

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

Tacoma Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs CIRA Annual Retreat

December 9, 2020

LWVTPC observer: Lydia Zepeda

Members Present: Jefferson Mok (Chair), Patricia Flores, Perla Gamboa (Vice Chair), Sandra Sych, Rafael Saucedo, Saiyare Refaei, Diana Parra

Absent: Rime Oujdi, Emily Calhoun, Hieu Nguyen, Alma Vargas

Also Present: Nick Bayard, Tacoma Office of Equity and Human Right (OEHR); Klarissa, OEHR; Katie Johnston, Budget Office; Elliott Barnett, City Planning

Called to order at 5:34 pm.

Statement of Purpose: Reduce barriers to access by refugees and immigrants

Land Acknowledgement

Motion to approve agenda

Motion to approve minutes from October 2020

Hate Crime: Vandalism against public art

Guests Michael Liang, Spaceworks, and Rebecca Solverson, City of Tacoma Office with Arts and Vitality.

Michael: Spaceworks among other things does public art, is responsible for the mural program. While there is often graffiti, in September there was the first defacement by a known White supremacist group called Patriot Front on a mural by David Long that features detainees at the NW ICE Processing Center. There were repeat acts of graffiti that have been reported to the police. The murals are being repaired. Given the nature of the acts, they felt that it is important to inform CIRA. It has become so common, Spaceworks now has a standard operating procedure for when it happens, and has started using an anti-graffiti coating on all murals so that the graffiti can be removed more easily. The message from the artists is do not give in, do not remove murals, just the graffiti. The mural of Justice Ginsburg has been repeatedly defaced. It is very triggering to the artists and to the community.

Rebecca: The City has seen a lot of graffiti, but this is the first time we have seen hate graffiti by White supremacists. The Arts Commission wants to work with CIRA and Spaceworks and the TPD on how to message about this to the community. The crimes have been classified as hate crimes. The City Manager is reporting on hate crimes each week to City Council. Saiyare's mural has been targeted as well.

Are any other buildings or organizations are being targeted? There was some tagging at Chinese Reconciliation Park - it was a different hate group than Patriot Front.

Rebecca will look into requesting a report on hate crimes, reporting them to CIRA and getting information from TPD; and she will follow up with a joint statement.

Observer shared a database on hate crimes with Jefferson Mok: <https://data.cityoftacoma.org/Public-Safety/City-of-Tacoma-Hate-Bias-2013-2020-/eubc-icg7>

Michael: Concerned about the personal safety of the artists so suggested being careful about how messaging is crafted.

Rebecca: There is some funding for artists, from the Tacoma Artists Initiative, to do their individual work. They would love to see immigrants and refugee artists. She is unsure if there are materials in other languages.

Biennial Budget follow-up, input from CIRA.

Katie Johnston, Tacoma Budget Officer, talked about the calendar for budget: the biennial budget starts with a community random sample survey on levels of safety and services in January. They also use strategic plans to guide priorities in February. In June there is a General Fund 6-year forecast and program analysis. In June/July the department puts together budget proposals to go to the City Manager. It is finalized in August and September and the budget is presented to the Council in October and November.

Outreach is done in March and over the summer. This year it was all online. Some Commissions are responsible for capital plans and have conversations all year long. Other Commissions engage later, they are given the budget, and asked how to allocate. Some get to decide what gets funded. This Commission needs to talk to Nick about the budget broadly or what it needs as a Commission or what the Commission needs the OEHR to work on.

Over the next year, there is an April re-appropriation. They do not do new projects but reallocate funds. In December they adjust the second year of the biennial budget. If CIRA has things they want modified in the budget, it needs to do this by August.

Jefferson: Stated he wanted to know how to make specific requests and be successful at getting projects/objectives funded. This was the first time he had seen the budget calendar, so it is very helpful.

Katie: There is no outreach to Commission during the budget process; they rely on city staff liaisons to relay the information back to the budget office. This year, community outreach has been through social media. There have been things in different languages and it has been successful. If CIRA members have not seen them, they need to connect to city's social media.

Jefferson: How should the process work? Should we first contact OEHR? Or the City Budget office?

