

# COMMISSION ON LATINO-AMERICANS

## QUARTERLY MEETING

November 11, 2023 9:00 AM

Methodist Fremont Health

450 E. 23<sup>rd</sup> Street

Fremont, NE 68025

Health Park Plaza

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Rm 3- Auditorium

## MINUTES

### I. CALL TO ORDER:

Nebraska Commission on Latino-Americans Chair Maria Whitmore called the meeting to order at 9:03 am.

### II. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Maria Whitmore welcomed everyone and a roll call was taken each Commissioner and staff member present stated their name and position.

### III. ROLL CALL/RECORD ABSENTEES

**Present:** Chair Whitmore, Vicechair Cristina Castro-Matukewicz, Governor Representative Lali Sage, Commissioner Sandra Lopez, Commissioner Adi Nancy Dobbins, Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez, Commissioner Aida Evans.

**Commissioner Absent:** Jaime Suarez

**Staff present:** Executive Director Maria Arriaga, Office Specialist Dora Lima, Marketing and Communications Specialist Ricardo Alcala

**Community members present:** Jessica Gutierrez works with the American Red Cross, Antonio Gutierrez, Margo Juarez

*Vicechair Cristina Castro-Matukewicz joined the meeting at 9:09 am*

*Governor Representative Lali Sage joined the meeting at 9:25 am*

*Members of the public arrived at 9:14 am*

**Motion 1** to approve the roll call and excuse the absence of Commissioner Suarez was presented by Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez

*Seconded by Sandra Lopez*

*Vote Yes: Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez, Commissioner Aida Evans, Commissioner Sandra Lopez, Vicechair Cristina Castro-Matukewicz, Chair Maria Whitmore, Commissioner Adi Dobbins*

*Vote No: None Motion Passed*

#### **IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS 20-30 min**

Jessica Gutierrez came in hoping to create a collaboration between the Nebraska Commission on Latino-Americans and the Red Cross as Latino-Americans are not receiving sufficient services when emergencies arise, she gives the example of a house fire to illustrate this point.

#### **v. PUBLIC NOTICE OF MEETING**

##### **NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON LATINO-AMERICANS QUARTERLY MEETING**

The Commission on Latino-Americans will host its Quarterly Meeting on Saturday, November 11, 2023. The meeting will take place at Methodist Fremont Health, 450 E. 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Fremont, NE 68025, Health Park Plaza, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, rm.3. We will begin at 9 a.m. and adjourn at no later than 2 p.m.

The Quarterly Meeting is open to the public and all interested individuals are invited to attend. Time will be allocated for public comments within the first hour of the meeting. We encourage those wishing to speak to call our office ahead of time, in an effort to provide better accommodations.

The agenda for the Quarterly Meeting will be kept current and made available for public inspection at the Commission's office. For further information, please contact us at (402) 471-2791.

Public Notice of this meeting was placed in The Grand Island Independent and Omaha World Herald on October 28, 2023; The Lincoln Journal Star on October 30, 2023; The Fremont Tribune on October 31, 2023; The Kearney Hub, The North Platte Telegraph, and The Star-Herald on November 2, 2023; Mundo Latino Publications on November 3, 2023; Lexington Clipper-Herald on November 4, 2023, and it was e-mailed to the NCLA e-mail list and posted in Social Media channels.

#### **V. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*Motion 2 was made by Commissioner Adi Dobbins to approve the agenda.*

*Seconded by Vicechair Cristina Castro-Matukewicz*

*Vote Yes: Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez, Commissioner Aida Evans, Commissioner Sandra Lopez, Vicechair Cristina Castro-Matukewicz, Chair Maria Whitmore, Commissioner Adi Dobbins*

*Vote No: None      **Motion Passed***

**VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (MOTION 2)**

Approval of Minutes of August 5th, 2023, Quarterly Meeting

**Motion 3** was made by Commissioner Sandra Lopez to approve the Minutes for august 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023      *Seconded by Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez*

