



COMMISSION ON DECOLONIZATION
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
May 7, 2024 | 3:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order: 3:15 p.m.

II. Roll Call

1. **Hon. Lourdes Leon Guerrero** (excused)
2. **Hon. Therese Terlaje** (excused)
3. **Hon. Tina Muña-Barnes**
4. **Hon. Frank Blas** (excused)
5. **Hon. Jesse Alig** (excused)
6. **Hon. Eddie Duenas** (represented by Eloy Hara)
7. **Eloy Hara**
8. **Dr. Michael Bevacqua**
9. **Dr. Mary Cruz**
10. **Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper**
11. **Ty Whitaker**
12. **Victoria “Lola” Leon Guerrero**
13. **Dewey Huffer** (absent)
14. **Other**
 - a. Alan Cepeda (Representative-Vice Speaker’s Office)
 - b. Joe Mesa (Statehood Task Force)

In the absence of Governor Lou Leon Guerrero, Vice Speaker Barnes served as Chairperson for the meeting.

III. Approval of Minutes - Regular Monthly Board Meeting - February 6, 2024

- a. Motion by Vice Spkr. Barnes to approve the minutes.
- b. Seconded by Eloy Hara.
- c. Motion passed by consensus.

IV. Financial Report

- a. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that since the transition into the new Guam Financial Management Information System (GFMS), COD has been experiencing some delays with procurement and accessing account balances. However, the COD staff has been participating in training to transition into the new system. COD has been able to move through procurement requests with the support of the Executive Management Office (EMO). Additionally, BBMR has been helping COD keep track of



their account balances. Reported that in April, the Independence Task Force received their encumbered blanket purchase agreements (BPAs) for printing services and materials & supplies. Provided a reminder to the task forces to submit all invoices once shared by the vendors so that COD can have them processed immediately.

- b. **Vice Speaker Barnes:** Requested the number-to-date balances from BBMR.
- c. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Explained that COD does not currently have this information. Noted that COD tracks procurement internally and refers to BBMR to obtain reports. Explained that there has been very little spending since the last board meeting in February 2024.
 - i. **Motion to table financial report until next board meeting pending information from BBMR and FMIS by Vice Speaker Barnes.**
 - ii. **Seconded by Eloy Hara.**
 - iii. **Motion passed by consensus.**

V. Old Business

- a. Plebiscite Update & Strategy Discussion
 - 1. Written request to the Attorney General
 - a) **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that on February 19, 2024, Governor Leon Guerrero transmitted a letter to Attorney General Moylan requesting legal opinion on two questions focused on a political status plebiscite for Guam. The first asked if their office can draft the definition of native inhabitants of Guam so that it does not violate the U.S. Constitution. The second asked if an NGO can conduct a plebiscite with the current definition of native inhabitants of Guam. A copy of the Governor's letter was shared with all the board members. A formal response from the Attorney General's Office is still pending. Reported that the Governor's Office assisted COD in following up with the Attorney General's Office. The last update from the Attorney General's office is that they are working on their response.
 - b) **Vice Speaker Barnes:** Asked if it is in order to send a second request as the letter was sent out on February 19. Suggested asking the Governor to get a response from her initial letter. Requested that follow ups be accounted for on the record so that the Board continues to get updates as they meet. Since there is no response from the Office of the Attorney General, it must be noted that the Board has been patiently waiting since February for a response, but there is nothing to date. The Board is checking for updates.
 - c) **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Noted and appreciated the concern expressed by Vice Speaker Barnes. COD will follow up and produce the second written request for the Attorney General's opinion and coordinate the effort and transmission through the Governor's Office.



Recognized the Vice Speaker's motion to submit a second written request from the Governor's office to the Attorney General following up on request for legal opinion.

- (1) Motion by Vice Speaker to submit a follow up with the Governor's initial letter (submitted February 19, 2024) to the AG requesting legal opinion on a political status plebiscite for Guam.
- (2) Seconded by Eloy Hara.
- (3) Motion passed by consensus.

