



## Community Involvement Commission (CIC) March Retreat 2026 Meeting Minutes

March 14, 2026

10:00 – 3:00 pm

Rainier Community Center

**Commissioners present:** Rachele Olden, Gabriel de los Angeles, Tim Turner, Chelsea Affleck, Elise Herwig, Heidi Morisset, Julio Perez, and Nada Ramadan. Soon to be Commissioner Olivia Barlow (virtual).

**Commissioners Not Present:** Jalen Smith and Kamryn Yanchick

**City of Seattle Staff present:** Staff Liaison Alvin Edwards

**Guest Presenter:** Guest Speaker – Chris Curia - LGBTQIA Commission

**Public Comment:** James Sherrell – EthnoMed/Harborview Medical Center

Transcriber's Note: The notes shown below are summaries of statements provided. They are not transcriptions and have been shortened and edited to include the major points raised. Full comments are retained in the files in the video recording and available upon request.

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### Call to Order and Roll Call

Staff Liaison Alvin Edwards called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

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### Public Comment: James Sherrell (EthnoMed / Harborview Medical Center)

James Sherrell shared an overview of EthnoMed and Harborview's community-based work serving refugee, immigrant, and migrant (RIM) populations, particularly those with complex medical needs. His program provides cultural and linguistically tailored care through cultural mediators, interpreters, and outreach partnerships, supporting patients across more than 140 languages.

He highlighted **growing concerns among Refugee, Immigrant, and Migrants (RIM) communities**, including:

- Decreased willingness to seek care due to fear of law enforcement and policy changes
- Increasing barriers to Medicaid/Medicare access

- Gaps in culturally appropriate care and system navigation

In response, EthnoMed has expanded community outreach efforts, such as:

- Partnering with trusted community organizations to host health events and education sessions
- Providing in-language resources and culturally relevant health education (e.g., chronic disease, nutrition, fasting practices)
- Training providers to better serve diverse populations, including survivors of trauma

James emphasized that much of their work relies on informal networks (e.g., King County, UW, community groups), and identified key challenges:

- Lack of clarity on how to effectively engage with the City of Seattle
- Fragmented coordination across agencies and organizations
- Limited staffing and resources to meet growing demand
- Gaps in outreach to smaller or less-recognized language communities

He expressed interest in stronger collaboration with the city, including:

- Better coordination and promotion of community events
- Increased visibility of available resources across languages
- Support in connecting services (healthcare, social services, employment, etc.)
- Assistance with outreach, funding opportunities, and system navigation

Overall, his request centered on building partnerships to improve coordination, expand reach, and reduce barriers for underserved communities.

- Key themes:
  - Importance of **cross-organizational collaboration** to reduce silos.
  - Opportunity to expand outreach to underrepresented and linguistically diverse communities.
  - Interest in **future partnerships** with the Commission.

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### Approval of Previous Minutes

- February 2026 meeting minutes approved by quorum.

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### Guest Presentation – LGBTQ Commission Presentation (Chris Curia)

Chris Curia, co-chair of the LGBTQ Commission, shared insights into how their commission operates, focusing on **structure, strategy, and lessons learned** from their experience.

The commission is currently finalizing its annual work plan, centered on three main pillars:

- **Intersectional advocacy:** Advising city leaders on LGBTQ+ issues through policy input, public comment, and statements, with attention to overlapping identities (race, migration status, etc.).
- **Community engagement:** Building trust with communities through events, partnerships, and regular forums (e.g., quarterly advisory meetings with community organizations).
- **Commission sustainability:** Strengthening internal systems, continuity, and onboarding processes to maintain long-term effectiveness despite turnover.

Chris emphasized that commissions are **volunteer driven with limited budgets** yet can still influence policy by building relationships and credibility with city leaders. Their work includes:

- Hosting community dialogues and connecting residents with policymakers
- Participating in outreach events and supporting community initiatives
- Collaborating on policy efforts (e.g., contributing to protection for gender-affirming care in city law)

They also discussed operational practices such as:

- Setting clear expectations and time commitments (8–10 hours/month for commissioners)
- Using SMART goals to measure success
- Developing tools like a rapid response policy to act between meetings
- Prioritizing mentorship and internal relationship-building

Chris highlighted challenges such as turnover, limited capacity, slow government processes, and uneven responsiveness from elected officials, but stressed the importance of persistence, patience, and relationship-building.

## Key Takeaways

### Build a Strong Foundation First

- Focus on internal structure, processes, and clarity of purpose before expanding impact.
- A clear work plan and defined scope of influence are essential.

### Relationships Drive Influence

- Building trust with both community commissioners and city officials is critical.
- Start with relationship-building rather than immediate policy demands.

### Be Clear About Scope and Limitations

- Communicate what the commission can and cannot do to manage expectations.
- Help direct community commissioners to appropriate resources when outside scope.

### Intersectionality Matters

- Effective advocacy requires understanding overlapping identities and ensuring underrepresented voices are included.

### Community Engagement Builds Trust

- Showing up consistently (even in small ways) helps rebuild credibility and connection with communities.

### Use Structured Planning and Metrics

- Work plans with measurable goals (SMART goals) help track progress and define success.

### **Create Systems for Continuity**

- Mentorship, documentation, and clear processes prevent loss of institutional knowledge during turnover.

