



City of Bellingham
Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
January 17, 2023, 6:30 PM

Board Members

Board members present: Monika Cassidy, Liz Darrow, Homero Israel Jose Garrido, Von Ochoa, Holly Pai, Sophia Rey, Ada Rumford, Australia Tobon, Tara Villalba, Alfredo (Lelo) Juarez Zeferino

Board members excused: Christian Sanchez Alvarez

Staff and Others Present:

City Council Legislative Staff: Jackie Lassiter

City Council Liaison: Kristina Michele Martens

Russian, Spanish, and Punjabi Interpreters

There is a 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 view the recording.

To submit an application to serve on a City Board or Commission, please visit the following webpage: <https://cob.org/gov/public/bc/Boards-and-Commissions-Application-Process>

Welcome [00:00:20]

Liz Darrow asked the interpreters to introduce themselves and make themselves available to anyone who may need them. She emphasized the importance of being mindful of the interpreters while speaking so that everyone can have language access.

Sophia Rey moved to approve the minutes. The motion passed with no opposition.

Announcements [00:04:45]

Darrow explained President Biden's extension of Title 42. She and Holly Pai described several aspects of this, including:

- The scope of this order and the impact it has had on the local community.
- Parole programs, which act as exceptions for people from certain countries.
- There is now an app that people are expected to use to apply for asylum before they reach the border, which presents several challenges.

Pai stated that there is a new Supreme Court decision that has to do with the Remain in Mexico Policy. She said that immigration judges in Tacoma are using this ruling to deny bond, stating that people are not eligible for release.



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Subcommittee Reports

- Processes Subcommittee [00:15:29]

Darrow gave an overview of a recent meeting between the Process Subcommittee and City Councilmember Martens, Council President Lilliquist, Bellingham Mayor Seth Fleetwood, and staff members. She stated that the Mayor and administration did not want the IAB to hold the strategy session that members had previously voted on. The administration would like to be included in the meeting, have input on the agenda, and include a facilitator at the meeting. Members discussed and asked questions. Topics included:

- Tension between City administration and the IAB, which was acknowledged by the Mayor, and the Mayor's expressed desire to build a better relationship.
- Potential role of the facilitator at the strategy meeting, and the best way to find an appropriate facilitator.
- City Council members and the Mayor (or staff from his office) are welcome and encouraged to attend IAB meetings.
- The process for the creation of the agenda for the strategy session.
- The potential date for the strategy meeting, the format it may take, and the process laid out by the administration for scheduling the meeting.

Pai moved to work with the city on a retreat and hiring a facilitator for the meeting. Monika Cassidy seconded. No members were opposed.

- Federal Contacts Data Subcommittee [00:44:17]
 - *Pai nominated Tara Villalba to be a member of the Federal Contact Data Subcommittee. No members were opposed.*
 - Pai recognized a member of the public, Scott Powell, who was present at the meeting and who has been helping with the Federal Contact Data.
 - Villalba gave an overview of the progress the committee has made. They have decided to split up the committee into groups, each in charge of reviewing a specific part of the data.
 - Pai explained what the Federal Contact Data documents.
 - Pai, Villalba, and Darrow gave an overview of the Keep Washington Working Act and an example of instances in which it would be relevant.
 - Von Ochoa asked about the benefits and drawbacks of obtaining a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) in order to obtain housing.
 - Members discussed how the TIN functions, the potential vulnerabilities for those who have this number, and potential services available from



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non-profits and other organizations. Members agreed that this number was mainly used for paying taxes.

- Outreach/Communications Subcommittee [01:01:58]
 - *Ada Rumford nominated Australia Tobon to the Outreach/Communications Subcommittee. No members were opposed.*
 - Rumford suggested that name tags be available for in-person attendees.
 - Rey asked if the proper name for the committee is Communication or Outreach. Members agreed Communications would be a better fit.
 - Rey gave a suggestion for an update to the website in regards to increasing transparency of what the Board is doing and what documents are made available to the public.
 - Tobon gave an overview of efforts being made to invite more community members to the meetings and the implications of that in regards to interpretation services offered at the meetings.
 - Homero Israel Jose Garrido brought up the importance of having access to participants' native languages to encourage participation. Members discussed this and the best way to provide that.
- Immigrant Resource Center (IRC) Subcommittee [01:19:43]
 - Garrido reported that the group gave a presentation to the Whatcom Human Rights Task Force on the IAB, its background, the work being done, and the status of the IRC.
 - Lelo Juarez Zeferino said that, in his part of the presentation, he spoke about the vision for the IRC and the community need for it. He expressed frustration that it has been over a year of work and that the City is still wanting to spend more time to go through the process of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ).
 - Darrow invited members to contribute ideas on what qualifications should be listed in the RFQ.
 - Members discussed the potential function of the IRC and how it could be helpful in various situations.
 - *Darrow nominated Rey to the Immigrant Resource Center Subcommittee. No members were opposed.*

Public Comment/Community Report [1:32:44]

There was no public comment.



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Overview of Main Objectives of IAB [1:33:24] *(this item was added to the agenda)*

Pai introduced a discussion on the scope and purpose of the IAB. Darrow read the stated purpose of the IAB according to the originating ordinance. Pai stated that there had been disagreement between the City and the board on what the scope of the board is. She stated that the board could evaluate city data beyond the Federal Contact Data and increase community involvement in determining the direction of the board.

Villalba emphasized that services are concentrated in Bellingham, but are meant to be available to people throughout the County. The interpretation of “future of the city in regards to immigration” includes the well-being of immigrants. The purpose of the retreat was to reach agreement as to what the work of the board is actually supposed to be.

Members continued to discuss this subject. Topics included:

- How to make City government accessible to all immigrants.
- The website needs to include the history and the goals of the IAB.
- The retreat with the City, the IAB, and the public needs to focus on the work that the IAB is tasked with.
- Pieces of the work intended for the retreat can be done in regular meetings.

Old and New Business [01:47:21]

Darrow asked non-board members who were present to introduce themselves. Thirteen attendees gave brief introductions of themselves.

Darrow asked members to get any agenda items for the next meeting to her in the next two weeks.

Members expressed appreciation for the interpreters.

Adjourn 8:28 PM