

Meeting Minutes

DATE: Wednesday, October 13, 2021

TIME: 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

LOCATION: Virtual Zoom Webinar

I. Call to Order | Approval of September 8, 2021 Minutes

- **Roll Call:**

Board

Ms. Mary Abad	–	Present
Ms. Melissa Floca	–	Absent
Mr. Andre Kwan	–	Absent
Mr. Mark Leo	–	Absent
Ms. Chandler Martin	–	Present
Ms. Hilda Mwangi	–	Present
Ms. Caroleen Williams	–	Present
Ms. Kenia Zamarripa	–	Present
Ms. Victoria Philips	–	Present
Mr. Brian D’Amico	–	Absent
Mr. William Roberston-Geibel	–	Present
Mr. Nathan Williams	–	Present
Mr. Dennis-Michael Broussard	–	Absent
Mr. Gustavo De La Fuente	–	Absent
Mr. Richard Bainter	–	Absent
Ms. Karen Higareda	–	Present

City Staff

Rita Fernandez, Executive Director	–	Absent
Sarah Moga-Alemany, Binational Affairs	–	Present
Farhat Popal, Immigrant Affairs Manager	–	Present

Guests

Shreya Sasaki, Jewish Family Service	–	Present
Donna Duvin, International Rescue Committee	–	Present
Nadine Toppozada, Catholic Charities Diocese of San Diego	–	Present

- **Approval of Minutes:** Caroleen Williams Motions to approve, Hilda Mwangi seconded. Chandler Martin abstained, William Robertson-Geibel abstained, the rest are in favor.

II. Public Comments

- a. Paul M: Anxious to hear what everyone has to say

III. Afghan Refugee Crisis Presentations – Shreya Sasaki, Donna Duvin, Nadine Topozada

- a. Shreya Sasaki, Jewish Family Services (JFSSD)
 - i. Been in the community for 100+ years,
 - ii. One of four refugee resettlement organizations in San Diego.
 - iii. Help refugees gain access to healthcare, housing, employment, etc.
 - iv. August 1st to last week, JFSSD has received 13 families or 95 individuals from Afghanistan.
 - v. Has started to receive people from the Afghan Placement Assistance Program (this is different from the special immigrant visa holders)

- b. Donna Duvin, International Rescue Committee (IRC)
 - i. Been in the community for 40 years
 - ii. One of four refugee resettlement organizations in San Diego.
 - iii. Began this work primarily after the fall of Saigon as people came into the US through camp Pendleton
 - iv. Help for immigrants through the early resettlement process and provides services to support them for a longer period of time.
 - v. They have had a full-on program on the ground in Afghanistan since 1988
 - vi. IRC was called upon with catholic charities to be very involved with the evacuation efforts.
 - vii. People coming through the military bases have been generally processed quickly. Those who were not processed quickly were made to remain on the base for 21 days or longer as they went through healthcare checks and vaccinations.
 - viii. We are now seeing people released from the military base and entering the community in greater numbers
 - ix. IRC has received over 50 individuals in September and are expecting another 50 this month and 180 in the following weeks.
 - x. 24-to-48-hour notice of arrivals. Right now, this often results in families being placed in temporary housing as they wait for more permanent housing to be available.
 - xi. Availability of permanent housing is very limited, and the process of multiple moves is very destabilizing to evacuees and can exacerbate preexisting trauma from their situation.

- c. Nadine Topozada, Catholic Charities Diocese of San Diego
 - i. Offer the standard resettlement programs
 - ii. Are in a very different situation than before the Trump administrations
 - iii. All resettlement offices were left with barebones operations to keep their doors open.

