

Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship
Tuesday, September 30
Virtual Public Meeting

Present: Chair Felipe Lobo Koerich, Commissioners Anne Odera, Vanessa Ruget, Karin Lin, Karim Razzaz, Raul Ripoll, Sarah Figge Hussain, Tsamchoe Dolma

City Staff: Executive Director Carolina Almonte, Employee Engagement Manager Saffana Anwar, Director of Operations Sarah Binney, Immigrant Services Liaison Tagesech Wabeto

Members of the Public: Wyatt Zurline

Absent: Chair Shubhan Nagendra, Commissioners Ana Mejia, Debbie Klein

1. Call to Order

- Chair Lobo Koerich called the meeting to order at 6:04pm.

2. Public Comments

- Wyatt Zurline joined the meeting as a reporter for the Harvard Crimson.

3. Review and approval of May 2025 Minutes

- The Commission reviewed the minutes from the meeting in May 2025. Commissioner Lin moved to approve the minutes; Commissioner Ripoll seconded. All voted in favor of approving the minutes.

4. Staff Reports

- ED Almonte
 - ED Almonte is planning to return to work part time on September 29. She will be attending upcoming Commission meetings.
- DOO Binney
 - DOO Binney is working with the Central Square Library to schedule a Know Your Rights Training specifically geared towards immigrants with TPS and those who have recently lost TPS. The training will be put on by De Novo and will have interpretation in Haitian Creole and Spanish. DOO Binney will send out more information when the date is solidified.
 - CIRC and the LGBTQ+ Commission are collaborating with the City of Somerville to put on a virtual Know Your Rights series about issues that affect LGBTQ+ Immigrant Communities.
- ISL Wabeto
 - There has been an uptick in people seeking information about

legal screening clinics. ISL Wabeto has been connecting residents with the monthly City of Cambridge and De Novo legal clinic, as well as the City of Boston MOIA clinic and the Rian legal clinic.

- o ISL Wabeto has tabled at 11 community events including Danehy Park Day and the Preschool Enrollment Fair to share information about immigrant resources.

5. Old Business

- Volunteer Attorneys – There have been fewer attorneys volunteering for the legal clinic. Commissioners can send the application to be a volunteer attorney to any interested attorneys in their networks. Commissioner Lin asked if it would be possible to provide stipends to attorneys. ED Almonte shared that this would likely not be possible within the city contract. Commissioner Figge Hussain suggested the possibility of including law students. Commissioner Lobo Koerich suggested reaching out directly to large law firms with Pro Bono programs.
- Danehy Park Day – Danehy Park Day was a very successful event. The weather was beautiful, there were many families in attendance, and lots of languages were represented.

6. New Business

- City Council discussed Policy Order 2025-127 about resources for detained immigrants. It contained 5 elements, including a 24 hour emergency immigration hotline, a vetted interpreter network, a centralized legal and community response directory, internal protocols for response to ICE encounters, and designation of an on-call city liaison. ED Almonte shared that the city already has a vetted interpreter network as well as internal protocols for responding to ICE encounters. Commissioner Lin shared that some of the suggestions seem like a recreation of existing community resources such as LUCE and BIJAN, and that the city should connect with and support existing organizations. DOO Binney shared that CIRC could focus on publicizing existing resources and making sure that resources are easily visible on CIRC website. Commissioner Razzaz shared that the City of Somerville provides wraparound support for a household after a family is detained, supporting with connecting families to food assistance, rental assistance, and legal support. ISL Wabeto asked about how the city can support families who are unable to work and get benefits in securing food and other needs, especially when families are afraid of

leaving the house. Commissioner Razzaz suggesting compiling information about soup kitchens, food pantries, and other food resources that are available to families regardless of immigration status. DOO Binney suggested sending this information out via the school system and backpack express.

- DOO Binney shared that the Massachusetts Office of Refugees and Immigrants is hosting Bystander Intervention Trainings. CIRC is interested in collaborating on one of these trainings for Cambridge residents. DOO Binney will share more information when it is available.

7. Adjournment

- Commissioner Ruget moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:01pm. Commissioner Figge Hussain seconded.