

# New Portlanders Policy Commission General Meeting minutes

On April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020 4:30-6:00 pm by Teleconference

Commissioners present: Evelyn, Mohamad, Rick, Djimet, Octaviano, June, Salome, Maria, Wajdi, Anne, Ahmed,

Commissioners excused: Blanca

Staff present: Touk, Andrea, Marco

## 1. Welcoming and Check-in

a. In a short sentence share one highlight you have in the last month

- Having Kids at home
  - reconciliation with a daughter, COVID broth us together
  - helping school assignments with our kids, communicating with teacher every day
  - stay home and stay focused, learning how to say no, doing everything we can within that context.
  - Happy with no work, initially. Now busy working with people, trying to be helpful
  - Connecting through Zoom with mother, after 7 weeks for 20 minutes
  - Having work done through ZOOM, with undocumented community
  - State/OR legislation approved \$10M for undocumented workers aid
  - Living w/out structure has been a challenge, and non-stop work. But wonderful been together and sharing with husband, reading each other's minds and sharing more time together.
  - Sometimes you don't know if you are helping but today a small business owner reached out a restaurant owner who applied for APANO fund, didn't get it, his wife said, call Evelyn, he did, and I helped with filling up docs and after all he got it.
  - Donated 1000 face masks to the community, helped with applications for unemployment and home-stay advice. Like to say thank you Wajdi and MET for help providing food boxes to families, families ended up very happy, and getting ready for Ramadan
  - "Been a teacher" at home has been challenging but good
  - 8-month-old baby started crawling, and grandma was able to share with him for the first time.
  - Extremely busy with putting supporting 900 + families, w/out any government help. We need to keep government officials accountable.
- \*the need of the undocumented community is great, the need of the immigrant and refugee communities are big, what are the roles of the Commissioners, and

Civic Life on it, as well as NPPC. Some communities are organized and others not, we should talk about it at some point.

It was stated that the question on what do to about the situation was started in last month's meeting and it's addressed in the next point.

## 2. Action item:

- a. The agenda for today was approved
- b. In order to gain time and address the agenda main points (it's 5:06pm), **last month's general meeting minutes approval was moved to the end of meeting, and if we don't have time left, we'll approve it next month.**

## 3. Action plan responding to COVID-19 Approval

- a. Action plan review, discussion and approval

We had the plan displayed for all to see. It is the finalized plan we discussed last month's meeting, staff put together all the recommendations and Executive Committee reviewed it.

We proceeded to read the goals and objectives of the plan.

Discussion:

- We started reviewing the chart and adding comments to it (review chart)
- The idea is that we clarify needs, actions and personally commissioners commit to the actions/activities they can.
- Unemployment:
  - o On unemployment, "the system is a nightmare" getting in the system, there's no support on different languages and the system is not willing to create access for different communities of diverse cultural backgrounds.
  - o Octaviano is proposing to close the discussion about the plan responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and proceed to approve the addendum for the Report to Council.
  - o We need mentors to help people fill up applications
- Octaviano asked "what's the purpose of this document?" because it was important to understand the seriousness and official level of our recommendations and the impact of it with City Council. Also mentioned that we as commissioners have wisdom, expertise and experience and the recommendations that we present go to Council members, this is an opportunity to include our voices and remind commissioners that we are serving the city and that this is important to understand.

- NPPC advises city council in order to change policy to support our Immigrant and Refugee communities
- The other role of the NPPC is to serve as a bridge to connect our communities with City Council.
- The document we are discussing gathers the needs NPPC have identified in our communities, and the purpose of it is to define what we can do realistically as NPPC in this difficult time, it is a timeline
- Andrea explains that the Plan is a collection of the brainstorm of commissioners in the last NPPC general meeting, and if commissioners want to add to the plan, now is the time to do that. And what was read informed what we are about to see next which is the updated report to Council which will occur on Early June, and the two recommendations to be presented to Council comes from the discussion we had in the last meeting. So, we can continue making changes or leave it as is for now. This is a living document and commissioners can complete it as we go
- Salome: there are many barriers for people to apply for unemployment or other things, the major difficulty is language barriers, some organizations are doing as much as they can, but this is a need that elected officials can help with. The questions is what can we do as NPPC to help and support our communities?
- Rick: where is the advocacy piece here, we should be advocating as the NPPC, and the policies that we proposed should be addressing the needs of the people, which are the least addressed by the system right now. I see a disconnect between what the policies are and what the systems. We can not only be helping to walk through the system is not enough, we have to be advocates and the City should advocate for a change and flexibility in the policies that would address the many issues of immigrant and refugees, that's what council should be doing and we should advocate for the people we represent, New Portlanders. Our communities have been discriminated against, and don't benefit from the traditional benefit streams such as unemployment, food stamps, etc. and they (immigrant and refugees) must rely in charitable organizations like Catholic Charities., MET, etc.
- Wajdi: second Rick's comments and mentions that Civic Life should address this issue and advocating on behalf of Immigrant and refugees, NPPC is about integration by design for the immigrant and refugee. City resources and County resources
- Andrea: we are internally advocating as much as we can as a bureau, in addition to that it is more powerful for Council members to hear from each of you and community members, and we will continue doing as much as we can
- Wajdi: we addressed through the Coalition of Communities of color about the County response. I did talk to a Mayor Wheler officer (Christine Dennis) that we should have an open public forum with the immigrant and refugees' leaderships, not the usual suspects but those that represent the community and the public square.
- June: want to acknowledge the work by the EC to organize the input from the last NPPC general meeting and staff for organizing the information and moving the process, then everyone had the chance to review and OK this report to be

