

**PIERCE COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES
COMMISSION ON REFUGEE & IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS MEETING**

5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

October 2, 2023

Members: Alice Fong, Representing Pierce County Council District 6 – present
 Camila Maturana, Representing Pierce County Council District 5 - present
 Diana Bullen, Representing Pierce County Council District 2 - excused
 Erasmo Ruiz, Representing Pierce County Council District 3 - present
 George Conzuelo, Pierce County Council Representing Youth – present
 Gloria Rodriguez, Pierce County Council Representing District 1 – absent
 Jennifer Li Dotson, Pierce County Council Representing District 4 – present
 Thierry Ruboneka, At Large Member – excused

Guests: Njeri Waweru, Trish Crocker

Staff: Anika Moran, Special Advisor to the Director, Pierce County Human Services
 Becki Foutz, Administrative Assistant, Pierce County Human Services

MINUTES

TOPIC/ WHO	DISCUSSION	ACTION
Call to Order/Roll Call George Conzuelo	The meeting was called to order by Chair George Conzuelo at 5:10 p.m. Roll was called per above; a quorum was present. George provided an icebreaker activity.	Wel- come, all!
Approval of September Minutes George Conzuelo	Alice moved to approve the September minutes. Camila seconded. Vote was taken; none opposed.	The Sep- tember minutes were ap- proved.
Public Comment & Good of the Order George Conzuelo	Trish Crocker, Pierce County Human Services’ Grant Coordinator, announced that the Department of Commerce just released funding for counties for refugee stabilization, and Human Services is applying. Trish has lots of data on Ukrainian refugees. She asked anyone with data on other refugee populations to please share it with her. Anika and Trish will be putting together an RFP (Request for Proposals) and they will need input from Commission members for it, over the next month or so. People will also be needed to help review the applications when they come in.	Please send info to Trish at trish.crocker@pi ercecou ntywa.g ov by Thurs- day, 10/5.

TOPIC/WHO	DISCUSSION	ACTION
<p>Public Comment & Good of the Order George Conzuelo</p>	<p>George thanked Trish for this phenomenal news, and for including this Commission’s voice in the process. He’ll ping Thierry to see if he has any information on refugees. Camila asked if they need to be refugees designated as refugees by the State? No, it’s the loosest possible definition of refugee possible, including those seeking asylum, parolees, refugees, and those without documentation. Self-attestation is acceptable. Income documentation may be required. Those leaving areas with some sort of conflict will have preference, but that’s not required.</p> <p>George reported that there’s been an influx of Venezuelan refugees in the Latino community.</p> <p>What’s needed are numbers of refugee families/individuals in Pierce County or planning to come to Pierce County, if populations have grown recently, etc. If someone’s experiencing significant need, they can get assistance through this grant.</p> <p>Alice asked if Trish had a summary that she can share with others. Trish has a brief one that she shared with the Council:</p> <p><i>Commerce is requesting proposals from counties to rapidly deploy flexible funds to support and stabilize newly arriving refugees such as those from the 2021 Afghanistan conflict and the 2022 Ukraine-Russia conflict. PCHS will subcontract for the majority of this project to provide assistance to eligible households which could include, but is not limited to, paying for rent and housing needs, transportation, health care, food, employment barrier-removal, clothing, and other essential items or services that are deemed necessary to help stabilize eligible refugee individuals and families.</i></p> <p>We’ll request \$1M over two years. Trish requested data by Thursday, 10/5, however, she’d still like it after that date, to use when writing the RFP.</p> <p>Jennifer shared that community support’s being requested to support a Commission on Equity, proposed by Council Chair Mello. Jennifer shared an informative email with the group, as well as a template for members to complete and send to show their support of the proposal.</p> <p>Jennifer thanked Alice for being a featured presenter at the South Sound Philanthropy Summit. Alice brought the room to tears with her inspirational talk. The event brought multiple organizations together.</p> <p>Jennifer shared information for two organizations, in case the Commission would like to invite them to speak at a future meeting – Tacoma Refugee Choir, Advocates for Immigrants at Detention NW.</p>	<p>Njeri Waweru offered to help gather info on groups from east Africa.</p> <p>Alice volunteered to help with the RFP.</p> <p>Thank you, Jennifer!</p>

