

Immigrant Advisory Committee

2160 Spruce Street – June 22, 2006

Minutes

Members Present:

Amin Gheysar
Nabil Karkamaz
Eduardo Lopez
Christian Matthes
Beate Seelig
Cristina (Cris) Silva

Staff Present:

Carmen Atilano
Richard Johnson

Guests

Liz Abbott
Ghada Elturk
Karen Rahn

I. Review of May 31 Meeting

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting.

II. Library Services

Liz Abbott, Director of the Boulder Public Library, and Ghada Elturk, Outreach Librarian, provided the Committee with an overview of Library services. The following points were made:

- Mission: free and equal access to information for all community members.
- Goal: literate and informed community where everyone has access to the information they need.
- Confidentiality a strong value of the Library, and also part of the Colorado State library law
- If library users are not able to provide the required picture ID at the time of their visit to the library, they may be issued a courtesy card or can work with Ghada Elturk for other options.
- Of the non-English collection, Spanish is the largest. Boulder's Spanish-speaking community was involved in the development of the collection.
- The BoulderReads! program is an adult literacy program; about half of the participants are immigrants with conversational English skills.
- The library offers a weekly USA history and civics class in cooperation with Boulder County Community Action Program, primarily for those preparing to take the US citizenship test.
- Conversations In English classes are available and on-going. ESL—offers those new to the community an opportunity to practice English in a supportive setting.

- Spanish-English story time in children's area—check with staff for the current schedule; special Spanish-English story times can be scheduled in advance for groups.
- Reading Buddies program—part of BoulderReads!, pairs college mentors with children of adult literacy students or other children at risk in reading.
- Summer reading program—available in Spanish and English; information online or at the main library.
- School tours can be arranged with children's or reference staff in advance.

Ghada asked how best to reach out to immigrant individuals and families. Eduardo mentioned Parenting Place as a good contact spot for foreign families with young children.

Amin suggested that the Library needs better to better publicize the free English classes. There is a huge, hidden demand for this.

Beate mentioned that on August 26 there is a Welcome Back BBQ at CU family housing. Maybe the Library could publicize its services at this event. Beate also mentioned that many foreign students leave books behind when the school year is over and perhaps the Library could use these.

Ghada mentioned that text books are not useful, but that they may be able to use selected books. It is worth pursuing. The Library, also, has book sales periodically.

Liz asked if Committee members see any unmet needs in library services.

Amin commented that people need places to meet and maybe the library could serve this function. "Maybe we can flood you with people."

Cris suggested networking with public housing sites.

Ghada mentioned that the Library used to have centers on Broadway and at Kalmia; a total of four communities were served in this way. They have been spun off and are now run by the communities themselves.

Cris mentioned that the Library used to provide help with federal and state income tax, and that this was a good way of bringing people into the library.

Liz clarified that this was a service that a third party provided, but that, yes, this service was provided at the main library. She will see if the library can get them back.

Liz asked if there are people the Library should be collaborating with.

Nabil suggested the International Student Office at CU and Horizon.

Christian suggested the Parenting Place.

Liz and Ghada thanked the Committee for their thoughts and requested that members contact them directly if they have any further ideas.

Members of the Committee thanked Liz and Ghada for presenting.

Beate will follow up with Liz concerning the Family Housing BBQ upon her return from Germany next month or in early August.

III. Next Steps

Committee members were asked to prioritize the potential issues identified at the previous meeting. Beate had a question concerning the meaning of “community sustainability.” Karen explained that this is one of City Council’s priorities for the future and that it consists of three legs: economic sustainability, environmental sustainability and social sustainability. The Committee decided that this topic was too large and too general for the Committee to undertake during its pilot phase.

Nabil brought up that affordable housing and employment opportunities were of primary importance, not only to immigrants, but all residents. Through discussion of this and other issues, the Committee decided not to prioritize all issues previously identified, but to begin with affordable housing. Further, the Committee decided that members need a background on how the City sees this issue and what current programs already exist to address affordable housing, with an emphasis on affordable housing options available to immigrants.

Richard pointed out that there are two major functions of the Committee: (1) to serve as an advisory body, presenting the viewpoints of immigrants to the City as it develops programs, services or economic development (including commenting on departmental Master Plans in development), and (2) to identify issues of issues of importance to immigrants that they believe the City can have an impact on.

Eduardo suggested that meetings could generally be designed with two purposes: (1) hear from department heads (or other designated staff) concerning programs, services and plans within a given area, either identified by the City or by the Committee; and (2) the Committee meets among itself to discuss how it wants to progress on a given issue. There was general agreement on this approach.

Carmen suggested that John Pollak, Boulder Housing Director, could be invited to the next meeting to explain current affordable housing programs and discuss with the Committee (one and one half hours) and then 30 minutes could be saved for Committee discussion, much like the agenda today.

The Committee agreed to invite John Pollak for the next meeting, which will be held on August 2nd. Staff will determine a location and mail members some background materials on City housing programs in advance of the meeting.

Handouts at the Meeting

- A. Governmental structure**
- B. Various Materials from the Boulder Public Library**