

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

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

June 22, 2020, 5:30-7:30 pm

Members Present: Jefferson Mok (Chair), Perla Gamboa (Vice Chair), Hieu Nguyen, Sandra Sych, Rafael Saucedo, Emily Calhoun, Jason Gamboa, Diana Parra, Saiyare Refaei.

Absent: Rime Oujdi and Patricia Flores

Others Present: Nick Bayard, City of Tacoma; Don Ramsdell, Tacoma Chief of Police; Edward Wage, Assistant Chief of Police; Wendy Haddow, Public Information Officer and LGBTQ liaison; and members of the public.

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

The meeting was called to order at 5:43 pm.

Moment of Reflection for World Refugee Day on June 20

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

Approval of agenda.

Approval of minutes from May.

Discussion with Tacoma Police Department (TPD): Don Ramsdell, Edward Wage, Shawn Stringer (not in attendance) and Wendy Haddow.

CIRA: started in 2018, 5 standing committees: Community Engagement Committee, Community Safety Committee, Governance of CIRA Committee, Language Access Committee, and NW Detention Center Committee. Want to build community trust with TPD, communicate with nonEnglish speakers, want to understand TPD's role in immigration enforcement, and understand what is TPD is doing to build trust in Black community?

TPD: does not have prepared remarks, but wants to partner with CIRA to promote trust.

Dianna Parra, Chair of Community Safety Committee -highest concern about Black community members. Extended invitation to TPD on Thursday Sept 17 to participate in training about what it is like to be an immigrant.

Parra: What is TPD budget for interpretation services this year?

TPD: Contract with language bank, no cap on language bank or on 2% bonus for certified bilingual .

Parra: CIRA has found from victim advocates that officers do not use interpreters, but use family, especially children. What is TPD protocol to use interpreters?

TPD: It is up to officer's discretion of when to use language bank or family members as interpreters.

Parra: Some officers who say they are bilingual are not fully bilingual. So how are they certified?

TPD: Cannot answer, but will follow up with Alta to find out what the process is and will report back. Victims of crimes don't know what happens, don't know if case is closed. The only thing they know is that they gave TPD their information. To build trust need to communicate. How are you making sure that you are communicating with victims?

TPD: Each officer is required to give a blue card with case number and resources. Victims can call the TPD at any time to ask about status, but TPD does not contact them. TPD get same complaints from nonimmigrant.

Parra: When immigrant advocates see police reports, they often have to help immigrants revise the reports because they have errors. Officers tell the victims that they are reporting a crime just to get a visa. Officers have biases and are getting information from somewhere. What do you do about biases?
TPD: We do not give them any training on visas. This is an opportunity to start discussion about biases.

Parra: There have been calls from NWDC about crime, and TPD has responded differently depending on the officer. Some officers who have gone into the facility have talked to GEO Group and not victims. Is there a memo of understanding with GEO Group?

TPD: No. GEO Group asked us to have one with them at beginning, we said no. TPD does have jurisdiction because it is a private facility. We do respond, we do take police reports. We do get calls there. If you want statistics, we can provide them.

Parra: It would be helpful to tell your officers that they do have jurisdiction.

TPD: if you can provide with date and time and officer name, officers have to respond to calls for service.

Parr: who can we call about this?

TPD: You can file complaint online, or can call South Sound 911 and the shift officer has to take it. All complaints are investigated.

Hieu Nguyen: we would like to know more about police training, what does it cover? We want to provide feedback about cultural training.

TPD: We would like to talk one on one.

Diana Parra volunteers to be a point of contact.

NW Detention Center Committee

TPD: TPD does not have a formal contract with GEO Group, they are like any other private business. We do not get involved in ICE in any of their operations. They have space at facility. We do respond to public demonstrations on public thoroughfare.

Saiyare Rafaie: There was a solidarity event in May. There were 3 of us left after the event, a TPD officer was talking to a GEO employee and then passed by us in his vehicle. He was reading our license plates out loud without having a conversation with us about why he was running our plates. I have a video. Is it necessary to take license plate numbers?

TPD: Can't say without looking at video.

Public comment:

Nguyen: From immigrants on East Side, why is TPD slow or has no response to calls?

TPD: Need to know incident, date, time, and address, may be an issue of South Sound 911. Also the caller needs to state they specifically want to speak to officer.

Nguyen: many markets on Portland Avenue say that they have called about stealing or drugs being used around their markets. In addition, last Monday a person in a car was at stop light when someone came

and smashed their car window with a baseball bat. They called 911 and waited 45 minutes but no one showed up.

Mok: it is not just about language, it is about cultural competency. I will read public comments into the record

Comment: Given that the overwhelming number of non-English speaking calls are in Spanish, how many officers are bilingual in Spanish?

TPD: Does not know.

Comment: I have spoken to scores of Spanish of immigrants who have interacted with TPD and TPD has never used interpretation service. Why are they using children? There needs to be a policy of not using children under 18 as interpreters.

Comment: TPD needs to make it clear in the native languages of immigrants that they do not work with or share information with ICE.

Comment: NWDC is on city land, it is imperative that TPD respond to crimes that occur in the facility. They must speak to actual victims, and actual witnesses, not GEO employees who did not witness the incidents.

Comment: What kinds of training do officers receive on diversity? Who does it? How long is the training? Is it required?

Comment: My mom was physically assaulted and the officer refused to file a report, why?

Comment: TPD gives information to about actions outside NWDC to DHS, what information do they provide to them?

Comment: What is the cost of providing policing services to NWDC?

Comment: There is strong perception in immigrant community that law enforcement works together and assists ICE to threaten immigrants' safety.

TPD: we want to address these issues, to make people more safe, more trusting, we want to establish a good working relationship.

The discussion with TPD and comments ended at 6:56. The observer had to leave the meeting at this time.

The meeting went on to discuss responses to COVID-19 and reports from the five committees.