



Regular Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Thursday, December 16, 2021

Present: Chair Karin Lin, Commissioners Tsamchoe Dolma, Ashebir Gezmu, Eva Gottschalk, Subandha Karmacharya, Joe Manok, Anna Mejia, Abhishek Raman, and Jen Sparks

CIRC Staff: Executive Director Jennifer Mathews, Project Coordinator Crystal Rosa, and Immigrant Services Liaison Tagesech Wabeto

Absent: Commissioners Karim Razzaz and Aleksandra Ibrahim

1. Call to order:

Chair Lin called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

2. Public comment

No public was present at the start of the virtual meeting. There was no public comment.

3. Introductions

The newest members of the Commission, Eva Gottschalk, Joe Manok, and Abhishek Raman, introduced themselves. Staff and other Commissioners introduced themselves and welcomed the new Commissioners.

4. Review and approval of September 23, 2021 minutes

Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the September 23, 2021 meeting. Commissioner Raman moved to approve the meeting minutes, and Commissioner Manok seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

5. CIRC meeting schedule

The Commission participated in a Doodle Poll to reschedule the monthly meeting starting in 2022, due to scheduling conflicts. The next meeting date is Tuesday, January 25 at 6 pm. The CIRC meeting dates are now scheduled for the fourth Tuesday of each month.

6. Election in January

The Commission was encouraged to communicate any interest in being Chair to ED Mathews. The Commission will elect a chair or co-chairs in January.

7. Working Groups

Chair Lin announced the current members who previously formed working groups on certain topic areas. Outreach to Health Centers: Jenn Sparks and Subandha Karmacharya. Undocumented Workers' Rights: Tsamchoe Dolma, Lexi Ibrahim, and Subandha Karmacharya. Chair Lin reminded the Commission that the Family Preparedness working group was disbanded because of a shift in urgency and priorities during the previous Federal Administration.

Commissioner Dolma asked that the Commission assess the relevancy of the working groups. There may be new needs that have come about because of the pandemic. Commissioner Dolma asked that the new members be included in the working groups. Commissioner Dolma reminded the Commission of the commitment necessary to be involved in a working group.

Suggestions for alternative topics were made during the discussion, such as marketing and communications, mapping of resources (i.e., food pantries and clothing), promotion of civic engagement, welcoming new citizenship, and addressing mental health needs for undocumented residents.

Questions for reflection were posed during the discussion:

- What are the resources in Cambridge?
- What services do immigrants use the most?
- What services were easy to find?
- How do we make immigrants feel welcome in Cambridge?

8. Staff Updates

CET Networking Event

ED Mathews summarized the Know Your Rights event that was co-produced with the Community Engagement Team. PAIR attorneys presented updates on the current immigration landscape and tips on how to provide trauma-informed support to the community. CIRC staff also shared a story map of the legal resources in the Greater Boston area during the event. There were 100-125 service providers in attendance.

KYR with the Central Square Public Library

CIRC staff is working with the social worker and adult education staff at the Central Square Public Library on providing a Know Your Rights event to their patrons in multiple languages.

Margret Fuller House

ED Mathews has connected with the new Executive Director of Margret Fuller House to revive its partnership in community outreach.

Cambridge De Novo Legal Screening Clinic

ED Mathews reported that 25 clients called the virtual clinic in October and November. The number of clients dropped to 20 callers in December.

Council Order on Refugee Resettlement Process

ED Mathews announced that there was a directive to the Commission and other departments to determine the feasibility of starting a uniform refugee resettlement process in the city. ED Mathews has been reaching out to the Resettlement Agencies. These nonprofit organizations are already linked to the federal resettlement process. ED Mathews acknowledged that refugees from different countries will have different needs depending on the process of migration into the country.

Immigrant Services Liaison (ISL) Wabeto Report

Immigrant Services Liaison (ISL) Wabeto announced updates about new initiatives happening in Cambridge.

- The City and Cambridge Public Schools have partnered with East Cambridge Saving Bank to open saving accounts for kindergartners. The bank will deposit \$50 on behalf of the student to begin their saving journey early. Commissioner Gottschalk notes that unfortunately this program is only available for students with SSN's, as she went through the process of trying to register her daughter only to discover they were ineligible.
- While outreaching at the Fresh Pond Community Fair, ISL Wabeto learned about a new resource called Starry. It is free high-speed internet through the emergency broadband benefit.

Commissioner Manok moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Sparks.

The next commission meeting will be on Tuesday, January 25, 2022, at 6 pm via a Virtual Zoom meeting.