



Regular Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Tuesday, May 24, 2022

Present: Acting Chair Karin Lin and Commissioners Tsamchoe Dolma, Ashebir Gezmu, Eva Gottschalk, Joe Manok, Anna Mejia, and Karim Razzaz

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

Absent: Commissioners Abhishek Raman, Jen Sparks, and Subandha Karmacharya

1. Call to order

Acting Chair Lin called the meeting to order at 6:20 pm.

2. Public comment

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

3. Review and approval of March 22, 2022 minutes

Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the March 22, 2022 meeting. Commissioner Manok moved to approve the meeting minutes, and Commissioner Dolma seconded. Minutes were approved unanimously.

4. Commission Working Groups Follow-Up Discussion

According to the Doodle Poll, Executive Director (ED) Mathews informed the Commission that neither date in June had enough Commissioners for a quorum. Acting Chair Lin asked the Commission if the retreat was viable for June or if it should be postponed after the summer break. ED Mathews will follow up on scheduling with the Commission through a Doodle poll and will add dates in July to broaden the possibility. Acting Chair Lin suggested that the Commission could scale back to something smaller than a retreat and strategic planning initiative, and keep informal to reacquaint or meet for the first time. Possible meeting locations could be the Senior Center patio or the courtyard at Community Development Department.

Welcoming Event Working Group

Acting Chair Lin asked the Commission if they had ideas for a Welcoming Event. Project Coordinator Rosa advised that members allot themselves 3 months for planning an event from start to finish, with the last month to be focused on a communication strategy for outreach. Chair Sparks & Commissioner Mejia are on working group at this time. Other members are encouraged to join. Discussing potential events, Commissioners provided the following ideas, in substance:

- An exhibit in City Hall showcasing immigrant stories
- Different dates with events focused on specific immigrant communities, e.g., international students
- Partnering with the Multicultural Art Center or Senior Center
- Working with musical groups like the Refugee Orchestra Project

5. New Business

Cambridge De Novo Legal Screening Clinic

CIRC staff met with De Novo and discussed the need for new volunteer attorney recruitment for the legal clinic. There has been more demand than the ability to service callers. ED Mathews will coordinate the recruitment of new volunteer attorneys to increase the reach. Commissioner Manok suggested reaching out to Harvard Law School alumni for pro bono interest. Commissioner Manok stated that alumni are always looking for ways to give back to their school community.

Domestic Violence Needs Assessment Sharing

Staff from Transition House has contacted CIRC for help with outreach to Arabic-speaking communities and other language communities about their assessment of domestic violence. ED Mathews shared the assessment landing page with the Commission in an email before the meeting.

Summer Meeting Schedule

The Commission wanted to “wait and see” the results of the Doodle to determine if meeting in the Summer would be possible.

Language Justice Division

ED Mathews announced the new Language Justice Division and a full-time position added to the Human Rights Commission budget. The new position will support city departments in incorporating language access into their work, facilitate Plain Language training, work on issues of digital accessibility, and help centralize resources. The city has also set aside \$250,000 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money to fund interpretation and translations for the next couple of years.

Immigrant Services Liaison (ISL) Wabeto Report

Immigrant Services Liaison (ISL) Wabeto announced her outreach activities and updates about new initiatives happening in Cambridge. ISL Wabeto participated in the annual door to door outreach by the Department of Human Services. ISL Wabeto has helped with the outreach for the last 3 Wednesdays, there are 3 more Wednesdays left. ISL Wabeto participated in a site walk of two paths (Linear Park, and Danehy-New St Connector Path) which are currently being reconstructed with the Community Development, in preparation for community outreach in June. ISL Wabeto attended the Haitian Flag Day story time at the North Cambridge Public Library. ISL Wabeto conducted outreach for the mini job fair at Community Development Department, which had a successful turnout. ISL Wabeto is completing her second Making Connections Training with the intention to network with new employees in the City.

Commissioner Manok moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Mejia. The adjournment was approved unanimously.

The next commission meeting will be at a date and time TBD, per Commissioners poll responses.