



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
LANSING

SUSAN CORBIN
ACTING DIRECTOR

Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan,
Consumers Energy John G. Russell Leadership Center
Grand Valley State University
120 Front Ave. SW Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504
June 21, 2024
Meeting Minutes No. 353

Commissioners Present

Dr. Jesse Bernal, Chair	Monteze Morales (Virtual)	
Consuela Barber-Lopez, Vice Chair		
Floren시오 Hernandez, Treasurer		
Aurora Saucedo		
Angelita Valdez		
Jose Sanchez		

Staff Present:

Marisa Constantini-Ramos (Administrative Assistant)

Guests:

Mika McAskill (Office of Global Michigan)

1) Call to Order:

Chair Jesse Bernal called the meeting to order at 5:40 PM.

2) Roll Call:

Chair Bernal complete the Roll Call. Dr. Jesse Bernal, Consuela Barber-Lopez, Floren시오 Hernandez, Aurora Saucedo, Angelita Valdez, Jose Sanchez, Monteze Morales (Virtual) were present. Commissioner Elias Gutierrez was present virtually (no quorum or voting)

3) Acknowledgement of Commissioner Absences:

Commissioners Abril Valdes-Siewert, Vanessa Guerra, Juan Rodriguez, Anthony Rubio and Sonya Hernandez were not present.

4) Approval of Minutes from June 7, 2024 :

MOTION: Motion for the approval of the minutes was made by Commissioner Aurora Saucedo, seconded for Treasurer F. Hernandez. Motion was approved.

5) Approval of Agenda:

Jesse Bernal, Chair
Consuela Barber-Lopez, Vice Chair
Floren시오 Hernandez, Treasurer
Abril Valdes Siewert, Secretary
Sonya Hernandez

Vanessa Guerra
Anthony Rubio
Elias Gutierrez
Juan Rodriguez
Jose Sanchez, III

Monteze Morales
Angelita Valdez
Aurora Saucedo

Chair Bernal informed the commission that the agenda for the meeting was prepared differently from previous meetings. Moving forward, every future meeting will begin with a reflection on the mission of HLCOM.

Treasurer F. Hernandez read the commission's mission statement.

Mission: To enhance the abilities of Michigan Hispanics by improving their quality of life and by:

- Promoting the appointment of more Hispanics in positions of influence in the public and private sector.
- Increasing the economic growth and stability of Hispanics.
- Increasing awareness and support of Hispanic issues by local and state government officials.
- Promoting better education and academic achievement of the Michigan Hispanic/Latino community.
- Creating a participatory, empowered the Michigan Hispanic/Latino community.

Chair Bernal proposed that the language of the HLCOM's mission statement be updated to better reflect the current goals of the commission. He suggested that this discussion take place during the retreat.

6) Chair's Report- Dr. Jesse Bernal

Chair Bernal thanked the commissioners for attending the Latine Summit, emphasizing the importance of the event and the positive reputation that HLCOM has built through its participation. He also informed that the Executive Director is expected to return next week.

7) Report from Office of Global Michigan:

Mika McAskill informed the commission that there is a plan to brief the Executive Director on all the changes that have occurred over the past three months. There will be a transition phase to ensure smooth progress moving forward. She highlighted the importance of clarifying the role of the commission in the public's mind, noting that there are inaccurate expectations and some confusion about the commission's functions. She and the Executive Director will work together to address this issue.

Commissioner Valdez provided an example of this confusion, citing the new budget of the Office of Global Michigan, which some people mistakenly believe there will be more funds for the commission. Treasurer F. Hernandez agreed, stating that the commission should be clear about its goals to change the public's perception. Mika McAskill informed that this will be part of the strategic planning discussions during the upcoming retreat.

I. Old Business:

A. Latine Summit Discussion & Next Steps.

Chair Bernal shared the key themes from the report outs:

• Collaboration and Networking:

- Emphasis on collective and collaborative spirit among businesses, nonprofits, and educational institutions.

