



City of Bellingham
Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
September 20, 2022, 6:30 PM

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 PM

Board Members

Present:

Tara Villalba

Liz Darrow

Lelo Juarez

Holly Pai

Australia Tobon

Ada Rumford

Homero Israel Jose Garrido

Absent:

Monika Cassidy

Russian Interpretation: Alfia Logunova

Spanish Interpretation: Martha Sabalsa

Punjabi Interpretation: Piku Dillion

City Council Legislative Staff: Nalini Margaitis

City Council Liaison: Kristina Michele Martens

Deputy City Administrator: Brian Heinrich

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.

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Welcome [3:32]

- Nalini Margaitis welcomed the group.
- Nalini Margaitis and tri-facilitators facilitated this meeting.
- Minutes for the July 19, 2022 meeting were approved as written

Announcements and follow up on public comment from June meeting [4:56]

- Welcome to the new City Council liaison, Kristina Michele Martens
- Bridget Reeves has resigned from the Board

Public Comment I [6:24]

- Dena Jensen shared her enthusiasm on the efforts that have been made for an IRC and shared that she sent a letter to City Officials urging a more human level of support toward the IRC. Jensen also mentioned that the August IAB meeting was cancelled and that the butterfly installation was removed – she placed a record request for email correspondence between Hannah Stone and the Mayor. Jensen read an email aloud that she received from the public records request.
- Maya Morales, WA Privacy for People, shared comment with the Board addressing immigrant lived experience (including the hardships and barriers they face), urging City officials to support the Immigrant Resource Center, and support for the butterfly display.
- Dana commented on the last-minute cancellation of last month's IAB meeting
- Ian Schaefer Lorenz, WA Poor People's Campaign, spoke on behalf of those experiencing poverty in the state of WA. Ian shared that his organization helped with the installation of origami butterflies in City Hall and read a statement aloud addressed to the Mayor and City Council in support of the art installation as well as an IRC.
- MB requested that the federal contact data from August be uploaded to the website.
- Henry Bennett requested that the federal contact data be uploaded as an Excel file.

Report Back on Two Tours (Australia Tobon and Tara Villalba) [22:40]

- Australia and Tara reported back on the two tours that the IAB participated in (CBP-Blaine in July and Port of Entry trip in Blain in August (blue uniforms)).
- Tara shared that key take aways: how much border patrol is used in local law enforcement (including as a training resource)
- Australia shared the following about the tour to CPB Blaine: toured the administrative office and spoke with individuals who are in charge of different operations, the tour emphasized that they are members of the community (most have military experience and have served in the Southern border of the state), patrol by land and by water (through Idaho), they need more budget and personnel to continue their operations, they would like to keep their focus on the federal level but often get called in by local law enforcement, the working relationships with cities in Whatcom county seems informal (nothing written down on how they work together), they have received training and are in compliance as well, big crimes include warrants for arrest coming in from Canada, the individuals detained at border patrol tend to be Romanian nationals (next is Latin American countries), questions were asked about discretion (they have to detain people in 99.9% of cases), will detain people that did not present themselves as point of entry, biggest charge is setting foot on US soil as a criminal charge, their goal is to process people

- Australia shared the following about the tour to the Port of Entry: deals with issues of expired documentation, visa renewals, change of immigration status at the port of entry, they deal with items that are confiscated that should not be brought into the US. An active shooter incident was discussed (an active shooter in a school) and a lot of Port of Entry workers had their kids in that school (there was a connection with the schools to have law enforcement support to deal with that situation) – example of how federal agencies are intertwined with the community.
- The objective was to let these agencies know that the IAB exists and that there are communities here in Whatcom County that have concerns about what has been going on - tried to convey view of the public regarding immigrants access to basic services (the 911 system, getting local resources, etc.)
- Holly Pai added that the Port of Entry emphasized how they are the good guys and wanted to help the community and wanted to differentiate themselves from CBP. When field operations are called to provide backup for local law enforcement, they are there purely in a support role and not looking to enforce federal immigration laws. However, if someone is at that port of entry, then they have less discretion. This new Port Director is willing to engage with the IAB (previous Port Directors did not do that).
- Liz Darrow added that the Port of Entry is focused on promoting their image (they provided the IAB with Port of Entry memorabilia). Darrow also mentioned that much of their budget goes toward surveillance (62 night cameras in North Whatcom county – e.g. a farmworker making movement at night) and discussed expanding funding for more surveillance. Officer Gil stated that their division is responsible to profile people because they must visually make an assessment based on what they look like, what they're wearing, or what they are driving)
- Holly Pai shared that it was disappointing to hear the misunderstanding of how immigration laws affect the individuals. For e.g.: officers believed they were doing community members a favor by putting them into deportation proceedings so that they could go to an immigration judge and get a green card (when in reality, that is not how it works)

