



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

- I. Call to Order:** 3:07 p.m.
- II. Roll Call**
 1. **Hon. Lourdes Leon Guerrero**
 2. **Hon. Therese Terlaje**
 3. **Hon. Tina Muña-Barnes**
 4. **Hon. Frank Blas (Excused)**
 5. **Hon. Jesse Alig**
 6. **Hon. Eddie Duenas**
 7. **Dr. Michael Bevacqua**
 8. **Dr. Mary Cruz**
 9. **Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper (Excused)**
 10. **Ty Whitaker (Absent)**
 11. **Victoria “Lola” Leon Guerrero (Excused)**
 12. **Dewey Huffer (Absent)**
 13. **Other**
 - a. **Phill Leon Guerrero (The Office of Vice Speaker Barnes)**
 - b. **Harmony Palaganas (Commission on Decolonization)**
 - c. **Byron Aguon (Commission on Decolonization)**
- III. Approval of Minutes - Regular Monthly Board Meeting - August 13, 2024**
 - a. **Motion by Vice Speaker Barnes to approve minutes subject to corrections.**
 - b. **Motion seconded by Governor Leon Guerrero.**
 - c. **Motion passed by consensus.**
- IV. Financial Report**
 - a. **Account balances**
 1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Provided a reminder that all invoices from the task forces must be submitted as soon as possible to process payments. All purchase orders (POs) must be expended by September 30, 2024. Asked that all PO requests be submitted as soon as possible in order to give time for processing prior to the end of the fiscal year. Noted that the Independence Task



Force has expenses that need to be ironed out. Clarified that equipment must be done as line items, COD can assist in working out PO issues.

2. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported on account balances for the political task forces as of August 30, 2024. For the Free Association Task Force a journal voucher (JV) to transfer funds (n=\$24,805) from the COD Lapses Account is pending. Explained that the JV is being done to restore funding to the Free Association Task Force that was used to cover the cost of the 2023 Fanhita Conference when the FY 2023 Lapses Account was still pending. The Statehood Task Force balance is at \$55,000. The Independence Task Force balance is at \$28,000. Noted that amendments to raise the amount of funding in the supplies and materials open POs from \$1,5000 to \$5,000 is currently being processed. Recognized that the Independence Task Force would like to purchase equipment. Affirmed that the COD team will work with the task force to ensure that the requests for equipment are done as line items. COD can coordinate directly with a representative from the Independence Task Force regarding equipment.
3. **Governor Leon Guerrero:** Asked about task force balances moving forward.
4. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Cited the budget law and explained that any unspent money by the task forces will roll over to the COD office. The task forces had previously been given a rollover when allotments were higher with funds rolling over from previous years still in task force accounts. The rollover was discontinued and then reappropriated for use by the COD office.
5. **Governor Leon Guerrero:** Asked if allocated budgets are renewed every fiscal year?
6. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Confirmed that task force budgets are renewed annually.

V. Old Business

a. Plebiscite Update & Strategy Discussion

1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that, at the request of Senator Frank Blas Jr., the COD office has drafted letters to the chairs of the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization (UN C-24) and the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (UN Fourth Committee/ C-4) to inquire about Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that COD may engage with and seek assistance to hold a political status plebiscite. Confirmed that the letters will be sent out to the chairs this month. Noted that this is where the Board stands regarding discussion of the political status plebiscite until such time that either the law is amended or an NGO takes on the plebiscite task. The Board will be notified when a response is given.



b. Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) Membership & Updates

1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that the COD office reached out to Mercè Cano, the Secretary General of UNPO to inquire about Guam's case to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). Noted that Secretary General Cano is following up with UNPO's legal team and will provide COD with an update. Once an update is provided, the Board will be notified. Noted that Secretary General Cano offered for Guam to be featured on UNPO's website. COD will work with UNPO to put the piece together for their website and will notify the Board once it goes live.

V. United Nations Updates

a. United Nations Special Political and Decolonization Committee (UN C-4) - October, 2024

1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Highlighted that the UN has given notice that the UN C-4 79th Annual Session will be held between October 7-11, 2024, at the UN headquarters in New York. A link for petitioner registration was shared with the Board. Instructions for registration are within the link. Explained that the UN C-4 accepts petitioners from public or community organizations. In the past, elected officials have been able to petition and appear before the Committee. Recognized that COD plans to participate. Noted that if any board member is able to attend the UN C-4 annual session they are encouraged to petition. Highlighted that the COD office has inquired with the UN Decolonization Unit on the dates for when Guam will be heard so that Committee members can be engaged during Guam's delegation visit. COD will be working with the Governor's office on her statement. Noted that if the Governor or Lt. Governor plans to attend, they will have a separate designation from petitioners. Notified the Board that he will be unable to attend the UN C-4 annual session. Reminded the Board that the link to the Google document for board members to include their priorities to be included in COD's petition has been sent out. Requested that board member requests be submitted by this week.
2. **Governor Leon Guerrero:** Asked if a statement can be submitted without physically appearing.
3. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Explained that statements from petitioners require physical attendance. If the Governor or Lt. Governor plans to attend, COD will reach out to the USUN (U.S. Mission to the United Nations) and UN C-4 to arrange for credentials for government representation. For those interested in petitioning, registration forms must be submitted before September 17th.
4. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that COD shared a Google Drive on August 13th, which includes copies of Guam's testimonies and annual resolutions from the C-24 Regional Seminar, the C-24 Substantive Sessions and the C-4 Annual Session. These documents serve as a historical record for the current iteration of COD. This was put together per the request of board members to have a full record.



5. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that Governor Leon Guerrero requested for COD to draft a letter on her behalf to the UN Fourth Committee to H.E. Mathu Joyini. This letter inquires on the exclusion of language within Guam's resolution, the letter is now awaiting the Governor's signature. Once the letter goes out and a response is given, the Board will be notified and language will be crafted to be included in the statement for the upcoming Fourth Committee Annual Session. Noted that the Indico link for petitioner registration was sent to the Board and closes on Tuesday, September 17th, at 5:00 P.M. (EST) or Wednesday, September 18th at 7:00 A.M. (CHST).

VI. COD Office Updates

a. Community Outreach

1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that COD has continued its *Challenge the Status Quo* radio spot every Wednesday on WAVE 105.1 FM. The show has fostered great conversations and opportunities to talk with guests. Highlighted that the Lt. Governor will be featured on the show this week. Also reported that COD received the opportunity to be part of an exhibit at the Guam Museum hosted and curated by Micronesia Climate Change Alliance and Hita Litekyan, entitled *Ta Nà'i Ànimu*. COD has a section of the exhibit which is interactive, showcasing community art and offering COD's educational content.
2. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that COD is working to reprint *Guam: A Territory Like No Other*, the educational insert that was originally published in the Pacific Daily News (PDN). Explained that the entire stock has been exhausted and COD is planning to order an additional 4,000 copies. Additionally, copies of the COD tote bag (n=2,000) will be ordered. Noted that the tote bag will include a link to the COD website.
3. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Noted that COD is assisting the *Kumisión i Fino' CHamoru* with the accumulation of primary sources for their *CHamoru Self-Determination* exhibit. Asked if any of the political status task forces have any historical documentation related to their task force to contact COD so that we can scan and send over documents to the *Kumisión i Fino' CHamoru*.

VII. Task Force Updates

a. Statehood

1. **Fmr. Senator Eddie Duenas:** Reported that the Statehood Task Force is still working with Shooting Star productions to produce the Task Force's ads.
2. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Asked when the Task Force engaged with Shooting Stars and when funds were encumbered for their services.



3. **Fmr. Senator Eddie Duenas:** Notified that the video services were initially requested one to two years ago.
 4. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Explained that if funds were not encumbered, then it likely lapsed. The FY 2025 balance can be utilized.
 5. **Harmony Palaganas:** Noted that based on the last account balance report from BBMR, the Statehood Task Force is still at \$55,000. Explained that Shooting Star requested more funds for additional services. This request for funding may have to come from FY 2025.
 6. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Asked about the amount previously paid.
 7. **Harmony Palaganas:** Recalled that the previously encumbered funds for Shooting Star ranged between \$10,000 - \$14,000.
 8. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Confirmed that an increase in funding for additional services will be paid out through FY2025. The COD office will work with the Task Force to pay for the services for Shooting Star.
- b. Independence
1. **Dr. Michael Bevacqua:** Reported that the Independence Task Force has focused on spending its remaining funds before the end of the fiscal year to include getting new equipment, new supplies, new designs and the printing of new materials. Noted that the Task Force has spoken at some international conferences and has conducted teach-ins. Further opportunities are being planned in the coming weeks.
 2. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Confirmed that the COD office will work with the Independence Task Force regarding their equipment requests as they need to be line items.
- c. Free Association
1. No updates.

VIII. Open Floor

- a. **Gov. Leon Guerrero:** Reported that the Lt. Governor recently traveled to Fiji to attend preliminary Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) meetings to get Guam's application for associate membership on the agenda for the PIF Leaders Meeting. At the PIF Plenary Session, President Simina of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) moved to put Guam's application on the agenda, which was accepted. The Prime Minister of Tonga notified Guam that its associate member application was approved. Guam is now at the table, but is still unable to vote. Explained that the architecture of PIF membership is currently being restructured to look at how various members can be afforded greater authority and participation. Commented that the Pacific region is on the radar of global politics. Explained that the situation in New Caledonia was discussed at the Leaders Meeting as New Caledonia is a full member



of PIF despite being a French territory. The PIF leaders decided to send a delegation to New Caledonia on a fact finding mission to try to de-escalate the unrest and violence in the island. Guam will continue to monitor the situation in New Caledonia as it is a very moving event in their fight and struggle for Self-Determination and for voter eligibility. The next PIF Leaders meeting will be held in the Solomon Islands. Reported that American Samoa also had its application for associate membership approved.

- b. Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that the upcoming 29th Conference of Parties (COP29) plans on utilizing PIF's platform in regards to climate change as Pacific islands need to lead the charge in regards to global climate reform. As an Associate Member in PIF, Guam now has an opportunity to participate in discussions and will potentially have access to other UN mechanisms through PIF.
- c. Governor Leon Guerrero:** Reported that she met with the Secretary General of the UN, António Guterres, who spoke on the radical impact of climate change on Pacific islands. Noted that PIF is working under the platform of the 2050 Strategic Goals, most of which involve climate change reform.
- d. Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Explained that PIF plans to submit directly to the UN General Assembly a line item specific to sea level rise. Relevant information will be provided to the board once it has been published.

IX. Adjournment

- a. Motion made by Dr. Mary Cruz.
- b. Seconded by Governor Leon Guerrero.
- c. Motion passed by consensus.
- d. Meeting adjourned at 3:51 p.m.