*Vote Yes: Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez, Commissioner Aida Evans, Commissioner Sandra Lopez, Vicechair Cristina Castro-Matukewicz, Governors Representative Lali Sage, Commissioner Addi Dobbins.*

*Abstain: Chair Maria Whitmore*

*Vote No: None      **Motion Passed***

**VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

1) Nebraska Latino Youth Summit Updates

E.D. Arriaga asks Chair Whitmore and Marketing Specialist Ricardo Alcala to report about the Latino Youth Summit as they were present at the event. Ricardo distributed event agendas, tshirts and brochures that were given at the Latino Youth Summit so Commissioners could see the materials that were available at the event. Chair Whitmore talks about her welcoming the students and encouraging them to cherish and develop their bilingual capacities. To not be afraid to dream and set goals for themselves. She further states there are still some aspects of the event that can be polished and communication between the Commission and the organizations in Columbus seems to be having challenges. The commission logo and information as an organizer with the Department of Education and Central Community College was absent from many of the materials this year. The pattern of promotional materials was changed from previous years and when an explanation was requested from Centro Hispano who was responsible for the program our request for information after the event was over was met with evasion and misinterpretation.

The agenda of the event only had a small logo on the bottom of the agenda. Whereas other event donors were given numerous areas in which their branding could be placed and seen such as posters and even on the backside of the t-shirts given at the event, completely disregarding the Commission as organizational part of the event and that the Commission donated \$20,000 to the event. Tshirts and programs are presented and commissioners are appalled by the definite change from previous years on the size and logo the Commission had at the Columbus event. This was a one sided decision. Chair Whitmore goes on to state that communication has been sporadic with

the Commission at best. The Commission continues to be left out of the organizational meeting. The few emails received from the Columbus Chamber of Commerce for the meetings this year did not contain the minutes after March 2023. This is a concern because of our duty as a state agency to taxpayers. We need to be mindful of our fiscal responsibility when we work with other organizations but Columbus continues to disregard this.

It has been an event that presents excellent opportunities and information for High School students to pursue higher education. Chair Whitmore states that she sent an email stating our concerns as a public entity and our fiscal responsibility to taxpayers to the chamber requesting the minutes for April to October 2023 as well as some other polite suggestions to improve communication for the recap meeting as she received calls from other organizations that collaborate that had some concern on the way communication was being handled to no avail. In view of the lack of respect for the Commission and the improper branding that had been followed for the Commission as organizer as well as the communication issues with us and other organizations that also have been contacting us, Vice Chair Cristina Castro agrees with the effort of approaching Columbus to see if the situation can be improved and have the summit in Columbus again. Chair Whitmore states it is important to make every effort and suggests that the Commission form an AdHoc committee to try to mend the situation with the participating organizations in Columbus namely ESU7 as the leader, Centro Hispano, and Columbus Chamber to try to continue the commitment we had with the location. If this proves to be unsuccessful perhaps some other locations should be considered to improve the execution of the Latino Youth Summit for future years and have a fresh start. Executive Director Arriaga suggests the next location could be a more central one like in Grand Island where it has never been held as the school system there has been well involved with the community and students. Chair Whitmore emphasizes the need to continue moving the summit west to better serve the Hispanic-Latino community in Nebraska that perhaps has not had an opportunity to experience the event due to the distance. The Ad Hoc committee is formed by Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez, Commissioner Aida Evans and Chair Whitmore.

## 2) Website Updates

E.D. Arriaga talks about a tentative schedule to have the new website done by the end of year or early 2024. We are working on content migration to the new site. Getting photographs to include in the pages such as the headshots we are taking today to include on the “Get to know us” page. Working on a message from the governor to also include on the website. Everything is looking good so far.” E.D. Arriaga asks the commissioners to send us a short bio of themselves for the website. Chair Whitmore asks if there is any way we can add a tab to the website to host the Latino Youth Summit information Vice-Chair Castro agrees it is a good possibility to which E.D. Arriaga says she will look into having the information on our website.

