La Alianza Latina Commission
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, January 16, 2024, at 6:15 pm

Members Present:

- ☒ Yvette Oquendo- Berruz
- ☒ Luzmila Robinson
- ☒ Gabriel Terrasa
- ☒ Alicia Altamirano
- ☒ Paloma Leon
- ☒ Feli Sola- Carter
- ☒ Gabriel Moreno
- ☒ Monteith Mitchell
- ☒ Santiago Carrera
- ☒ Cris Oviedo
- ☒ Victoria Benitez
- ☒ Gaston Gamez
- ☒ Sandy Cos
- ☒ Katherine Canales
- ☒ Elvira McCullough

Staff Present*:* Yolanda Sonnier, Monica Perez and Claudia Allen and Lauryn Reynolds

Members of the Public: Samiyah Hira

I. Call Meeting to Order & Welcome – *Yvette Oquendo-Berruz, Chair*
   a. Called meeting to order at 6:19pm (changed meeting to virtual due to weather)

II. Introduction of Monica Perez, new Executive Liaison
   a. Monica introduced herself o La Alianza Latina and thanked Lauryn as she helps Monica transition into new role.

III. Approval of November 14, 2023, Minutes
   a. Cris Oviedo motioned to approve, and Gab second. The vote to approve the minutes was unanimous and the minutes were approved.

IV. Commissioner's acknowledgment (*congrats/birthdays/other)*
   a. Feli Sola- Carter- thankful for the new transition and ready to get started. Thankful for Yolanda for helping with ongoing support.

V. Chair & Vice Chair Reports – *Yvette & Luzmila Robinson*

- Yvette- thank you for trusting her to lead the commission
- County Executive Ball requested to encourage Latinos in Howard County to enroll in health insurance
- Luzmila - discussed community information and shared some of the organizations that have reached out to La Alianza Latina:

a) NAACP looked for feedback and participation in community celebration in December,
b) Howard County NAACP branch for make healthy choices (Easy Choice in Howard County MD) asked to collaborate with La Alianza Latina.

c) Columbia Community Care collaboration for their Distribucion De Juguetes that took place in December.
d) Howard County Department of Community Resources and Services (DCRS)- reached to partner with their holiday food support and projects.

e) Howard County Multi Service Center in Laurel MD looking for translating services f) Collaborated with County Executive's office to do a PSA for health insurance open enrollment.

g) CASA- they are preparing for MD state assembly Jan 10th and want to collaborate with their Access to Care Act.

h) Master Plan for Gateway area's open house is Jan 25th 4:00-7:00pm and they would like to collaborate regarding how to develop their area.

i) Gaston- shared job postings and special program (summer programs) for the community. The Hispanic Achievement Liaison has two vacancies. He also shared details on summer programs like the Math Academy.

j) Hannah from Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Core working with Heritage Greenway- (they run environmental programs) would like to collaborate.

k) Gaston shared information with an event happening at Reservoir high school. Their student services are running a one-day interviewing event for 11th graders called the World of Work Event. Asking for participation on March 21st from 8:00-2:15p.

l) Howard County Women's Bar Association asked for attorneys to mentor young women about the legal field and for them to sign up for a program called Discovering Your Path being held March 22nd.

m) The Choice (program from UMBC) is hosting an intern during spring break and wanted Alianza to circulate information.

n) Luzi wants to prioritize communicating with other organization on how to move forward to collaborate with them.

VI. HCPSS & HCC Ex-Officio Commissioner Reports

a. Gaston (HCPSS)-

i. Vacancies for the Hispanic Liaison in three high schools – interviews are happening soon.

ii. Academia De Padres Con Ambiciones starts Jan 24th and will be held once a month with a total of have 5 sessions. Three in person and two virtual. He will meet with the community college (Program de Ambiciones) to discuss zoom link and QR codes. They received 70 applicants and decided on selecting 30 random participants to keep the groups small. They are planning to do something with the other 40. Last session the participants will receive a certificate from community college and school. This program is fully in Spanish. The Academia de Padres will discuss topics like how to navigate school system, financial aid for higher education etc.

iii. Noche Latina is in April at a high school and will give us more details soon

b. HCC Ex-Officio- Sandy

i. Feb 2nd is Sandy's last day at HCC and will no longer be with La Alianza Latina

ii. Luzi asked if we must live or work at Howard County to be a part of the La Alianza Latina? Yolanda explained that you need to live, work, or have a connection to Howard County to be in La Alianza Latina.

