



City of Bellingham

Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

June 20th, 2023, 6:30 PM

Board Members

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

Board members absent: Tara Villalba

Staff and Others Present:

City Council Liaison: Kristina Michele Martens

City Communications Director and Deputy Administrator: Janice Keller

City Council Legislative Staff: Jackie Lassiter

Planning and Community Development Director: Blake Lyon

Senior Planner: Elizabeth Erickson

Long Range Planning Manager: Chris Behee

Russian, Punjabi, and Spanish Interpreters

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>

Sophia Rey called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

Language Justice Process

Jackie Lassiter, Council Staff, went over best practices for speaking while interpretation is occurring.

Roll Call

Review and Approval of May Meeting Minutes

Holly Pai moved to approve the May minutes. Sophia Rey seconded. Motion passed with no opposition.

Announcements

Jackie Lassiter proposed a permanent move to the Public Works Operations Center for future Board meetings. Members discussed and asked questions. Board members agreed to the move.

Monika Cassidy announced she would be resigning from the board and this would be her last meeting.



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Presentation – Comprehensive Plan

Blake Lyon, Planning and Community Development Director, presented on the Comprehensive Plan. He gave an overview of what the Comprehensive Plan does, how it is formed, and the process for gathering community input for the upcoming plan. Lyon, Senior Planner Elizabeth Erickson, and Long Range Planning Manager Chris Behee answered questions from members and asked for their feedback about the best way to gather input from the immigrant community.

Public Comment

Board members and others thanked Monika for her service to the IAB.

Subcommittee Reports:

Immigrant Resource Center Subcommittee: The Committee reported that their workplan for the next 18 months includes:

- Recruiting new members for the board and for their subcommittee
- Collaborating with the City on the Request for Proposals (RFP) process for the Immigrant Resource Center (IRC) project
- Keeping the community informed on developments regarding the IRC
- Looking for existing services that are already available for immigrants, building relationships with the leaders of those organizations, and distributing information on them to the community
 - They proposed that we reserve time at the beginning of each IAB agenda to present on an available resources
- Engaging with the community to gather input
- To have the IRC funded, established, and running

The Committee provided an update on the RFP, which has been posted to the City website. Members and staff discussed the process that bidders go through and what will happen once the timeline closes. It was suggested that the deadline be extended and Janice Keller agreed to look into that. *Note: the RFP deadline was extended by one month after the IAB meeting based on this request.* Once the deadline has passed, a workgroup will be convened, which will include IAB members, to review the responses.

Process Subcommittee: Holly Pai announced that she will be stepping down from the Committee.



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The Committee reported that their 18 month workplan includes:

- Clarifying and documenting the processes for:
 - Forming and joining a Subcommittee
 - Processing IAB Applications
 - Specifically appointment timelines and the roster
 - Missing meetings
 - Appointing alternate members
 - Creating meeting agendas
 - Term expirations
 - Appointments to the IAB
 - Ordinance revisions

The Committee updated the Board on the status of applications they have received for open seats. They stated that they are recommending the following applicants:

- Senaida Perez Villegas
- Gabriela Montenegro
- Daniel Cruz
- Jian He
- Imanat Kang

Liz Darrow moved to recommend appointment of the above listed five applicants to the Mayor. Sophia Rey seconded the motion. Motion passed with no opposition.

It was announced that Sophia would be leaving the board, as she will be attending university out of state. Sophia spoke to the board about her experience, stated that she would be attending the August meeting, and spoke positively about board applicant Jian He.

The Committee inquired about former Deputy Administrator Brian Heinrich's recent departure and what the process is for hiring a replacement. Janice Keller reported that the Mayor has asked her to take on the Deputy Administrator role and that community involvement in hiring decisions depends heavily on the role.

Communications Subcommittee:

The workplan for this subcommittee had not yet been completed.

Von Ochoa spoke about literacy rates in the U.S, including the 4th grade cliff wherein the literacy gap gets wider as children move forward after 4th grade. He reported that 45% of US adults are functionally illiterate.



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Von Ochoa explained an idea to create a Community Land Trust cooperative.

Federal Contact Data Subcommittee: The Committee reported that their workplan includes:

- Work with the City Council to enhance IAB access to the development of legislation and policies potentially impacting immigrant communities. Promote best practices to ensure timely awareness of and opportunity for community response to proposed legislation, policies, and resource allocations.
- Work with City Administration to develop an internal system to monitor City compliance with the Keep Washington Working Act (KWW) across Whatcom County. Work with the Mayor's Office and the Police Department to assess how countywide participants in What-COMM 911 referral service, as well as courts, schools and other agencies identified in the KWW, have actively addressed requirements for policy review, training, and best practices.
- Review other city policies and departmental programs and procedures for alignment with existing City goals and priorities to support immigrant communities. (See BMC 2.25 and Ordinance 2017-02-008)

Committee members and others discussed the Federal Contact Data document that is distributed each month. They reported that it is difficult to find information on what happens after an event that is detailed in the report.

Holly Pai informed the group that there is an Enforcement and Removal Operations Center located in Ferndale now, which means that folks will not have to drive to Tukwila, but it also means that there is more communication locally with immigration enforcement.

Adjourn 8:35 PM