- iv. We have lost a lot of our infrastructure to accept the incoming Afghan people.
 - v. This has limited our ability to help them and is exasperating the usage of temporary housing as we look to place them in housing.
 - vi. CCDSO is the contractor with the State of California for this project and JFSSD and IRC are partners with CCDSO.
 - vii. Refugee arrivals receive their cash assistance through these agencies, but also need employment placement assistance to ensure they are not placed into poverty.
 - viii. There is no clarification on what the next step for Afghan parolees.
 - ix. There is a worry that the existing “at-capacity” caseloads of legal placement remedies for the parolees will limit their ability to find routes to assistance and citizenship.
 - x. CCDSO originally asked to place 200 families but has been asked to place more as there are not enough services to assist in family resettlement.
- d. Q&A Contact with Congressional Representatives: Congressional Representatives do have proactive communications with resettlement services, due to the limitation of benefits that were to be provided to Afghan refugees there was an emergency appropriation of funds to expand their benefits. But is still lacking proper assistance for the resettlement and adjustment of these refugees. Therefore, resettlement services are still in communication with congress and are trying to keep them apprised of the challenges they face. The largest challenge they face is housing. Private business has no financial reason to work with resettlement services and the families being placed have no credit history etc. it is a big leap of faith for these small property managers. Donna Duvin calls for the assistance of the County and the community to help place these refugees in housing and for small businesses to cooperate with the resettlement agencies.

There are some outstanding asks for the Federal Government including a path for citizenship for the parolees. There is also uncertainty over funding for these programs that were stripped to their bare bones under the previous administration.

- e. Q&A Cooperation with Tijuana Migrants: As far as Afghans are concerned there are some rumors that there are Afghans in Tijuana trying to figure out what to do, but that has not been confirmed. Catholic Charities does not operate in Tijuana. 14,800 migrants have come through their San Diego operations for COVID screening, and they assist those who are apprehended by CBP. JFSSD deals with migrants who come through the ports.
- f. Q&A How is the larger SD community reacting to the Afghan’s coming in and how can we avoid them falling into the same employment gaps as other immigrant populations: Quite a large number of the Afghan American community have formed organizations to provide support to Afghan families. The city is acting as a convener between these groups and resettlement organizations. On the workforce

front, the community has also been discussing how they support refugees in this field. The goal of the city is to create meaningful discussions and spaces for discussions between these organizations as they work to create employment opportunities. To do this thought the city will need more assistance.

- g. Q&A Are there any models out there of cities incentivizing what the resettlement agencies are asking of the community: JFSSD is working on piloting a formalized partnership with other organizations to create co-sponsorships for families with groups around the community outside of their case manager. This pilot will take place over the next 12 months.

They are not aware of models outside of San Diego. But there is the example of the migrant shelter created by the city and a proposal sent to the State to purchase a hotel and use that as shelter. This particular proposal was rejected as the hotel was used instead as a COVID-19 quarantine property. Hotels are expensive and the resettlement organizations rely on philanthropy to pay those bills for the refugees. They don't have adequate federal funding to use that funding for those bills as that funding is used elsewhere for the refugee's continued care. It is possible that reserving rooms under the county, State, or city could help alleviate this issue.

There is a moratorium on Afghan's arriving from October 1st until the 18th and so there is expected to be a surge in numbers shortly.

IV. Discussion Topics and Action Item: In-Person or IAB virtual meetings

- a. Bill Robertson-Geibel is in favor of delaying this decision until there are more people in attendance and feels that we should factor in the accessibility of these meetings to the public and does not see a rush to move toward in person meetings.
- b. Hilda Mwangi agrees with Bill and also feels that there would be an additional resource restraint on the city to facilitate hybrid meetings.
- c. Nathan Luke Williams feels that a return to an in-person meeting format leads to different conversations and interactions and feels that the IAB should meet in person at least once or at some stage.
- d. The final decision was to delay the vote until next month.

V. Discussion Topics and Action Item: Future IAB agendas and focus areas

- a.

VI. Chair's Report

VII. Board Member Updates and Announcements

- a. Mary Abad asked Sarah to circulate the points that Todd Gloria circulated at the start of his term about his focus on international affairs and his global vision.
- b. The executive committee may start providing a newsletter

VIII.Adjourn

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