- Highlighting the need to break down silos and share resources and information.
 - Building bridges between different sectors and communities for better support and collective action.
- **Civic Engagement and Leadership:**
 - Importance of civic engagement from grassroots to higher political levels.
 - Training and empowering community members to participate in civic activities and leadership roles.
 - Intentional leadership development and investment in future leaders, particularly from underrepresented communities.
- **Education and Skill Development:**
 - Focus on systemic issues in education, such as lack of parent and community involvement, and the need for intentional and measurable goals.
 - Promoting higher education and professional degrees to create societal change, rather than only pushing for skilled trades.
 - Advocacy for the recognition of international credentials to address teacher shortages and other professional gaps.
- **Health and Policy Advocacy:**
 - Addressing social determinants of health and the need for inclusive policies that cater to under-documented individuals.
 - Emphasis on narrative storytelling and lobbying for policy changes to improve health outcomes and access.
 - Highlighting the importance of using inclusive and respectful language.
- **Nonprofit Sector Challenges and Strategies:**
 - Shared successes and challenges in supporting the community, including the need for centralized grant writing and stronger partnerships.
 - Addressing funding fragmentation and advocating for direct funding to support Latino nonprofits.
 - Encouraging collaboration and resource sharing among organizations to build collective power.
- **Arts and Culture:**
 - Arts and culture as a catalyst for community engagement and a megaphone for initiatives.
 - Creating safe spaces for future leaders to learn and express their culture and creativity.
 - Integrating arts into various sectors to enhance outreach and impact.

· **Immigrant and Migrant Resources:**

- Addressing issues related to documentation status and access to federal programs.
- Advocating for institutional support beyond federal funding, such as self-sustained programs within universities.
- Discussing barriers in education and health for immigrant and migrant communities.

· **Sustainable Funding and Advocacy:**

- Need for sustainable funding sources that are not subject to political changes.
- Creating united advocacy efforts to advance Latino priorities in various sectors.
- Ensuring that funding supports both the organizations and the communities they serve, including undocumented individuals.

Chair Bernal asked commissioners to share their thoughts about the Latine Summit.

Treasurer F. Hernandez shared that the session he facilitated was rich with information on education at all levels. Attendees shared resources with each other, but had some questions about the follow-up process and whether the commission would take responsibility for coordinating this among community leaders.

Commissioner J. Sanchez shared that the summit brought great ideas and it was inspiring to see community leaders come together to support people, mentor the youth, and emphasize the importance of having mentees.

Commissioner A. Saucedo expressed that she enjoyed and learned a lot at the summit. She was particularly moved by the speaker her group had, Gabriela Santiago. Her group discussed how to convert discussions into actionable steps.

Commissioner A. Valdez, who facilitated the health session, mentioned that the focus was on how to access funding, and how the health group can advocate and collaborate with each other in a spirit of camaraderie. She highlighted the great quorum at the summit and encouraged participants to continue the movement initiated by the summit committee.

Vice Chair Barber-Lopez shared that it is now time to determine the next steps, as people want to be part of change and success. She emphasized the importance of holding listening sessions. She noted that there were fewer than 10 people in her group and suggested that the commission should give more importance to arts and culture, especially considering the sponsorships allocated to that group. Participants also inquired about how they could be more influential in various sectors of the community. The group plans to meet in July and is interested in sharing with the community how to navigate the state system for funding and grants.

B. Community Receptions

Chair Bernal informed the commission that today was the first community reception, which he had proposed. The next reception will be held on August 16th in Muskegon, and he invited all commissioners from all OGM commissions to attend.

C. Hispanic Heritage Month 2024

Chair Bernal informed the commission that this year there will be no Hispanic Heritage reception, as the focus will be on planning the 50th anniversary event for next year.

a. Scholarships Update

Chair Bernal informed that he and the administrative assistant will work on the scholarship application process to award students across the state. Up to \$20,000 will be available for scholarships. Commissioners Jose Sanchez and Juan Rodriguez will review the applications. Commissioner A. Valdez inquired about the bylaws that state the commission is required to host a Hispanic Heritage event and a graduation ceremony each year. Chair Bernal clarified that his is a misconception and that the state only requires recognition of Hispanic contributions, which can be done through other means such as social media campaigns and awarding community leaders.

