



"Our Strength is in Our Diversity"

Benjamin T. Opara, Chair
Rev. Cecilio Hernández
Maria Cunha
Robert Gignac
Way Sai Kyi
Kate Lessard
Donna McIntosh
Elinor Mondale
Vesna Nuon
Joseph Varnie

Lowell Immigration Assistance Commission

Meeting Minutes

March 4, 2013

Present: Rev. Cecilio Hernandez, Chair; Kate Lessard; Elinor Mondale; Ben T. Opara; Joseph Varnie; Way Sai Tyi.

Also attending were Mayor Patrick Murphy and City Manager Bernard Lynch.

Absent for known reasons: Maria Cunha (family), Robert Gignac (health), Donna McIntosh (family).

Rev. Hernandez called the meeting to order and turned to the City Manager for the first order of business. Mr. Lynch announced that the Rev. Cecilio had done an excellent job as chair of the Commission, but wished to submit his resignation.

Mr. Lynch then announced that he was appointing Ben Opara as the new chair.

The floor was then opened for discussion of future directions for the Commission.

It was generally agreed that the survey results had shown that housing was generally a problem for immigrants. Mayor Murphy suggested that the Commission members need to be more familiar with the Master Plan. Mr. Lynch said he will arrange for a representative of the Department of Planning and Development to come to the next meeting to explain the Master Plan for the City including housing.

The idea of small focus groups to determine the needs of various immigrant groups was also discussed.

Other problems cited were the language and attitude problems for immigrants in dealing with the Department of Transition Assistance. Although this is not a city department, it was agreed that it should be looked at in the future.



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Mr. Lynch said that the Commission should have at least two more members and he is hoping for the addition of members from Southeast Asia and Iraq. It was suggested that it might be a good idea to invite Derek Mitchell, the Director of the International Institute, to speak to the Commission in the future and to consult in suggesting new members.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30.

Next meeting: Monday April 8, 5:30 p.m. @ same venue.

Respectfully submitted,

Elinor Mondale