**Minutes of the San Diego Refugee Forum Meeting Tuesday, 9/15/20 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

The meeting was held virtually via Zoom, hosted by SDRF Chair Mohammed Tuama.

Attendees:

Abdi Abdillahi, County Refugee Coordinator

Alondra Huerta

Ana Lozano, United Healthcare

Angelica Esparza

Ann Vilmenay, COSD-HHSA-BHS-AOA

Bob Walsh, SDRF Vice Chair

Bowa Tucker

Brian Tam

Brittney Ochira

Carol Crisp, Public Consulting Group

Carol Lewis, El Cajon Collaborative

Casey Myers, One Digital World

Chris Williams, Catholic Charities

Clint Carney, Survivors of Torture, International

Cristina Calderon

Cynthia Centeno

Dee Dorsey

Diana Nafea

Donna D

Elizabeth Jackson, A Better Life Together

Giselle B

Gloria Cruz

Graciela Mendoza

Hassan A, Somali Family Service

Homayoun Nabizadeh, SDPD Multi-cultural Community Relations Officer

Jacqueline Hom

Jamie Schroer

Jane Hoey

Jessica Hernandez, Transition Specialist with East Region Adult Education

Jessica Mier, Representative Susan Davis’s office

Karmella Maribao, A Better Life Together

Keshav Damoor

Kim Thomas

L Kocher

Lilian Matingkwony, SAY San Diego

Lucia Gonzalez

Lucy Jasso, San Diego Youth Services

Maggie Santibanez

Maria Horsley, United Way of San Diego County

Michael Vu, San Diego County Registrar of Voters

Mohammed Tuama, SDRF Chair

Monica Melgoza, Office of Refugee Coordination, SD County HHSA

Mu Aye, Karen Association of San Diego

Neda Rivera, County of San Diego

R Rascon

Rita Fernandez

Uweast team

Vernita Gutierrez, Planned Parenthood

1. Task Force Updates

No updates from Advocacy, Health, Domestic Violence, Employment task forces. Asylum Seekers – have not met since Covid crisis.

2. Resettlement update – Abdi Abdillahi, County Refugee Coordinator

- 37 arrivals in August: 12 refugees, 11 Haitians and 1 Cuban, and 13 Afghan SIVs

- September is the last month of the fiscal year. There have been 707 arrivals so far this fiscal year, the majority Haitians and Afghan SIVs.

- In US overall this fiscal year, 9,502 refugees and 9,235 SIV cases have been admitted. We are unlikely to reach the current 18,000 limit on refugees. No word from Trump administration yet on admissions numbers for next year, but it is likely to stay at 18,000.

3. Announcements

- United Women of East Africa: The agency got a new contract with San Diego County related to COVID19 for data collection and other functions. It is one of seven local agencies participating, including Alliance for African Assistance, Karen Organization, License to Freedom, Somali Bantu Association, and others.

- Somali Family Association also announced a new contract.

4. Main presentation by Michael Vu, San Diego County Registrar of Voters

This office oversees elections for San Diego County. The presentation explained voting procedures for the November 3 election in light of the pandemic situation.

There are 1.8 million registered voters in the county. This is among the top five in the US. The policy had been that voters could get a mail-in ballot if they wanted one or they could go to a polling station to vote in person. For the March 2020 election, 74% of voters voted by mail ballot. There were 1,548 polling places and 9,000 volunteers.

Given the pandemic, the state formed a task force to prepare for the November election. They needed to consider what would be feasible while maintaining election transparency and the safety of 1.5 to 1.8 million voters. They also needed to deal with an expected shortage of volunteers, half of whom are typically either aged 65+ or students aged 16-19. It was decided to provide a mail-in ballot to every voter to give everyone that option. For in-person voting, the number of polling places would be consolidated and larger sites with more open space would be utilized. Poll workers would be paid.

Procedures established for the November election:

Ballots

- Every voter will be sent a mail-in ballot. SD County is expecting to receive up to 1.6 million mail-in ballots.

- Ballots are also provided at polling places for in-person voting.

- The county will have 840 different types of ballots, depending on the specific location. These ballots are available in five languages, per state law: English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Tagalog.

- Ballots will be mailed out beginning the week of October 5. Ballots are already going out to military and overseas locations.

- Every voter should receive a mail ballot except those who did not register in time (by October 19). Such cases would require in-person voting.

- Sample ballots will start going out the week of September 21.

Mail ballot voting procedures

- Best option is to mail in the ballot by US mail. Postage is paid. Ballots need to be postmarked by November 3 at the latest to be counted.

