



Regular Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Thursday, June 24, 2021

Present: Co-Chair Karin Lin, Karim Razzaz, Commissioners Marcio Macedo, Tsamchoe Dolma, Ashebir Gezmu, Arantxa Ortiz, and Aleksandra Ibrahim

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

Absent: Commissioners Subandha Karmacharya, Ana Mejia, Jen Sparks, Elizabeth Badger, and Immigrant Services Liaison Tagesech Wabeto

1. Call to order:

Co-Chair Lin called the meeting to order at 6:07 pm.

2. Public comment

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

3. Review and approval of April 22, 2021 minutes

Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the April 22, 2021 meeting. Commissioner Ortiz moved to approve the meeting minutes, and Commissioner Dolma seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

4. Reopening the City

Interim Executive Director (IED) Mathews announced that the City will reopen to residents for walk-in services next week. IE Mathews explained that the State legislature extended the policy allowing for remote public meetings until April 2022. This policy allows this Commission to choose to continue to meet virtually or in person. The IT Department is currently assessing the limitations in certain rooms to determine the possibilities of hybrid meetings. In response to a question about the timeline for the full-time Executive Director position, IED Mathews explained that it is underway, and she may be able to report on a timeline at the next meeting.

5. July and August meetings

Due to attendance which impacted the ability to have quorum within the last few months and the coordination with Summer travel plans, Co-Chair Lin asked the Commission to indicate their interest in taking the Summer off. After some discussion regarding their availability, members of the Commission agreed to conduct an election of a new Chair in July, suspend the meeting in August, and return to regular meetings in September.

6. Welcome Event

Co-Chair Lin gave a brief history of the Welcome Events of the past. In June 2018, the Commission organized a collection of dances, spoken word, and musical performances celebrating immigrant communities. In Oct 2019, the Commission showcased a film series of local filmmakers who highlighted the experiences of immigrant residents in Massachusetts. Co-Chair Razzaz asked about Danehy Park Day which is in the process of being planned by the Office of the City Manager. The Commission could use the opportunity to have a table for outreach and advertise for a Welcome Event in late October or November. In previous years at Danehy Park Day, the Commission has decorated with international flags and displayed 2 large Welcome signs with multiple languages at park entrances to demonstrate that all residents are welcome in the City.

At the end of May, Project Coordinator (PC) Rosa and Immigrant Services Liaison (ISL) Wabeto filled the mailboxes in City Hall with the Welcome Signs that were previously printed for outreach. Many departments have displayed the signs to Welcome residents back to City buildings. The Commission expressed interest in tabling at different City events to inform the residents of immigrant services and resources in Cambridge.

7. Cambridge De Novo Legal Screening Clinic

With 5 volunteer attorneys, CIRC and De Novo served 25 clients at the May and June virtual clinic. De Novo is still determining if and when their staff will feel comfortable to open their offices to share with the clinic. When the transition back to an in-person clinic occurs, there will be a need for some time to inform the public of the new process.

8. Immigrant Services Liaison (ISL) Wabeto Report

IED Mathews explained that ISL Wabeto was absent because she was at a training to learn more about Cambridge RISE (Recurring Income for Success and Empowerment) - an 18-month pilot program that will distribute recurring payments of \$500 to single-parent families under 80% area median income. IED Mathews provided a summary of ISL Wabeto's work in her absence. IED Mathews shared ISL Wabeto's outreach efforts regarding housing, immigration, summer camp, COVID vaccine, pre-school lottery, CLC classes, CPL services and re-opening plan. ISL Wabeto visited "The Spot" and took a refugee single-parent family of 10 to gather clothing and shoes as they needed. The family is now connected to this resource and they do not need further assistance. The children speak English and were able to schedule an appointment, walked over to The Spot, and got what they needed for the 2nd time.

9. Ongoing Business

Strategic planning

Commissioner Dolma explained that she has been unable to meet with her working group on undocumented workers' rights. The Commission will hear about their work at a later date.

Commissioner Gezmu who is a Family Liaison for the Amharic-speaking community explained that several members of his community have been denied their green cards and have left their USCIS interviews feeling like there was an unusual line of questioning. He asked for resources on how to best support his community. CIRC staff will follow up with additional resources to best assist this concern.

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

The next commission meeting will be on Thursday, July 22, 2021, at 6 pm via a Virtual Zoom meeting.