presented onto City Council. One of the advocacy items is to advocate for the State funding for unemployment benefits not available to subcategories of workers. The second advocacy issue is the race-based hate crimes done by COVID-19 been leveled as Asian-Chinese, Kung-flu, etc. we re asking city council to play a vocal role speaking against it as a hate crime against immigrant and refugee communities.

- Octaviano: can we create a new category in the chart called advocacy to produce systemic changes and have in there potential actions captured in this discussion and be able to prioritize too
- Rick: second that, this notion of systemic failure is what city council's job is, to determine what those structures are, that serve the people, we have a whole group of people left out. They need to step up and work for system change. Also, there's many people that are not getting the stimulus check, even though they deserve it. The system is broken specially for people of color and immigrant and refugees. The emergency systems are designed for mainstream people only, The NPPC should show how those systems are not working and be a voice for those we represent.
- Djimet: DHS Oregon refugee coordinator called for a meeting with the employment department asking them to allow immigrant and refugees organizations for advocate to have access to the unemployment portal so we can help immigrant and refugees to access unemployment benefits, I see there's no equity accessing resources because immigrant and refugees are excluded. The rep from the employment department said they will go to their supervisors and will go back to us. We sent a letter telling them that we can help people and seat with them. They said no, that they should contact work systems, but they don't have services available in different languages. This is the challenge we are facing so our commission should bring this reality to the public so we could see some changes. Many Immigrant and refugees move constantly, and they don't have access, because the system don't have access.
- Touk: lets take the time to honor the experiences everyone is having and the passion behind it, whether it's frustration and anger, this is a great time to write a letter to our commissioners and city council to let them know what our communities are experiencing these frustrations, as a next step.
- Touk: check-in on time we have 25 minutes left, and proposed to continue to the next point of the agenda to be able to approve the documents for the Report to Council
- Evelyn ask if everyone agrees
- Octaviano proposes the same
- Everyone agreed

**Marco will send the planning document for all to review and provide more input if needed.** Commissioners can Define next steps and assignments in the plan/timeline

#### 4. NPPC Report to Council

Marco pulled up to the screen share the new version of the update to council document and explained that we had the Report document already for the end of 2019 but now, some time has passed and needed to update the report with a new section with the new activities.

Andrea gave a brief update and background on how we got here with the updated report:

- This year the report is falling under the response efforts to the challenges we are facing under the COVID-19 pandemic and everyone had the chance to see it (was e-mailed beforehand for NPPC review)
- The report includes two recommendations to city council:
  - o The first is asking to City Council to invest on city dollars on the Oregon Workers Relief Fund. The State of OR is investing \$10M. We think that the City of Portland should also invest and pitch in money since the \$10M is only a fraction of the overall need of about \$120M. This fund is for unemployment benefits for workers that were left out because immigration status, including undocumented workers.
  - o The second recommendation is to pass a resolution to condemn the rise in hate crimes against Asia Pacific Islander communities and to call the racism that is being promoted under this crisis. Marco has drafted a potential resolution.
- What we need to do in NPPC is to call for a vote, we did already vote on approving the report for 2019 and we need to do the same for the updated addendum attached to the original report.
- Marco: we sent already the document by e-mail and there were 12 responses in agreement with it, now is the opportunity for those that have not had the chance to see it to give input. So, we can approve it today.
- Rick: to clarify, is this the request we agree to address the systemic change asking them to pay attention to, since it is an extension for unemployment benefits for those whom won't benefit from the system in place, isn't consistent with what we said in previous comments?, are we in the same page?
- Wajdi: I will add what Djimet said, to integrate services for immigrant and refugees who have to move often and that speak different language. And also benefit those that have suffered the most as a consequence of the pandemic

