

GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNSEL ON REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS (GACRI)

MEMBERS MEETING

May 31, 2017

MINUTES

Attendants:

GACRI Members: Jeffrey Goldman (Chair), Marjean Perhot, Eva Milona, Cynthia Mark, Albion Calaj, Ajit Nagral.

ORI/EOHHS staff: Falah Hashem, Robert Jones.

The meeting was called to order at 1:10pm

Items Discussed:

1. Welcome and Introductions

GACRI Chair Jeff Goldman welcomed the members and Executive Office of Health and Human Services Representative. Jeff then summarized the agenda and goals for today's meeting.

2. ORI Updated

ORI Chief of Staff Hashem updated the council on the following:

a. Financial Literacy for Newcomers Project

ORI had received funding from Peoples United Bank to support its financial literacy program. ORI continues to meet with other partners to seeking out additional funding for the financial literacy project.

b. Fall Gala

Governor's office is taking the lead in planning for the fall event. The proceeds from the Gala will be benefiting ORI's Financial Literacy for Newcomers Project. David Ortiz will be the honoree for the Gala. The Gala is scheduled for November 9th, but the venue is not yet determined.

Falah answered Gala-related questions from GACRI Chair and members in regards to ORI's role in planning for the event and the reason behind ORI focusing on Financial Literacy for Newcomers Project rather than expanding that to other objectives. Falah explained that Governor's Office is leading the planning efforts now along with planning committee that includes representatives from Conventures, Eastern Bank and Serge. Although ORI is no longer directly involved in planning the event, but proceeds will be benefiting the Financial Literacy Project. In addition to celebrating the contribution of immigrants in our Commonwealth, the scope of the event has expanded. Falah suggested that GACRI contact Governor's Office if they need

additional information. The reason behind focusing on Financial Literacy is to address gap in service and bridging this gap can be very useful to the newcomer populations. In addition, Executive Director Truong believes that focusing on one project at a time is the best way for ORI to achieve its strategic goals

Falah answered Marjean Perhot's question in regards to providing grants to organizations to provide financial literacy services. ORI is planning to directly administer the project, but the decision of procuring out the service will depend on the amount of funding received and the qualifications of each applicant.

Falah also answered Eva Millona's question about fundraising amount target. There isn't a set amount, but ORI is hopeful to collect enough funds to run services in many areas of the state.

c. Budget

Although the proposed Presidential budget FFY18 shows reduction in funding for refugee programs, but ORI is hoping that their office will not suffer a large loss this year.

Funding from the state for SFY18 is promising; senate budget includes an additional \$100,000 to support Citizenship for New Americans Program. This increase in funding is not finalized at this point. Employment Support Services earmarked \$1 M in state funding through interdepartmental service agreement with Department of Transitional Assistance. ORI is planning expand employment support services to additional geographic areas of the commonwealth.

d. 2016 Annual Report and Community Partners Directory

ORI 2016 Annual Report is finalized and will be posted on ORI website. ORI 2016 Community Partners Directory is updated and now available in print copies and also on ORI website. Falah also shared with GACRI members the updated number of arrivals for FYY17.

Marjean then brought up the New York Times article that discussed and increase in arrivals over the originally approved 50,000 and asked Falah to comment on the topic. Falah explained, according to national partners the 50,000 mark maybe reached by June 30th. it is unclear at this point if arrival numbers exceed this limit by close of FYY17.

Marjean then asked if ORR would be increasing resources to meet this predicted increase in arrivals. She expressed her concern that MA will be slammed with a large group of arrivals all at one time and that MA might experience a housing crisis. She asked if ORR would be able to meet their obligations. Falah stated that he assumed that ORR will have some additional funds that they will prioritize to meet these needs.

3. Celebrating World Refugee Day Updates

Jeff pointed out that ORI had some service providers that were planning events to celebrate World Refugee Day.

Marjean talked about Catholic Charities event that was scheduled and urged members of the council to share this event with others. She explained that registration was open. The event is geared towards the community with a theme; “Is accepting refugees still an American value?” The event will close with a call to advocacy. Cynthia and Eva asked for flyers and a link to the registration so they share with their network.

Jeff then asked Eva to update the council on the calendar. Eva explained that she had been sending out weekly updates but expressed a concern that some people were having trouble receiving the emails. The council decided that Eva will now be forwarding the e-mail updates to everyone on the council. She also reminded the council of the MIRA gala that was occurring the following evening.

4. Other issues/topics:

Jeff stated that previously the council has discussed the opportunity of celebrating refugees and immigrants in June to be presented to the Governor. The council formed a group of 4 members to put some suggestions together for how the Governor could use this opportunity. The secretary’s office expressed an interest but suggested that while the Governor was very supportive of this idea his schedule would not allow him to make any sort of personal appearances. Jeff then explained that the group suggested the possibility of a press conference to announce all of the events. Unfortunately this press conference did not happen.

Albion asked why the press conference never happened. Jeff deferred to Eva to answer this question. Eva explained that there needed to be something concrete to announce, and that the Governor’s office wanted more time to figure out what to do, how to do it, etc. She suggested that their office did not want to have a press conference just to have a press conference. Jeff added that Secretary Sudders felt that a press conference right now might be unnecessary considering the large event coming up in the fall. Jeff also took a moment to highlight that GACRI is an advisory council rather than a group that is responsible for planning and implementing events. He stated that the council did provide advice to the Governor on the topic and that the Governor’s office decided that they need more time.

