

[Simplified Version]

The 2nd Yao City Foreign Residents' Council Meeting in FY 2017 [Minutes]

Date & Time: Tuesday, February 6, 2018, 7:00 p.m.–8:45 p.m.

Location: Large Conference Room B, 6th Floor, Main Building, Yao City Hall

Council Members in Attendance (titles omitted): NONAKA Mônica (Chairperson), PARK Yanghaeng (Vice Chairperson), KAWAMOTO Yolanda, ZU Yan Ting, PARK Koon-ae, YOSHIMURA Miki, HUYNH TU VAN, FUJITO Satomi

Representative of the Relevant Division/Department: Mr. KONISHI (Chief, General Information Room of the Department of Human Rights, Culture, and Friendship)

Secretariat Representatives (Cultural and International Affairs Division): Mr. MURAKAMI (Director of the Department of Human Rights, Culture, and Friendship), Mr. KAMATA (Manager), Mr. NISHINO

1. Opening

2. Maternal and Child Health Handbook (Multilingual Versions)

A secretariat representative reported on the provision of translated versions of the Maternal and Child Health Handbook (MCHH).

- Information on multilingual versions of the MCHH was posted in the December 2017 issue of *Yao City Multilingual Newsletter*. Although no one has obtained a non-Japanese version of the MCHH since then, the number of foreign residents who will take home the translated versions of MCHH should increase over time as the information spreads.
- In principle, a foreign-language version of the MCHH should be hand-delivered to foreign residents by public health nurses at the Health Center, yet if a public health nurse at a branch office makes a request, it can be hand-delivered from the branch office as well. Future issues, such as whether or not translated versions of the MCHH can be regularly stocked at branch offices, are being discussed between the Health Promotion Division and branch offices.
- Information regarding the MCHH for foreign residents is also sent to the General Information Room.
- The number of babies born to foreign residents possessing resident cards has not been confirmed, since the statistical data for such information is not collected at the Yao City Hall.

Councilor

I understand now that foreign language versions of the MCHH can be obtained at the Health Center. Yet, when doing so, how can a foreign resident arrange an interpreter? The contact number for information on translated versions of the

MCHH listed in the *Multilingual Newsletter* is only for people who speak Japanese, so non-Japanese-speaking residents cannot find out how to obtain translated versions of the MCHH anyway. If a foreign resident wants such version of the MCHH, should they visit the third floor of the City Hall first and then go to the Health Center from there with an interpreter?

Secretariat representative

There is no permanently stationed interpreter at the Health Center. Therefore, a foreign resident needs to talk to someone in the General Information Room on the 3rd floor of the City Hall, or call the Advice Center for foreign residents. Their numbers are also listed in *Multilingual Newsletter*.

Councilor

After a foreign resident talks to those offices, do they have to call the Health Center themselves again, or can they have interpreters contact the Health Center on their behalf? After all, it is very hard for a foreign resident to visit those offices over and over again and to arrange an interpreter themselves. It would be easier for us to inform them about the procedure if it can be completed in just one visit.

Secretariat representative

If they contact the Advice Center counter, they can arrange, for example, the date of the meeting with the interpreter. Thus, they do not need to go to those offices many times to complete the procedure.

Councilor

Does that mean that to obtain a foreign language version of the MCHH, a foreign resident has to call an office where an interpreter can be arranged, not the Health Center?

Secretariat representative

At the time the last issue of *Multilingual Newsletter* was released, we were still at the stage of thinking whether or not translated versions of the MCHH could also be issued at our branch offices. Therefore, in that issue, we simply informed residents that such versions of the MCHH were available

Councilor

I think I understand the situation.

3. Progress of the Yao City Plan to Promote a Multicultural Society in FY 2016

A secretariat representative explained Fundamental Objectives 3 and 4

Councilor

Although the City have conducted many projects, information about such projects are not conveyed very well to most residents, who cannot spare the time to take part in them. I pretty much read everything issued with regard to Yao City such as *Shiseidayori* (“Municipality Magazine”), and I sense that messages cannot spread very widely through such a magazine. I think that is a problem.

