



**COMMISSION ON DECOLONIZATION**  
**Regular Monthly Meeting Agenda**  
**February 6, 2024 | 3:00 p.m.**

- I. Call to Order: 3:16 PM**
- II. Roll Call**
  - 1. **Hon. Lourdes Leon Guerrero**
  - 2. **Hon. Therese Terlaje**
  - 3. **Hon. Tina Muña-Barnes**
  - 4. **Hon. Frank Blas (absent)**
  - 5. **Hon. Jesse Alig (absent)**
  - 6. **Hon. Eddie Duenas (absent)**
  - 7. **Dr. Michael Bevacqua (absent)**
  - 8. **Dr. Mary Cruz (excused)**
  - 9. **Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper**
  - 10. **Ty Whitaker**
  - 11. **Victoria “Lola” Leon Guerrero**
  - 12. **Dewey Huffer (absent)**
  - 13. **Other**
    - a. Hon. Roy Quinata
    - b. Phill Leon Guerrero (Office of Vice Speaker Tina Muña-Barnes)
- III. Approval of Minutes - Regular Monthly Board Meeting - September 5, 2023**
  - a. **Motion by Victoria-Lola Leon Guerrero.**
  - b. **Seconded by Governor Lou Leon Guerrero**
  - c. **Motion passed by consensus.**
- IV. Financial Report**
  - a. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that with FY 2024, each Task Force account has been renewed to \$55,000 as stipulated in the budget law. The Independence Task Force has blanket purchase agreements (BPAs) for equipment, materials and printing that are being processed. COD will provide the encumbrance and the BPAs to the Independence Task Force when they are ready. Asked Lola Leon Guerrero to send a representative from the Independence Task Force to receive the BPAs. Reported that there has not been much spending outside of the last Fanhita Conference as it was done in October using this current fiscal year’s budget.
  - b. **Victoria-Lola Leon Guerrero:** Asked how soon the printing Purchase Order would be ready.



- c. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Stated that it should be done in less than a week.
- d. **Victoria-Lola Leon Guerrero:** Informed that the task force would need to print for an event they are holding on Saturday.
- e. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Informed her that COD reached out to DOA to see if the BPAs can be expedited.
- f. **Victoria-Lola Leon Guerrero:** Asked if direct payment is an option if the cost of service is under \$2,000.
- g. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Stated that he would have to inquire with DOA as the direct payment would come from them. COD does not have direct payment access. Informed her that COD will look into this option.

## V. Old Business

- a. Plebiscite Update & Strategy Discussion
  - 1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that in December 2023, COD scheduled a Special Board Meeting with Attorney General (AG) Moylan regarding the plebiscite update and the strategy discussion as requested by the Board members. Unfortunately, this meeting was canceled by AG Moylan and his office as he was unable to attend. As an alternative, COD requested that they move forward with a written request for a legal opinion.
    - a) Motion by Vice Speaker Tina Muña-Barnes.
    - b) Seconded by Governor Lou Leon Guerrero.
    - c) Motion passed by consensus.
  - 2. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Stated that COD will compile the record into a packet which will be submitted to the board members for vetting. The packet can be revised as needed. The packet will then be submitted to Chairwoman Lou Leon Guerrero for signature and will go out as an official letter from the Commission on Decolonization. Stated that COD will have an update by the next board meeting. Notably, the packet will likely go out ahead of the next meeting.
- b. 2023 Fanhita Conference
  - 1. **Melvin Won-Pat Borja:** Reported the outcomes of the 2023 Fanhita Conference. The theme of the conference was Security, Sovereignty, and the Path to Peace. Informed the Board that the conference had diverse attendance with 200 registrants. Recordings from Days 2 & 3 are on COD's YouTube page. Recognized that one notable deliverable from the conference is the COD Community Engagement Plan. Informed the Board that planning for the next conference is underway. Noted that COD is working with the Governor and the Legislature on the FY 2025 budget. Mentioned that funds for the next conference will come from the FY 2025 budget. Explained that COD is exploring other options as an alternative to the conference because there are significant costs in terms of availability and affordability of space. Explained that COD would like to schedule the conference for days where people can attend, but renting a venue for preferred days of the week increases the cost.



