Latino Community Development

Commission Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 20, 2016

6:30pm-8:00 pm

The meeting took place at the Mayor’s Office on Latino Affairs (MOLA). Johnny Garcia and Catalina Talero called the order at 6:47pm. Commissioners and members of MOLA in attendance were Johnny Garcia, Catalina Talero. Participants included Johnny Garcia, Catalina Talero, Gunther Sanabria, Jonas Minino, Ricardo Villalba, Angelique Sina, Ana Reyes, Dr. Angelo Gomez (note taker), and Jackie Reyes (MOLA Director) and (Julio Guity-Guevara (MOLA Deputy Director).

**Items discussed at the meeting:**

There was a delay waiting for members to join the meeting to have full quorum for the meeting. There were welcome remarks offered by Johnny Garcia and Catalina Talero. MOLA Director, Jackie Reyes offered a report before she left the meeting. Participants described the successful events on the State of Latinos in DC. MOLA Director Jackie Reyes and Deputy Director Julio Guity-Guevara reminded the commissioners that the next State of Latinos Roundtable will be in January. They also requested that the commissioners support the work of the State of Latinos of the District Roundtables and report to better advise the major. Commissioner Jonas Minino inquired about the upcoming two meetings and the exact time for them to confirm the schedule of commissioners. Commissioners discussed their possible participation on the 5 mile race upon invitation of the major on Saturday. Commissioners Minino and Ana Reyes indicated their potential participation.

After her report, the Director left for a meeting, but reminded commissioners to reach out to her by emailing Co-chairs Garcia and Talero. Co-Chair Talero inquired with Commissioner Reyes to have previous meeting notes to have them approved by email in the next 3 days. She agreed. Commissioner Angelique Sina joined the meeting a few minutes around 7:10pm. Co-Chair Garcia asked continues with the meeting with the section: “What’s on your mind?” He proposed to have a solution driven conversation. Commissioner Sina indicated that on her mind is to have goals and a strategy. For her, it is to make a difference in the Latino community.

Co-Chair Garcia asked the commissioners a question to ponder upon: “How do we make this group more effective than it has been in the past?” He commented on unifying under the wealth of knowledge and experience of the group.  He continued by suggesting having a follow-up conversation with Director Reyes and working with her team on find ways and more suggestions and improves communication. To which Co-Chair Talero agreed and commented on having “actionable items to bring to the table.”

Commissioner Villalba asked about the role of the group, “What’s the role of this group?” For him, to join this group was to work with youth to advocate and to help in their issues. Also, other items for him were social movements such as “Black Lives Matter,” helping the LGBT community, and other racial minority groups.

Commissioner Sina also mentioned at this point other groups that are part of the Latino community that must also be included. Commissioner Reyes talked about her interest in working on the community and what the MOLA office focuses on. She asked to know more about what MOLA offers as an office, what committees are available to work with. She gave some examples, such as education. She reminded the commissioners to focus on what is available rather than “to reinvent the wheel.” She asked about the top 5 items for MOLA to understand the office priorities.

Commissioner Jonas Minino said to agree with what has been said but also inquired about resources, what has worked and to move forward. Again, he emphasized on focusing on resources “to be more successful to make it through,” “as to know what we are working for.” Commissioner Sanabria agreed with what has been said; he continues to be on the phone with the group.

Co-Chair Talero indicated that she would abstain from comment during the opening session "check-in" because the topic of diversity was already on the agenda as a listed item later in the evening. The session continued as specified in the agenda, with every commissioner doing a "check in" about the work of the commission. All commissioners present did a "check in" assessing the work of the commission to date.

Later, before Director Reyes returned, the commission discussed a separate agenda item (Unity from Diversity) previously agreed on in group emails as a topic to be included in the agenda. Co-Chair Talero referred to an article she had sent to the group in advance of the discussion on this pre-approved agenda item. She noted that unity from diversity was an area of interest to many in the Muriel Bowser Administration and inquired into various commission and MOLA resources, fiscal and non-fiscal, that might be explored to support diverse communities. She gave some examples of commissioners who had expressed interest in supporting diverse communities that comprise the Latin diaspora citing, for example, Commissioner Dilone’s interest in supporting senior citizen communities, Commissioner Jonas Minino to lead assistance and work with the LGBT community.

