



Utah Multicultural Commission
Meeting Minutes
March 10, 2026 | 1–2:30 p.m.
Highland Building | Google Meet
Approved

Members: Emmie Gardner, Rhiana Medina, Shawn Newell, Kevin Nguyen, Rich Nye, Nune Phillips (designee for Tracy Gruber), Tom Ross, Trhas Tafere

Absent: Luna Banuri, Tyler Clancy, Meredith Lam, Jefferson Moss

Guests: Amy Ahrens Terpstra, Jenny Hor, Dustin Khong, Igor Limansky, Kat Potter, Jeremy Shinoda, Eddy Thompson

Welcome –Shawn Newell, MCC Co-Chair

Quorum was not yet established at the beginning of the meeting.

Commissioner Vacancy – Commission Discussion

The meeting began with a call for recommendations to fill a commission vacancy. Division of Multicultural Affairs (MCA) Director Igor Limansky requested commissioners to identify potential nominees from the community, sectors we may be missing, and people you would enjoy working with, who are committed to making a difference. Provide suggestions to Igor Limansky.

The director introduced the new deputy director, Eddy Thompson, who brings extensive experience in community engagement and youth programming.

Commissioner Highlight – Emmie Gardner

Emmie Gardner shared her background as a licensed clinical social worker and her current work with Holy Cross Ministries, which supports the immigrant community through health, education, and legal services.

Approval of Minutes – Commission Vote

MOTION: Emmie Gardner moved to approve the meeting minutes from January 13, 2026. Tom Ross seconded the motion. The motion passed on a 8-0-3 vote.

Yeas – 8

Emmie Gardner
Rhiana Medina
Shawn Newell
Kevin Nguyen
Rich Nye
Nune Phillips
Tom Ross
Trhas Tafere

Nays – 0

Absent – 3

Luna Banuri
Tyler Clancy
Meredith Lam

CCE Legislative Updates – Kat Potter, CCE Deputy Director

The deputy director of the Department of Cultural and Community Engagement (CCE) provided a summary of the recently concluded legislative session.

The department secured one-time funding for projects such as the America250 initiative and a literacy awareness campaign. MCA's budget remains intact. CCE sustained several minor cuts across the board and MCA will not receive any cuts. SB241, an early literacy bill, was highlighted for setting an ambitious 80% literacy goal for third-grade students by 2030.

There was a discussion regarding the challenges posed by recent legislation, including SB295, and its potential impact on identity-based student groups like Latinos in Action.

Promise Partnership Presentation – Amy Ahrens Terpstra, Promise Partnership Utah

Guest speaker, Amy Ahrens Terpstra, from Promise Partnership Utah joined to discuss community-based strategies to support the state's literacy goals. Commission members brainstormed tactics, emphasizing:

- Starting literacy efforts upstream, specifically working with children ages zero to three.
- Improving language access and establishing community interpreter programs to empower parents to be involved in their children's education.
- Utilizing the "community schools" hub model to remove socioeconomic barriers, integrate after-school programming, and provide health links.

April Retreat – Igor Limansky

The commission finalized plans for an upcoming deep-dive retreat on April 9th. Key retreat topics will include reviewing a new set of commission bylaws, electing two new co-chairs (representing cabinet and community sides), and voting on a member agreement draft form regarding internal attendance expectations. The meeting will be held at the Utah State Capitol.

Other Business and Open Comment – Commission Discussion

Dr. Rich Nye shared that SB295 passed. Another part of the bill is under review for K-12 clubs.

Reaffirming the Utah Compact: Members discussed the potential role of the commission in recommending a reaffirmation of the Utah Compact to promote compassion, kindness, and healing for refugee and immigrant communities following a divisive legislative session.

Adjourn

MOTION: Dr. Rich Nye moved to adjourn the meeting. Emmie Gardner seconded the motion.

Action Items

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Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for April 9, 2026, from 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m