

Washington County Sheriff's Office Latino Advisory Commission
September 1, 2021
Meeting Minutes

Commission Members Present: Olga Acuña, Maria Caballero-Rubio, Pat Garrett, Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Joann Hoffman, Ricardo Moreno, Mark Shah, Pablo Valenzuela

Commission Members Absent: Fernando Lira, Daniel Guzman-Catarina, Fernanda Pantoja

Moderating: Brandon Lee, Training for Transformation (T4T)

Via Zoom

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Garrett called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

Introductions

Approval Meeting Minutes

The members present constituted a quorum. Commissioner Valenzuela made a motion to the approve the August 4, 2021 minutes. Commissioner Caballero-Rubio seconded and the minutes were approved.

Public Comment

No public comments

Commissioner Member Updates

Co-Chair Acuña informed the commission that Juan Carlos Gonzalez would be resigning from the LAC. Juan Carlos will be joining us at 5 PM this evening and this will be his last meeting.

Hispanic Heritage Month Recognition

Co-Chair Garrett recognized this as Hispanic Heritage month. The celebration runs from September 15 – October 15. Co-Chair Garrett also shared the history of the Virginia Garcia Clinic and the young Virginia Garcia whose loss of life prompted the creation of the clinic. Commissioner Caballero-Rubio added details and context about how the Virginia Garcia organization serves many diverse communities.

Real Life, Real Talk, Real Change

Mr. Lee had asked us to review the “Real Life, Real Talk, Real Change Final Report & Recommendations from Listening Sessions” T4T had completed in July 2020 for Washington County.

Co-Chair Garrett commented on two quotes from the report, “It’s difficult to advance equity when government policies are set up to only provide equality” and “it doesn’t look like a bright future since the change is slow, but management all think they are making changes in leaps and bounds”. These statements caused Co-Chair Garrett to slow his thinking and reflect on sentiments of our staff and to slow down our assessment.

Co-Chair Acuña said for years, as an educator and city councilwoman, that management says “we’ve come so far”, but she still sees the disparities in the minorities of our community. Things like affordable housing and the school to prison pipeline. She recognizes that she is also responsible for change, but she is still only one person. People are still afraid of people speaking out for fear of losing their jobs. She says they shouldn’t be afraid of “interrupting” when they see incidences that are unfair.

Commissioner Moreno saw a very direct connection between the findings of the report and the areas we should be focusing on in our group. Training and Hiring specifically. He says people want to do the right thing but they don’t know how to do the right thing appropriately.

Commissioner Valenzuela feels it is important we are getting this information and knows that people don’t feel comfortable speaking up unless they are invited to do so. He cited the quote “I sometimes have feelings of isolation like I am on an island by myself.”

Mr. Lee said this was an unprecedented effort to gain these perspectives and make them public. Where can the LAC be supportive as we prioritize our discussion topics?

Commission Purpose, Outcome & Process (P.O.P.) Review

Co-Chair Acuña invited the Commission to discuss basic questions about the Commission’s POP, to include *who we are, what is our mission, where do we want to go and how do we get there?* Co-Chair Acuña suggested that we revisit the P.O.P. (Purpose, Outcome & Process) once a year to measure our progress. She posed the questions:

Who are we in relation to the community that we serve?

Where do we stand?

Where do we want to go and how do we get there?

Co-Chair Garret said one of the items we accomplished this year was the Body Worn (BWC) policy. It was because of the input from this commission that the Sheriff’s Office (SO) refined the policy and the importance of proper BWC usage was reinforced. We have a partnership, and the LAC holds the SO accountable.

Commissioner Caballero-Rubio asked what do we mean by being a partner? Is the LAC and SO on equal footing?

Commissioner Moreno would like to add the word “advisory” to the Outcome part of the P.O.P.

Commissioner Valenzuela suggested that the term “service delivery” should be changed to “improve safety” in P.O.P.

Mr. Lee asked who reviews the Sheriff's Office communications that goes out to the Latino community? Is the LAC an option for that?

Equity Lens and what does that mean?

Mr. Lee started this discussion with the following suggestions for using an equity lens:

- Set of questions to guide decision making
- Forces us to consider the impact of our decision on people who are historically disenfranchised.
- Forces us to evaluate how are ware making decision

We must start by acknowledging what privileges we each bring into the space.

Commissioner Caballero-Rubio stated when we begin to use an equity lens, it becomes part of common practice and you don't have to think about it.

Sheriff's Office Updates

The Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS) was awarded a \$4 million grant from HHS to improve health and literacy among non-English speaking communities in Washington County – primarily the Spanish speaking community. The grant allows the WCCLS to purchase books in Spanish for Washington County's Jail, Harkins House (Juvenile Facility) and Community Corrections Center.

In February 2021 the Sheriff's office started posting onto the County's Facebook page called "Condado de Washington". Since then, the Sheriff's Office has posted a variety of messages in Spanish to include, safety information, invitations to community events both in-person and virtual, and recruitment.

Some of our mid-level leaders have started one-on-one equity coaching with T4T. They are meeting every other week until the end of the year.

Prioritization of Discussion Topics

At our last meeting we promised to send out a list of discussion topics to the LAC Commission members, asking them to prioritize what is most important to them. This list was the result of that inquiry:

1. Use of Force
2. WCSO training
3. STOP Data
4. Who's in jail
5. Hiring practices
6. Drug arrests

Next steps and closing

Commissioner Gonzalez said he had spoken earlier with Commissioners Garrett and Acuña about leaving the commission. He greatly appreciates the opportunity to work with this group but feels the need to open up his space to allow another leader to take his place. Commissioners and Mr. Lee expressed their heartfelt gratitude for Commissioner Gonzalez's service.

Co-Chairs, secretary and Mr. Lee will meet to prepare the agenda for our next meeting. We will discuss Juan Carlos' replacement. Commissioner Acuña solicited interest among the Latino Policy Council and members have until Friday to respond.

Meeting adjourned at 5:26 PM