When it was time for the agenda topic of "Unity from Diversity" Commissioner Talero disclosed information regarding a meeting with Commissioner Aspirilla and an individual (Hernando Viveros) who said he had been consulted by Director Reyes to advise MOLA regarding the AfroLatino Task Force. Commissioner Talero confirmed that Commissioner García had discussed the Aspirilla/Viveros meeting with her prior to the commission meeting (this had also been specified in emails preceding the commission meeting). Talero shared the details of the Aspirilla and Viveros meeting to the group. Commissioners agreed that the two requests of these individuals were reasonable: a) to have a private meeting with MOLA staff, perhaps also commissioners b) to have the opportunity to showcase more Afro-Latino talent publicly before end of year. Commissioner García suggested that co-chairs should be present for the private meeting. All other commissioners agreed to it.

Commissioner Villalba added to these comments to work with young people, and organizations such as the LAYC where commissioners Villalba, Garcia, and Talero have worked before. He reminded commissioners to address the needs of the community and have them as top priority. Some examples of cultural events that were mentioned were, Noche Cultural. Director Reyes rejoined the meeting. The commission presented its previously agreed upon decisions in the meeting, including the topic of diversity. Director Reyes expressed understanding and welcomed further correspondence and communication on all topics relevant to the commission.

The meeting’s discussion was later around the commissioners who have missed many meetings. One of them was, Commissioner Sanchez. It appears that there are many factors that prevent him from attending. There is a proposal to reach out to him and determine his availability if not to find a replacement that may also add diversity to the group.

The conversation went on then to the inclusion of other groups within the Latino community that may be included now as part of the commission or as observers of the group such as seniors, LGBT groups, etc. Commissioner Jonas Minino remarked the need to include the AfroLatino community and other minority groups who have not been included so far. Co-Chair Garcia agreed on that proposal.

Commissioner Jonas Minino stated that for that a couple of drag queen could be part of this new inclusion mission. He knew some of them who would be willing to participate. Commissioner Villalba highlighted the beauty of the diversity within the Latino community and to keep in mind African American Heritage month next year to plan an event that also overlapped with the Latino community, in reference to the earlier AfroLatino group discussion.

Co-Chair Garcia brought up the idea to have a retreat meeting, to which Commissioner Minino commented that this was tried before but instead have a more “tangible” goal oriented meeting. Rather, perhaps to have a building team meeting, to have a more result driven ideas for the commission. Commissioner Sina suggested having a cooking class to learn on how to work together. Commissioner Villalba mentioned to work with youth again and find out if there is a budget. Also, he asked what else we could do as a commission and as a commissioner.

There was a voting on that and the motion was passed on having a group activity like a cooking class to work together and to solidify the group as a team. Commissioner Sanabria agreed on that too. Later, Commissioner Sina asked a few questions to the group such as: What area we want to focus on? What else can we do to have visibility in the community?

Suggested areas to focus on were a mentoring program, education, affordable housing, fund raising programs, and asked commissioners to have and give more ideas. Co-Chair suggested on forming groups around the proposed ideas. Co-Chair Talero suggested more networking and think of those who can also come to the table of conversation in relation to the groups that may not be present at the commission and the current initiatives of the group. She also reminded the commissioners to think of those who are and who are not at the commission to solidify the group and determine their commitment as commissioners.

Commissioner Sina asked: “What else can we do instead?” For the commissioners to ponder upon and continue the process of inclusion and action. The meeting concluded with a reminder to have the previous meeting notes approved in 3 days by email. This is something that has not been approved and could not be approved at the beginning of this meeting. These notes on the other hand will be sent for review to the commissioners and Co-Chairs for review in the coming days. The Meeting adjourned at 8:17pm.