- Voters can drop off their mail ballot at one of 126 mail ballot drop box locations in the county that will be accessible for a period of 29 days, up to Tuesday, November 3. These boxes are located at public libraries and a variety of other locations. Go to sdvote.com to see drop-off locations.

- Voters can take their mail ballot to any polling place for four days, from Saturday, Oct. 31 through Tuesday, Nov. 3. However, it is preferable that mail ballots are not taken to polling places, which may be crowded.

- Voters can track their mail ballot to know when it is mailed, received, and counted by the Registrar of Voters. Sign up at Where’s My Ballot? at sdvote.com.

- Voting twice will not be allowed. In-person ballots will be checked against mail ballots and not counted if a person has voted by mail.

In-person voting procedures

- For voters who prefer in-person voting, there are 235 polling places (“superpolling sites”) set up at public facilities around the county. There will be fewer polling places than for previous elections. All have full accessibility and will be provided with sanitizers, etc.

- Voters are each assigned to a polling place in proximity to their residence. It may be a different location from where a voter has voted in the past. Voters should vote only at their assigned location; however, they will be able to vote at other polling locations.

- Polling places will be open for four days, from Saturday, Oct. 31 through Tuesday, Nov. 3. Sat-Sun-Mon open 8am-5pm, Tue 7am-8pm.

- Polling places will be staffed by an expected total of 3,500 paid workers. SD Registrar of Voters is looking to hire poll workers, including bilingual workers with languages such as Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Tagalog, Laotian, Arabic, Korean, Japanese, and other languages of the refugee and immigrant communities. Go to sdvote.com to see job opportunities for poll workers.

Voter registration

- The deadline to register and receive a mail ballot for the November election is October 19. After that date, you can register online at sdvote.com or at a superpolling site.

- You can check your registration at sdvote.com

- Check your voter information on the SDVOTE mailer you received. If it does not show your current address, you can update your registration by re-registering to vote at sdvote.com

Job opportunities

- Go to sdvote.com. See “Poll worker” for description and to apply.

- At “Contact”, see also Employment opportunities, listings for “Temporary Election Workers”.

- Bilingual a plus for most jobs.

Information dissemination

- Every registered voter received a notice in the mail from SDVOTE explaining voting procedures.

- A big campaign is needed to get the word out about voting procedures. SDRForum members are asked to inform the public about the main changes in procedures, and to advise them to:

- Check their registration and confirm their address

- Mail in their ballot or return it to a drop off location or polling place

- Track their ballot on “Where’s My Ballot?”

- Use a polling place as an alternative if they don’t mail in a ballot

- And to vote!

Michael Vu made assurances that the Registrar of Voters office can manage the increase in mail-in ballots. They have increased their mail capacity and processing capability. They will start processing ballots beginning 29 days before election day. They will accept ballots postmarked by election day up to 17 days after election day.

5. Other announcements

- Carol Crisp at PCG: Public Consulting Group is hiring for 7-9 positions for Supportive Services. Some require language skills.

TEMP (PA Family Services) (South)Claims Specialist (East)Claims Specialist (South)Lead Child Care Specialist (Central)Child Care Specialist (East)Child Care Specialist (Central)Senior Social WorkerFamily Services Supervisor (East)Family Services Program Assistant (East)

Formally apply via PCG Careers Site: http://www.publicconsultinggroup.com/careers/

Full position descriptions can be found on the Careers Page.

- Lilian Matingkwony at SAY San Diego: Now trying to enroll Cal-WORKS recipient parents with children below 2 or pregnant moms. Lilian can send a referral form. Lilian.Matingkwony@saysandiego.org

- Casey Myers at One Digital World: They are opening a computer lab in Tijuana migrant shelters, are looking for a social media intern/marketing coordinator (volunteer position). casey@onedigitalworld.net

- Jessica Hernandez at East Region Adult Education announced program openings for students.

6. San Diego Refugee Forum news

- There will be an election of forum officers in November for the positions of Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary. An election task force needs to be formed to receive nominations and count votes. Mohammed asked for three volunteers for the task force, and Monica Melgoza, Carol Lewis and Carol Crisp volunteered. Nominations for officer positions should be emailed to Mohammed. Self-nominations are accepted.

- Next month’s meeting will address USCIS changes regarding citizenship and immigration issues. Please contact Mohammed Tuama with suggestions for panel participants.

7. Closing

- The meeting minutes for the July meeting were approved. (There was no meeting in August.)

- The next meeting will be held Tuesday, October 20.

- The meeting adjourned at 11:55.

*Minutes taken by Bob Walsh*