### **Being Strategic and Patient with Government**

- Policy change takes time; persistence and ongoing engagement are necessary.
- Start with staff relationships and expand to elected officials.

### **Maximize Limited Resources**

- Even small budgets can be effective when used strategically and paired with partnerships.

### **Prioritize Sustainability and Avoid Burnout**

- Encourage realistic time commitments and support commissioners beyond just task-based work.
  - Building relationships within the commission is as important as external work.
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## **Commission Onboarding / Bylaws & DON SharePoint**

It was noted that the Commission Onboarding/Bylaws discussion and the DON SharePoint update were postponed to the next meeting due to time constraints. These items were not discussed and will be revisited at a future meeting.

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## **Staff Liaison Updates & Social Media Discussion**

Staff Liaison Alvin Edwards confirmed that the mayor received the Commission's letter and acknowledged it.

The Commission then discussed updates related to communications and social media strategy. The discussion focused on how best to share Commission information with the public in a clear and effective way.

Key points included:

- Options considered:
  - Creating and managing a dedicated Commission social media account, which would require clear assignment of responsibilities, access management, and ongoing content coordination.
  - Continuing to use the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) established social media channels and newsletter to share Commission updates and materials.
- The Commission generally supported initially using DON's existing platforms due to limited capacity and the resources required to establish and maintain a separate account.
- It was noted that:
  - All content shared through DON channels must go through DON Communications approval prior to posting.
  - A structured internal process is needed to determine what content is shared and when.
- Commissioners discussed the importance of:
  - Assigning 1–2 commissioners, likely through the Communications Subcommittee, to help coordinate communications efforts.

- Working collaboratively with DON Communications to understand engagement practices and content preferences.
  - Establishing a clear workflow for reviewing, approving, and submitting content.
  - Additional suggestions included:
    - Capturing photos and documentation at events to support public awareness of Commission activities.
    - Coordinating submissions with DON Communications to ensure proper timing and formatting of materials.
  - It was suggested that the Communications Subcommittee take the lead in developing this workstream and report back to the full Commission with recommendations regarding roles, responsibilities, and process.
  - The Commission agreed to continue leveraging DON communication channels for the time being, while further structure and guidance is developed.
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## **Appointment Updates**

Staff Liaison Alvin Edwards provided updates on upcoming appointments and reappointment processes for commission members. He noted that a Link Committee meeting is scheduled for March 25, during which appointment packets for Olivia and Nagesh are being submitted for consideration, pending confirmation from the Boards and Commissions office.

Clarification was provided on commissioner term lengths and reappointment procedures. Commissioners who begin serving partway through a term are still eligible to serve the full standard term length once officially appointed. At the end of a term period, reappointment materials are submitted through the appropriate appointing authority (e.g., Mayor's Office or City Council) for review and confirmation.

It was further clarified that:

- Commissioners do not need to independently contact City Council or appoint bodies regarding reappointment; staff liaison support facilitates this process.
- Commissioners will be notified directly by the Staff Liaison when action is required for reappointment or continuation of service.
- Commissioners may express interest in continuing service, after which administrative steps are managed through staff coordination.

The discussion also included clarification that if a commissioner is reappointed, their new term begins at the point of reappointment, while prior partial service is considered part of a previous interim or partial term.

It was confirmed that several commissioner terms are scheduled to end in May, and those individuals will be contacted regarding continuation and reappointment options. The process involves coordination with the appropriate appointing authority and may require additional administrative processing time.

Commissioners were encouraged to direct any questions regarding appointment status, eligibility, or process to the staff liaison for clarification and support.

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### **Budget Planning Discussion**

#### **Available Budget:**

Approximately \$3,800 (after reserving retreat costs)

#### **Approved Allocations:**

- Events & Engagement: \$2,300
- Communications: \$1,000
- Research & Assessment: \$500
- Retreat Reserve: ~\$600

#### **Discussion Highlights:**

- Emphasis on responsible allocation during early-stage development
  - No immediate major expenses required for communications infrastructure
  - Events prioritized as primary engagement strategy
  - Promotional materials to be purchased only for confirmed events
  - Budget remains flexible and subject to revision
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## **12. Subcommittee Planning (Full Commission Discussion)**

### **Events & Engagement**

- Plan to host two biannual community roundtables
- Focus on civic education and community connection
- Importance of accessible venues and inclusive participation

### **Communications**

- Development of a proactive annual communications strategy
- Potential focus on civic education campaigns

### **Research & Assessment**

- Exploration of a community resource guide
  - Priorities to be defined before next meeting
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## **Discussion on Inclusive Participation**

A discussion was held regarding inclusion and ensuring all Commissioners feel heard.

### **Key Outcomes:**

- Commitment to actively practicing shared norms
  - Agreement to review community norms at the start of each meeting
  - Recognition of diverse lived experiences
  - Commitment to improving facilitation and inclusivity
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## **Final Thoughts and Comments**

Commissioners shared reflections emphasizing:

- Increased clarity of purpose
  - Importance of maintaining momentum between meetings
  - Need for active participation in subcommittee work
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## **Action Items**

- Subcommittees to meet and define 2026 priorities
  - Post-retreat evaluation survey to be distributed (Staff Liaison)
  - Add community norms review to future agendas
  - Begin planning first community roundtable (Events & Engagement)
  - Prepare budget reset for next fiscal year
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## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:00 p.m. following a motion and second.