Chairperson

It has been expressed before that it is also an important part of the Plan to think about how we can conduct the PR activities of many of our projects.

4. Evaluation Method for the Progress of the Yao City Plan to Promote a Multicultural Society

Based on Council members' opinions from the last Foreign Resident's Council Meeting, secretariat representatives presented two sample evaluation methods for the progress of the Plan. The council members' opinions were sought.

First, each project is classified into the following groups based on whether it has dealt with foreign residents.

- A. The project dealt with (or considered) foreign residents
- B. The project dealt with residents including foreign residents.
- C. The project did not deal with (or consider) foreign residents.
- D. The project itself did not take place.

Group A and B will be evaluated by Method A or B.

[Method A]

- A. Dealt very well, and very advanced
- B. Dealt rather well, and relatively advanced
- C. Dealt rather poorly, and relatively unadvanced
- D. Dealt poorly, and very unadvanced

[Method B]

Freewriting; no rating system is used, and each project is judged based on what was actually performed and how people in the division in charge see it.

Councilor

With regard to this, it is important to reduce the work burden of each division in charge and to make the evaluation effective at the same time. Considering it is not a good idea to spare much time on writing, I think it is better to start with Method A, which uses the simple A through D rating system.

However, to evaluate how each activity has worked for foreign residents is still difficult. I think we should rather see what results we wish to obtain from particular set goals. This might be irrelevant for foreign residents, but the promotion of English education in schools is conducted, as part of the Plan to Promote a Multicultural Society, to change the attitude of Japanese children or Japanese citizens toward English learning, and it is not designed for foreign residents. It is difficult to judge projects like this just using the standards provided here.

Councilor

As for myself, I liked neither method at first.

Yet, I could not come up with a good Method C, either. I think, as Councilor Park has just said, that Method A may work fine for the evaluation. However, Method A's A through D rating system is confusing since the same system (A-D) is

used for the classification of groups as well. We can evaluate each project using Method A, yet it would be clearer if, for example, the 1 through 4 rating system is used for that method instead. At first, Method B sounded good to me, but I think if a project is evaluated through writing, the quality of the project will not be clear.

Chairperson

I think the quality of each project can be more clearly shown through Method A. Yet, the important part is whether it is clear for foreign residents. Any other ideas?

Councilor

I also think it's very difficult to decide which one should be adopted, Method A or Method B. I myself am in a position to write, but I honestly have no idea how to evaluate each project in the form of writing. The main purpose of the projects is to raise the awareness of all citizens, and the Plan to Promote a Multicultural Society is a program that helps foreign residents live independently in Japan. Thus, I am not sure if it is right to think that a particular project is good simply because it deals specially with foreign residents. However, I can't really decide whether Method A or Method B would be better.

Chairperson

Are there any projects that foreign residents regard as being good?

Councilor

It might be a good idea to show what was done to foster the independence of foreign residents and what kind of support was provided for them, and also it is good for both Japanese and foreign residents to know about each other's countries and cultures through such things as study seminars. Writing things in plain Japanese will help not only foreign residents but also Japanese residents to understand things better. To write things in a way that both sides can easily understand best suits the purpose of the Plan to Promote a Multicultural Society. Therefore, dealing only with foreign residents, or only with Japanese residents, is not really the way to go. Instead, I think it is necessary to develop a program that will enable both sides to live comfortably.

Chairperson

Evaluation methods, evaluation standards, and the way to show ratings should be rational and practical. We should think about how to evaluate projects without increasing our workload. Are there any other opinions?

Councilor

As I have said before, I sense people working at Yao City Hall worry about many things. I happened to see the Yao City Hall's website the other day and did a search under the word "*Kokusai-rikai-kyoiku*" (education for international understanding) and the word "*tabunkakyousei*" (multicultural society). When I typed in the word "*tabunkakyousei*," many documents regarding administrative policies showed up. I thought they were very difficult materials to read. When

I entered the word “*kokusai-rikai-kyoiku*,” only Akegawa Minami Junior High School appeared.