V. New Business

a. UNPO Membership & Updates

1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that COD is in the process of paying annual dues to the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO). Noted that this will be COD's third attempt. Explained that UNPO does not accept purchase orders or checks, they only accept payment via credit card or electronic funds transfer (EFT). COD has tried to process an EFT payment through DOA. However, payment has been rejected twice. This is an error on the UNPO side. COD is working with the UNPO Director Mercè Cano and their finance lead to resolve this issue. Noted that Washington D.C. is also experiencing payment delays. UNPO is not holding late payment against COD and the office will not be charged additional fees. However, it is important that payment is made to conduct regular business. Reported that an update from UNPO is pending. However, once payment is made COD will inform the Board via email.
2. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that on February 9, 2024, COD and Vice Speaker Barnes met with UNPO Director Cano. During this meeting, Director Cano introduced a new UNPO strategy for engagement that is focused on climate change and the environment. The strategy reconceptualizes the approach of the degradation of human rights and the rise of autocratic states. Notably, there are no updates in Guam's case with the International Network of Human Rights. Additionally, UNPO has paused the establishment of a Washington D.C. office. However, they are still exploring ways to create a presence in the United States. This is an important piece for Guam. Explained that COD has found a disconnect between the work being conducted in UN Geneva and the UN Headquarters in New York. COD is working closely with UNPO to try to rectify this situation. Lastly, Director Cano highlighted opportunities for human rights training, which may be held in June or September. However, COD has not received an update on when UNPO will host them. Updates on participation opportunities will be relayed to the Board.
3. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that COD assisted Governor Leon Guerrero with her application for candidacy as a Regular Presidency member of the UNPO General Assembly.



Explained that the presidency is like the leadership or executive committee of the UNPO. As a member, Guam is eligible to hold a position in the presidency. However, this hinges on Guam getting their dues paid. As COD continues to work to get the ETF through, UNPO will allow Guam to proceed with the election.

VI. United Nations Updates

a. UN Caribbean Regional Seminar- May 14-16, 2024 | Caracas, Venezuela

1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that this year's theme for the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization (UN C-24)'s Caribbean Regional Seminar is *Pursuing Goals and Addressing the Needs of Non-Self Governing Territories (NSGT)*. An invitation was sent to Governor Leon Guerrero and she designated Melvin to represent her during the seminar. Commented that for the annual regional seminars, the UN C-24 usually invites an independent scholar from every NSGT. In the past, the scholar invitation has gone to Dr. Michael Bevacqua. This year, Dr. Bevacqua was again invited. However, he is unable to attend because he is scheduled to attend the American Alliance for Museums annual conference around the same time. COD advocated to have Dr. Kenneth G. Kuper recognized and added to the list of scholars so that he could be invited. The UN C-24 confirmed that Dr. Kuper was being considered by the Committee. However, there were no invitations sent to him. COD reached out to ask if Dr. Kuper would be invited but they have not received word back and are unsure why he was not considered despite being a recognized scholar on their list. COD is hopeful that Dr. Kuper will be considered for the next regional seminar. Reported that travel arrangements have been made with the UN C-24.

b. UN C-24 - June 10-21, 2024

1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that Guam is scheduled to provide testimony on June 10, 2024, at the UN C-24 annual session. Explained that originally, COD was not planning to attend due to insufficient funds to travel to the UN Headquarters in New York. However, Governor Leon Guerrero and Lieutenant Governor Tenorio have secured funding through their offices to send himself and Staff Assistant Harmony Palaganas to the annual session. Reported that he will be using the Governor's designation as the government representative and that COD is working on a petition for Harmony. Recognized that it is fortunate for Guam to have two speaking opportunities. During the annual session, COD plans to follow up on the working paper that will be produced after the Regional Seminar. Explained that this year, COD will focus on the execution of the visiting mission that was approved by the U.S. State Department. Reported that during COD's last conversation with UN C-24 Chairwoman Menissa Rambally, she confirmed



their receipt of notice of approval by the U.S. State Department. COD also plans to double their effort with the U.S. State Department engagement and try to see if they can contribute to funding a visiting mission. In addition, COD is assisting Governor Leon Guerrero to prepare a letter to send to Chairwoman Rambally requesting her support in the recognition of *Giha Mo'na: A Self-Determination Study for Guåhan* by the Committee. Explained that this request has been made in the past but has not been reflected in Guam's annual resolution. This request for recognition of *Giha Mo'na* will also be made in Governor Leon Guerrero's statement for this year's Regional Seminar. Explained that COD conducted research and found that in the past, NSGTs have hosted the annual UN C-24 Regional Seminars. In Governor Leon Guerrero's testimony, they will ask for Guam to host the next Pacific Regional Seminar.

