



MINUTES
Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (OCAPIA)
Wednesday, July 17, 2013
10 AM - 12 PM
800 NE Oregon St., Room 1A, Portland, OR 97232

ATTENDEES:

Chair: Stephen Ying
Vice Chair: Mari Watanabe
Commissioners: Jennifer Kleskie (phone), Joseph Santos-Lyons (phone), Mahendra Shah
Absent: Ping Khaw-Sutherland, Michelle Vlach-Ing
Guests: Clifford Walker; Frank Garcia, Jenny Lee Berry and Rey Goicochea, Governor's Office; Chhabi Koirala, IRCO
Staff: Nancy Kramer

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:10AM.

II. Roll Call

Roll call was taken. Quorum was established part-way through the meeting.

III. Approval of May 15, 2013 Minutes

MOTION (Ying/Shah): To approve the minutes of May 15, 2013. CARRIED.

IV. Report of Administrator

Nancy reported that Lucy Baker was working with Van Truong, the English as a Second language Director for Portland Public Schools (PPS), to draft a letter from the OCAPIA in support of PPS establishing a dual immersion language track for Vietnamese. Commissioner Santos-Lyons asked that this letter be completed by the end of July.

Nancy gave an update on the OACO work study student position and asked the Commissioners to consider: On which projects would they like a student to focus? The student will work from September to June.

V. Committee Reports

Chair Ying said Oregon hosted a Chinese Business delegation in June for the 3rd year. China is interested in the Oregon labor force and has created approximately 400 jobs in southern Oregon.

Vice Chair Watanabe noted there is a new Japanese Consul General in Portland who was introduced at the Asian Pacific American Chamber of Commerce's annual event at the Lan Su Chinese Garden. He is looking at how to improve the relationship between the United State and Japan.

She also noted that Travel Portland is hiring a new Community Outreach Director. Vice Chair Watanabe will coordinate a meeting between this person and key members of the Asian community. OCAPIA would like Travel Portland to be sure to include the Asian community in the next Travel Portland survey.

Commissioner Shah attended Beaverton's annual recognition of citizens and nonprofits and noted that all the honorees were from the dominant culture. He had hoped to see represented diverse recipients inclusive of leaders from Beaverton's ethnic, racial and cultural groups. Chair Ying agreed to meet with Mayor Doyle about it. Beaverton is approximately 20% minority population and markets itself as the most diverse city in the state. Jenny Lee Berry, Deputy Director of the Governor's Office of Diversity and Inclusion noted that Frank Garcia has met with Mayor Doyle and the city's Human Resources department. OCAPIA would like to invite Mayor Doyle to a future commission meeting.

VI. Old Business

In appreciation for the presenters' busy schedules, Chair Ying invited Chhabi Koirala and Frank Garcia to make their reports next under Old Business.

A. Immigrant and Refugee Issues – Chhabi Koirala

Chhabi Koirala introduced himself to the Commission. He is a refugee from Bhutan, who arrived in the United States in 2008. He has worked as a Job Coach at Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) since then. He is the newly elected President of the Association of Bhutanese Community in Oregon (ABCO). Mr. Koirala thanked the OCAPIA for inviting him.

He described the experience of Bhutanese refugees living in refugee camps, sometimes for decades, without jobs, which presents a problem when applying for employment. The refugees who come to the United States are faced with many challenges: learning English, chronic depression, untreated mental health issues, culture shock and high unemployment, among others. They are compelled to work entry-level jobs and are often dependent on public assistance. IRCO offers employment training but this lasts for only 8 months, which is not considered to be enough by the Bhutanese. Despite these hardships they still find the U.S. to be full of opportunity.

The Commissioners asked questions about the number and ages of the Bhutanese population in Oregon and how much training time would be suitable. Mr. Koirala replied that the total Bhutanese population is about 2,000, they are all ages, mostly families of two or three people. He added that they are the newest population both in Portland and in the U.S. After some discussion it was agreed that 18 months of training would be a great improvement.

The Commissioners asked how they can help the Bhutanese community. Mr. Koirala said free space for English classes is a need, and they are specifically looking for a location in SE Portland, close-in. English classes are crucial to a refugee's success. Currently there are 50 students on the east side and 25 in Beaverton, with more coming. Finding a job without good English is a challenge.