Jeff expressed that the November 9th event is coming up soon and that the council needed to use the next month or so to come up with ideas for this event. Eva then emphasized the importance of messaging for this event. She stated that it was an opportunity to highlight foreign born individuals as beneficial to the commonwealth.

Jeff then expressed his interest in advising the Governor that there is a lot of private funding, that if supported by the state could really be reached through this event. He suggested the idea of private/public fund matching. He also emphasized that the time to act is now. He stated that the thought of immigrants and refugees in the face of everyone in the

commonwealth. He stated that we are a state of action, the governor is a man of action, and it is time to act.

Eva suggested to Jeff that maybe he announce this as a GAC recommendation. She suggested that the Governor has talked about a private and public partnership and that maybe the GAC would want to recommend something concrete like this. She said that this might be an opportunity to help make up the loss in federal funding.

Marjean then asked if other states have done something like this. Eva then began discussing the importance of integration. Ajit asked Eva to clarify what she meant by integration. Eva replied stating that there are several types of integration that are important. She explained that civil integration can take the form of naturalization, linguistic integration arises through ESL classes, economic integration can happen through entrepreneurship and licensing and finally social integration can happen through the bringing together of native and foreign born people. She said that within that you could create a legal service as well for those who need to be represented.

Marjean then stated that there are 4000 people that are in need of services in the next 4 months especially with the 6 month extension for Haitian arrivals. She asked if the term integration was too broad, and asked if the council thought that people would donate to "integration." Eva replied and explained that if fundraising is framed by the needs of immigrants and refugees, people probably won't respond to that, but if you frame fundraising with foreign born individuals as an asset to the commonwealth and America, then people will donate.

Ajit also emphasized the importance of and need for entrepreneurial mentorship for the refugees that are entrepreneurs.

Cynthia then expressed that while lots of ideas regarding fundraising efforts had been discussed, the council has to decide what the next steps are. She stated that the gala could be a great opportunity to raise funds and get private donors to offset some costs. She wanted to focus on the messaging for the Gala. She raised the issue of "What are people donating to?" Jeff agreed and stated that the council needed to start focusing on this topic now. Jeff expressed his desire to figure out a way to move on with the planning of the Gala before the summer. Eva reminded the council of the great opportunity presented by the presence of David Ortiz at the gala.

Jeff then addressed the council and asked if anyone disagreed with suggesting a public/private partnership to the Governor. Eva answered in support stating that it is something that the Mayor does every year and that it is the type of fundraising that the business community would be drawn to. Cynthia also answered in agreement stating that economic integration can include financial literacy and this theme could attract the right donors.

Albion then pointed out the importance of having target donors. He suggested providing the governor with a list of specific donors that the council wishes to target on the private side. He

also highlighted the importance of breaking down the use of funds. He pointed out that donors want to know how their money is being used. Eva agreed and suggested putting a service next to a dollar amount to show donors how their money can be used.

Marjean then asked if the council was sure that the Governor's office was even open/receptive to this idea of a private/public partnership, to which Jeff said no, we do not know if his office will be amenable to this sort of partnership.

Marjean then asked what the goal of the fundraising was. She asked if the fundraising was only for financial literacy. Jeff stated yes and he also felt that the gala was an opportunity that the council should not miss. He also has other opinions on the topic which he could talk to Governor's office.

Robert then spoke, and suggested that he did not think that the council should move forward without discussion with Secretary Sudders and Director Truong. Jeff replied stating that he had told Director Truong as well as the governor and his staff previously that there might be a conflict between ORI and the council. Jeff expressed his concern that ORI feels that its office is funded for one purpose only and generally has a hard time getting behind anything that does not benefit the ORI. Falah disagreed about the idea that the council and ORI were in conflict, but rather they are separate entities in alignment. ORI felt that the immediate need at the initial planning phase of the gala was financial literacy. Director Truong believes that it might be best is to focus on one issue at a time.

Albion then suggested that one issue at a time might not be the best route. He suggested that there might not be an opportunity like the gala again where there will be access these donors.

Cynthia then stated that she thinks that the council needs to hear from the Governor's office regarding the Gala. She feels that the council should reach out and ask how they can help and then provide ideas in turn.

Jeff then suggested that he reach out to Secretary Sudders as well as Director Truong. He intended to reach out and ask for an update on the Gala and ask how the council could be helpful.

Jeff asked members about GACRI meeting schedule. He proposed quarterly meetings. After some discussion by the council, the present members agreed to change from monthly meetings to quarterly meetings.

Marjean asked Jeff if there is any interest in asking the Governor to weigh in on the "Haitian TPS issue". She said that they did not believe that the Governor had written a letter on the topic yet, but that January was coming soon and if there is not an extension then the commonwealth may lose a large chunk of its workforce particular in health care and home health aides. Eva agreed and reminded the council of the letter that the governor sent to Secretary Kelly on the broader workforce issue. Jeff agreed stating that the issue was appropriate and definitely worth speaking to the Governor about.

Meeting Adjourned at 2:20pm