

COMMISSION ON LATINO-AMERICANS
QUARTERLY MEETING
February 10, 2024
9:00 AM

In-Person
Unity In Action
3900 Dakota Ave. Ste. 11
South Sioux City, NE 68776

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER:

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

II. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Commission Chair Maria Whitmore welcomed everyone, present were Maria Arriaga, Ricardo Alcala, Dora Lima, Lali Sage, Sandra Lopez, Aida Evans, Maria Whitmore, Leticia Rodriguez, Jaime Suarez. **Community members present:** Mayra Moreno owner of Ostion bar and grill, Rogelio Rodriguez, Ximena Perez, Olga Guevara, Martin Ortiz, Omar Samaniego.

III. ROLL CALL/RECORD ABSENTEES (MOTION1)

Present: Chair Maria Whitmore, Vice-Chair Leticia Evans, Secretary and Governor's Representative Lali Sage, Commissioner Aida Evans, Commissioner Jaime Suarez, Commissioner Sandra Lopez. **Staff Present:** Executive director Maria Arriaga, Marketing and Communication Specialist Ricardo Alcala, Office Specialist Dora Lima.

Motion 1: *was made by Vice-Chair Leticia Rodriguez to excuse the absence of Commissioner Adi Dobbins. Seconded by Chair Maria Whitmore.*

Vote Yes: Chair Maria Whitmore, Vice-Chair Leticia Rodriguez, Secretary Lali Sage, Commissioner Aida Evans, Commissioner Jaime Suarez, Commissioner Sandra Lopez.

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

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS 20-30 min

There were no public comments.

v. PUBLIC NOTICE OF MEETING

NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON LATINO-AMERICANS QUARTERLY MEETING

The Commission on Latino-Americans will host its Quarterly Meeting on Saturday, February 10, 2024. The meeting will take place at Unity in Action, 3900 Dakota Ave. Ste. 11, South Sioux City, NE 68776. 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 Mundo Latino Publications on January 21, 2024, Dakota County Star on January 25, 2024; The Grand Island Independent, The Kearney Hub, Lexington Clipper-Herald, Columbus Telegram, The Star-Herald, The North Platte Telegraph, The Lincoln Journal Star on January 27, 2024; and it was e-mailed to the NCLA mail list and posted in Social Media channels.

v. APPROVAL OF AGENDA (MOTION 2)

Motion 2 was made by Commissioner Sandra Lopez to approve the agenda. Seconded by Chair Maria Whitmore.

Vote Yes: Chair Maria Whitmore, Vice-Chair Leticia Rodriguez, Secretary Lali Sage, Commissioner Aida Evans, Commissioner Jaime Suarez, Commissioner Sandra Lopez.

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

¶I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (MOTION 3)

Motion 3 was made by Commissioner Sandra Lopez to approve the minutes of the November 11, 2023 quarterly meeting. Seconded by Secretary Lali Sage.

Vote Yes: Chair Maria Whitmore, Vice-Chair Leticia Rodriguez, Secretary Lali Sage, Commissioner Aida Evans, Commissioner Sandra Lopez.

Abstained: Commissioner Jaime Suarez

viii. UNFINISHED BUSINESS 10:00 am

1) Nebraska Latino Youth Summit

Executive Director Maria Arriaga gave updates of the Latino Youth Summit for 2024. The university of Bellevue has accepted our offer and will host the Latino Youth Summit at their campus in Bellevue for the next three years. We will be hosting several virtual meetings with them to discuss details and begin to enter the planning phase of the event. She goes on to elaborate that the Latino Youth Summit has never been held in Bellevue before, and bring up potential partnerships with the Mexican and Guatemalan Consulates in Omaha. Commissioner Leticia Rodriguez interjected and asked why we did not consider hosting the summit somewhere further west to which E.D. Arriaga responds that no partners out west expressed interest in hosting the event, as well as the Commission's urgent need to find a new partner due to Columbus stepping away from the event.

Following E.D. Maria Arriaga's update on the Latino Youth Summit, Marketing and Communication Specialist Ricardo Alcala presented the commissioners with the final drafts of three possible logos for the Commission to use for the Latino youth summit. Of these three logos one was selected via vote. The commissioners ask that there be one slight change to the logo, to which Ricardo happily agreed.