It was not just that many elementary schools and junior high schools did not list things concerning the promotion of a multicultural society or the issue of foreign residents, but that many of them listed pretty much nothing. Their locations and goals are posted, but nothing else. I think people working at schools are too busy to update their information. Yet, I just wished that they had posted anything about what they were engaged in. For example, it could have been simply about people involved in the promotion of a multicultural society or things that nurtured the international awareness of people, and it could have been described in plain language. If schools are too busy to write about anything, I think the spaces where items about administrative policies are written can be made smaller to reduce their workload.

Secretariat representative

On Yao City’s homepage, projects conducted by each division are listed. I don’t know much about the work situation at schools, but I often hear that teachers are very busy. They may not have enough time to write things on the websites of their schools.

Councilor

Some things that we do are ahead of other municipalities. I think if these are well promoted, they could help make Yao City more attractive.

Secretariat representative

To consider how we deliver and show such things to people in communities will be very important.

Councilor

I constantly read *Shiseidayori*, but I have never seen an issue whose front page featured the theme of a multicultural society.

Vice Chairperson

There has been no issue of the magazine which has featured that theme on its front page.

Councilor

I would like coming-of-age ceremonies and school entrance ceremonies to be more aggressively advertised, since I believe there must be at least one foreign resident who would participate in these ceremonies.

Vice Chairperson

Such things are listed in *Gakkoutsuushin* (“School Newsletter”), yet things listed there are usually not indicated on the websites of schools.

Councilor

Parents and people in the various communities probably look at magazines like *Gakkoutsuushin*. If people working for a school do not have time to renew the website of their school, we may give them help in that category or support them in conveying information in other ways.

Chairperson

I think publicizing the projects and activities in such ways is very nice. I will collect opinions from council members on the content we should deliver and on things residents may demand.

5. Exchange of Opinions on Daily Life and Social Customs in Japan that are Different from Those in Foreign Countries”

Chief Konishi from the General Information Room explained how this subject has come about.

Many foreign residents face difficulties because they do not understand the differences in daily life and social customs between their home countries and Japan. In light of this situation, Chief Konishi wanted to ask interpreters if there are any good ways such differences can be conveyed to foreign residents and what things about Japanese customs need to be explained to them.

Based on what Chief Konishi had raised with the Secretariat in advance, staff at the secretariat prepared materials for discussion. Council members’ opinions were sought.

Chairperson

Just recently, I attended a study session that talked about the issue on how to support foreign residents at a time of natural disaster, and the attendees discussed whether it is people’s culture, tradition, or etiquette that matters. For instance, in one case, rice balls were provided free on the table for disaster victims with a note that read, “Please help yourself.” Even though each Japanese victim ate only one of those rolls, some say that each foreign resident there took many (more than one). Was it a matter of culture or tradition? Maybe, to avoid misunderstanding, it could have been better to leave a note that said, “Please only one each.” Like in this case, I think there are many occasions when there would not have been any problems between Japanese and foreign residents if the Japanese side had been a little more sensitive about the cultural differences.

At this meeting, I would like all council members to exchange opinions on how to inform foreign residents, or even Japanese residents about things related to everyday life that could lead to misunderstanding between people from different cultures. I would like Group A to exchange opinions about daily life and social customs, and Group B about customs with regard to hospital visits and children. Both groups should not just discuss cultural differences, but also talk about other issues that can exist, how all these issues should be communicated among all the residents, and how they all should be addressed by City Hall.

[Summary]

Chairperson

Group A—exchanged opinions on daily life and social customs

- The most important thing would be whether we should divide foreign and Japanese residents into minorities and

majorities.

