

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

City of Tacoma Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (CIRA)

July 27, 2020, 5:30pm-7:30pm

LWVTPC observer: Lydia Zepeda

Present: Jefferson Mok (Chair), Perla Gamboa (Vice Chair), Sandra Sych, Rafael Saucedo, Jason Gamboa, Diana Parra, Saiyare Refaei, Rime Oujdi

Absent: Hieu Nguyen, Patricia Flores, Emily Calhoun, Alma Vargas

Guests: Nick Bayard, City of Tacoma; Victoria Woodard, Mayor; Julie Tran, Bucoda Warren, Leah Montagne, Haiku, Dr. Bernal Baca (ED of Centro Latino), Rachel Wilkie, Tanya Tran, Bennett Johnson

The meeting was called to order at 5:37 pm.

Statement of Purpose - to reduce barriers to access and participation in Tacoma's economic, cultural and civic life for immigrant and refugees; to make the city more vibrant, inclusive, and welcoming for all.

Land acknowledgement of Puyallup People

No agenda or prior minutes posted on website at the time of the meeting.

Approval of agenda.

Approval of minutes from June.

Dr. Bernal Baca of Washington State Racial Equity Team - RET is a lobbyist team that vets legislation through a racial equity lens to decide to support legislation or not, and develop strategy to communicate with legislators. RET's goal is to dismantle institutional and systemic racism in Washington State through the passage of equitable legislation. They have a racial equity framework that they use to evaluate legislation. They ask people to provide data before they will support legislation. They plan to work with 60 college students of color over the coming year to teach them civics and eventually place them with legislators to be aids or lobbyists. They are developing a manual with a glossary of terms, which they will be willing to share with the community.

Goals as new Executive Director of Centro Latino: community education; cultural center with an art gallery; and just hired someone today to run their domestic violence (DV) program, a counseling psychologist. Got a three- year grant from the state DSHS to provide DV services.

COVID-19 has impacted the immigrant, Latino community, even more because not they are not eligible for unemployment and other benefits. Since February, Centro Latino has started a food pantry; over 10,000 culturally relevant food baskets have been given out. They are helping clients with Census and voter registration at the food pantry. They have given out over 5,000 masks, some to farm workers in Yakima who are being charged by growers for masks. Pierce County just gave them \$92,000 to provide assistance if clients or family members got COVID-19 and they have expenses due to it. They are doing intakes, 10 so far. They will send money directly to their creditors, not to clients, if they can document illness and debts.

Centro Latino wants folks to send them people in need, focusing on Hispanic, undocumented and indigenous.

Resolution on the NW Detention Center (NWDC) to bring to the attention of the City Council on COVID-19

Leah Montange is working with Resistencia on the resolution as well as City Council. Detainees cannot social distance, there is no PPE, there is misuse of harmful disinfectant, there are difficulties in getting medical care, many inside who are vulnerable, people being transferred in who test positive. Three purposes of the resolution: declare support for people who are detained (20 years ago the City Council declared support of GEO Group, this would be a symbolic reversal of this); pressure ICE to release everyone in the detention center; and call for the Tacoma Pierce County Health Department to exert influence to protect people in detention by using their line of communication with NWDC more proactively. A fourth was added to direct the city to look for ways to regulate the NWDC.

Discussion: amend prohibition of transfers (to prevent spread of COVID-19).

Resolution as amended passed unanimously.

Biennial Budget

CIRA wants to send their priorities to the Committee on Vitality and Safety to ensure that Tacoma is welcoming and reflects the community it serves, conducts purposeful outreach and engagement and provides equitable service delivery to residents. The City Manager's proposed budget will go to the City Council in September.

Julie Tran from the Human Rights Commission (HRC), wants to share with CIRA that the City is considering letting HUD contracts expire and not rehire civil rights investigators. In that case, there would be no enforcement of City Code because state and federal agencies are not responsible. If you are renting and facing discrimination, you used to be able to file a claim with HUD (city let the contract expire at the end of June), state and Tacoma (until September).

It was suggested that the city not terminate the civil rights investigators. One EEOC and one housing investigator came back to work today after being on layoff.

How is this specifically related to immigrants? Immigrants are often the most vulnerable and civil rights investigators also did education and prevention, particularly at a time of crisis. Landlords are not following the Governor's rules because they think immigrants do not know rules, cannot speak the language, and do not know how to navigate the system.

HRC is drafting a resolution to send to the City Council tomorrow. Julie Tran can send to Jefferson Mok. CIRA may be able to sign on to the letter if HRC is interested in input from CIRA.

Motion to approve letter to send their priorities to the Committee on Vitality and Safety approved unanimously.

Election of CIRA Officers

One year terms. The Chair and Vice Chair were elected at same time. Vice-Chair Gamboa wants to step down and recommends that the Chair be extended three months with possible extension to six months so that they do not change both at same time. Nomination process: any commissioner can nominate an officer.

Diana Parra, Perla Gamboa, and Rafael Saucedo nominated Saiyare Refaei for Vice Chair.

Saiyare Refaei statement: passionate about detention center, mentoring folks so that they can serve on other on other commissions so that immigrants' rights are represented throughout the city. Wants Tacoma to be a welcoming city.

Send vote directly to Jefferson Mok.

Motion to extend chair's position for three months, up to six months was approved unanimously.

Letter on Racial Equity - send Jefferson Mok any thoughts to draft a letter for next meeting. Reference City Resolution No. 40622.

Welcoming Week - due to COVID-19 it is difficult to create an event. An online event is not accessible to all. So suggest partners in 2018 and 2019 events be contacted and ask them how to help refugees. The Commission wants to offer something to immigrants, not simply showcase immigrant culture. Some organizations are having virtual cooking classes, readings at the Library. Next steps require some volunteering. Members were asked to take a look at the list, organizations are excited about working with CIRA. Wants to create a resource for new immigrants.

Next Meeting: Thursday September 17 of welcoming week, want to have a closed meeting with community safety committee, not of CIRA, with TPD and city attorney to discuss immigrant and refugee safety.

Nick Bayard update on City

Budget Crisis is uppermost. The City is understaffed. They are providing information, but have not capacity to translate. Would welcome a budget for Welcome Week.

Adjourned at 7:55 pm.