E.D. Maria Arriaga then goes on to explain to the commissioners the email copies that she had provided to each of them. The emails were correspondence she had received from the Columbus Chamber of Commerce. She has been trying for months now to receive some form of receipts so that the Commission could better understand what the money we provided for the 2023 Latino Youth Summit was used for. She then asked the commissioners to look at the receipts. Chair Maria Whitmore was quick to point out that they billed the shirts as having logo recognition for the commission even though our logo was not present anywhere on the shirts. She also notes that one of the people that works at Centro Hispano billed the design for the program separately and she billed close to \$4,000 for the design. It was Chair Whitmore's opinion that since the designer already worked for Centro Hispano, which was subcontracted to overview the planning of the summit, she should not have been paid an extra fee on top of her salary. Commissioner Jaime Suarez then states that we need to tread carefully with how we respond to this situation as we do not want future partners to be wary of us or how we handle things. Commissioner Jaime Suarez and Chair Maria Whitmore then agree that this matter should be handed over to the State auditors and let them figure out whether the State wants to take any action in this matter or not.

2) Latino Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics in Nebraska Report

E.D. Maria Arriaga talks about the difference between this report and the Latino Business report. The main difference that she highlighted was that this report emphasizes education trends while the other report did not touch on education at all. Chair Maria Whitmore asked if this report had been sent out to the Governor and the Nebraska Legislature. Maria Arriaga stated that this report has not been disseminated to anyone yet as she wanted to show it to the Commissioners for approval beforehand. Chair Maria Whitmore then asks for there to be infographics made and put into the report before it is sent out to which Commissioner Jaime Suarez followed up by asking Ricardo if he had any experience with infographics. Ricardo replied that he has some limited experience but would be willing to create some for the report.

IX. NEW BUSINESS 11:00 am

1) Legislative Agenda – Bills

E.D. Arriaga explains that she added this simply to provide a copy of the Legislative Bills the Commission wants to testify on to the Commissioners. The bills were decided on by the executive committee which consists of Chair Maria Whitmore, Vice-Chair Leticia Rodriguez, and Secretary Lali Sage.

2) Honor Commissioner Castro-Matukewicz (Motion 4)

The commissioners briefly discussed honoring former Commissioner Christina Castro-Matukewicz. They brought up the idea of inviting her to our next quarterly meeting where they would present her with the honor but upon further discussion, they found that depending on the location of the next meeting it may be to large of a journey for her to make. Chair Maria Whitmore suggested that a good back up plan would be to reach out to her and ask her to meet us somewhere in Omaha to deliver her a plaque.

***Motion 4:** was made by Secretary Lali Sage to honor former Commissioner Castro-Matukewicz. Seconded by Maria Whitmore.*

Vote Yes: Chair Maria Whitmore, Vice-Chair Leticia Rodriguez, Secretary Lali Sage, Commissioner Aida Evans, Commissioner Jaime Lopez, Commissioner Sandra Lopez

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

3) Minutes Review/State Senators Flyers

E.D. Arriaga explains to the Commissioners why the commission staff made the decision to put a blue and red background on different senators. She explains how the graphics are meant to serve as a quick access guide to inform voters about

their representatives and as such the staff felt portraying party affiliation was valuable information. Chair Maria Whitmore felt that since we are a nonpartisan commission, we should not be putting any such information on any of the content we create and as such requested that the background color for all senators be changed to yellow to better portray the commissions nonpartisan stance.

4) Calls report

E.D. Arriaga showed the Commissioners the recent call logs that the staff of the commission have received to give the Commissioners a general sense of the things the staff works on, daily. As well as to give the Commissioners a sense of some of the issues that the Latino community in Nebraska has been facing.

5) Judicial branch opportunities for interpreters (Motion 5)

E.D. Arriaga discusses with the Commissioners how the staff have helped spread information for the Nebraska Judicial Branch. The information that the staff have helped spread is in regard to spreading awareness to the Latino community about an opportunity for bilingual individuals to become certified translators. E.D. Arriaga believes that this training presents a unique opportunity for the bilingual Latino community to apply their skills and knowledge. E.D. Arriaga is interested in continued collaboration with the Nebraska Judicial Branch and asked the Commissioners to allow further collaboration between our two entities.

Motion 5: was made by Vice-Chair Leticia Rodriguez to approve further collaboration with the Nebraska Judicial Branch to promote translator opportunities. Seconded by Commissioner Jaime Suarez.

