



City of Bellingham
Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
January 18, 2022, 6:30 PM

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM

Board Members

Present:

Danielle Siedlecki
Liz Darrow
Holly Pai
Ada Rumford
Monika Cassidy
Alfredo Juarez
Sierra Green (Alternate)

Absent:

Bridget Reeves (excused)
Maria Isabel Cortes-Zamora (excused)
Tarnjot Brat ("TJ")
Jagwinder Gill (excused)
Homero Israel Jose Garrido
Australia Tobon

Spanish Interpretation: Martha Sabalsa

Russian Interpretation: Alfia Logunova

Punjabi Interpretation: Piku Dhillon

City Council Legislative Staff: Nalini Margaitis

City Council Liaison: Council President, Hannah Stone

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 [4:32]

- Danielle Siedlecki welcomed the group.
- Nalini Margaitis and tri-facilitators facilitated this meeting.
- Minutes for the December 21, 2021 meeting were approved as written

New Board member Introduction [8:09]

- Alfredo Juarez joins the IAB as an official board member

Process Subcommittee Report Part I (Liz Darrow, Holly Pai, Sierra Green) [11:59]

- Holly Pai reported that the subcommittee worked new language to insert into the proposal from the previous month (to update the ordinance regarding the selection of members)
- Holly Pai shared the email from the Riveters Collective regarding the City's response in the selection new members for Boards and Commissions:

1. Which Mayor's Office staff are responsible for selecting new members? Tracy Lewis and relevant City staff responsible for coordinating with members of the specific Board and Commission assist in selecting new members.

2. Does the Mayor's Office consult with active members as part of the selection process? The Mayor typically receives a recommendation from City staff and the relevant Board and Commission on the recommended applicant.

3. When vacancies exist, what internal deadlines has the Mayor's Office set to 1) review applications and 2) appoint eligible applicants? The Mayor highly depends on staff and the board/commission to review applicants for a cohesive fit within the board/commission and to make a recommendation for appointment in a timely manner.

4. How does the Mayor's Office report the status of applications and appointments back to active members? The communication goes to the administrative staff coordinating with the board/commission. They receive a copy of the acknowledgement letter (with the application) sent to the applicant and if there was a recommendation for appointment and the Mayor appointed, they receive a copy of the letter that was sent to the new member. The appointment then goes to City Council (for information or approval) and rosters are updated on the web with the previously sent link to give the full status of the board/commission.

- Adding to section 2.26.020 – Membership appointment to read: *The Board will review all new Bboard member applications and make recommendations to the Mayor for appointment. Member applications shall receive a two-thirds affirmative vote from the Board before being forwarded to the Mayor for appointment.*

Public Comment/Community Reports [20:37]

- **Liisa Wale** inquired about translation options for those dialing in
- **Henry Bennett** inquired about a new Zoom feature present when signing on to the meeting, asking for address and comment. Bennett encouraged the Board to continue work toward creating an Immigrant Resource Center
- **MB** advocated to have the majority of the Board makeup represent impacted community members – racial profiling by Police and border patrol. MB reminded the Board that the reason it was created was to evaluate and strengthen existing policies based on experiences of impacted community, adding that the people who get detained and deported in Whatcom County are overwhelmingly immigrants of color. MB urged the Board to recognize the inequity in immigration experience for people who aren't White. Access and information are things that the Board can take action on now, developing a solid plan with clear achievable steps, such creating an IRC.

- **Maddi** shared that she was upset after watching last month's IAB meeting, indicating that is much color blindness in the racial makeup of the Board, which should not be the case on an Immigration Advisory Board. The people who are harmed by anti-immigrant laws and rhetoric are disproportionately people of color, indigenous people, darker skinned people, poor people, people of the Global South, people from colonized backgrounds
- **Dana Erickson** commented on the conversation surrounding the Board makeup, stating that an immigration advisory board should prioritize the BIPOC population – adding that it does not make sense for the Mayor to be making these appointments without coming to these meetings
- **Jackie Tabone** echoed that the Board should be prioritizing those with lived experience, those closest to the experience will have the most knowledge about it, adding that statistically the BIPOC populations are the ones being targeted.
- **Dena Jensen** stated that by focusing on the crisis that immigrant populations face within the community – addressing the physical, emotional, mental trauma – will translate to the fact that something significant is being done and that can help with trust and communication. Approaching this through a crisis management lens will open doors for the IAB.

Community Reports [38:06]

- None

Process Subcommittee Part II [39:40]

- Pai continued to present the proposed changes to the ordinance language
- Second proposal – to take out the sector requirements from the ordinance and to replace that with: *It is a priority that the composition of the Immigration Advisory Board reflects the impacted community that the Board serves. For this reason, the Board recommendation to the Mayor will take into consideration factors such as immigration status, race, class, and sector of our community that could impact a potential board member's experience in the community.*
- Remove the following portion that provides the Mayor with autonomy: *The Mayor shall consider individuals from the list provided by the Board for possible appointment, however, the Mayor may select other individuals who are interested in serving and whom the Mayor believes will effectively serve as alternates.*
- Ada Rumford asked if there was an opportunity to explain why the Board is removing certain sections. Stone added that any revisions that come forward would need to be approved by the Council and there are opportunities for explanation: a memo that addresses the proposed changes, IAB members could be present at the meeting to provide feedback (and to potentially respond to questions from the Council regarding the proposed changes). Pai proposed that the IAB do both – compose a memo and attend a Council meeting to present the proposed changes. Cassidy added that Board members could be present at City Council meetings on a rotational basis. Stone reminded the Board that Council meetings are open to the public, but that the opportunity for dialogue would be dependent on an agenda bill (typically an item taken

for action) – also take into consideration which Committee this would be for (Public Health, Safety, and Justice or the Committee of the Whole). Siedlecki added that it would be a great opportunity for the IAB to present in front of Council. Rumford added that the Board should prioritize the topic presented to Council and instead present on the IRC (and not the proposed changes to the ordinance). Darrow added that the greatest obstacle has been figuring out how to schedule an agenda bill in front of the Council – what’s the timeline for presenting an agenda bill? When and how can the IAB get on the agenda? Stone responded that the agenda bills are brought forward by the Chair of that Committee – for Public Health Safety and Justice, it would be Dan Hammill. For Committee of the Whole, it would be Hannah Stone. The agenda bills would need to be finalized 10 days before a City Council meeting. Darrow requested that the board vote to move forward with the proposed ordinance changes when the guest speaker suggested Darrow might want to wait until her presentation before such a motion is made.