## 3) Latino Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics in Nebraska Report

E.D. Arriaga discusses her meetings with Juan Paulo Ramirez from GIS and human dimensions, LLC the meetings have been to discuss the different information regarding education that he has been compiling on behalf of the Commission. She states that the information is looking very promising and that it is shockingly unexpected in a good way. E.D. Arriaga explains how the information being compiled is focused on education and will go a long way in breaking stereotypes on Latinos and Latino students as it shows the number of Latino students attending secondary education is rising, especially among women. She states the report will be ready by November 30<sup>th</sup>.

4) Award Hispanic Heritage Congressional District 2

E.D. Arriaga explains how this is an update to the Hispanic heritage congressional recognition. She states that Chair Whitmore has requested a draft letter to invite congressional districts 1 and 3 to also have the same in their district. Vice Chair Castro asks if it might be a good idea to have one event or 3. Though this might depend on the congressmen offices.

5) Ad-Hoc Committee to nominate officers / Election of Officers (Motion)

***Motion 4 was made by Governors Representative Lali Sage to approve nominations and proceed to the election process***

*Seconded by Commissioner Sandra Lopez*

*Vote Yes. Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez, Commissioner Aida Evans, Governors Representative Lali Sage, Commissioner Sandra Lopez, Vicechar Cristina Castro-Matukewicz, Chair Maria Whitmore, Commissioner Adi Dobbins.*

*Vote No: none* ***Motion Passed***

Lali Sage reads the background on policy number 7 of the Nebraska Commission on Latinoamericans which states that each fiscal year the Commission shall nominate a new executive board which consists of a Chair, Vicechair, and Secretary. An Ad Hoc committee shall be formed to nominate commissioners for these positions prior to the election. Before the election additional nominations on the floor shall be permitted.

Vicechair Cristina Castro-Matukewicz asks if anyone has any nominations. Governor Representative Lali Sage Nominates Aida Evans for chair, Chair Whitmore nominates Governor Representative Lali Sage for Secretary, Commissioner Sandra Lopez nominates Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez for chair. The commissioners cast their votes. Here are the results of the ballot counted by office team mates:

***Chair:*** Chair Maria Whitmore 5 votes, Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez 1 vote, Commissioner Aida Evans 1 vote: ***Winner:*** Chair Maria Whitmore

***Vicechair:*** Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez 4 votes , Secretary Jaime Suarez 1 vote, Governor Representative Lali Sage 1 vote, Commissioner Aida Evans 1 vote:

***Winner:*** Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez

***Secretary:*** Commissioner Jaime Suarez 1 vote, Commissioner Adi Dobbins 2 votes , Governor Representative Lali Sage 4 votes: ***Winner:*** Governor Representative Lali Sage

***Motion 5*** to approve the Slate as presented was made by Chair Maria Whitmore

*Seconded by Aida Evans*

*Vote Yes:* Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez, Commissioner Aida Evans, Governor Representative Lali Sage, Commissioner Sandra Lopez, Vicechair Cristina Castro-Matekuwicz, Chair Maria Whitmore, Commissioner Adi Dobbins.

*Vote No:* none      ***Motion Passed***

*Vicechair Cristina Castro took a moment after the motion to congratulate the commissioners on their new roles and wish them well.*

## **IX. NEW BUSINESS**

### **1) Marketing and Communication Specialist**

E.D. Arriaga introduced the new Marketing and Communications Specialist Ricardo Alcala to the Commissioners and allowed him to say a few words about himself. Ricardo is a Graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a bachelor's degree in Advertising and Public Relations. He is very honored to be a part of the team and be able to help the Latino community of Nebraska.

### **2) Nebraska Latino Youth Summit Logo**

Chair Maria Whitmore requested that the logo for the Latino Youth Summit be updated as the current logo was outdated. Ricardo designed 5 mockup drafts logos to show the Commissioners. The Commissioners were very responsive to the first drafts. The commissioners enjoyed the first drafts. Chair Whitmore requested that more color be included into the logo variants as well as including the wording "State of Nebraska Latino Youth Summit" or "NELYS" to differentiate the summit we hold from the summits other organizations hold for the Latino youth in different locations of the State.

