



City of Bellingham
Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
March 21st, 2023, 6:30 PM

Board Members

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

Board members excused: Sophia Rey

Staff and Others Present:

City Council Liaison: Kristina Michele Martens

City Communications Director: Janice Keller

City Council Legislative Staff: Jackie Lassiter

Russian, Spanish, and Punjabi Interpreters

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>

Holly Pai called the meeting to order at 6:36 PM

Language Justice Process [00:00:27] Australia Tobon instructed members and attendees on how to access the provided interpreters. Interpreters introduced themselves.

Roll Call [00:02:18]

Review and Approval of January Meeting Minutes [00:03:23] *Von Ochoa moved to approve the January meeting minutes. Tara Villalba seconded the motion. Motion carried with no opposition.*

Announcements [00:03:50]

- Justice in sentencing policies: Holly Pai brought forward the idea of the IAB looking at justice in sentencing policies. Having a formal policy would require prosecutors to take immigration status into account when recommending sentences. Councilmember Kristina Michele Martens recommended that Pai or another member reach out to the Whatcom Democrats for a possible partnership.
- Housing legislation: Tara Villalba summarized the status of housing related policy measures:



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- A rent stabilization bill is not moving forward this in the State Legislature this legislative session.
- There are two additional bills moving their way through the legislature: one concerns security deposits and one requires the State to set aside money for housing in the State budget. Those interested in supporting the bills should contact the Bellingham Tenants' Union.
- At the city level, seven organizations representing Bellingham renters recently met and put together a list of tenant protections measures that they would like the City to focus on. They will be presenting that to the City soon.
- City language access updates: Janice Keller, City of Bellingham Communications Director, gave an overview of city-wide language access programs:
 - City staff are currently being trained on the Language Line system. This service allows for live interpretation via an app, telephone, or via Zoom. Staff who interact with the public the most are being prioritized for training before being rolled out city-wide.
 - Advances in technology have allowed high quality website translation and the City website now has translation options in over 30 languages. There are still limitations, for example certain forms, documents, PDFs, and sites hosted by third parties are not translated.
 - Keller answered questions from members on topics including prioritizing the untranslated website sections, replacing PDFs with live pages, ASL translation and accessibility.

Public Comment/Community Report [00:32:24]

- A community member asked a question about the IAB's relationship with Whatcom Community College. She said that she has heard that the school is desperate for Spanish speakers to help students with homework. Ada Rumford explained that the college is a state institution and is separate from the City. Members discussed this issue and language justice as a systemic issue.
- Von Ochoa stated that several of his students' parents take classes at the college through Whatcom Literacy Council. He also stated that he attended a webinar from Workforce GPS in which the importance of sector-specific language tutoring was emphasized. He summarized what other jurisdictions around the country are doing which he learned about at the webinar.



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Subcommittee Reports [00:41:22]

Immigrant Resource Center Subcommittee: Lelo Juarez Zeferino read the Request for Proposals (RFP) cover letter that his subcommittee crafted. Australia Tobon presented a diagram explaining the process of the RFP and how it would lead to an Immigrant Resource Center (IRC). Homero Jose Garrido shared a draft scope of work document that the subcommittee had created. He read through the document and explained their reasoning for each proposed item. Garrido also went over the subcommittee's suggestions for evaluation criteria for RFP respondents. Members discussed, asked questions, and made changes to the documents presented.

Rumford moved and Tobon seconded to change the suggested evaluation criteria by removing five points from the "Demonstration of Experiences" category and adding five points to "References". Motion failed with 6 opposed, 1 in favor, and 3 abstentions.

Pai moved and Tobon seconded that they approve the changes as discussed and forward the documents as recommendations to the Mayor's office. Motion carried with no opposition.

New subcommittee proposal: Christian Sanchez presented on his idea for a new Subcommittee for the Prevention of the Criminalization of Latin American Migrant Youth. He described the problem and possible solutions.

Sanchez moved and Darrow seconded to create the new subcommittee. After discussion, the motion was tabled until the work of the committee can be refined and membership can be established.

Process Subcommittee: Darrow presented the responses to the subcommittee's search for facilitators for the board retreat. The subcommittee decided that the most qualified respondent was Victor Rodriguez. Darrow shared Rodriguez's response letter.

Darrow moved and Pai seconded to proceed with Victor Rodriguez as the suggested facilitator for the Board retreat. Motion carried with no opposition.

Federal Contact Data Subcommittee: Pai informed the board about an interlocal agreement recently signed between the Bellingham Police Department and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in which HSI agreed to provide reimbursements to the City for Police overtime related to retail theft investigations. Councilmember Kristina Michele Martens further explained the interlocal agreement and why HSI is involved in local retail theft issues. Members discussed and asked questions.

Pai introduced Scott Powell, a community member working with the subcommittee, who gave a short presentation on the Keep Washington Working Act.



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Communications Subcommittee: Tobon stated that they are working on coordinating several things, such as the website and outreach to invite people to meetings. She also reminded members and the public about an upcoming Know Your Rights Workshop on April 12th at 1295 E. Bakerview in Bellingham. There will also be an IAB table at a Western Washington University event on April 4th from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

Old and New Business *Pai moved and Tobon seconded to recommend reappointment of Homero Israel Jose Garrido and Alfredo (Lelo) Juarez Zeferino to the board. Motion carried with no opposition.*

Adjourn 8:50 PM