VII. COD Office Updates

a. COD Outreach

1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that since the last board meeting in February, COD has experienced a rise in outreach engagement as a result of their participation in Mes CHamoru in partnership with the Department of CHamoru Affairs, the renewal of their community education spot on WAVE 105.1 FM by Glimpses Media, continued engagement with GCC and UOG, and the finalization of COD's t-shirt collaboration with the three local t-shirt companies. Reported that in total, COD has conducted 20 class presentations, 12 outreach tables, 12 radio shows, 4 interviews, and participated in one conference. During these events, COD has been able to foster meaningful engagement with community members and students through various mediums. Explained that COD's radio show, *Challenge the Status Quo*, on WAVE 105.1 FM originally started as a pilot with a 10-episode trial and a slot every Wednesday from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. During the first 10 episodes, COD invited all the task forces to participate and have their own segment. Reported that *Challenge the Status Quo* was extended for another 20 episodes. In anticipation of upcoming scheduled travel, the team has begun arranging for substitute hosts for the shows. Asked if any of the board members would be interested in being a substitute host and if so, to please contact COD. Recognized that the show has been impactful and that COD has gotten great feedback/ engagement from the show's callers. Community members have been expressing that they are happy with COD's additional engagement on a talk show platform.
2. **Eloy Hara:** Asked if the show is two hours. Reported that the Statehood Task Force has made a couple presentations at JFK High School and that they have all the materials.



3. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Explained that it is a radio talk-show format. Arrangements can be made to set a date for the Statehood Taskforce to join the show for an interview. Noted that Former Senator Duenas did confirm that he would attend but was unable to make it.
4. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Updated the Board on COD's t-shirt collaboration project. Explained that COD launched a collaboration with three local companies: Opake, LongLive, and Fokai Industries. The purpose was to create another medium for information to be disseminated to the general public. With this collaboration, COD provided assistance with messaging for the t-shirts and placement of a QR code. Every t-shirt has a QR code linked to COD's website where all educational material can be accessed. In addition to designing and printing the shirts, each company committed to conducting a distribution event at their storefronts. Reported that COD had t-shirt distribution events with Opake (March 9, 2024) and LongLive (May 5, 2024). During these events, COD distributed educational material and continued to populate their email list.

b. Community Engagement Plan

1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that the draft COD Community Engagement Plan was shared with all board members. COD has only gotten feedback from one board member. Asked for the remaining board members to review and to contact COD with any comments/ suggestions so that the team may make revisions before finalizing.

VIII. Task Force Updates

a. Statehood

1. **Eloy Hara:** Reported that the taskforce was invited to do a presentation at JFK High School a couple of months ago. This event had excellent attendance and was well received.
2. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Added that COD receives requests from different community partners and schools for outreach. With these requests, COD asks if the schools/ organizations are interested in having representatives from each task force present. COD will continue to communicate outreach opportunities to the task forces. Noted that COD produced a brochure for each taskforce, but have run out of a lot of these materials. Explained that funding is currently limited but COD will find a way to reprogram funding. Asked if any of the task forces have updated or new materials that they've been producing to coordinate with COD pickup of copies to have available for COD's outreach.

b. Independence

1. **Dr. Bevacqua:** Reported that taskforce members have conducted presentations and outreach at high schools and the colleges in the past month. The task force has engaged in solidarity work since across the U.S. there has been a lot of activity at college campuses and there have been



efforts to connect Guam to different movements for peace, demilitarization, and decolonization. Reported that the Fanachu podcast had its 300th episode last month. Reported that Independent Guahan participated in the memorial ceremony on the birthday of the late Former Senator Angel Santos.

c. Free Association

1. No updates from the task force lead.

2. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Requested that board members provide references for membership and leadership for the Free Association task force. Reported that due to the task force's current lack of leadership and inactivity, Former COD Executive Director Ed Alvarez was invited to *Challenge the Status Quo* to discuss the political status.

IX. Open Floor

a. No discussion.

X. Adjournment

a. Motion made by Hara to adjourn

b. Seconded by Lola

c. Motion passed by consensus.

d. Meeting adjourned at 3:56 p.m.