



Durham Mayor's Hispanic/Latino Committee (MHLC)

City of Durham Mayor's Hispanic/Latino Committee (MHLC) Office of the Mayor

Clerk's Summary of Actions and Proceedings

Meeting: MHLC General Board Meeting

Date: Thursday, January 15, 2026

Time: 6:30 – 8:22 PM

Location: Virtual (Zoom)

Prepared by: James T. Ham, Recorder

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair **Josue Cordova** at 6:30 PM.

2. Roll Call / Attendance

Members present: Africa Dutor; Maria Padilla; Marianella McCole; Bryan Rodriguez; Oraly Spatz; Suzy Marcial; Victor Ayeni; Heydi Andino; Cristobal Alvarez; Junior Sarmiento; Giseli Ordonez; Josue Cordova.

3. Approval of Prior Minutes

Action: The minutes from the December 11, 2025 MHLC meeting were reviewed and approved.

4. Mayor's Office / City Liaison Update

The committee acknowledged the new role of **Councilwoman Javiera Caballero** as Vice Mayor / Mayor Pro Tempore. Members discussed whether she would continue serving as the MHLC liaison given expanded responsibilities.

Action: The Executive Committee will draft and send a letter requesting clarification on continued participation or designation of an alternate City Council liaison.

5. Annual Report – Status and Direction

Chair Cordova reported that the MHLC Annual Report is in draft form and is scheduled for submission to the Mayor's Office by January 21, 2026.

Key Focus Areas Identified: - Public awareness of MHLC - Interdepartmental collaboration - Development of informational and issue-specific reports - Inventory of active membership - Documentation of community concerns, including border patrol presence

Members were directed to submit updates promptly. If additional time is required, the Mayor's Office will be notified.

6. Membership and Integration

The committee discussed the importance of diverse representation and effective integration of new members.

Action: One membership application was acknowledged; **Paula Hernandez** was approved at a recent City Council meeting.

7. Orientation, Onboarding, and Procedures

The committee discussed deficiencies in onboarding and agreed on the need for a structured orientation process.

Actions Approved: - Development of a formal orientation letter - Assignment of peer mentors for new members - Creation of an onboarding/procedures manual - Formation of an Orientation/Onboarding Subcommittee

Next Steps: The Executive Committee will circulate draft materials and invite member participation. Heydi Andino's draft handbook will serve as an initial reference.

8. Motions and Votes

Motion / Action	Moved By	Seconded By	Vote Outcome	Notes
Approve December 11, 2025 Meeting Minutes	—	—	Approved	Approved by consensus
Establish Orientation/Onboarding Subcommittee	Josue Cordova	Marianella McCole	Approved	Majority vote; framework to be developed

8. Committee and Initiative Reports (6:30–6:40 PM)

Chair **Josue Cordova** called the meeting to order and welcomed members.

Approval of Minutes:

The committee approved the **December 11, 2025** meeting minutes.

II. Mayor’s Office Update: Role of Vice Mayor / Mayor Pro Tempore

The committee discussed the new role of **Councilwoman Javiera Caballero** as **Vice Mayor / Mayor Pro Tempore** of the City of Durham. Maria explained that in this role, Councilwoman Caballero presides over City Council meetings when the Mayor is unavailable and serves in a backup executive capacity.

Given her expanded responsibilities, the committee discussed whether Councilwoman Caballero would be able to continue attending MHLC meetings or whether another City Council member should be designated as liaison.

Action Item:

The **Executive Committee** will draft and send a formal letter to Councilwoman Caballero requesting clarification on continued participation or the appointment of a designee.

III. Preparation of the Latino Committee Annual Report

Chair Cordova led discussion on the preparation of the **MHLC Annual Report**, which is due to the Mayor’s Office by **January 21, 2026**.

Priority Areas Identified:

1. Increasing public awareness of the committee
2. Expanding collaboration with City departments and external partners

3. Developing short informational and issue-based reports

Additional elements to be included: - Inventory of active committee members - Committee structure and updates - Goals for the upcoming year - Documentation of community concerns, including border patrol presence

Members were encouraged to review the draft and submit updates promptly. If additional time is required, the Mayor's Office will be notified.

IV. Committee Diversity, Integration, and Membership

The committee discussed the importance of ensuring **diverse representation of Durham residents** to enrich dialogue and strengthen community impact.

- Maria proposed creating a **welcome and orientation letter** for new members.
- Oraly suggested assigning a **mentor** to each new member.
- Junior emphasized the need for a **procedures manual**, especially as members rotate off and new members join.

Membership Application Update

- One application is currently under review.
 - **Paula Hernandez** was approved during a recent City Council session.
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V. Committee Procedures Manual & Onboarding Process

Several members shared that they did not receive adequate onboarding when they joined the committee. Discussion focused on the need for a **formal orientation process** and a comprehensive **procedures manual**.

Key points: - The City currently has only a basic procedures document. - Additional guidance materials are needed. - **James Davis** was identified as a potential resource to provide training on committee procedures. - Marianella proposed that all new members participate in one of the standing committees to strengthen engagement.

VI. Disqualification and Subcommittee Formation

The committee discussed the disqualification of **Nancy Ramos**, who previously served from September 2022 to October 2024 but did not reapply within the required timeframe.

