

The 2nd Yao City Foreign Residents' Council Meeting in FY2018 [Minutes Summary]

Date & Time: Friday, February 8, 2019, 7:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m.

Location: Conference Room 701, 7th Floor, Main Building, Yao City Hall

Council Members in Attendance (titles omitted): NONAKA Mônica, PARK Yanghaeng, KAWAMOTO Yolanda, PARK Koon-ae, LE THI KIEU Nga, FUJITO Satomi

Relevant Division (Labor Support Division): Mr. MORITA (Manager)

Secretariat Members (Cultural and International Affairs Division): Mr. KAMATA (Manager), Mr. KAWAZOE (Asst. Manager), Mr. DEMIZU (Group Chief), Mr. TOMITA (Section Chief)

1. Opening

2. Regarding the progress of the “Yao City Plan to Promote a Multicultural Society” (FY2017)

A member of the Secretariat explained [Document 1](#).

<Opinions>

- Seeing the “reasons for classification and evaluation,” I find several parts that do not clearly indicate whether or not a certain item is contributing to the promotion of a multicultural society. For example, in regard to Basic Goal 4, Project No. 2 “Holding of seminars on human rights,” there is no description about foreign residents in the “reasons for classification and evaluation.” The seminars might have referred to the human rights of foreign residents, but it is not easy for someone who does not know about this project to understand that.
- Some projects in the material are evaluated with a B grade even though they focus on foreign residents and seem to be contributing to the promotion of a multicultural society, and vice versa. Since it is difficult to unify evaluation standards, the description method needs to be improved so that we can be convinced when we see the evaluations along with the reasons.
- In regard to Basic Goal 1, Project No. 38 “Elimination of discrimination against foreign residents seeking private rental housing (Dissemination and promotion of the Osaka Trusted Rental Housing Project),” the number of registered rental housing and cooperative agencies in the Yao City is shown. However, the number seems to include housing and agencies supportive of elderly people and people with disabilities. I have heard that few companies cooperate in letting foreign residents rent houses. Even in the cases introduced as successful examples, special procedures not required of Japanese tenants (higher guarantee deposits, etc.) are required of foreign tenants, supporting the fact that it is difficult for foreign residents to find rental housing. This highlights the deep-rooted discrimination against foreign residents looking for rental housing. I understand that this is a difficult problem since the project is undertaken by Osaka Prefecture, and Yao City has no

division in charge, but at least it is necessary to recognize that there are challenges facing foreign residents seeking rental housing.

- In the “implementation status,” some projects not targeted at foreign residents are included. For example, regarding Basic Goal 1, Project No. 27 “Organizing literacy and Japanese language classes,” the Nishigori literacy class is not for foreign residents. From this description, people may think that the class is offered to foreign residents, so the description method needs to be improved so that we can clearly see whether or not a certain class is offered to foreign residents.

3. Opinion exchange—Topic: “Support for foreign workers”

A member of the Secretariat explained Documents 2, 3 and 4.

- The revised Immigration Control Act will come into effect this April, newly introducing the status of residence “Specified Skilled Worker” to promote the acceptance of a larger number of foreign workers in Japan. Under this act, a framework has been established to accept foreign workers more widely, even for job categories that had been considered as menial jobs and were not open to foreign workers.
- As of December 2018, the population of foreign residents in Yao City is 7,342, showing a growing trend. We expect the number of foreign residents in the City to further increase when the new status of residence “Specified Skilled Worker” is introduced.
- Document 4 is an extract of major policies for foreign residents from the “comprehensive measures for the acceptance of and harmonious coexistence with human resources from foreign countries” now under review in the national government, along with additional descriptions of Yao City’s relevant support measures for foreign residents.
- We would like you all (council members) to exchange opinions on the topic of “Support for foreign workers” from the two perspectives of “preventing the isolation of foreign workers” and “delivering service information to foreign workers.” As for the target subjects, please also include all foreign workers living in the City currently, in addition to new foreign workers who will arrive in the future.