TOPIC/WHO	DISCUSSION	ACTION
<p>Public Comment & Good of the Order Continued</p>	<p>Njeri (pronounced Jerry) Waweru attended; she’s an immigrant from Kenya and has lived here in WA for 13 years now. She’s concerned with the plight of her community as well as some of the challenges that all immigrants experience. She aims to empower her community.</p>	<p>Thank you, Njeri! We’ll keep her in the loop.</p>
<p>E-Verify Follow-up & Information-Gathering Plan George Conzuelo</p>	<p>Anika suggested the Commission have a conversation about what they’d like to do with the information received at the E-Verify presentation at the last meeting. We may want to have additional speakers knowledgeable about E-Verify to come present their points of view. Chair Mello had asked the Commission for input about those having negative experiences due to E-Verify. George has some. Alice would like to hear an opposing side; that would better position the Commission to understand both sides of the issue.</p> <p>Anika said that we can bring in a speaker from the County, from either the Council or the Executive Team, who’s familiar with how the County uses E-Verify with Pierce County contracts.</p> <p>Camila asked if we know whether any other Counties have opted out of E-Verify? That might be a good starting point for us. Great question! Anika has seen some data – we will look into that. California might be the best bet to see if they have opted out.</p> <p>Do we want to have the County E-Verify speaker next? Erasmo and Camila said yes! Does the group want to invite them to the next scheduled meeting in November? Erasmo suggested asking the presenter approximately how long the presentation will be.</p> <p>Do we have any other questions to chew on? George feels that we should have an immigrant or refugee come speak about their experience with E-Verify as well. Alice would like to hear other opinions. She just looked at the Ordinance that Jennifer shared, and there were “tons of nos.” Alice believes that we each have our own thoughts and opinions about E-Verify. To fulfill our Mission, we need to get the immigrants’ point of view, even if it’s just a brief ten minutes or so. George agreed that it’s imperative to know about the system we’re working within. Erasmo also agreed.</p> <p>Other thoughts on E-Verify?</p>	<p>Anika will find a County rep to come speak about E-Verify.</p> <p>Anika will look into E-Verify data re: counties opting out.</p>

TOPIC/WHO	DISCUSSION	ACTION
Gloria	Gloria reached out to staff last week about an issue she was considering bringing to the Commission.	Erasmo will reach out to Gloria.
Scheduling George Conzuelo	<p><u>Guest speakers</u> Hoping to have the County speaker re: E-Verify in November.</p> <p><u>Awareness calendar</u> George will work on the Awareness Calendar and share it with the group.</p> <p><u>Finish Vision statement</u> At the next meeting Diana will help the group to finalize the Vision statement. It would be nice to be here in person to work on that.</p>	<p>George will work on the Awareness Calendar and share it with the group.</p> <p>Please come in person next month if possible! Potluck!</p>
Any Other Items?	Camila asked about an event that Gloria mentioned two meetings ago, at which the Commission could potentially host a table. Camila offered to staff the table, and she needs details about the event.	George will follow up with Gloria.

TOPIC/WHO	DISCUSSION	ACTION
Appreciation & Adjourn	George expressed appreciation to Jennifer for her input and attending tonight. He appreciates everyone for being here; he understands that everyone's busy. Alice appreciates George's leadership and Camila's questions and participation. Thanks to Erasmo for coming, even with a headache! Camila thanked George and Erasmo for coming despite outside issues, and thanked Alice for her input and perspective. Erasmo appreciates everyone, especially all the diverse perspectives around the table. The variety of perspectives and experiences is what makes this Commission strong. Anika thanked everyone for this meeting and thanked the Commission in advance for their interest in the Commerce RFP and funding. Thanks to all and especially Anika for attending in on her day off! Shall we have a potluck in November? Yes!!	Thanks to all – you are appreciated!

The next CRIA meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 6 at 5:00 in the SV Muckleshoot Conference Room. The meeting will be in person, and we'll have a potluck!

Respectfully submitted,

Becki Foutz
Administrative Assistant