VII. Executive Secretary and Executive Liaison Reports

a. Executive Secretary – Yolanda Sonnier

i. Claudia Allen will take over tonight's meeting because she needs to step out to testify before county council on pending bill. Claudia is the Communications and Outreach manager. She is the PIO representative for OHRE.

ii. We lean on Gaston and Sandy to help us on recruiting students to be on the commission.

iii. Gabe accepted for Luminious the Living the Legacy MLK award at the MLK Celebration

iv. Conexiones – there is no one from that organization that has been appointed to La Alianza. Does Anyone have any contact? Feli shared information with Yvette. Organization has transitioned and it is her impression that at this point they transitioned from their previous programs. Feli sent Yvette contact and indicated their website is not up to date. Yolanda suggested to possibly put in request to change legislation and make to another community member instead of Conexiones if they are no longer operational.

v. The Rules and Procedures for the commission are still being reviewed by attorney and will get back with feedback. May have to make revisions or schedule a time for her to come to give them legal advice based on recommendations. She will give feedback within the next couple of weeks.

vi. Every year Maryland Association of Human Rights Agencies will have a Human Rights Day in Annapolis and it is being held 2/5 from 10-4pm with lunch being provided.

vii. Financial update- commission started with 35,425 dollars, has used 11,744.73 so far and has 23,680.27 left. Commission cosponsored the Hispanic Heritage Month Festival. $15,000 was held with Columbia Community Care (CCC) who was co-sponsor. From that $15,000 13,500 that was paid to Inner Arbor Trust for the festival and other 1,500 was a processing and contribution fee to CCC.

b. Community Ambassador kickoff event and information

i. Lauryn shared about event- will have different sessions and tiers. First session is about safety with the Sheriff's office, police department and fire department. Goes hand in hand with commissioners. Spread with networks and send it in Spanish as well.

ii. Luzi asked Yolanda to share process (website) to share with those wanting to apply to a specific commission. Yolanda said there is a central portal for commissions. Must submit interest letter as well as a resume. High school students do not need to have an extensive resume or indicate in letter of interest. Address information should not be on there. Constituent services will collect applications, review and County Executive will select an individual. They will give testimony before the County Counsel. This is for private and public schools. College must be Howard County resident or attend school in Howard County. (They can attend another college but be Howard County resident) or not resident but attend Howard County

college.

VIII. Retreat Discussion/Preparation – Led by Yvette

a. Yvette shared the draft agenda. Yvette discusses the main objective for retreat is to get a refresher on the purpose of this commission and why it was created and brief refresher on the open meetings act of dos and don'ts. Also, to establish mission, vision, and values.

b. They need a facilitator for retreat and want to know if there is anyone in the commission that would be willing to serve as the facilitator. Feli doesn't think someone that is a part of committee should facilitate. Yvette will ask Yolanda.

c. Establish our goals for 2024 and break out in small groups to come up and vote on goals.

d. Work on committees to determine if we need any additions or changes

IX. Internal Communication Discussion – *Cris Oviedo & Katherine Canales*

a. Cris- through surveys what came up consistently was the need to look at the ways we are communicating internally and externally. Look at internal communications (text group) when we have quorum or any communication via email or chat then it becomes subject to open meetings act. Moving forward we will not use group chat but if event is coming up it will be about event. If we have more than half attending, then it becomes subject of the open meetings act. With retreat create subcommittee that focuses on communication. External communication is guided by Human Rights office. Internal is also guided by Human Rights office. If you have questions email

b. executive community and cc office of human rights with issue and they will help with that. Katherine linked the open meetings act. Luzi asked Cris and Kat to expand

c. communication with external entities we hear from regularly as well on how we respond to organizations in our community. OHRE forwards to executive committee. There is a form that OHRE created to request to communicate with Alianza Latina that gets forward to La Alianza Latina. Commission needs to come up with a system because it can be hard to navigate each email. What kind of partnership do we want? What does partnership mean? Be on the same page when new opportunities come up. Claudia talked about internal and external communication. Internal should always email alianzalatina@howardcountymd.gov email and cc should be all the staff. Yolanda and Monica. Do not reply all with opinions, thoughts, ideas because that is subject to PIA and could be a violation of the Open Meetings Act. The offices will be sending all communication from the Alianza Latina email account. All internal should be sent to that account and will be from that account. To post online make sure it is sent to Alianza through executive leadership. It will be sent to Claudia and then it will post. Press releases are drafted within office and then sent to PIO office and edited there. Executive leadership will be asked for quote to be put on press release. Same process for media. For external partnerships and networks – we will figure out appropriate system during retreat. If there is a document or image that needs to be voted quickly then we set up meeting virtually to vote and move forward. Reach out if anyone has questions. Cris said many requests for quotes or to represent

d. Alianza Latina is done by the chair if not it will be vice chair. If for some reason they both can't, the chair will designate a

commissioner.

X. 2024 Committee Discussion

Yvette – we will discuss committees below at the retreat. To start thinking what committee they want to serve on and designate someone that will create a report of the committee. We need committees to be more structured. They want to meet on the off months that La Alianza Latina does not meet. Committee meetings will be virtual and monthly. Luzi said prior to retreat take the time to look at the legislation and rules and procedures of the commission. Look at committees to see who is best suited for committees. Chair and scribe to take minutes for commission meetings. These are the committees:

a. Government Access
b. Events and Committee
c. Underserved & At-Risk Latino Population
d. Public Policy
e. Rules of Procedure

XI. Public Forums–

a. Samiyah Hira is from ambassador program. Samiyah asked Monica to translate flyer and will be sent out tomorrow.

XII. Announcements

a. No announcements
b. Will populate committees at the retreat.

XIII. Adjournment

a. Cris motioned and Gaston second motion
b. Meeting adjourned at 7:46pm