Vote Yes: Chair Maria Whitmore, Vice-Chair Leticia Rodriguez, Secretary Lali Sage, Commissioner Aida Evans, Commissioner Jaime Suarez, Commissioner Sandra Lopez

Vote No: None

Motion passed

6) Collaboration opportunities with UVEG (Universidad Virtual del Estado de Guanajuato)

Chair Maru Whitmore expressed her interest in a potential collaboration between the Universidad Virtual del Estado de Guanajuato and the Commission. Through this collaboration Chair Whitmore believes that the Latino community in Nebraska will have a viable and affordable option to further education to improve job opportunities. She went on to elaborate on how the classes offered line up

well with Nebraska requirements and are eligible to carry over for individuals to be licensed here in Nebraska.

7) North Platte project. Las Mañanitas collaboration

E.D. discussed the fact that a new meat packaging plant is opening up in North Platte. As a result of the new meat plant a large Latino population has moved to the area. As such she revealed how Commissioner Adi Dobbins wanted to get involved with the representation of the Latino workers to ensure their needs are being met. However, Commissioner Adi Dobbins expressed to E.D. Arriaga that she will be speaking on behalf of her organization Las Mañanitas and not on behalf of the Commission. She will however be sharing any and all important information with the Commission in case there are any issues that arise that the Commission can help with.

8) Discretion and Confidentiality Clause

E.D. Arriaga brought up the Discretion and Confidentiality Clause that she has typed up for all representatives of the Commission to include at the bottom of any and all emails sent regarding Commission business. She asked all Commissioners and staff to include the clause at the bottom of their emails to ensure that any and all information shared stays between the parties intended and the Commission to prevent leaks of any information. She added that the Commissioners may not put the Commission on resumes as an employer as they are volunteers and not employees of the Commission.

9) Latino Health outcomes and disparities in Nebraska Deliverables report (Motion 6)

E.D. Arriaga told the Commissioners that the final report that will be made concerning the Latino community in Nebraska is the Latino Health Outcomes and Disparities in Nebraska report. She explained how this report will cost \$7,900. In addition to being the most expensive report to make it will also take the longest to complete she estimated it to be around 6 months before completion. Chair Maria Whitmore asked what kind of information this report will contain that is not available elsewhere. To Which E.D. Arriaga explained that while all the information is public there are currently no easy to digest resources with this information available. In addition to this the information that will be in this report will be more complex than that of our past report. E.D. Arriaga shares that Juan Pablo will be using new information sources to develop this report to ensure that the information is unique and does not replicate information that other agencies have already compiled. Chair Whitmore says she is interested in this report but does not think they can approve this report yet, she would like to have a meeting with Juan Pablo and have him explain to her how this information is different.

Motion 6: was made by Secretary Lali Sage to approve the budget, and go into more detail in the studies. Seconded by Chair Maria Whitmore.

Vote Yes: Chair Maria Whitmore, Vice-Chair Leticia Rodriguez, Secretary Lali Sage, Commissioner Aida Evans, Commissioner Jaime Suarez, Commissioner Sandra Lopez

Vote No: None

Motion Passed

10) Unidos US Conference (Motion 7)

E.D. Arriaga requested that the Commissioners approve the travel of two Commission representatives to go to this years Unidos US conference. She talked about how last year herself and Chair Maria Whitmore went together and were able to learn several useful tactics that they were able to execute at the Commission. She mentioned how there may be room for a third depending on final prices. The two people selected to go were E.D. Maria Arriaga, and Ricardo Alcala with the possibility that Secretary Lali Sage may join.

Motion 7: was made by Chair Maria Whitmore to approve the travel plans for 2-3 representatives from the Commission to partake in the 2024 Unidos US conference. Seconded by Commissioner Jaime Suarez.

Vote Yes: Chair Maria Whitmore, Vice-Chair Leticia Rodriguez, Secretary Lali Sage, commissioner Aida Evans, Commissioner Jaime Suarez, Commissioner Sandra Lopez

Vote No: None **Motion Passed**

x. FINANCIAL REPORTS (MOTION 8)

Financial reports were presented, examined, and reviewed.

During the review of the budget the Commissioners noticed that we will have plenty of money left over and suggest that we purchase a new more powerful laptop for the Marketing and Communications Specialist as well as a new camera and a go pro.

1) Review Budget Status Reports for November, December, and January

2) Review General Ledger Reports for November, December, and January

Motion 8: was made by Chair Maria Whitmore to approve financial reports for November, December, and January. Seconded by Commissioner Sandra Lopez.

Vote Yes: Chair Maria Whitmore, Vice-Chair Leticia Rodriguez, Secretary Lali Sage, Commissioner Aida Evans, Commissioner Jaime Suarez, Commissioner Sandra Lopez.