2. **Sen. Roy Quinata:** Asked if the Guam Community College auditorium is being considered as a possible venue.
3. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Responded and informed Senator Quinata that it will be added to a list of potential venues. Stated that COD is also considering the Sinajana Mayor's Office (SMO) and their Performing Arts Center. Asserted that cost savings on venue may increase opportunities.
4. **Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper:** Asked if the community engagement plan was made available to the Board.
5. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Stated that the plan is still in a draft form and COD is finalizing it. It will be made available to the board members when it has been finalized.

## V. United Nations Updates

- a. UN C24 Regional Seminar - Dates and location are pending.
  1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that the UN C24 Regional Seminar dates and location are pending. Reported that the anticipated location for the Regional Seminar is Venezuela. Asserted that the bigger question is if the UN will have the funding to support the Regional Seminar. Reported that a decision on the Seminar's scheduled dates and venue should be confirmed by next week. Informed the Board that COD doesn't have funding for the C24 Regular Session. However, if COD's budget request is successful for next fiscal year, there will be enough funding to travel for the Un C4 this October. Reiterated that the UN C24 and the C4 annual sessions are opportunities to petition.
- b. Engagement Strategy & Visiting Mission
  1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reiterated that COD has received agreement from the United States United Nations (USUN) for a visiting mission and that the UN C24 Chairwoman has received notice of the USUN's approval. Noted that the biggest concern is whether or not resources will be available to support a visiting mission. Explained to the Board that there are two other visiting missions ahead of Guam. Emphasized the importance in continuing to work with the USUN in order to keep their commitment strong to the visiting mission.
  2. **Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper:** Asked what the board can do to facilitate the conversation to convince the USUN to move forward with the visiting mission in a timely manner.
  3. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Stated that there is a benefit to engaging with the USUN. Reported that during COD's last visit, the U.S. State Department Ambassador for the Pacific Region attended with a commitment to maintain support for the visiting mission. Noted that a bigger concern is whether the UN C24 will be funded and if the US can or is willing to fund the visiting mission.
  4. **Victoria-Lola Leon Guerrero:** Asserted that considering there is an upcoming election in the U.S. and that the current Administration is receptive to a visiting mission, there seems to be an opportunity.



5. **Governor Lou Leon Guerrero:** Suggested that the Board write to the U.S. State Department.
6. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Agreed that the Board can draft a letter and noted that there is currently good communication with the State Department.
7. **Governor Lou Leon Guerrero:** Informed the Board that the Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell has been very much supportive of Pacific Island nations and is involved with INDOPACOM. Suggested for the Board to write to him or offered to personally call him. His support could help with funding a visiting mission.
8. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Suggested another option, which could be to reach out to member states that Guam has relationships with in the region like Palau, the FSM, or the RMI.
9. **Governor Lou Leon Guerrero:** Suggested that she and Melvin discuss this to see what can be done.
10. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Explained that if funding is secured, then COD will participate in the Caribbean Regional Seminar. Additionally, if funding is secured for the UN C24 and C4, then COD's messaging will be consistent in terms of the visiting mission strategy. Offered to meet with board members to discuss this item again when the time is closer to these engagements.

## VI. COD Office Updates

- a. Office staff updates
  1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that in January, Nolan Flores who was COD's Staff Assistant moved to the University of Guam and accepted a position there as a Research Fellow. Byron Aguon has stepped in as a Staff Assistant at COD.
- b. Community Engagement Plan
  1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that the COD staff is still finalizing the Community Engagement Plan, which will be transmitted to the Board when complete. Highlighted the three major goals and strategies of the plan, which will be included into COD's existing Public Information Program. Reported that this will inform the work COD does in this and the next fiscal year.

## VII. Task Force Updates

- a. Statehood
  1. No updates.
- b. Independence
  1. **Victoria-Lola Leon Guerrero:** Reported that on Saturday, February 10th at 10:00 AM, the Independence Task Force is hosting the Lukao Fuha, which will be the 10th annual hike to Fuha Rock in Humatak. Explained that this event brings people back to the site of Guam's creation story and engages them around that story as a continuing practice that has been lost through colonization. Informed the board that the Task Force is preparing an educational pamphlet and that there will be



educational tables set up. Reported that the Independence Taskforce is planning a general assembly for next month at Saggan Kotturan