Presentation (Krystal Rodriguez) [55:42]

- Rodriguez provided the Board with a presentation titled, ‘Obtaining Information from the City of Bellingham’
- Rodriguez is from the Riveters Collective: to improve components of the justice system
- Rodriguez shared that the City has an obligation to respond to a public records request within 5 business days (they may also extend this deadline based on the size of the request)
- Rodriguez provided examples of data she has requested – for example, a year’s worth of 911 data
- Rodriguez shared her frustration with obtaining information of public records – citing examples of the homeless camps, What-Comm 911 service call data, police complaint and investigations records, police union contracts, and homeless camp sweeps bodycam videos
- Rodriguez shared that Board member applications are never disqualified and that no letter is sent to an application who is not selected
- Rodriguez recommended that the Board provide specific deadlines when recodifying the appointment process (e.g. “reviewing applications within XX days”) and suggested that the Board use a scoring matrix, improving language based on member experience
- Darrow requested that Rodriguez send the slides to the IAB
- Stone clarified that Tracy Lewis sends the applications to herself and Nalini and that they are public information and can be shared

Address what the public is saying [1:08:24]

- The reasons why the Board needs to be more specific in the intent of the Board
- Green added that the community is saying that the Board must ground themselves in the purpose of the Board and bring that up more in conversation when things are being discussed – purpose and reason of being here , Siedlecki echoed Green
- Green expressed for affirmation for having a scoring matrix for applicants

- Siedlecki added that she would like to see all of Riveter’s suggestions
- Darrow acknowledged the public comment speakers for addressing entrenched white supremacy in this space and stated that a head nod by Council is not enough – responsibility to address those things
- Siedlecki shared that she interpreted the public comments to mean that the Board should not focus all of their attention to one people group, and instead all immigrant communities represented in the area (Whatcom County), having more BIPOC members has never been in question, but that there are other immigrants who have been impacted by ICE (including East Indian people)
- Green perceived that the public comments meant that the Board should be comprised of impacted community (and what that means to the Board – who is having negative experiences? And who is struggling the most? Who is in these detention centers? Who is in ICE?) Ultimately, who is this resource center for? What are we trying to solve? What is the purpose?
- Cassidy agreed with Green, stating that it is important for the Board to continue with the resource center – only then will it be apparent which types of people will come to seek help at the center
- Juarez expressed interest to help out with the resource center – specifically, helping out with medical bills. Cassidy suggested that the resource center partners with a doctor, lawyer, and daycare assistance. Siedlecki invited Juarez to join the IRC subcommittee.

Immigrant Resource Center Update (Danielle Siedlecki) [1:26:08]

- Siedlecki reported that since the last meeting, she emailed the Mayor and City Council, put together a letter of interest for the Resource Center (along with the organizations interested in supporting) and is waiting to hear back from the next steps. Siedlecki has not heard back from the Mayor since then.
- Darrow added that she had hoped that the Mayor would attend an IAB meeting
- Stone shared that the Mayor will attend the next meeting in February. Cassidy suggested that the Board prepare three questions to ask the Mayor at the following meeting. Darrow directed IAB to email questions to the co-facilitators.

New Law in Illinois (Alfredo Juarez) [1:31:10]

- Juarez shared that he read an article that the state decided not to renew their contract with the detention center
- Darrow added a comparison with the Tacoma Detention Center (which will be shutting down in the end of 2023, when their contract expires). Darrow also notified the Board that the Jan 25 field trip is cancelled. Darrow stated that she located a second enforcement and removal center and is trying to get into contact with them.

Training (Liz Darrow) [1:35:55]

- AORTA: Anti Oppression Resource and Training Alliance offers trainings for groups and confront white supremacy in organizational spaces, and strengthening equitable facilitation. The training is filled and the IAB is on a waitlist.
- Stone mentioned that Darrow's training proposal was sent to the Mayor and is under consideration and Stone will follow up.
- Siedlecki will work to get the IRC on the Council agenda
- Darrow asked Stone if Council will provide a formal response to the letter re the January 28, 2021 incident – Stone says she will follow up.

Federal Contact Data [1:50:45]

- WhatComm facilitating contact between border protection and the jail, which is in direct violation of the Keep Washington Working Act
- Communications between US Immigration police and local law enforcement seem illegal – Darrow would like to get a clearer picture of what is going on

Old and New Business [1:53:18]

- Margaitis suggested to provide the Mayor for a 1-page brief on a monthly basis summarizing the IAB meeting. Darrow, Rumford, and Cassidy expressed interest in starting the brief. Pai suggested to ask the Mayor what the best way to communicate would be. Siedlecki and Pai drafted a letter outlining frustration that is being shared with Board members – looking for feedback before it is sent to the Mayor.
- A request was made for members to send 3-4 questions to the Board ahead of the meeting with the Mayor on February 15, 2022.

The meeting adjourned at 8:34 PM

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

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