



**City of Bellingham**  
**Immigration Advisory Board Meeting Minutes**  
October 17<sup>th</sup> 2023, 6:30 PM

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**Board Members**

*Board members present:* Homero Israel Jose Garrido, Jian He, Imanat Kang, Gabriela Montenegro, Holly Pai, Tara Villalba

*Board members absent:* Daniel Cruz, Alfredo (Lelo) Juarez Zeferino

**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 was absent*

*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 6:35 PM**

**Equity Reminders**

Tara Villalba reported that interpreters are available at IAB meeting. She went over best practices for speaking while interpretation is occurring.

Tara 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 the Point Elliot Treaty is the supreme law of the land.

**Roll Call**

**Approval of minutes**

Tara moved to approve the September minutes. Holly Pai seconded the motion. Motion passed with no opposition.

**Announcements**

Tara announced that general election ballots would be mailed October 18<sup>th</sup> and are only available in English. If anyone in the community is unable to read their ballot, they could contact the League of Women Voters for assistance.

Holly Pai announced that there are two upcoming immigration legal clinics. One will take place on November 2<sup>nd</sup> from 4PM – 7 PM at the Mt. Vernon Goodwill. It is sponsored by Skagit Legal



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Aid and Immigrant Resources & Immediate Support (IRIS). Volunteer attorneys will be available for consultations on immigration-related questions. The second clinic will be held on November 4<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM at Western Washington University. It will be a [citizenship clinic](#) to aid community members in filling out citizenship applications. Both events will have interpreters available.

#### **Public Comment**

No members of the public wished to speak during public comment.

Tara Villalba asked for an update to the questions that they had asked at previous meetings. Janice Keller stated that she did not have any updates, but hopes that the Mayor will be able to attend the next meeting.

#### **County Community Updates**

Tara asked how the Board can find out what is going on with EDI funds that are allocated by the County. Jackie Lassiter suggested contacting the County Executive's office.

#### **Community Updates**

Tara said that the Process subcommittee decided to add this agenda item as a way for information to be shared by and for community members. This would also be a space for presentations from non-profit or other organizations that serve the immigrant community. Board members agreed it would be a good item to add on a monthly basis.

#### **Subcommittee Reports:**

##### ***Immigrant Resource Center Subcommittee:***

Homero Israel Jose Garrido reported that the City has set up interviews with both respondents to the Request for Proposals (RFP). Board and committee members discussed the RFP process and the general credentials of each of the applicants.

Tara asked if there was an update on creating a list of local resources. Homero said that they are still working on that, but want to put together a document that could be posted on the IAB website.

Board members and staff discussed various repositories for resources, such as 211, Opportunity Council, Washington Asset Building Coalition, and the Western Washington Blue Group Student Organization. Casa Latina of Seattle was also suggested as a model for Whatcom County to use for immigrant job seekers.



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Members and community members discussed the safety of immigrants while job searching with regards to the risk of deportation.

***Process Subcommittee:***

Tara moved to add Daniel to the Subcommittee. Holly seconded the motion. Motion passed with no opposition.

Tara moved to add Daniel to the Outreach Subcommittee. Holly seconded the motion. Motion passed with no opposition.

Tara asked Janice Keller, Interim Deputy Administrator, about appointments. Janice responded that she would like to meet with Process subcommittee about appointments but has been focused on the Immigrant Resource Center RFP process.

Tara asked why the Mayor suggested that members of the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force be able to extend their terms but did not allow for re-appointment of Liz Darrow at the end of her first full term. Staff stated that the IPRTF is a board under a different jurisdiction and that the question about the Mayor's comments during the meeting would need to be directed to him.

Holly and Tara asked Janice about communication with the Mayor. Holly stated that she sees a lot of disrespect from the City when her e-mails go unacknowledged and that the break down of communication has led to a dissolution of trust that was built up after the retreat.

Board members and staff discussed the reasoning behind new board members being appointed to fill the remainder of a previous Board member's term. This is outlined in the originating ordinance for the Board, but can lead to confusion about who will be appointed to which term. This means that members appointed at the same time will have different term end dates. Tara suggested that the Mayor could assign shorter initial partial terms to members that he favored less than others. Janice assured that that was not the case and encouraged them to suggest a slot to fill when they make their recommendations.

Tara brought up the subject of planning for a Board retreat sometime this winter. Board members and staff discussed timing, with most members seeming to favor a January date, and logistics. Staff requested that this could either occur as part of the regular January meeting or as a special meeting, and asked that Tara or another Process subcommittee member get back to them with an outline of what the agenda might include and/or what the goals would be.

***Federal Contact Data Subcommittee:***



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Holly Pai stated that they had a productive meeting last week. They are working with the Keep Washington Working Implementation Table group to discuss implementation of the Act. Holly and Scott will be attending those meetings moving forward. The minutes from the last meeting state that the Attorney General's office is interested in following up on the contacts in Whatcom County. The volume of contacts has drawn the attention of the AG's office as well as others.

Tara and Holly will be approaching the City Attorney's office about a City wide policy that takes immigration status into consideration when creating plea deals with the City.

The committee has been looking at interlocal agreements between the City and Federal Immigration Enforcement. One is for the Stonegarden project and one is between the Bellingham Police Department and Homeland Security Investigations. Both contracts contain language stating that they will not share immigration related information, however the committee is looking at ways in which they could be strengthened. They would also like to work with a Councilmember to change the way that interlocal agreements and other legislation are approved. They would like to put a system in place in which the IAB is consulted on certain legislation or agreements.

***Outreach Subcommittee:***

This item was not discussed.

**Old and New Business**

Janice brought up the topic of bringing in the Planning Director to give a presentation on housing, explaining that at the last meeting there was conversation about housing and it sounded like there was a desire to have City staff with knowledge of the topic provide more information and answer questions. She stated that Planning Director Blake Lyon can give a presentation at a future meeting and that she can coordinate other department staff to come present on other topics as needed and wanted. Board members and staff discussed the best manner to go about this and ensure that any potential presentations are relevant to the group.

***Review Action Items:***

- Review Casa Latina's model of aiding immigrants in employment in a safe manner
- Find date for Process Subcommittee and Janice to meet regarding appointment issues
- Date for retreat

***City's Response to Re-appointment Questions*** This item was addressed earlier in the agenda.



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**Adjourn 8:52 PM**