

Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (CIRA)
7th Regular Meeting Minutes
Virtual via Webex
Date: March 10, 2026
6:00 pm -8:00 pm

Attendance:

- **Commissioners:** Adeeti Jindal, Bartholomew T. Shepkong, Daniel Myungho Sim, Kassandra Aguirre Ramirez, Mariam Isse, Nadia Jean-Jacques, Rev. Dr. Alexander Y Sumo, Naima Ilmi, Shahwar Ali, Tasha Lomo, Sara Abou Rashed, and Jesus A. Valencia.
- **Absences:** Bashir Ahmed, Fernanda Diaz-Basteris, and Kamran Syed Arif.
- **City Employees/Non-voting members:** Robert Tobias, CM Lourdes, Jessica Caceres, Joseline B. Martinez-Cortez, and Lindora Howard-Diawara
- **Guests/Public Attendees: None**

Meeting start time: 6:03

Overview

The March meeting of the CIRA, chaired by Barth Shepkong, focused on reflecting upon a successful community event held in February and planning future initiatives. The event was praised for its diversity and engagement, with suggestions to enhance outreach to grassroots communities and youth, and to improve commissioner participation during planning and execution phases.

Committee reports highlighted active collaboration and advocacy efforts. The Community Engagement Committee detailed their busy schedule and emphasized the importance of commissioner visibility at events, while the Advocacy and Policy Committee reported progress on a resolution concerning federal agents and plans to establish a social media presence for the commission. Both committees are working to recruit community members to strengthen their work.

Discussions on meeting logistics addressed the transition to hybrid meetings, with legal counsel Robert Tobias clarifying public notice requirements and advising on technology and procedural compliance to ensure effective participation and quorum. Upcoming community events were shared, including a Women's Day event and a caregiver's retreat, with invitations extended to commissioners for involvement. Plans for the commission's one-year anniversary celebration were also discussed, with a formal event anticipated in June.

Overall, the meeting demonstrated the commission's commitment to inclusivity, community engagement, and effective governance, with a focus on continuous improvement and collaboration.

Detailed Summary

Event Reflection and Feedback

The commission reflected on a recent community event held on February 20th, highlighting its success in fostering dialogue, resource sharing, and community engagement. Participants praised the diversity of voices and the breakout session format, which allowed for one-on-one interactions and follow-ups. Suggestions for improvement included increasing outreach to grassroots communities, engaging youth and second-generation immigrants, rotating assignments during events, and enhancing communication with commissioners to boost participation.

- Nadia Jean-Jacques praised the event and thanked Joseline for her leadership.
- Dr. Alexander Sumo suggested holding similar events quarterly to maintain engagement.
- Sara appreciated the breakout sessions and recommended expanding outreach to more organizations.
- Barth Shepkong emphasized the importance of diverse voices and suggested engaging youth more actively.
- Kassandra Aguirre Ramirez expressed concern about inconsistent commissioner participation during event planning.
- Naima Ilmi recommended earlier distribution of event coordination details to improve preparation.
- Sara proposed extending the reception time to allow for regrouping after breakout sessions.
- Joseline Martinez-Cortez highlighted the importance of targeting the right audience and expressed enthusiasm for future events.
- Nadia Jean-Jacques suggested rotating roles during events to allow commissioners to engage with multiple groups.
- Daniel Sim recommended creating official flyers or captions to facilitate community outreach and RSVPs.

Community Engagement Committee Report

The Community Engagement Committee reported on their recent activities, including collaboration with Joseline on event planning and coordination with City Council's Suzan for a co-hosted event. They emphasized the need for greater commissioner participation in community

events to strengthen connections and visibility. The committee meets monthly on the third Wednesday virtually and is addressing logistical updates such as changing Zoom links.

- Sara detailed the committee's busy schedule and collaboration efforts.
- Sara stressed the importance of commissioner engagement at events for community visibility.
- Naima Ilmi praised the thoughtful organization of a recent Iftar event and suggested improvements for meal service timing.
- Daniel Sim appreciated the inclusion of non-Muslim commissioners and community members in cultural events.
- Kassandra Aguirre Ramirez noted the need to update the committee's Zoom link due to staff changes.
- Sara confirmed the committee's meeting schedule and willingness to share calendar details for public notice.

Advocacy and Policy Committee Report

The Advocacy and Policy Committee focused on refining a resolution regarding federal agents' identification and successfully introduced it at a City Council meeting. They are working on establishing communication protocols for rapid response to legislative matters and developing a social media presence on Instagram to share the commission's work and advocate relevant issues. The committee also plans to recruit community members to enhance meeting robustness and engagement.

- Naima Ilmi described the committee's detailed work on the federal agent's resolution.
- Committee members attended City Council meetings to introduce and champion the resolution.
- Tasha Lomo contributed significantly to preparing speaking points and backend coordination.
- The committee plans to discuss social media management and legislative advocacy strategies.
- Adeeti Jindal highlighted efforts to recruit community members to join committee meetings.
- Naima Ilmi emphasized the importance of collective advocacy and communication structure.

Meeting Logistics and Hybrid Model Discussion

The commission discussed the logistics of hybrid meetings combining in-person and virtual participation. Legal counsel Robert Tobias clarified public notice requirements, emphasizing that both physical location and virtual login credentials must be included in notices for hybrid meetings. The commission explored options for recurring virtual meeting links to facilitate consistent access. Technical and procedural considerations for ensuring quorum and member participation, including camera use and roll call voting, were also addressed.

- Robert Tobias explained public notice requirements for hybrid meetings.
- Naima Ilmi and Lindora Howard-Diawara discussed posting virtual meeting links on the website for accessibility.
- Robert Tobias advised on using recurring meeting links to simplify public notices.
- Concerns about quorum and camera usage were raised to comply with virtual meeting policies.
- Robert Tobias suggested using unanimous consent motions to streamline voting procedures.
- The commission considered technology needs to ensure effective hybrid meeting interaction.

Community Events and Announcements

Commissioners shared upcoming community events and personal milestones. Notable announcements included a Women's Day event hosted by Council Member Lourdes and a caregiver's retreat focusing on support for caretakers, with an invitation extended to commission members to participate in a panel. Additionally, updates on the commission's website hosting and resource availability were provided. Plans for celebrating the commission's one-year anniversary were discussed, with a formal event anticipated in June.

- Sara announced the Women's Day event on March 26th and her upcoming book launch on April 30th.
- Naima Ilmi shared details about the caregiver's retreat on March 28th and invited panel participation.
- Lindora Howard-Diawara updated on the commission's minutes and information being posted on the City Council website.
- Cassandra Aguirre Ramirez mentioned the need to update virtual meeting links due to staff changes.

- Discussions about the commission's one-year celebration included suggestions for a potluck and timing considerations.
- Robert Tobias reminded everyone of Councilmember Lourdes' proposal to delay formal celebrations due to late budget passage and scheduling conflicts.

The Chair called for a motion to Adjourn the meeting @ 7:07. Dr. Alexander Sumo made the motion and Kassandra Aquirre Ramirez seconded the motion.