

Liberian Community Association of Greater Charlotte

P. O. Box 5031
Charlotte, NC 28299
www.libac.org

***LIBAC's First General Assembly Meeting
February 9, 2020
Hickory Grove Gym- 4 to 6pm
President Lucien Saiday Edwards, Sr. Presiding***

Meeting Call to Order at 4:05pm

President Lucien S. Edwards, Sr

Opening Prayer

Chaplin Joanna Slawon

Welcome remarks and recognition of Special guests

**Mrs. Oritha Manneh
Chairlady, Social Committee**

- Jelena Held-Immigration Law Clinic Director
- Liz Zipperer-Supervising Immigration Lawyer
- Zola Velasquez-Immigration Lawyer
- Alma Hernandez-Client Services Director

Immigration Awareness

**International House
Charlotte, North Carolina**

- Jelena Held, Director Immigration Law Clinic
 - Excited about the new law, a dream came through for many people and we (the International House representatives) are very happy for the opportunity to share with the Liberian community how to apply for a green card through this process.
 - A little about the International House: been in Charlotte for over 30 years, with many departments, one of them being the Immigration Law Clinic. We help low income immigrants, refugees and asylees with their different immigration needs including Green Card applications, Citizenships, Petitions for family members and other immigration benefits.
 - There are five people in the law clinic
 - There is an education department where people learn english language skills so that they can pass the citizenship test.
 - There is a rising readers program, a summer camp for the children of immigrants who do not speak english at home. The goal is to help the children not to fall behind in school.

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- Diplomacy Program, where people learn skills they can take back to their home countries as well as find host families. Immigrants live with families for a few days or a week, have meals and just get familiar with life in the country as well as get to know each other.
- Liz Zipperer, Supervising Immigration Lawyer
 - Here to specifically talk about the new immigration policy, Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act (LRIF). Yes, the policy sounds too good to be true, but it is real. The policy was thrown into a 1,000 page document. The Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act was a total of 3 pages and in the last 100 pages of the document. This act is in effect from now until December 20, 2020.
 - This is a path to citizenship.
 - The Deadline to apply is December 20, 2020.
 - Move forward as quickly as possible
 - Complete the application with a counselor or someone who actually knows what they are doing, like a professional.
 - Three main requirements
 - Liberian National (proof of Liberian Nationalism via birth certificate or passport)
 - Exception: You are eligible to apply if you are the spouse or child of a Liberian national and also an immigrant
 - Proof of arrival in the United States on or before November 20, 2014 and continuous presence from then until now (no more than a total of 180 days outside the United States)
 - Eligibility
 - You do not have to prove lawful entry into the US
 - The form needed to be completed is Form I-485 along with the full fee of \$1,225.
 - You might qualify for a fee waiver, Form I-912
 - Have an attorney help with the filing
 - A medical exam also needs to be completed, Form I-693
 - There is a \$300 medical exam fee
 - The exam is only valid for 2 months once completed. If the application is not completed and turned in within 2 months, you will have to take the medical exam again.
 - Apply for work permit at the same time as form I-485, and you will not have to pay an additional fee to file the work permit
 - If you have DED currently
 - you are eligible for expedited work permit if you file between now and March 20th, 2020.
 - The sooner you move forward, the better
 - Questions/Comments/Concerns
 - Could you please throw some light on what is meant by continuous presence?

