

# Hartford Commission on Refugee and Immigrant Affairs (CRIA)

Wednesday, September 3, 2014

5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

City Council Chambers

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Hartford City Hall

550 Main Street

## Minutes

In attendance: Michael Akpan, Georges Annan-Kingsley, Janet Bauer, Padam Bharati, Rio Comaduran, Letticia Cotto, Elizabeth Cuentas, Anne Dombrowski, Carlos Espinosa, Mui Mui Hin McCormic, Eva Jacobson, Joseph Morris Kalapele, Jyotsna Khattri-Chettri, Leonel Balam Soto, Rebecca Thomas (Commissioners), Linda Bayer (Mayor's office), Judy Wyman Kelly (Hartford Public Library).

- **Introductions:** As this was the first official meeting, everyone introduced themselves. Linda B. acted as temporary chair of the meeting.
- **CRIA mission:** Linda B. went over the CRIA and talked a bit about the creation of the Commission.
- **Appointment process:** Linda B. mentioned that there are still two vacant seats remaining, but that they needed to be filled by Hartford residents.
- **Roberts Rules of Order:** Linda B. summarized the important points of Roberts' Rules of Order, as indicated on the hand out. She also emphasized that the Commission, as a public body of the city government, must be transparent and open to the public. Meetings dates and times/agenda/minutes must all be published on the new website, which will be up and running soon. Meetings are open to the public, although each Commission can determine whether the entire meeting is open, or only some portion of it.
- **Interim leader:** after nominations and discussion, the group voted unanimously for Rio C. and Janet B. to be interim co-chairs through the November meetings, at which point the group would vote for permanent officers. A recommendation was made to include recent immigrants in Commission leadership in the future. Officers serve for the length of their appointment.
- **Report from two meetings regarding undocumented children at the U.S. border:** The group discussed the several unofficial meetings that had been held during the summer to address the issue of undocumented children coming to Connecticut and Hartford. Dr. Colon-Rivas, Director of the Department of Families, Children, Youth and Recreation, is the Mayor's representative on the Connecticut Mayor's task force. The group discussed inviting him to a meeting, and/or first sending him a letter introducing the Commissions and asking for an update on the task force's progress thus far. Janet B. will draft a letter and circulate to the group for any comments.

- **Future Meeting schedule:** the group voted to meet twice a month through November to give the Commissioners a chance to get to know each other better. The group voted to meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month: Sep. 17<sup>th</sup>, October 1, October 15, November 5, November 19, 5:30-7 pm. If someone cannot make a meeting, there is the option of phoning in for a conference call. Eva J. will work on the teleconferencing logistics. After November the Commission will meet once a month (at a time yet to be determined), unless the group decides otherwise. Judy K. will look into a meeting place for Sep. 17 as the City Council Chambers is not available at that time.
  
- **Next Steps**
  - a. **Communication:** There was discussion of the best way for the group to communicate. Balam S. offered to work with Judy K. to set up a google group. Anyone who isn't comfortable with google groups can let Judy K. know and she will provide an alternate type of communication.
  
  - b. **Liaisons from Hartford Public Schools and Hartford Public Library:** There was a suggestion to follow up with Hartford Public Schools and Hartford Library to request a liaison, as indicated in the Commission ordinances. Martha B. of the Welcoming Center was recommended from Hartford Public Schools, and Homa N. from the Hartford Public Library.
  
  - c. **Issues to focus on in the future:** undocumented immigrants and training for driving licenses; South American asylee children
  
- **Announcements**
  - a. A public safety event is being put on by Project Longevity Hartford, Nadine Nieves of HART, and Rio Comaduran, Commission member, in mid-October; Commission members are invited to attend and speak briefly on purpose and aim of Commission for immigrant and refugee residents. The Commission voted for representation at the event.
  
  - b. The Commission was invited by CT World Affairs Council to the talk given by the Executive Director of IRIS speaking on refugee resettlement issues, Oct 7 6:00 pm at St. Joseph University. This is a chance to introduce the Commission and its purpose. The Commission voted for representation at the event.
  
  - c. There is an event on September 26 at Goodwin College to help undocumented immigrants study for the driving test.
  
- **Other:**
  - a. Add AOB (Any Other Business) to the agenda in the future.
  - b. Ebola fundraiser.
  
- The meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.