



Regular Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Thursday, April 22, 2021

Present: Co-Chair Karin Lin, Commissioners Marcio Macedo, Tsamchoe Dolma, Ashebir Gezmu, Jen Sparks, and Arantxa Ortiz

CIRC Staff: Interim Executive Jennifer Mathews, Project Coordinator Crystal Rosa, and

Absent: Commissioners Subandha Karmacharya, Ana Mejia, Aleksandra Ibrahim, Elizabeth Badger, Co-Chair Karim Razzaz, and Immigrant Services Liaison Tagesech Wabeto

1. Call to order:

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

2. Public comment

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

3. Introduction to new Interim Executive Director

Jennifer Mathews who is an Assistant to the City Manager (ACM) will be the new Interim Executive Director. ACM Mathews is a lawyer and has worked in the City Manager's Office for two years. Previously, ACM Mathews worked in MA State government for eight years. ACM Mathews explained that she will serve as Interim Executive Director for the next few months until the vacancy for the Executive Director is filled. Each member of the Commission introduced themselves to ACM Mathews.

4. Review and approval of February 2021 minutes

Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the February 25, 2021 meeting. Commissioner Ortiz moved to approve the meeting minutes, and Commissioner Dolma seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

5. Staff report

With 5 volunteer attorneys, CIRC and De Novo served 26 clients at the March virtual clinic. The hotline voicemail for the April clinic hit its max (25) within the first week. Those who called after hitting the cap will be rolled to the May clinic. The members of the Commission asked clarifying questions about the clinic and its process during the pandemic. Project Coordinator (PC) Rosa explained that about a third of callers are residents of Cambridge. Usually, half of the callers speak Spanish and one or two callers speak a different language. Currently, the Legal Clinic is managed through the hotline between PC Rosa and a paralegal at De Novo. Co-Chair Lin explained that members of the Commission were needed to volunteer when the clinic was in-person to help greet clients and usher intake forms.

Immigrant Services Liaison (ISL) Wabeto Report

ACM Mathews provided a summary of ISL Wabeto's work in her absence. ISL Wabeto continues to work with the CET outreach team who is currently focused on signing up families to summer camp. ISL Wabeto is working to get the word out about the different language forums for the COVID vaccine. The Haitian Creole language forum is being scheduled and will be posted through the library, and the City will be sending out the communications. Additional languages will be added to this format and the Commission is helping coordinate expedite the process.

Working Committee on Language Justice

Project Coordinator (PC) Rosa shared some information from the Language Justice survey conducted in partnership with the Family Policy Council. There were 160 respondents represented from different

organizations across Cambridge. One of the key findings was the lack of knowledge about the services available to help someone gain access to information in their language. The next goal is to conduct focus groups with service providers and families in Cambridge. If the Commission is interested in learning more about the Language Justice work being done, PC Rosa suggested scheduling Nancy Tauber to speak more about her role with the work and the Family Policy Council.

6. Ongoing Business

Strategic planning

Co-Chair Lin reviewed the working groups and asked if any group had started meeting. Commissioner Dolma suggested creating a template with deadlines to help structure the work. Co-Chair Lin supported the idea. Commissioners Macedo and Dolma agreed to work together to start a template and will connect after the meeting. Co-Chair Lin clarified that the formation of the working groups came out of the Needs Assessment. Commissioner Ortiz suggested a new Needs Assessment since the results are now several years old and new issues have arisen from the pandemic.

Commissioner Macedo moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:48 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Dolma.

The next commission meeting will be on Thursday, May 27, 2021, at 6 pm via a Virtual Zoom meeting.