



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

Board Members

Board members present: Daniel Cruz, Homero Israel Jose Garrido, Imanat Kang, Gabriela Montenegro, Tara Villalba, Alfredo (Lelo) Juarez Zeferino

Board members absent: Jian He, Holly Pai

Staff and Others Present:

City Communications Director and Interim Deputy Administrator: Janice Keller

City Council Legislative Staff: Jackie Lassiter

City Council Liaison: Kristina Michele Martens

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>

Tara Villalba called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM

Equity Reminders

Tara Villalba made a land and border statement, acknowledging the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe, and that the border between the US and Canada is not part of the traditional peoples who were here prior to colonization. She stated that Lummi Nation and the Nooksack Tribe have ongoing events that the immigrant community can attend including an upcoming holiday bazaar.

Tara went over best practices for speaking while interpretation is occurring.

Roll Call

Approval of minutes

Homero Israel Jose Garrido moved to approve the October minutes. Daniel Cruz seconded the motion. Motion passed with no opposition.

Announcements

Liz Darrow announced the results of the November general election, highlighting certain measures and races.



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

Public Comment

A community member asked how homeless people can find out about shelter services offered. Tara pointed out services offered by the County and Lummi Nation. The community member said that we need an Immigrant Resource Center so that folks can have somewhere to go to get information in their own language. The community member and board members discussed various issues regarding housing and other systemic inequities.

Lelo Juarez Zeferino shared that he and his family have stayed in housing provided by farm owners before, and the housing is not fit for winter weather or hot summer weather, as they don't have adequate heat or air conditioning. He said that we need an immigrant resource center for that reason.

Daniel Cruz said that historically farm workers have been seasonal, but now people are staying longer and need to be vocal about their needs. He said that the Board needs to convince people to come to speak and put pressure on politicians.

Tara said that in order for people to get involved, they need access: first of all language access, and also access to information on where and when the Board meets. She said a resource center is a very clear place for people to come and be received in a dignified way.

Community member Brenda Bentley said that the Board has been waiting for answers on appointments and reappointments to the board. She said that now that we will be getting a new Mayor, she would like to know how appointments are going to be addressed in the future.

Daniel added that he and other board members have not gotten an answer to e-mails. He said he hopes the new Mayor will come to IAB meetings.

Gabriela Montenegro said that she is excited that there are so many people involved with the difficulties of the community and that we all have the same mission. She added that the thing that worries her about opening the Immigrant Resource Center is that it wouldn't have all the resources to help all the people accessing it. She expressed a hope that a Resource Center could partner with other organizations.

Members discussed homeless shelter services and how an Immigrant Resource Center could help.

City of Bellingham Updates

Janice Keller offered apologies for not getting the Immigrant Resource Center RFP reviewers back together yet. She hopes to get everyone together in December.



City of Bellingham

Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

November 21st 2023, 6:30 PM

Janice said that the Comprehensive Plan team was seeking to form a workgroup whose feedback will help inform the Bellingham Plan.

Janice shared a letter from Mayor Fleetwood explaining reasoning behind not re-appointing Liz Darrow. The letter explained that a majority of Council Members would not have supported her re-appointment and would not have been confirmable.

Board members and community members discussed the letter and general relations between the Board and the City.

County Community Updates

This item was not discussed.

Community Updates

Nobody had any community updates to share.

Subcommittee Reports:

Immigrant Resource Center Subcommittee:

Homero reported that he did not have an update on the RFP process.

Homero nominated Imanat Kang to be a member of the subcommittee. All members agreed.

Lelo stated that they have met twice to talk about the RFP candidates and that they have scored the candidates. He would like an update on scoring and would like an additional meeting before the December IAB meeting.

Scott Powell added that the City should be straight forward with the committee about their understanding of the process between now and January 1st when the new Mayor comes on board. He said he did not think it was likely to reach a contract before the new Mayor takes office and would like more information on what that transition may look like.

Liz Darrow said that the sub-committee had reached out to the incoming Mayor to offer orientation.

Process Subcommittee:

Tara said that it has been difficult to get information about the appointment of Suneida. She went on to explain that a board member had made a public records request for emails and communications regarding re-appointment. They received e-mails between City staff communicating about appointments.



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

Federal Contact Data Subcommittee:

Scott reported that he and Holly had met with a coalition that is trying to monitor the implementation of the Keep Washington Working Act.

Outreach Subcommittee:

Daniel discussed the flyer.

Daniel moved to add Imanat Kang to the Outreach Subcommittee. There was no opposition.

Old and New Business

Review Action Items:

This item was not discussed.

City's Response to Re-appointment Questions:

This item was not discussed.

Process subcommittee meeting with Mayor's office:

This item was not discussed.

Retreat: Tara asked if people would have availability to do a full day retreat on January 16. She and Liz asked them to send a response as to their availability via e-mail.

Adjourn 8:41 PM