Subcommittee Reports [49:20]

- Tara shared that the process subcommittee has been meeting with people who have expressed interest in serving on the IAB (interviewed 5 people in the past month and 1 more coming up) & have recommended certain people to the Mayor's Office to be added that the committee has been working on the ordinance and was hoping for an update from CM Stone, but will now work with CM Martens on that (shelve the ordinance work for now and come back to it in the near future) & the process subcommittee is working to ensure that the Board members are in compliance with the OPMA. The process subcommittee will no longer facilitate a community outreach liaison – it was suggested that the outreach subcommittee can do this.
- Holly Pai provided an update on the federal contact data subcommittee recognizing the help that Bridget Reeves was able to provide for this subcommittee. The subcommittee looks over the contact data and advises the City if there are any violations with Keep

Washington Working Act. Pai recognized Deputy Administrator Heinrich's response to this. The City and County have responded to the ACLU's letter. The state AG office is still looking into the City and the County regarding these violations.

- Ada Rumford reported out on the outreach subcommittee's goal to establish a language access for the City. The City website has been updated with a new image and once agreed upon, the goal will be to translate the website into multiple languages. Top 5 languages spoken in Bellingham include: English, Spanish, Punjabi, Russian, and Vietnamese. Rumford shared that she hoped pamphlets would be created in multiple languages.

Public Comment II [1:24:12]

- Vaughn shared how to access a language translator in MS PowerPoint: new presentation > enable "always use subtitles", under subtitle settings (asks spoken and subtitle language) (view video at: 1:26:12-1:28:19)
- Maya shared that it is important to recognize when the voice recognition technology is on because it is surveilling students in the classroom when it is on. Maya also shared that they City was using a third party company to gain feedback on Broadband and that feedback to a third party included a lot of self-identifying information (including IP address and identifying information on broadband). Maya also shared that the image that Ada presented appears like a profile and isn't community centric.

Butterfly Installation in City Hall and the IRC (Tara Villalba and Lelo Juarez) [1:36:28]

- Lelo provided the Board with a quick report on the butterfly installation that took place on August 5, 2022, hanging butterflies and honoring Ernesto an immigrant farmworker who died in Whatcom County in 2017. The work supports and immigrant resource center. Many of the local stores were hanging the butterflies. Lelo added that the IRC will not collect immigration status and all immigrants will be welcomed at the center.
- Tara shared a some photos of the butterfly installation.

Update: Brian Heinrich, Deputy City Administrator [1:47:25]

- Brian Heinrich shared that Mark Gardner, Senior Legislative Analyst, did some research of IRCs in other cities
- Heinrich shared that there are three models: a City staffed funded model, an intergovernmental partnership (City-County, City and other small cities, etc.), or a contract with a city-serving organization (the models that Mark looked at includes a blend of all three)
- Next step: the direction given in May from City Council was to explore these models (presentation in front of City Council in October during the 10/24 meeting)
- Budget process: Mayor will release budget to Council on 10/1, followed by a series of workshops in October and November with an eye of adopting a biennial budget no later than the December meetings (two dates to set ordinance) – once this is done, the biennial budget for 2023-2024 calendar year will be in effect

- At the moment, the Administration does not have direction from Council to fund an Immigrant Resource Center (there is ability to amend the budget at a future date)
- Heinrich requested to return to the IAB during the 10/18 IAB meeting to have a discussion with the IAB to make a recommendation to City Council (memo, email, can be included in Council packet)
- The IRC subcommittee will set up a meeting with Councilmember Martens

Public Comment III [2:08:41]

- Maya expressed concern that there is not an actual report to look at given the tight timeline for the next meeting
- Heinrich responded that he will make available documentation for the 10/18 agenda packet ahead of the meeting

Old/New Business [2:12:08]

- Ada Rumford shared that the outreach committee would welcome new members

The meeting adjourned at 8:43 PM

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