



Greater Tulsa Area Hispanic/Latinx Affairs Commission

Regular Meeting | March 13, 2025 | 6:00 – 7:00 pm

City Hall at One Technology Center | 10 North Meeting Room

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Amy Ariza, Carlos Bejarano, Chriss Chavez, Jackiez Gonzalex, Jose Bamaca Hernandez, Fatima Linares, Jessica Lozano-Alvarez, Mark Ohnesorge, Amanda Peregrina, Angelica Reina

Commissioners Absent: Amairani Perez Chamu, Daniel Gomez, Mimi Martinez Herrera, Diana Pennington

Liaisons Present: Riley Howard, Andy Little

Liaisons Absent: Ivan Patino-Cortez

I. Call to Order

- a. Vice Chair Gonzalez called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

II. Guest Speaker: Maria Elena Kuykendall, Executive Director of El Centro New Sanctuary Empowerment Center

- a. Maria Elena started with gratitude and asked commissioners to introduce themselves. María Nunéz, El Centro's Administrative Coordinator, shared a handout.
- b. El Centro is a nonprofit organization focused on empowering the immigrant community in Tulsa. They are a grassroots organization that focused on peer education. They emphasize making community feel welcomed and listened to.
- c. El Centro runs several programs, including free legal consultations. Currently in need of a new provider, have 300 people on a waiting list to receive legal services. Have been hosting Know Your Rights events.
 - i. There is fear in the community to gather; however, El Centro is recognized as a safe place to access information.
 - ii. Prioritize child-friendly areas in meeting rooms and events.
- d. Offer a free community closet including clothing and household items.
- e. Provide a membership card to those who don't have the documentation needed to access certain services. It's not a driver's license or government identification, but it provides folks with a card that identifies who they are.
- f. Crisis Fund Management: Economic support program. Families are eligible for up to \$240 after going through an application process. Provides some relief to pay bills,

provide food, etc. This is a very popular program. Can only offer assistance to 36 families per month, and appointments will up within three hours of opening them for each month.

- i. Relationship built with families is important, as they can be connected to other services such as SNAP, WIC, and Financial Empowerment Center. They provide a warm handoff to these other services that they know can help them with their unique situation rather than a simple referral.
- g. Partnership with Oklahoma Birth Equity Initiative has a community doula embedded in El Centro. Offer classes for parents in partnership with Amplify, OSU, and others. Planning to collaborate with DVIS on domestic violence prevention.
- h. Have certified 150 peer educators to provide support in various community organizations.
- i. Upcoming events:
 - i. April 30, Mexico celebrates Day of the Children, El Centro hosts an event on April 26.
 - ii. Other events this year will be a community baby shower and a health fair.
- j. Commissioner Q&A:
 - i. Vice Chair Gonzalez shared GTAHLC's work to administer a survey to understand the community's needs and fears around accessing identification documents. Also have discussed organizing or amplifying Know Your Rights sessions. When you talk about legal services not being active right now, are you looking for individuals or do you need an organization to partner with?
 - 1. Maria Elena: El Centro doesn't currently have a staff lawyer and need to find a way to provide this resource. Welcome individuals who can donate their time, and open to ways to make that happen.
 - ii. Commissioner Chavez: What donations will you take, and how do we drop off?
 - 1. Maria Elena and Maria: Can drop off between 10 am – 5 pm on Monday – Friday. Can't take big furniture. Clothing, toys, small household items are all appreciated.

III. Vice Chair Report

- a. Vice Chair Gonzalez turned the meeting over to Commissioner Bejaranos for the vote on 2025 officers.
 - i. Commissioner Bejaranos shared the slate of officers as determined by the Nominating Committee:
 - 1. Chair – Amairani Perez Chamu
 - 2. Vice Chair – Jackie Gonzalez
 - 3. Recorder – Mark Ohnesorge
 - 4. Historian – Jose Bamaca Hernandez
 - ii. Paused for nominations from the floor.