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- Answer: If you have made multiple trips outside of the United States, your days outside of the US must not exceed a total of 180 days.
- Could you please throw some light on the eligibility of an individual with an expired DED or TPS?
 - Answer: Even if you entered the country illegally, have no visa, came into the country with someone else's passport, never applied for TPS or DED, you are still qualify to apply
- If your green card expires, can they re-apply or apply within this segment?
 - Answer: You do not have to re-apply for a green-card, or fill out this form, you just need to apply for a green card extension
- How much does the International House charge to assist with filing?
 - Answer: Lawyer's fee is \$300 so long as you do not have a lengthy application process. If an investigation needs to happen, there is an additional fee. Also, only help families who are under 200% of the federal poverty guideline.
- What if you entered the country anytime during November of 2014, are you still qualified?
 - Answer: If you entered any time before November 20, 2014, you are still qualified. If you entered November 21, 2014, you are not qualified.
- Do you happen to have additional information on where people can go for more information, maybe an address? etc?
 - Answer: Our client services, Alma will give you additional information at the very end of our presentation.
- Note: If you apply for residency and get denied, you could be placed in deportation proceedings. Speak with your immigration lawyer prior to submitting the I-485.
- Jelena Held, Director Immigration Law Clinic
 - Things that could cause you to be ineligible to apply for a green card or place you in deportation proceedings if you apply:
 - Criminal Convictions
 - Any criminal record that is not traffic related (for example: speeding tickets, expired registrations)
 - Fraud or misrepresentation,
 - Any situation where you have lied to an immigration officer
 - Let your lawyer know about EVERYTHING
 - Health Related Grounds
 - DUIs (alcoholism could lead to you being ineligible)
 - Questions/Comments/Concerns
 - Can you please elaborate on claiming to be a US Citizen?

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- Answer: This is one factor that would cause you to be deported. Voter registration, Job applications, DMV documents, etc. If you ever checked the box stating “I am a US Citizen”, you need to know that it could be used against you.
- Answer: If you ever applied for a job and the company listed you as a US Citizen and you received a benefit from it, you could be held responsible.
 - What if you have an existing application on file?
 - Answer: No pending applications will prevent you from taking advantage of this opportunity.
- You have to prove physical presence in the country through a variety of ways and times throughout the years from November 20th, 2014 to present.
- Proof of Physical Presence are as follows: Check stubs, leases/deeds, vaccination records, medical records, school transcripts, car insurance/registration, traffic tickets, cell phone bills, utility bills, church attendance (letter from pastor), work permit, other official documents with your name, etc.
- Alma Hernandez-Client Services Director
 - We have a few procedures in place to assist new clients:
 - We do not take new client walk-ins. In-take days are Tuesdays from 1-4pm by phone calls only. Call as many times as you need to in order to speak to someone, even if it's a busy day. Each initial call lasts from 10-20 minutes in duration.
 - Make sure you have your income statements and other information on hand.
 - Also, additional information has been provided via flyers passed out and at our booth set up in the back corner.
 - Also, information can be found on the International House website: <https://www.ihclt.org/>
 - **Contact International House:**
 - Address: 1817 Central Ave #215, Charlotte, NC 28205
 - Phone: (704) 333-8099

Official Turning Over of Office

Mr. Fred Tulay, Interim Leader

- Recognition of people who worked with the interim leadership:
 - Mr. John Karpeh, Interim Leadership Advisor
 - Mrs. Selma Yahnqueen, Interim Leadership Secretary and Some Financial Aspects
 - Mr. Edwin Freeman, Sitting President
- John Karpeh, Interim Leadership Advisor
 - Thanks to everyone for working with the interim leadership
 - A copy of all the interim activities was passed out to President Edwards, Chairwoman of the Board Mrs. Marwin Gbenyon and Chairman of the Constitution and Grievance Council, Pastor Mesthuselah Dixon.

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- Mr. Fred Tulay presented the physical gavel of authority to President Lucien Edwards, Sr on behalf of the entire interim leadership team.

Remarks

President Lucien S. Edwards, Sr

- Introduction of self
- Thank you for everyone who came out to the meeting
- Vote of Thanks to Inauguration Team members who worked tirelessly day and night to put the inauguration together and to stay and clean up after the inauguration
- All set to work with the entire community, we are one team.
- On Saturday, February 22, 2020, we will have an Immigration Information Officer at North Davidson in fellowship hall from 12-2pm.
 - The Officer is a community liaison, he does not work for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and will only be there to provide information.
- Reaching out to other communities through volunteering and getting involved with members from the international communities throughout the diaspora.
- Feel free to stop me and speak to me when you see me around.