### **3) Presentation to the Nebraska State Senators**

Executive Director has been working on meeting with the Nebraska State Senators that represent the largest Latino populations to tell them more about what the

Commission does as, to express some needs that the Latino population has in each district. E.D. Arriaga selected the 11 senators with the highest Latino populations and invited them to attend a meeting. 3 senators attended the first meeting, the report on Hispanic owned businesses in Nebraska was presented to them and the 3 senators who attended were very impressed with the report. In addition, they also provided the commission with different organizations who may be able to help expand the attention to the latinoamerican community. In a second meeting E.D. Arriaga accompanied by Dora Lima, Ricardo Alcala, Chair Whitmore, and governor Representative Lali Sage met with Senator Hughes to discuss the aforementioned document E.D. Arriaga reported the meeting went well and that Senator Hughes was very responsive to the information provided. Senator Hughes had several questions in regards to the Latinoamerican community.

4) Tony Gomez book presentation

E.D. Arriaga has been asked to help with a book presentation that the Mexican Consulate in Omaha asked the Commission to help former commissioner Tony Gomez from South Sioux City who has written a book about his American dream and how he found success. He owns a pallet business and is one of the biggest pallet exporters in the country, exporting to Europe and Canada. E.D. Arriaga expresses that she believes this is an important event as it shows how with dedication and ingenuity it is possible for every Latino can find success here in America.

5) Review of the statutes

Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez reads the statutes of the Nebraska Commission on Latino Americans. Chair Whitmore then reads all of the Commissions procedures. The Commissioners believe this is important information for the new commissioners to hear as well as a good reminder for the other commissioners.

6) Level all partnerships

E.D. Arriaga has been meeting with a company called “Level All” that provides information and resources to help users of their site discover career paths and the steps they need to take to get into the career of their choice. E.D. stresses to the Commissioners that the program would be of no cost to the commission as the State of Nebraska meets the requirements needed for users to access the program for free. In addition to it being free of charge E.D. Arriaga has also made sure that Level All will not sell user data as well as be able to translate the content they provide so that the whole Latino community in Nebraska may benefit from this resource.

7) 2024 Quarterly Meeting Dates

Chair Whitmore briefly discusses future dates for quarterly meetings, the commissioners are in agreement with suggested dates. The dates are as follows:  
**2024 Quarterly Meetings / other meetings**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Alternative Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>City</b>
01/27/2024		Legislative Mtg.	TBD
02/10/2024	02/17/2024	Qtr. Mtg.	South Sioux City
05/04/2024		Qtr. Mtg.	TBD
06/08/2024		Strategic Planning	TBD
08/03/2024		Qtr. Mtg.	TBD
11/09/2024		Qtr. Mtg.	TBD

8) **Motion for the Congress Latino Recognition Invitation Letter**

After a brief discussion the Commissioners decided no motion was needed and asked E.D. Arriaga to provide them with a draft for the letter.

**x. FINANCIAL REPORTS (MOTION) 11:00 am**

1) Review Budget Status Reports for August, September, and October

Chair Whitmore was curious why a negative variance was showing underneath the worker compensation premiums for October. E.D. explained that that was showing a negative due to the severance package that was extended to the old Marketing and Communications Specialist Hilda Rey.

2) Review General Ledger Reports for August, September, and October

***Motion 6*** was made by Vicechair Cristina Castro-Matukewicz to approve the financial reports.

*Seconded by Governor Representative Lali Sage*

*Vote Yes: Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez, Commissioner Aida Evans, Governors Representative Lali Sage, Commissioner Sandra Lopez, Vicechair Cristina Castro-Matukewicz, Chair Maria Whitmore, Commissioner Adi Dobbins.*

*Note No: none      **Motion Passed.***

**xi. DIRECTOR REPORT (MOTION) 11:30 am**

E.D. Arriaga and the team have been dedicated to elevating the visibility of the Nebraska Commission on Latino-Americans by creating relationships with different organizations across Nebraska. Some of the events she has been involved in are the