**Wajdi will send/share the letter he sent to County commissioners for us to review**

- Evelyn: The funding recommendation for the OWRF is not a resolution and the wording is clear, the commissioners know what it is, so, we don't need to explain to city council more than what we have in it. And number two is also very clear and gets right to the point.
- Octaviano: we need to know, first, define the timeline to have this completed, Two, share this document in a safe way by city policy and three that commissioners add thoughtful input

- Marco: we have a very little window of extension in time, although, we don't have much time to go back and forth with changes, no longer than a week
- Andrea: to explain the process, the presentation of the report is scheduled for June 3<sup>rd</sup> at 9:45 am. We have to submit this kind of reports and documents at least 5 weeks in advance, so we have one week to add edits before we need to submit the documents to Hanna Holloway, commissioner Eudaly policy analyst, and she has to do some preparation for the city council agenda.
- Touk: when we started this conversation, we mentioned there's an urgency to bring this up. If we don't get this out soon enough, we won't be able enough to move forward with other items.
- Rick: this might be not exactly what we want to say about the conditions affecting our communities, but it is asking some very important thing, so lets get it in because we want to make two important asks to Council. I don't know if we can make it clearer, it has two specific asks and I think we should submit it as is.
- Marco: this kind of documents shouldn't be big, max two pages containing the key ask and key words. We are clear on what we are asking. We can add in the language that we want to make it sure that the funds go to those that have been affected the most and that Council should make sure that to happen.
- Octaviano: we could give two – three days to give input, so everyone has the chance to do it.
- Maria: agree with Octaviano, the sooner the better because the funding and developing the criteria and working with different organizations to give access to this fund is in process.
- June: it is important to be timely delay to make a recommendation at the mark
- Evelyn: Do we need to give it 2-3 days or go with what we got now?
- Wajdi: we trust Marco, Touk and Andrea to modify the document in the context of the notes taken in this meeting. The faster the better.
- Andrea: what we need from NPPC is an actual vote to move this (or some version of this) forward, you could vote and say that with edits that were made during the meeting or also you can decide to give it a few days and folks will provide a final vote through e-mail but at the end of the day we need NPPC to approve this report to be delivered to City Council
- Evelyn: when we deliver this report to Council de we have the chance to elaborate on it?, will they be asking us questions about it?
- Andrea: Yes, and we have to decide who will present
- Evelyn: so we need to vote
  - o Do we accept it with the edits recommended from this meeting and we trust Touk, Andrea and Marco to do the edits, or
  - o We give two to three days for inputs with edits and we give a cut off time
- Wajdi: **makes a motion to move to approve the report with edits made by Touk, Andrea and Marco based on the minutes from this meeting.**
- The motion is second by Mohamed
- Evelyn ask if all are in favor
- All say "AYI"
- **Motion passes with no objections**

Marco: ratify the process for the decision made, staff will edit the update report doc and will share with EC for final approval, then it will be submitted to Commissioner Eudaly's office.

**EC + Staff will continue organizing report and its presentation for the day of the Council Session, following formal steps.**

#### **5. Announcements/Info sharing**

- Djimet: The governor put together the Economic Recovery Advisory group, this groups is pushing the governor and legislature to redirect all the funds from HB2016 which includes Black Student Achievement as well as the Student Investment Act to Restart the economy. They are trying to cut funding from vulnerable communities. We drafted a letter last Friday and sent it to the governor and Tina Kotek and this morning we got a call from Kotek's chief of staff, and we scheduled a meeting with Tina Kotek on May 5<sup>th</sup> to advocate not to cut those funds because immigrant and refugee students are already behind with the COVID-19 crisis and it is hard to find support for distance learning. If they cut those funds, will be deterrent for us. In the group the governor put together there is NO people of color, and they are advocating to help big business, not even the small ones and owned by immigrant and refugees. It should be the opposite, instead of cutting funds, they should be contributing with more funding for Immigrant and refugee and undocumented communities, in order to be an equitable support with resources. This letter were signed by the 9 grantees that receives funding from the department of education to provide funding for the HB2016 Black Student Achievement Act.
- Evelyn: advocacy and sending letters is very important and a very good idea and we support it.
- Andrea: will be good if the letters mentioned by Wajdi and Djimet today to be shared with the NPPC and also for the commissioners t be aware of the asks
- **Wajdi and Djimet will be sharing it**
- Evelyn: the five chambers of commerce sent a letter for their coalition to the Governor office, the City of Portland and Prosper Portland, all chambers, Native American, Phillipino, APAC, Black Chamber of Commerce.
- Evelyn will share the letter too.
- Marco; please send us any information like this one so Touk can add it to the Friday's resource e-mail they send for everyone's knowledge.

**Evelyn announces The meeting is adjourned at 6:20 pm**