at the border
- ERO (enforcement and removal office) in Ferndale – improved structure to include 13 bathrooms and 2 shower stalls (why the additions? Why does the City allow the permits?)

Meeting with ACLU and state legislators (Liz Darrow) [56:05]

- Met with representative and provided her with the Keep WA Working Act and they will draft a memo to the City of Bellingham – there are a number of violations to the law and the City has a chance to respond
- ACLU and State Legislatures are working on stronger language for the next legislative sessions

Federal Contact Data Review (Bridget Reeves and Liz Darrow) [58:23]

- Bridget Reeves shared information with the Board pertaining to a follow-up on federal contact data process to obtain outcomes: reference numbers indicate the department or law enforcement agency (e.g.: “b” for Bellingham PD, “j” for Blaine PD, “a” for Whatcom County Sheriff, “l” for Lynden PD and “q” for Sumas PD)
- Proposition: subcommittee to request the City to obtain police reports 2 weeks prior to meeting (duration of response: 5 days)
- Proposition: approach WhatComm and provide recommendations to them or focus on translation calls
- Bridget spoke with Deputy Chief Almer (BPD) and he stated that he is the one who enters the data
- Bridget Reeves asked about translation services for the BPD – response: Policy 332 Limited Language Proficiency Services
- Bridget has requested some police reports and is waiting to hear back from those reports
- Liz Darrow expressed concern for several items on the data - the police should not give the federal immigration any information that you are I don't already know; anything beyond what is general public knowledge needs to have a judicial warrant come with it A person calling 911 dispatch to report a possible border crossing is not proper use of this dispatch.
- Liz also discussed an item where the federal government is asking the local police for information – KWW may include exception where trafficking or drugs are involved
- Interdepartmental relationship structure that assumes that everyone has the best intentions : not reflected in the data or experiences of community members

Further public comment [1:18:46]**Old/New Business [1:32:07]**

- Retreat has yet to be scheduled, but have a facilitator committed
- Necessity to have time to create a Work Plan (begin with 3 hour session)

The meeting adjourned at 8:13 PM

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

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