c. Free Association

1. No updates.

## VIII. Open Floor

- a. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that COD is still running the “Challenge the Status Quo” talk show on WAVE 105.1 FM every Wednesday from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. Reported that a notice was sent to all Task Force chairs to coordinate their guest spots on one of the shows. After the initial 10 show run, COD will have a conversation with WAVE to see if they are interested in continuing. The station is interested in community and educational spots.
- b. **Governor Lou Leon Guerrero:** Asked if people call in to make comments to the show.
- c. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Affirmed and informed that the show is done in a talk radio format. Reported that a few calls are received every show and have been positive. COD has also been promoting the show on all of their social media. The COD team is requesting the show recordings to see if they can be used for podcast episodes.
- d. **Victoria-Lola Leon Guerrero:** Explained the recent challenges in having critical dialogue on issues related to decolonization.
- e. **Governor Lou Leon Guerrero:** Suggested that COD participate in morning radio shows to start talking about decolonization as this medium is more widely listened to.
- f. **Victoria-Lola Leon Guerrero:** Explained that there are many misconceptions on decolonization that must be unpacked. Inquired if there were conversations had during the legislative briefing around the plebiscite.
- g. **Governor Lou Leon Guerrero:** Asserted that a decision has to be made on how to proceed forward in conducting the plebiscite. Stated that she is unsure how the legal decision from the Attorney General will impact this.
- h. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Affirmed that COD will work on obtaining legal opinion from the Attorney General.
- i. **Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper:** Asked if there is any interest for the Chair of the Free Association Taskforce.
- j. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that there currently isn't. Noted that Ed Alvarez was asked, but he and other members of their task force are not interested. Invited the Board to look out for any interested parties to chair the position and to send them to COD.
- k. **Governor Lou Leon Guerrero:** Asked about the status of the Statehood Task Force.



- l. Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that COD has been in communication with Fmr. Sen. Duenas. However, COD is unsure what the Statehood Task Forces' plans for leadership are. Recognized that there needs to be more activity overall from both the Statehood and Free Association Task Forces.
- m. Victoria-Lola Leon Guerrero:** Asked what the Board can do to help get COD what it needs for next fiscal year.
- n. Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Explained that the FY 2025 budget will cover personnel and task force appropriations. However, this leaves a small operational budget. Noted that there is no set decision on budget yet and that the office will work with Governor Leon Guerrero on the budget ceiling. COD also has an ongoing conversation with the legislature.
- o. Governor Lou Leon Guerrero:** Asked if some of the Task Force funds can be used for community outreach.
- p. Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Explained that the budget law was amended due to some inactivity by the Task Forces. As a result, the law was amended to allow lapsed funds to come into COD's budget so it could be programmed for COD's Public Information Program. Therefore, if a Task Force does not spend its full appropriation, in the next fiscal year it will roll over into COD's account. Explained that it does not affect the funding that the Task Forces had previously.
- q. Speaker Therese Terlaje:** Reported that the Legislature received the Governor's request for the budget that COD's appropriation is the same as the FY 2024 appropriations, which was an approximately \$64,000 increase from FY 2023 which was an increase for FY 2022.
- r. Victoria-Lola Leon Guerrero:** Asked if the increase reflected the 22% pay plan increase.
- s. Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Explained that some of it was the 22%, but there has been no change in any of the Task Forces.
- t. Victoria-Lola Leon Guerrero:** Noted that if there is traction on a plebiscite, there needs to be a fiscal plan that supports a more aggressive educational campaign.
- u. Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Agreed with Lola. Stated that whatever path is taken, it will be inevitable that the government would need to respond in that window of time.
- v. Governor Lou Leon Guerrero:** Noted that the Board will wait to receive the Attorney General's legal opinion and figure out a plan of action if he doesn't respond.
- w. Phill Leon Guerrero:** Noted that Mes Chamoru is next month and asserted that it is a natural opportunity for the media to offer free community space for the decolonization conversation and our quest to examine the status quo and the limitations and causes. Suggested that COD and the Task Forces should approach media organizations. Stated that shopping centers may be open to provide space for outreach events.
- x. Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Affirmed that COD will look into outreach opportunities that will be available in partnership. Reported that the Department of Chamorro Affairs is planning engagement during Mes



CHamoru where there will be weekly events happening to include COD. Stated that COD has a full calendar for March.

**IX. Adjournment**

- a. Motion by Governor Lou Leon Guerrero
- b. Seconded by Victoria-Lola Leon Guerrero
- c. Meeting adjourned at 4:01 PM