Katie: OEHR has its own budget to manage of which some may be to help CIRA (e.g. staffing), CIRA can be a "thought partner" to OEHR. OEHR needs to see the priorities of CIRA to help them do their job, help them with action items. CIRA can also go directly to Council.

Nick: We could not do much with CIRA's recommendations because of the budget. By bringing Katie in, it is to help CIRA be more effective in meeting its goal. Media communications, police and libraries were your topics of interest. Representatives of those agencies can be brought in to discuss your priorities with you.

Katie: Where we put our money tells what we value. Sometimes we do not need new resources, but change the way they do things to meet goals. Budget is tight for next two years, but can prioritize existing resources.

Rafael: What is in the queue for 2021 for budget communication?

Katie: Outreach efforts are usually every two years, so typically less next year. It is helpful to know what are the best channels to reach immigrant and refugee communities.

Jefferson: Do you have a Budget 101?

Katie: Yes, I or one of my staff can do this. It may help to understand why some departments are responsive regarding, for example, translation costs.

November 2020 Retreat - nominated Flores Heal the Heart (Res 40622) officially appointed last night.

Jefferson : How do we fundraise for the immigrant defense fund?

Nick: \$50,000 has been budgeted for the next biennium and there is surplus from last biennium. \$2800 per month. NWIRP has been able to take on more cases and expand scope of work, not just those detained, but those who have been detained previously. Hoping to have a public outreach for fundraising in January.

Community Updates - Committees should meet before end of the year

- **Community Engagement Committee** - no report
- **Community Safety Committee** - Diana Parra. Meeting this Friday at noon, will talk about language access, DV, ICE holds in jail, jail getting money from ICE, letter to TPD; we can have meetings with new chief. Diana had asked for interpreter for TPD candidates but no translation was provided.
21st century policing: https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf. City is paying consulting group 21CPS to do a report on policing in Tacoma in January. What are the systemic challenges related to immigrants and refugees: language access, using children, dismissing crimes against immigrants, etc. They had a community session and asked about what was working and did not have time get input about what was not working. Diana has tried to contact them, but they have not responded.

Nick: Copy Nick when you make a request for interpretation or communicate so he can follow up

- **Governance of CIRA Committee** - Did not meet, will bring text at next meeting to rotate chair and vice chair to vote that into bylaw.
- **Language Access Committee** – Perla. We have a meeting next week. Feedback from the community about COVID vaccine; there is a lot of misinformation and fear on how it will be distributed and prioritized. Farmworkers in particular fear being treated as guinea pigs. Dept. of Health and UW sessions on the vaccine in English and Spanish:

English session: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/making-sense-of-vaccines-during-covid-19-tickets-130616267773?fbclid=IwAR2vHs97b86nYdYGCpeGNtgrBcro-7ekHwqRdgb4IU185GXBhH105XajfnQ>

Spanish session: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/vacunas-contra-el-covid-verdades-mitos-y-preguntas-tickets-131247347349?fbclid=IwAR2yHMe1kz0f0cuTMgGfAQZpUURfkILuLr91xcferYY2Vjme6h4gLBVviJw>

- **NW Detention Center Committee** - Saiyare has had a couple standing meetings with Council members. Direct conversations about what is happening inside. Three more detainees have tested positive. Two are on hunger strikes, one at least 11 days and both say it is indefinite. One pod a

week is being quarantined, at least 20 people a week. Slowly releasing detainees. Everyone is afraid of getting sick and/or being deported.

Had hoped to have someone here today from TPC Public Health Dept to talk to CIRA about COVID and NW ICE Processing Center and at what point will they take action regarding detainees safety. (At this point Public Health only takes responsibility for food)

Public Health has committed to attending the Dec 28th meeting.

City Staff Updates

Current and upcoming focus areas - fill out the survey of TPD candidates.

Senior policy analyst in OEHR will be an open hire, the administrative assistant for OEHR is an internal hire, and the budget reinstated the civil rights investigators, thanks to CIRA for its advocacy in reinstating those positions.

There is 4x the complaints in housing.

Elliott Barnett from City Planning - Home in Tacoma Project,
www.cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma to talk about a housing survey.

Adjourned at 7:45pm