



Regular Meeting
Thursday, February 28, 2019

Present: Co-Chairs Yarlennys Villaman and Nick Lopez-Cortez and Commissioners Karim Razzaz, Jennifer Sparks, Sandra Mercedes Canas, Karin Lin, Marcio Macedo, Alejandro Epstein-Santoyo and Merline Sylvain-Williams and CIRC Staff: Executive Director Nancey Schlacter, Project Coordinator Crystal Rosa, and Immigrant Services Liaison Tagesech Wabeto

Absent:
Commissioners Elizabeth Badger and Donna Davis

1. Call to order:

Co-Chairs Villaman and Lopez-Cortez called the meeting to order at 6:12 pm.

2. Public comment

No public present, no comment.

3. Review and approval of January minutes

Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the January meeting, Commissioner Macedo moved to approve, and Commissioner Lin seconded.

4. Executive Director's report

There were 16 individuals/groups served at the legal screening clinic on February 20th. PAIR Project staff presented to 120 CRLS teachers at Professional Development workshops and a follow up training is planned for Parent-Teacher night. Commissioner Canas informed ED Schlacter that Parent-Teacher Night is already scheduled for March 14-15. ED Schlacter will follow up with Greta Hardina from Cambridge Public Schools. CCTV has finished the informational video about CIRC and it will be posted on the website soon. ED Schlacter reported that Senator Sal DiDomenico signed onto the Safe Communities Act after receiving the Commission's letter to the Cambridge delegation. ED Schlacter also presented to a class of Graham and Parks fourth graders about the Commission. CIRC will be tabling at RiverFest on June 1st and needs to ensure the table is always staffed. The event is rain or shine and volunteers must stay for their full shift. ED Schlacter is also working with Mass Legal Reform Institute to schedule a Public Charge Training for Cambridge Housing Authority staff. This training will be scheduled for late Spring. Commissioner Canas asked ED Schlacter to discuss the information provided by Liz Mengers, Planning & Development Manager of the Continuum of Care for the Homeless, regarding access to language services in local shelters. Commissioner Canas shared her experience with working with a homeless family currently staying a private shelter. ED Schlacter explained that the City does not operate the local shelters but coordinates government grants on behalf of local shelters. According to the information provided by Liz Mengers, some shelter staff have access to a language line 24/7, while others rely on staff who are multilingual. CHRC staff will follow up with the family Commissioner Canas described, when their contact information is provided.

• Report from Immigrant Services Liaison (ISL)

The Commission received a monthly summary of outreach from ISL Wabeto. ISL Wabeto also provided a monthly schedule of her day to day outreach efforts. ISL Wabeto shared that she attended a Parent-to-Parent support group at CRLS where she learned that parents have been having issues with their children using vape devices for tobacco. Commissioner Sylvain-Williams explained that she manages the Parent-to-Parent support group for the Department of Human Service Programs and there is a growing issue with high school students vaping. Commissioner Villaman further explained that the AGO's office is working on a campaign against the industry and how it has targeted youth consumers. This month ISL Wabeto focused her outreach to businesses owned by immigrants. ISL Wabeto also met with Molly Barstow, outreach coordinator at Project Citizenship. ISL Wabeto also met with Lili Sonis, Medical Case Manager at the Immigrant and Refugee Health Program, which

helps immigrant patients connect to primary care and other community resources. Boston Medical Center is interested in opening their own immigration legal clinic.

5. New Business

• **Presentation by Superintendent Christine Elow**

CPD Superintendent Christine Elow was unable to attend the meeting. After discussion with the Commission, ED will be scheduling Supt. Elow for the meeting in April.

• **Presentation by City Demographer**

ED Schlacter confirmed the city's demographer Cliff Cook is scheduled for the meeting in March. His presentation will take 30 minutes of the meeting.

• **Proposed Rules regarding SSA, FNS (PIF campaign flyer)**

Commissioner Razzaz informed the Commission about new federal rules that seek to remove people who do not speak English from receipt of SSA and FNS food stamp benefits. Commissioner Razzaz suggested that the group explore making comments like the Public Charge campaign or drafting a letter against changes to the federal law. Commissioner Epstein-Santoyo suggested that the Commission wait until after he attends the AILA New England conference and can gather more information on the matter.

• **Welcome Event**

ED Schlacter received information regarding a film series created by MA resident immigrant filmmakers highlighting stories of different immigrants living in the region. ED Schlacter reached out to the organization and included the Cambridge Public Library, which was already interested in buying the films. ED Schlacter explained that collaborating with the library would make for an interesting new Welcome Event. The Commission expressed interest in the idea and formed a working group to review the film trailers to narrow down which films would be appropriate for the event. Working Group Commissioners: Sylvain-Williams, Lopez-Cortez, Sparks and Lin. Project Coordinator Rosa will reach out to the group to determine a possible date in September or October. Project Coordinator will check what is on the different city calendars to avoid a conflict.

6. Ongoing Business

• **Goal setting for CIRC 2019**

Project Coordinator Rosa provided the Commission a detailed breakdown of CIRC budget expenditures since 2017. Project Coordinator Rosa explained that the budget for CIRC is shared with the Human Rights Commission. There are overlapping expenditures such as office supplies, food for meetings and events. There are some expenditures that are for specific use by one commission, such as the cost to operate the legal clinic and legal subscriptions for antidiscrimination law resources. After a discussion regarding the City's budget planning, the Commission agreed to focus their efforts on developing its core values to make project planning easier. Project Coordinator Rosa will email the Commission the Needs Assessment, the one-page summary, and the 2018 goals described at the November 2017 meeting. The Commission decided to form a working group to develop social media and meet other communication needs. Working Group Commissioners: Lopez-Cortez, Canas and Villaman.

• **Public Charge Rulemaking**

Scheduling the public charge training for Cambridge Housing Authority staff and DHSP staff has been moved to later in Spring. ED Schlacter has been working with Attorney Dierdre Giblin of MLRI to schedule a presentation with a consistent message informing people to continue using their current benefits/entitlements. The new rule may be published as soon as June, but it is not retroactive.

7. Commissioner Announcements

- Commissioner Villaman invited the Commission to an event recognizing Women in Immigration on International Women's Day at the Westin Hotel.

8. Future projects – **Nothing new to report on the topics below.**

- **AGO on UPIL training/outreach**

ED Schlacter is working with John Galli at the Community Learning Center but will also reach out to Hitomi Abe to involve CET outreach workers.

- **Elevator pitch**

The Commission will wait for Co-Chair Lopez-Cortes' attendance to discuss.

- **Presentation by ED of Arts Council**

The Commission agreed to have Executive Director Jason Weeks discuss the process for public art and ideas for welcoming immigrants in the Spring. Commissioner Macedo volunteered to do some research and report back.

Co-Chair Villaman moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:56 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Epstein-Santoyo.

Next commission meeting will be on Thursday, March 28, 2019, at 6 pm in the Large Conference Room.