- It might be an issue of cultural differences in everyday life, but there are many times when a thing that Japanese residents happen to regard as a nuisance is simply what people from other cultures do on an everyday basis without any problems. For example, some Japanese residents are annoyed by their neighboring foreign residents who cook *yakiniku* or hold barbecues outside their homes. There are differences in the perception of annoying actions; some Japanese may reject foreign residents because they think what foreign residents consider as a socially acceptable action is a nuisance.

However, it is not only foreign residents who engage in annoying actions; there are many occasions when Japanese residents create nuisances in their everyday life as well. What is important is to think how annoying actions that are considered annoying by one side can be dealt with by both sides.

- If there is a town council in a community, that community can serve as a place where residents can share information and opinions on the cultural differences between people. It is important whether or not a community has places like that to exchange opinions, and if there is no such a place in the community, we have to think how it can be created there. By expressing their thoughts at these places, Japanese residents may realize something that is new and important. By creating such opportunities for discussion, some problems may be avoided before they occur.

- There are misunderstandings about public systems in Japan. For example, some foreign residents wrongly believe that the national health insurance program automatically expires if they switch to the social insurance program from national health insurance. If foreign residents misunderstand the Japanese public system just like this, how should we provide them with correct information?

- The magazine *Multilingual Newsletter*, which we issue as a source of information for residents, usually has too many words written, and they may not be read by many people because of that. We have to think about how information is presented in that magazine; things may be written a little more concisely, perhaps as forms of headlines, to convey only necessary information.

Another thing is that it does not necessarily mean that every foreign resident can read the language of their home country. There were opinions that things written in easy Japanese—that is, written mostly in *hiragana*—may convey messages to foreign residents better than things written in their home language. It is pointed out that the ways particular information is shown and delivered can be more creative.

- If various pieces of information in everyday life are more often expressed in multiple languages, the lives of foreign residents may become much easier. For example, on most medicines, an instruction—which may say that the medicine should be taken in the morning, around noon, and in the evening—is usually written only in Japanese. It would be really helpful for foreign residents if such things, even a little part of them, were written in multiple

languages, or simply in English. Emergency mails for natural disasters are sent to cell phones only in Japanese, so if these are mailed also in multiple languages, many foreign residents would not have to panic any more.

Vice Chairperson Group B—exchanged opinions on customs with regard to hospital visits and children

- In the materials prepared by the secretariat, words such as “customs” and “traditions” are found many times. What is really important is that even if we clearly distinguish things like customs and etiquette from policies, there still may be some policies that are strange and hard for foreign residents to understand.

- With regard to etiquette, if one foreign resident does something annoying to Japanese residents, it is important to find ways not to make Japanese residents say that no foreign residents know anything about etiquette rules. Considering things like that, in a community where different cultures intersect, it is important to think how people react to some trouble that arises between people of different cultures. A key part is to find ways to reduce these kinds of trouble.

- Regarding how problems and trouble should be informed, many opinions have emerged. It is important to think how we use residents associations and how to attract the attention of parents through the activities of children at school. We should also find ways to use available media tools to include as much of the information we want to deliver as possible. If we are to send information through schools, to think how we can cooperate with communities via schools and how to convey important information through them is vital.

- The causes of trouble in communities can be about the boundaries between houses, and problems may arise due to some residents not knowing the rules for taking out garbage in their communities. Very often, it is not necessary the issue of cultural differences between Japanese and foreign residents.

- In regard to spreading information, things that can often cause trouble or misunderstanding should be put in writing as much as possible. If people at the office counter deal with people who are in a situation similar to those written examples, they may consult with those people by showing them these written examples or guidelines.

- Are there any places where people in charge can present and share the problems they are facing; for example, any misunderstanding or trouble they run into? If not, we can probably create such places somewhere, and by utilizing the things shared at such places as examples, we may be able to effectively spread that information to relevant places and people.

- What I have found personally very fascinating is that if one third of parents in a community receive a particular piece of information, there is a possibility that through these people, that information or message can spread across the majority of parents living in that community. An approach to look for ways to convey information to one third

of a particular group is very interesting. If we adopt that approach in each community, many things would become possible.

6. Adjournment