Vote No: None Motion Passed

XI. DIRECTOR REPORT (MOTION 9)

E.D. Arriaga starts off her report by saying how over the past 3 months she has been working towards her same goal of having meetings with people across Nebraska. She met with The City of Crete and the Nebraska Commission on Indian affairs to identify issues in our communities, met with the labor department to make sure meat packing industries are meeting labor standards, She had a meeting with Community in Action, she took part in the Lincoln Nebraska Cares listening session, She had a meeting with the UNL Extension leaders, she took part of the Immigrant Youth Task Force, is working to create bridges and find new partners for the 2024 LYS, She had a visit with Generational Diamond to discuss future projects and collaborations. She has been working hard to engage with the community across Nebraska. She had a meeting with the multicultural coalition in Grand Island to make some art projects in the streets of Grand Island, a presentation with the Centro of the Las Americas where the Mexican Consulate answered the communities' questions, The Mexican Consulate is hosting a nation-wide event here in Nebraska and the Commission has been asked to work in collaboration with them. She is working in conjunction with Ricardo to update our brochures to give them a newer design. She attended the Governors press conference, which was held in Omaha, where she reminded him of the empty spaces on the Commission. She invited the Governor to be the keynote speaker at an event in Kearney coming up and is waiting on his response. She also mentioned that she is part of the Camino Latino conference planning community. These are just some examples E.D. Arriaga presented to the Commissioners to show them her efforts to further the Commissions goal in Nebraska. She was thanked for her hard work by all of the Commissioners.

***Motion 9:** was made by Chair Maria Whitmore to approve the Director's report. Seconded by Commissioner Aida Evans.*

Vote Yes: Chair Maria Whitmore, Vice-Chair Leticia Rodriguez, Secretary Lali Sage, Commissioner Aida Evans, Commissioner Jaime Suarez, Commissioner Sandra Lopez

Vote No: None Motion Passed

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION (MOTION 10)

***Motion 10:** was made by Vice-Chair Leticia Rodriguez to enter the Executive meeting and exit the Executive meeting. Seconded by Secretary Lali Sage.*

Vote Yes: Chair Maria Whitmore, Vice-Chair Leticia Rodriguez, Secretary Lali Sage, Commissioner Aida Evans, Commissioner Jaime Suarez, Commissioner Sandra Lopez

Vote No: None Motion Passed

XIII. COMMISSIONER REPORTS 2:00-2:40pm

Aida Evans: Has been receiving several immigrants from Venezuela, Honduras, and Guatemala. As a result, she has been working with United Way and Catholic Social Services to get help with rent, and anything that these immigrants may need assistance with. She is working close with the immigrant families to get records for children so that they can go to school. She has also been working on her own food pantry to provide food to those she is able to reach.

Sandra Lopez: is working with the community in south Omaha to train them to learn about payroll and business planning. She has been trying to help people to start their own business or with expansion of current businesses.

Lali Sage: Works for the Nebraska Department of Labor. The Department of Labor is divided into 3 departments labor standards, unemployment, and reemployment services. Labor Standards enforces the law of contractor registration. The Department of Labor has recently discovered that many construction workers are Hispanic, as a result the department has started to send registration emails in both English and Spanish.

Jaime Suarez: has been working with One World to help them do more outreach to the Hispanic community.

Leticia Rodriguez: Has been working with students to do recertification of CPR training. She has also been working with non-English speakers trying to provide them with knowledge. She has also been working with DACA recipients to help them with their working rights.

Maria Whitmore: Had a meeting with UNL extension, she believes that this organization is very useful as a potential partner as they have connections and resources all throughout the state of Nebraska and as a result would help us extend our reach. She has also been coordinating education programs to provide employers and state services more Spanish resources. She has also been participating in monthly meetings as part of the Executive Committee for the Commission. As well as being part of the Ad Hoc committee for the 2024 Latino Youth Summit.

XIV. NEXT MEETING

May 17th and the 18th
North Platte

xv. **ADJOURN**

Meeting adjourned at 1:10 PM

Motion 11: *was made by Secretary Lali Sage to adjourn the meeting at 1:10 PM.
Seconded by Commissioner Sandra Lopez.*

*Vote Yes: Chair Maria Whitmore, Vice-Chair Leticia Rodriguez, Secretary Lali Sage,
Commissioner Aida Evans, Commissioner Jaime Suarez, Commissioner Sandra Lopez*

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

Secretary: Commissioner Lali Sage

Transcribed by Communications and Marketing Specialist Ricardo Alcala