

Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship
Tuesday, February 25, 2026
Virtual Public Meeting

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

City Staff: Executive Director Carolina Almonte, Immigrant Services Liaison Tagesech Wabeto

Absent: Chair Shubhan Nagendra, Commissioners Karim Razzaz, Subandha Karmacharya.

1. **Call to Order**
 - a. Chair Lobo Koerich called the meeting to order at 6:04pm.
2. **Public Comments**
 - a. Azellie Luyo joined as a member of the public. No comments made.
3. **Review and approval of December 2025 Minutes**
 - a. The Commission reviewed the minutes from the meeting in December 2025. Commissioner Ruget moved to approve the minutes; Commissioner Ripoll seconded. All voted in favor of approving the minutes.
4. **Presentation: Constance Devanthery-Lewis, [ArCS](#):**
 - a. Constance Devanthery-Lewis presented on the ArCS Cluster, a volunteer-driven organization that supports refugees and asylum seekers in Arlington, Cambridge, Somerville, and surrounding communities. ArCS mobilizes sponsor teams to provide housing support, transportation, resource navigation, and other stabilization services at no cost. Commissioners asked about hosting requirements, connections to long-term housing providers such as CHA, the level of support expected from volunteers, and the organization's specific ask of the Commission. Ms. Devanthery-Lewis explained that hosts typically participate as part of a coordinated sponsor team and receive guidance from ArCS. Housing pathways vary depending on individual circumstances. ArCS requested assistance amplifying volunteer recruitment and exploring partnership opportunities.
5. **Staff Reports**
 - a. ED Almonte
 - o ED Almonte shared updates on upcoming initiatives, including
 - April 11, 2026: Orientation Workshop for Foreign Trained

- Immigrants in partnership with the African Bridge Network
 - May 9, 2026: Joint Fair Housing Month and Welcome Event with the Human Rights Commission at King Open School.
 - May 19, 2026: Citizenship Day in partnership with Project Citizenship at Sanofi.
 - A forthcoming Community Bystander Training with LUCE, the Peace Commission, and the Cambridge Public Library.
 - b. ISL Wabeto
 - o ISL Wabeto has been doing outreach about our events as well as other Department of Equity and Inclusion events. ISL Wabeto provided her outreach chart to the Commission with specifics.
- 6. Old Business
 - a. “Borderland: The Line Within” Movie Screening (partnership with the Peace Commission) – The Commission reflected on the recent film screening held in partnership with the Peace Commission. The event was well attended, with approximately 100 to 120 participants. Commissioners shared feedback, including: The event was impactful and well received, consider shortening the resource fair portion in future events, and allow additional time at the end for audience questions and discussion.
 - b. Family Preparedness Guides – ED Almonte shared that a first draft of the Family Preparedness Guide has been completed in collaboration with partners. The draft will be circulated to Commissioners for feedback. The guide is intended to provide practical information and support to immigrant families navigating uncertain circumstances.
- 2. New Business
 - a. Welcome Event – Saturday, May 9, 2026, at King Open School
 - i. The Commission confirmed that the Welcome Event will take place on Saturday, May 9, 2026, at King Open School. Early planning is underway. The event is expected to include community partners, resource tables, and information relevant to immigrant residents.
 - b. Discussion of recent City Council actions related to immigration enforcement and potential Commission response
 - i. Commissioners discussed recent City Council actions related to immigration enforcement and considered how the Commission may respond.

- ii. Commissioners requested that ED Almonte draft a letter to the City Council. The proposed letter will: encourage continued collaboration with the Commission and request clarity regarding community feedback and concerns, and identify opportunities to strengthen support for immigrant residents. The draft will be shared with Commissioners for review prior to submission.

Adjournment

- a. Commissioner Ruget moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:24pm. Commissioner Lin seconded.