Motion:

Josue proposed creating a **Procedural / Onboarding Subcommittee** to develop a framework for new applicants and members. The motion was seconded by Marianella.

Decision:

The committee approved the creation of the subcommittee, which will address onboarding, orientation, procedures, and membership integration.

Next Steps: - Executive Committee will email all members to solicit ideas and draft materials. - Heydi's existing draft handbook will be shared as a starting point. - A formal proposal with goals, leadership, and scope will be presented at the next meeting.

VII. Committee and Initiative Reports

Culture Committee

- English classes for Latino adults were canceled due to fear stemming from border patrol presence, reducing participation from 12 to 2 students.
- New proposed activities include Latino artist engagement and cultural film screenings (e.g., Black Latino culture in Latin America).
- A community prayer event with approximately 60 participants was successfully held.
- Members emphasized continuing social justice-focused programming through 2026 and potential collaboration with the City's Cultural Public Arts Program.
- Discussion included coordination with the emerging **Latino Museum** initiative supported by the Latino Credit Union.

Social Justice & Public Safety Committee

- No new updates since the last meeting.
- Oraly shared that the next meeting is being scheduled for the first Monday of the month.
- Africa raised concerns about immigration appointment access in Charlotte.
- Heydi clarified differences between USCIS appointments and immigration court hearings and noted growing court-related challenges.

Education Initiative / Committee Update

Heydi provided updates on education-focused work, including: - Growth of the chess club from 10 to 25 participants - Collaboration with school programs - Support for food distribution and free legal services - Anti-bullying initiatives

Planned next steps include continuing the chess program and addressing bullying in schools.

VIII. Education Committee Structure Discussion

Discussion centered on whether Education should become a formal subcommittee.

- Maria clarified that education falls under **County jurisdiction**, limiting the City's formal authority.
 - Two options were discussed: establishing a formal Education Subcommittee or maintaining education efforts within the Culture Committee.
 - Heydi will consult with the Executive Committee on the most appropriate structure.
 - Josue noted that creation of a new subcommittee would require a majority vote, a defined purpose, and clear goals.
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IX. Committee Role, Limits, and Community Engagement

Members discussed MHLC's role as an **advisory body** to the Mayor's Office—not a nonprofit or grassroots organization.

Key reflections: - Meetings are intentionally held in Spanish to promote accessibility. - The committee advises City departments by elevating community concerns. - Impact can be achieved through letters, reports, and formal recommendations.

Public Participation

Ideas to expand community engagement included: - Inviting individuals to speak on specific topics - Hosting webinar-style meetings for public observation - Creating a Facebook or online form for community questions and concerns, with designated committee oversight

X. Action Items Summary

- Executive Committee to draft letter to Vice Mayor Caballero
 - Share onboarding handbook draft
 - Establish Procedural / Onboarding Subcommittee framework
 - Continue Annual Report contributions
 - Consult on Education Committee structure
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XI. Supplemental Notes (Supporting Documentation)

The following notes were captured as **supplemental documentation** to support the official minutes. Due to the pace and breadth of discussion, not all exchanges could be fully documented during the meeting.

- **Meeting Duration:** 6:30 PM – 8:22 PM

Orientation and Onboarding Improvements (Major Proposal)

The committee discussed significant improvements to the orientation and onboarding process for future MHLC members, including: - Development of a **formal orientation letter** for new members - Assignment of a **peer mentor** to support new members - Establishment of an **orientation/onboarding subcommittee** - Creation of a **procedures and onboarding manual** or welcome package for new members

Proposed Manual Content: - Instructions for how to sign up for payroll (if applicable) - Criteria and expectations to remain eligible for committee service

Subcommittee Formation Considerations: - Clearly defined goals and purpose - A directed strategy for onboarding and orientation - Identification of members interested in serving on the onboarding initiative

The Executive Committee will send an email to all members to share draft materials and invite participation in this effort.

9. Subcommittee and Initiative Notes

Culture Subcommittee: - English classes were previously held at the Durham Main Library. - After restarting classes, participation dropped to two students (from an original twelve) due to fear associated with ICE presence. - Classes may resume soon; operations at the Senior Citizen Center are paused until further notice. - Discussion included the possibility of engaging a local artist (e.g., *Antonio Alanis*) for a future cultural project.

Education Initiative (Ad Hoc / Under Culture): - Continued focus on addressing school bullying and related student concerns.

Social Justice & Public Safety Subcommittee: - Invitations to future meetings will be extended to Josue and Maria. - Possibility of setting standing meetings for the **first Monday of each month**. - Concerns were raised regarding challenges encountered when accessing USCIS offices, particularly in Charlotte.

Items to Highlight in the Annual Report

- Task force responses and committee advocacy
 - Food distribution efforts supporting the community
 - Committee-led prayer gathering for the Durham community
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Additional Notes and Future Agenda Considerations

- Invite an external provider to address current community stress and trauma, including stress-management techniques (e.g., *El Futuro*).
 - Ensure that formal agenda items (such as establishing an Education Subcommittee) are scheduled for future meetings and framed **within the jurisdictional boundaries of the City of Durham**.
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X. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at **8:22 PM**.