D. 50th Anniversary Ad Hoc Committee

Vice Chair Barber-Lopez asked if the commission could solicit more donations. She was confused about the budget and the donations account. Chair Bernal clarified that the funds in the donations account will remain within the HLCOM budget. Vice Chair Barber-Lopez suggested that the commission should solicit funding for next year. Chair Bernal agreed to rewrite the donation request letter used in the past. Commissioner A. Valdez recommended inviting Latino businesses to purchase ads in the commission's brochures. Vice Chair Barber-Lopez mentioned that the logo would change and requested swag for the 50th anniversary event.

E. Retreat Ad Hoc Committee

Vice Chair Barber-Lopez informed the commission that the retreat will take place on August 16th and 17th in Muskegon. Chair Bernal added that the commission meeting will be held on August 16th at 3:00 PM, followed by a community reception at 5:00 PM. The retreat will continue on Saturday, August 17th, from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Treasurer Hernandez recommended tracking back records on past commissioners to honor them during the 50th anniversary celebration. Vice Chair Barber-Lopez suggested having internships to assist with data and logistic.

II. New Business:

A. Commission Endorsements

Chair Bernal informed that the executive committee can endorse candidates running for office. He proposed changing the bylaws to restrict endorsements to non-partisan elections or non-political matters. The commission will vote on this in the next meeting, and Chair Bernal will send a draft of the proposed bylaw changes, including signatures, for review.

B. Executive Committee Nominations

Chair Bernal announced that elections would be held at the next commission meeting. He asked for two volunteers to serve on the elections committee, which will receive nominations for the executive committee and count the votes. Commissioners Angelita Valdez and Jose Snachez volunteered and will work with the Executive Director and the administrative assistant on this

task. Chair Bernal encouraged commissioners to share the link to the appointments office with their contacts and encouraged them to apply to become commissioners.

8) Finance Report

Treasurer Florenio Hernandez reported that HLCOM has utilized 67% of its budget. The remaining funds are \$ 124,559 according to the finance report provided up to May.

He informed that the donations account has a balance of \$58,926 which was raised by the Executive Director and will be used for the 50th anniversary celebration, along with the new funding. Chair Bernal suggested hiring an event planner instead of having the staff handle it, as it is not part of their role.

Chair Bernal asked for a motion to approve the finance report. Commissioner Jose Sanchez made a motion to approve the finance report. Commissioner Angelita Valdez seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

9) Public Comment

Limited to 2-3 minutes. Public comments will be received but will not be acted upon by the Commission. They will respond if requested via email in 2-3 business days.

- a) **Bethany McAllister, Immigration Lawyer and owner of Libelula Books.** She shared her perspective on how the public perceives the commission, viewing it as an advocacy organization. She informed that there are seasonal visas for workers to come to the U.S but noted that there is a gap, which is a federal issue. She suggested that the commission should create a LinkedIn page to promote events.
- b) **Dana McAllister.** She congratulated the commission on the success of the summit and all its work. She invited the community to attend a free screening of Piratas del Caribe in Spanish at Campus Martius in Detroit. There will also be a workshop with an actor who voiced the character played by Orlando Bloom in the Spanish version.

10) Announcements:

- Chair Bernal announced that as a member of the Presidents' Alliance for Immigration and Higher Education, he is working to bring an individual from the Department of Homeland Security to a future meeting to speak about DACA. He informed the commission that only 46% of undocumented students, or Dreamers, in higher education identify as Latino, and he aims to connect with other commissions to address this issue.
- Treasurer F. Hernandez announced that MSU is hosting a DEI conference for the first time at the Cadillac Center on July 10th and 11th, and OGM will be hosting one of the sessions.
- Commissioner A. Valdez announced that in Muskegon, there will be an event featuring Yuyi Morales, author of Dreamers, a book for elementary students, and Pedro Cisneros, a comic book author of Mexikid. Cisneros will meet with middle school students for a meet-and-greet and book signing on November 14th.
- Vice Chair Barber-Lopez announced that she will be speaking during a training with the FBI next Friday about community engagement in Detroit.
- Mika McAskill announced that on June 29th, the Detroit Historical Museum will host a screening of the documentary Bad Axe, directed by David Siev. The event is hosted by MAPAAC and will include a Q&A session with the director.

11) **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 6:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Jesse Bernal, Chairperson Date

Abril Valdes Siewert, Secretary Date

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