

Mayor's International Affairs Advisory Commission
Meeting Minutes August 20, 2021

Location: Zoom Meeting Recorded

Time: 11:00 – 1:22 p.m.

Present: Dr. Nkongolo Kalala, Diana Queen, Dr. Christel Broady, Rosa Martin, Dr. Huajing Maske, Innocent Akwa, Adrian Wallace, Deborah Alexander, Kaizar Mahuwala, Dr. Basal Touchan, Isabel Taylor, CM Liz Sheehan, CM Jennifer Reynolds, Karen Slaymaker, Melissa McCartt-Smyth, Dr. Iddah Otieno, Dr. Fabrizio Tirelli, Charles Baesler, David Carpenter

Guest: Buck Ryan, UK, Debra Alexander, Jerry Clark, International Immigration Investments, Angene Wilson, Steve Rogers, WTVQ news, Eli O'Neal, Branson Gillespie, Transy student, Julie Brock, UK student.

Agenda items

Call to order: Recording begins

Roll Call: Commissioners present for quorum

Welcome and Introduction of Guests: Brief Welcome w/brief introductions

Approval of May 21, 2021 Minutes: Motion to approve by Dr. Broady, 2nd moved by Dr. Maske, unanimous approval.

Previous Business

Welcome and introduction of new Commissioners: Kaizar Mahuwala, Dr. Iddah Otieno, Fabrizio Tirelli, and Rosa Martin

Co-Chair Remarks: Diana Queen announced that this would be her last meeting as Co-chair for MIAAC, she served for six years. She runs The Kentucky Center for Restorative Justice and has also accepted a Deputy Inspector General position at the Finance and Administration Cabinet.

Dr. Nkongolo Kalala wished Diana well and expressed his appreciation serving with her.

MIAAC Orientation and Training

Diana Queen and Dr. Nkongolo are working on Training for Commissioner's orientation/training. They hope is to be ready by January 2022.

Commissioner Queen mentioned the Economic Recovery Grant Program. An application portal opened July 27th, Commerce Lex manages the access to small business loans and finances based on payroll benchmarks; payback sliding scale based on performance. Isabel Taylor concerned about the urgency of the funding and asked Commissioners to spread the word. She met with seven Hispanic company owners last night that did not know about the available funding (Grants not loans).

Committee reports

Outreach: Dr. Maske and Adrian Wallace: Dr. Maske on specific plan for Ambassador plan, goal to build on current community festivals to bring all together. Ideas - New ambassadors could help

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organize and recruitment different age groups. Provide/rotate with different cultures open to the public. Commissioner Wallace would like hard deadlines for the Ambassador program so that recruitment and trainings could begin. Mr. Mahuwala suggested the Diversity Festival by connecting with International festivals to establish better inclusion. Basel Touchan suggested connections with festivals w/ Eastern Orthodox Church. Isabel Taylor suggests Heather Lyons and someone from Parks; Rosa Martin and CM Reynolds thanked Committee and expressed her excitement re: Ambassadors program; she mentioned the 2019 Diverse City International festival; same idea of supporting diverse cultures. Possible collaboration for future festival. Dr. Maske mentioned her awareness of that 2019 Festival; and suggest using it as a model or base moving forward; would like to collaborate with UK. David Carpenter suggested a world fair. Dr. Broady moved to approve Outreach committees report on Ambassador initiatives/training; Kaizar Mahuwala 2nded, no discussion so approved.

Immigration Issues: Marilyn Daniel and Charles Baesler: Marilyn Daniel mentioned DACA program's uncertainty and a Texas Federal court decision on 7/16/21. Additional Temporary Protective Status changes re: Haiti, Burma, Venezuela and Syria. Asking Commissioners to disseminate the information. Biggest change that will affect the Lexington practice of Immigration Law is the closing of Louisville court (2019) that has been moved to Memphis, TN.

Charles Baesler mentioned Afghanistan issues re Visa processing and consulates issues many have been shut down and re-opened; now prioritizing international students, medical etc. Basel Touchan asked if Mayor was on record welcoming refugees publicly. Isabel Taylor confirmed that the Mayor is on record as is the state of KY. A general welcome to refugees under Trump Administration that is not specific to any group.

Marilyn Daniel announced the CDC has extended the eviction moratorium to Oct. 3 and thereafter expects a crisis. How is this impacting immigrants and where is the data? Marilyn Daniel suggested an Ad Hoc group to study the issues.

Immigration Committee has four new members: Sharon Marcum, Immigration Attorney at Neighbors Immigration Clinic. Lea Ingram, Immigration Attorney with Maxwell Street Legal Clinic, Art Crosby, Fair Housing Council Executive Director, and Shannon Church, Immigration Law (private practice). Fourteen (14) current members.

Isabel Taylor reported that the Housing Stabilization Program (COVID funding) at Community Action Council provides support in eviction court and with property owners to assist immigrants in the process. Discussion ensued on rental assistance and list of resources and language assistance. New Division will be opening. Discussion ensued.

Marilyn Daniels suggested that the Commissioners' role would be to disseminate information to assist immigrants. Global Lex refers immigrant communities to local resources that provide language assistance if needed. Dr. Kalala and Diana Queen will do some research as well.

Emergencies and Public Health: Innocent Akwa: No report. Akwa made brief comments on pandemic. Akwa made appeal for new members; currently has three (3) members.

Global Lex: Isabel Taylor introduced Eli O'Neal, the Global Lex AmeriCorps Vista and the summer student intern Zee, who is working on sub grantees of LFUCG's federal funding to compile a resource list

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and language assistance services. No programming at Global Lex at this time due to Delta Variant; will explore virtual programming this year.

Isabel also mentioned the LFUCG ARPA survey/proposals from Mayor and Council to spend 120 million dollars (Covid-19 Recovery) from ARPA; three documents have been translated into seven (7) languages Swahili, Mandarin, Spanish, Napoli, French, Arabic, Japanese on Global Lex in order to elicit immigrant responses to the survey on community needs and proposals on meeting those needs.

International Business Workforce Development: Diana Queen reported that this committee has been inactive for all of 2021. Requested suggestions for next best steps for this committee to re-engage it.

David Carpenter next steps: worked with Japanese to engage international community and prepare refugees for work force. Language classes and other workforce development behind the scenes, willing to help someone else take the lead on this committee. Diana Queen asked is there interest from at least five (5) Commissioners to serve or leave it inactive.

Isabel Taylor suggested that targeting trainings around careers help immigrants learn quicker. Karen Slaymaker reported that one year of training is required for International students and need company sponsors. Marilyn Daniels suggested MIAAC focus on immigrant employment and small businesses support by compiling list of immigrant small businesses. Discussion ensued

Dr. Kalala agrees to recruit commissioners from interested members until January 2022; 3 members interested so far. Charles Baesler mentioned that focus of committee on small businesses is important.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by A. Wallace, 2nded by I. Akwa