Vice Chair Watanabe mentioned an organization in Portland called [PHC](#) (Portland Habilitation Center), which employs people with disabilities to do simple repetitive tasks, as a model to consider regarding employment. She explained that the jobs, such as envelope stuffing and janitorial work, may not require much English. PHC has government contracts.

Commissioner Shah also suggested two organizations as resources for Mr. Koirala to contact: [MESO](#) (Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon) and FACE, which is a program of MESO.

B. Frank Garcia – Director, Governor's Office of Diversity & Inclusion

Mr. Garcia reported that the Office of Diversity and Inclusion will be crisscrossing the state hearing from Oregonians and people of color about the issues they are facing. Oregon is historically largely homogenous, but in the last decade there has been a huge increase in the population of people of color moving from outlier to mainstream. He stressed the importance of leveraging individual gifts and talents to make Oregon a better home for all.

The Office of Diversity & Inclusion just released [the state's newest Affirmative Action report](#). The number of people of color working for the state of Oregon has increased by 2% in 2 years. Mr. Garcia said that retention of people of color has been an issue in Oregon. He used his own department as an example of successfully hiring and retaining people of color who are Oregonians.

Other recent successes include passage of the Driver License bill and Cultural Competency bill. Some of these bills have been in the works for over a decade.

Mr. Garcia asked the OCAPIA to ask the API community what are the most important issues they are facing, as a way of formulating the next round of bills to support for the 2015 session.

The Commissioners thanked him for his report.

C. OCAPIA Strategic Goals

Following discussion, the Commissioners agreed a work session is needed to prepare goals and objectives for their strategic plan and also around hosting a civic engagement session.

Commissioner Santos-Lyons noted that his organization, APANO, is hiring an education organizer later in July, and this person could be on the OCAPIA civic engagement committee.

Vice Chair Watanabe and Commissioner Shah will focus on the Education strategic goal.

Frank Garcia encouraged the Commissioners to continue to support voter registration and voter participation as part of their civic engagement goal. Commissioner Santos-Lyons suggested co-sponsoring a legislative day and developing a leadership training or democracy training for schools.

D. API Cultural Awareness workshop

Commissioner Khaw-Sutherland and Vice Chair Watanabe briefed the Commissioners on the workshop they conducted June 20th and 21st for the Portland Business Alliance. Participants included Human Resources personnel and community engagement organizers. More than one organization inquired if the class would be accredited and qualify for Continuing Learning Education (CLE) credits. They plan to present it again next year in June with the hopes of it becoming an annual event. The University of Oregon donated the space which was appreciated; however, because it is donated they will only commit to bookings within six months or less of the event date.

Commissioner Santos-Lyons congratulated them and commented that he heard a lot of positive feedback from participants.

VII. New Business

Commissioner Santos-Lyons said he was approached by the Governor's Office to be the OCAPIA representative for the Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF). He explained that the OCAPIA has a statutory seat on the EJTF and he is willing to serve. The OCAPIA needs to make a formal appointment.

Mila Prakash and racial incident in Scappoose, Oregon: The Commissioners approved letters to Ms. Prakash and Mayor Burge of Scappoose, offering OCAPIA's support. Commissioner Kleskie will also reach out to Ms. Prakash.

It was noted that former Washington state legislator Kip Tokuda died. The OCAPIA would like to have everyone sign a card and send it. White House Cabinet member and White House Initiative on Asian and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI) Chris Lu resigned.

APANO will invite California Congressman Mark Takano to Portland on September 5th for a community reception.

Vice Chair Watanabe said that Leadership Portland, a program of the Portland Business Alliance is offering a 4 hour board training, to Partners In Diversity alumni and OCAPIA Commissioners. The leadership development class offers training so

that participants are prepared to do public service, sit on an advisory board or run for office. Upon completing the class, the participant will be able to write their entry in the voter's pamphlet.

VIII. Public Comment

Clifford Walker introduced himself as a representative of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). He asked the Commissioners to consider writing a letter in support of the NAACP's position on the Trayvon Martin. He requested that the letter be addressed to the national and local NAACP. Nancy will research the position and send it to the OCAPIA.

MOTION (Ying/Shah): OCAPIA to support NAACP position on Trayvon Martin and call for a federal investigation. CARRIED.

Mr. Walker again made comments regarding his removal from the OCBA.

IX. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:37am.