- iii. Vice Chair Gonzalez entertained a motion to elect the slate of officers as presented by the Nominating Committee.
 - 1. Commissioner Bejaranos made a motion, Commissioner Chavez seconded
 - a. Aye: 10, Nay: 0
 - 2. Motion carried, officer slate elected.

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- a. Vice Chair Gonzalez entertained a motion to approve February meeting minutes.
 - i. Lexi noted a typo in section X that will be fixed.
 - ii. Commissioner Bejarano noted edits to who served on the nomination committee.
 - iii. Commissioner Chavez added the announcement of the soccer tournament to the Public Safety report.
 - iv. Commissioner Ohnesorge made a motion to approve February meeting minutes with three edits, Commissioner Lozano-Alvarez seconded.
 - 1. Aye: 10, Nay: 0
 - v. Motion carried, February meeting minutes approved with three edits.

V. Committee Reports

- a. Executive – no report
- b. Education
 - i. Commissioner Linares reported that the Tomás Rivera Awards Ceremony nominations close tomorrow, currently have about 58 nominations. Cynthia Jasso is confirmed as the keynote speakers, the Central Library is booked, and the committee has secured a sponsor for food.
- c. Community Advocacy – no report
- d. Public Safety
 - i. Commissioner Chavez shared that a Save Neighborhoods meeting took place, no new information. All local law enforcement entities continue to reinforce that they are not changing their practices and want community help to get the word out and calm fears. Noted that Broken Arrow Police haven't attended, but Bixby is still attending.
 - ii. All-ages soccer tournament March 29 & 30 fundraiser. Opportunity for the commission to table and raise awareness. Also need volunteers.
 - iii. Andy Little spoke about their canvassing event with American Red Cross, installed 52 smoke alarms with the help of many Spanish-speaking volunteers.
 - iv. Commissioner Ohnesorge shared TPD spoke at two immigration forums and multiple community events to continue to spread the word. Have 20 – 25 Spanish-speaking officers who are well versed on practices.
- e. Immigration – no report

VI. Old Business

- a. Vice Chair Gonzalez reviewed activities from previous meetings, including the working group to create educational resources for the community.
 - i. Commissioner Bejarano mentioned the Tulsa Area United Way and YWCA Tulsa presentation, can use those resources as a starting point and is willing to get people together to start the conversation.
 - ii. Vice Chair Gonzalez made an offer to connect the working group to a lawyer.
- b. By next meeting, Vice Chair Gonzalez and Commissioner Ohnesorge will have a draft of the lawful and safe protesting resource.

VII. New Business

- a. Commissioner Ariza provided an update on the vital records issue with Tulsa Health Department. She continues to follow up with Dr. Dart, THD's Executive Director, to push for changes to be more inclusive of documentation. This resulted in an Oklahoma House of Representatives bill to be filed—HB1688—which would allow people to amend birth certificates later in life to correct spelling and other errors.
 - i. Currently can only make these corrections within the first year of a child's live.
 - ii. Vice Chair Gonzalez asked how GTAHLAC can advocate for this bill.
 - 1. Commissioner Bejarano shared they can pen a letter from the commission and/or a chair letter.
 - 2. Lexi noted that a letter on behalf of the commission as an entity would need to be voted on in a future meeting. Additionally, the Human Rights Commission has an avenue for other commissions to make requests of support, so there is opportunity that HRC could sign onto a letter as well.
 - iii. Commissioner Lozano-Alvarez asked if Commissioner Gomez has drafted letters in the past, Commissioner Bejarano confirmed he has helped with that. Commissioner Lozano-Alvarez offered to ask Commissioner Gomez to draft a letter on behalf of the commission.
- b. Commissioners mentioned other Oklahoma bills to watch out for: HB1362, SB865

VIII. Announcements / Public Comments

- a. Commissioner Chavez congratulated Commissioner Reina on a presentation on the gender gap in entrepreneurship.

IX. Adjournment

- a. Vice Chair Gonzalez entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.
 - i. Commissioner Chavez made a motion, Commissioner Ohnesorge seconded.
 - 1. Aye: 10, Nay: 0
 - ii. Motion carried, meeting adjourned at 7:12 pm.