Technology Update

William Ward

Technology Committee

- Things will be changing and we just wanted to make you (the community) aware of the gradual changes coming
 - The goal of the technology team is to digitally transform the community
 - The focus is on four key things
 - Community Membership Database
 - If we have specific data, it is easier for us as a community to influence authority and decision making in the political realm
 - Targeted programs for the community members
 - Local government policies
 - Community Center Fundraiser
 - We are using technology to assist with raising the funds necessary to purchase a community center
 - This will be integrated in the new website, with links to donate to the fundraiser
 - General membership dues can be paid on the site
 - Operational Efficiency
 - We have to support our leaders, those that are working for the community.
 - We are going to try to use technology to make their jobs a little easier.
 - Google donated an office suite to be used by the organization
 - Collaboration and Communication

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- We need to get to know each other. There are platforms we have coming soon that we hope will help us be able to do just that.
- Business Directory will be added to the website.
 - If you have a business, you will pay a minimal annual fee and your business will be added to the site with all the business information including name, address, phone number.
 - Community Events Calendar
 - Where community members can post their event throughout the year.
- Community Forum
 - We are moving from WhatsApp to Band
 - Band can accommodate the entire community, while WhatsApp is only able to accommodate 250 members.
 - Band has built in calendars
- Social Media Presence
 - Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
 - If you haven't done so, start following the association on all platforms.
- We will continue to send personalized text messages to community members whose cell phone numbers we have on file
- Questions/Comments/Concerns
 - John Karpeh: Thank you. Don't get discouraged, keep up the good work.
 - Sam Morgan: Thank you. Suggestion: There are a lot of Liberians who do not understand or cannot operate these social media platforms. Will you teach us?
 - Answer: Yes, we plan to have training on these different platforms
 - Is that a Bird over there?
 - Answer: Yes, that is a bird, it is the logo for Twitter.
 - Brahim Khoury: I heard you mention keeping information on whether or no individual members are citizens. I think it is a good thing, but let us be careful in keeping people's citizenship data. As we go forward, let's try to protect people's information.
 - Eugene Mensah: Let's have another place to get information without endangering the people of the community
 - Victor Manneh: Have a class for the technologically challenged.

Inauguration Financial Report

Ms. Joyce Harris, Vice President
Mrs. Veronica Edwards,
Financial Secretary &
Mr. Roger Slawon, Treasury

- Gift Card raffle
 - One gift card given to an elderly member
- Joyce Harris, Vice President
 - A big thank you to the entire committee

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- A few things we have planned for the year:
 - LIBAC Community Day/Easter Egg Hunt/Membership Drive will be April 18, 2020 at noon
 - Earth Day Volunteer Project will be April 22, 2020
 - Athletic Committee

- Roger Slawon, Treasurer

- Revenue

Distribution	Amount
Manual/physical ticket sales	\$29,125.00
Online ticket sales	\$6,019.52
Drink sales	\$994.43
Business advertisements	\$550.00
Donations	\$1250.00
Total	\$37,938.95

- Veronica Edwards, Financial Secretary

- Expenses

Expenses	Amount
Hall Rental	\$4,380.00
Catering	\$3,825.00
Drinks	\$1,315.00
Decoration	\$1,100.00
Photography/Videography	\$700.00
Red Carpet & Souvenir	\$557.53
Sound System	\$500.00
Program Printout	\$500.00
Security	\$320.00
DJ	\$300.00
Dishes	\$300.00
Outstanding Invoice (Eventbrite)	\$275.85

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Insurance	\$210.00
Patrons Gift Bags	\$125.00
Liquor License	\$75.00
Publicity	\$50.00
Total	\$14, 533.02

- There was a 162% net profit
- Financial documents were turnover over on February 8th, 2020.
- The financial team (Mr. Roger Slawon and Mrs. Veronica Edwards) as well as President Lucien Edwards, Sr and Vice President Joyce Harris now have access to the community accounts.

Remarks:

- ❖ County Commissioner.....Honorable Mark Jerrell (unable to attend)
- ❖ Constitution & Grievance Council.....Pastor Methuselah Dixon

Vote of Thanks

Eugene Mensah

Closing Prayer

Chaplin Joanna Slawon

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