



City of Bellingham
Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
May 16th, 2023, 6:30 PM

Board Members

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

Staff and Others Present:

City Council Liaison: Kristina Michele Martens

City Communications Director: Janice Keller

City Council Legislative Staff: Jackie Lassiter

Russian and Spanish 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>

Liz Darrow called the meeting to order at 633 PM

Language Justice Process [00:00:25] Tara Villalba went over best practices for speaking while interpretation is occurring.

Roll Call [00:03:05]

Review and Approval of April Meeting Minutes [00:04:00] *Von Ochoa moved to approve the April minutes. Liz Darrow seconded. Motion passed with no opposition.*

Announcements [00:04:30] Tara Villalba announced that the City Council voted to approve an ordinance criminalizing public drug use. She stated that the Board did not have an opportunity to review the ordinance or gather community input. Members gave their feedback about the ordinance:

- Homero Israel Jose Garrido stated that it was a complex problem and that he felt that the City's boards were ignored because the ordinance was not put before them. He added that there is not a single answer and that the ordinance affects those without homes.
- Holly Pai said that she believes it would have been appropriate for this ordinance to come before the board because simple possession of controlled substances has severe repercussions to those without immigration status.
- Lelo Juarez Zeferino said that the Board represents a big community and asked why they



City of Bellingham
Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
May 16th, 2023, 6:30 PM

didn't get a say in the ordinance.

- Sophia Rey asked if there was a formal action that they could take as a board, such as establishing a new Policy Subcommittee. She said that there should be a process to hold the City accountable.
- Tara Villalba said that they did not receive information on what would happen if someone without secure status is arrested under this new law.
- City Staff and Councilmember Martens gave input on how IAB members can be notified about upcoming legislation.
- Tara Villalba said that none of the options presented by staff were viable options for the immigrant community. She said that the burden lies with the City to seek counsel from the Board, not the other way around.
- Kristina Michele Martens volunteered to meet with members before each Council meeting to go over the items that were up before Council.
- Members and staff discussed the ordinance that was brought forward and the process that it followed.
- Tara Villalba pointed out that there are other items, such as the Consolidated Plan, that are not brought before the Board.
- Members and staff spoke about the Consolidated Plan and the Comprehensive Plan

Holly Pai announced that there are currently four vacancies on the Board and gave information on how to apply.

Sophia's reported that the Whatcom County Sheriff's Annual Report reflects that there were no Hispanic inmates in the Whatcom County jail because the Federal Government has changed the way it collects data, moving the category of "Hispanic" from race to ethnicity. She spoke about anti-Blackness and stated that folks will not select Black when they don't have the option to select Hispanic. This will cause more people to select white and leads to inaccuracies in data.

Retreat Report [00:49:00] Tara Villalba reported that the Board had held a retreat the previous week alongside several members of City Government and facilitated by Victor Rodriguez, who the Board chose. They had four goals:

- Build trust and collaboration
- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Orient new board members
- Set a workplan for the future



City of Bellingham
Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
May 16th, 2023, 6:30 PM

The original purpose of the board retreat was to set a work plan for the next 18 months, however, there was not time to address this goal at the retreat.

She asked Board members to share what was most significant to them from the retreat. Each member present shared at least one takeaway.

Public Comment [01:36:28]: Community member Scott Powell, said that it may be appropriate for the Board to ask the City for more information on the drug criminalization ordinance and how it will be implemented.

Subcommittee Reports [1:39:04]

Tara Villalba stated that each sub-committee is asked to work-plan for the next 18 months at each of their next meetings. Each sub-committee will then report on their plan at the next meeting.

Communications Subcommittee [01:40:58]: Sophia reported for the Subcommittee. She said that they have fliers giving information on the IAB, and asked for members to tell her what languages they would want the fliers to be printed in.

Immigrant Resource Center Subcommittee [01:46:28]: Homero Israel Jose Garrido reported that they have agreement with the City on the Request for Proposals (RFP) and it will be posted on the City's website in the next few days. Lelo Juarez Zeferino added that he feels it is very important to have the chosen respondent attend all IAB meetings. Liz Darrow added that there were two things that the Mayor's office chose not to use two of the Board's suggested changes to the RFP. The subcommittee decided that they should move forward with the RFP anyway because the work is important and they wanted to get started on the process.

Process Subcommittee [01:51:40]: Liz said that Australia Tobon sent a letter to the Board prior to her resignation. Members agreed that Liz would read the letter at the next meeting.

Old and New Business [01:52:35]: Von shared that the Steering Committee for the Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness will be talking about incarceration at their June meeting. August will have a focus on employment. He is hoping to have an organization called the Block Project out of Seattle come present to the group. He explained the organization's goals and methods of addressing homelessness. He encouraged members to attend the meetings.

A member of the public named MB shared a quote regarding confrontation and said that it shouldn't be assumed that everyone wants what's best.

A community member reported on an incident that occurred on April 17th at La Gloria, a Mexican grocery store in Everson. A family contacted this community member and told her that



City of Bellingham

Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

May 16th, 2023, 6:30 PM

ICE was at the store at 6 AM and took several families away. These families are worried because this is the store that is used by the people in the community. C2C dispersed brochures informing people of their rights and letting them know that ICE needs an official order to pick anyone up. In this case, ICE had orders on only one person who was fleeing from Seattle, but they picked up several people. Now the community members are afraid to go to the store, so they would like the City to make more information available on their rights.

Adjourn 8:35 PM