Nebraska Latino Dialogue Session, she was the keynote speaker for an educational event with Grand Island public schools, she spoke at the welcome event for High School students in Grand Island, She was part of the Hispanic Heritage Award with Congressman Bacon in Omaha, was a speaker of the Nebraska Adult Education virtual event, talked about the roles and responsibilities of the Commission with Scholarship students from UNK that came to the Capitol, as present at the opening of the Guatemala consulate, and she was present at the CODE career fair. In addition to the events, she hired the new Marketing and Communications Specialist Ricardo Alcala. E.D. has made it a point to be very active in the media, spreading the word of the Commission and raising awareness of what we do.

At the end of the Director's report the commissioners thank her for her drive and commitment to being present at these important events impacting the Latino Community.

***Motion 6*** was made by Governors Representative Lali Sage to approve Director's Report.

*Seconded by Aida Evans*

*Vote Yes: Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez, Commissioner Aida Evans, Governor Representative Lali Sage, Commissioner Sandra Lopez, Vicechair Cristina Castro-Matukewicz, Chair Maria Whitmore, Commissioner Adi Dobbins.*

*Vote No: none      **Motion passed.***

## **XII. COMMISSIONER'S PHOTOSHOOT**

*The Commissioners as well as the Commission Staff took turns being photographed for professional headshots*

## **XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

*No Executive Session was held.*

## **XIV. COMMISSIONER REPORTS 2:00-2:40pm**

### *Chair Maria Whitmore*

Attended a Human Trafficking prevention session, she attended a workshop for visas and immigration that the Nebraska UNL extension office provided. With ED Arriaga she attended a meeting with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and a possible partnership between them and us and replicate success stories of immigrant communities coming to where the jobs are. She mentions the importance of a diversity of career opportunities for Latinoamericans illustrating for instance ends the few numbers of Hispanic presence in the technology professions.

Vicechair Cristina Castro-Matukewicz

She thanks everyone who was a part of the Hispanic Heritage Month event planning with Congressman Bacon's team. She represents the Commission of Latino-Americans on the Nebraska Semi-Centennial Commission and asks that Ricardo attend the subsequent meetings representing the Commission. She was honored to receive the Latino Center of the Midlands family and community award. She is also in the final stages of the leadership Nebraska Program where she has been able to visit numerous communities around Nebraska. She ends by stating that this quarterly meeting will be her last as she is stepping down from the Commission for personal reasons.

Governor's Representative Lali Sage

Was told that the meat packing coordinator has inspected 22 meat packing plants where 115 Hispanics were interviewed and the coordinator was able to resolve 10 issues at these plants the coordinator also worked on 3 wage complaints filed.

Commissioner Sandra Lopez

Has been teaching financial classes with Nebraska Hispanic chamber of commerce. She is doing loans with Catholic Charities and mentions that they have a food pantry that operates five days a week in the Omaha area.

Commissioner Adi Nancy Dobbins

Her organization "Las Mananitas" finally obtained its tax exempts status. She is now offering immigration services in North Platte. She is offering classes to migrants on how to run their own business as well as teaching them how to bring over their family through legal channels. She is currently working on a Spanish magazine that she hopes will be out soon.

Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez

She talks about how food pantries are starting to ask for documentation before they can receive food which is posing an issue to the Latino community as not everyone has documentation to provide in order to get the food. She is also concerned about the rising cases of suicide and propensity to suicide.

Commissioner Aida Evans

Has been attending meetings with the South Heartland health Department where she discusses the needs of families in rural communities. In addition, she has been receiving a lot of immigrant families that she works with to help them get access to the resources they need. She says that she has noticed the need for dental care in numerous cases. She ends by stating that she has a food pantry at her own home that allows her to have the food people need.

**xv. NEXT MEETING**

Next Meeting

February 10  
Location South Sioux City  
9 am – 2 pm

**xvi. ADJOURN**

Adjourned at 2:07 pm

**Acting Secretary: Commissioner Adi Nancy Dobbins**

**Transcribed by Communications and Marketing Specialist Ricardo Alcala**