The Manager of the Labor Support Division explained the City’s approaches to support foreign workers.

- The City has no more information than is reported by the media.
- The national government is discussing issues related to technical intern trainees, prior to the acceptance of foreign nationals who will come to Japan with the new status of residence.
- Even though Japan has welcomed foreign workers due to workforce shortage, we have observed cases where we were unable to offer sufficient life support or where foreign workers became isolated. To prevent this, the national government says that it will take necessary measures.
- Yao City has already been working on the promotion of a multicultural society, and we hope to

continue implementing relevant policies as a pioneer.

- Based on the information from the public employment security office, we assume that the number of foreign workers in Yao City is about 2,200 or 2,300. Although this number may not be accurate since it does not include permanent residents, we can say that we already have many foreign workers in the City.
- The national government says that Japan will accept more than 300,000 foreign workers in five years. However, they have not yet established specific policies to prevent gaps between urban and rural areas, and it is still unknown how many foreign workers will actually come to Yao City.
- Yao City is known for manufacturing and is home to many companies. Among them, a considerable number of companies suffer workforce shortage. Considering this situation, we can assume that the number of foreign workers will grow in the future.
- Companies employing foreign workers for the first time can tell them how to do their work, but have no idea what kind of living support they need. Currently, we introduce the Cultural and International Affairs Division and Yao International Center to such companies for consultation.
- When considering companies' acceptance of foreign workers and the required living support for such workers, it would be desirable for the City to have a one-stop consultation center that can deal with comprehensive matters regarding the acceptance of and harmonious coexistence with human resources from foreign countries. The center will be able to provide advice for companies that are planning to employ foreign workers, and promote awareness-raising for companies.
- It is the Labor Standards Inspection Office, not the city office, that imposes regulation on companies violating the Labor Standards Act. We are determined to work on the awareness-raising of companies in cooperation with the Labor Standards Inspection Office.
- We are advancing necessary arrangements so that we can host seminars for companies on the newly established status of residence "Specified Skilled Worker." For example, companies are to pay a considerable amount of money to employ technical intern trainees, so they must take care not to be deceived by malignant supervising organizations or others. We hope to encourage companies to secure human resources through appropriate utilization of the system.

<Opinion exchange>

- It is important for the City to review the problems that have been specified in the course of providing information and consultations in the past, and organize what the City can do, what it cannot do, and what the national government or the private sector should do.
- We may be able to utilize our past experiences to prepare supportive measures for newly arriving foreign nationals that will increase in number.
- I am concerned that citizens' awareness may not be sufficient. They understand that discrimination is not allowed, but they may inadvertently hurt foreign nationals by stereotyping people and

things.

- Since many foreign residents are already living in the City, the promotion of harmonious coexistence between those foreign residents and newly arriving foreign nationals is also a challenge we should tackle henceforth.
- We often hear the expression “foreign workers” in the news, but it is necessary for accepting parties to recognize that they are, above all, residents in the community who lead their everyday lives there. Locals should accept such foreign residents more warmly, and become aware that they are all living together. We also must consider how to promote awareness-raising in this context.
- Facing a declining birth rate and an aging population, Japan will observe a significant decrease in its working population in the future, with no choice but to rely on foreign workers. If Japanese people rely on foreign workers, we must share the premise that it is necessary to achieve a harmonious relationship among us all.
- The “comprehensive measures for the acceptance of and harmonious coexistence with human resources from foreign countries” include measures and support for newly arriving foreign nationals, but do not include awareness-raising for local people accepting them or the mental preparation they should undergo. Yao International Center is implementing programs to promote citizens’ understanding of diverse cultures, such as the introduction of foreign cultures, but it is difficult to disseminate a mindset of multiculturalism among citizens only through such programs. I would like to know an effective way to encourage citizens to develop awareness for the mutual acceptance of diversity.
- I cannot easily come up with specific measures to raise awareness of multiculturalism. When the distance is great, many people have positive views of international exchange and foreign cultures. However, when the distance is reduced and people recognize the differences between “us” and “them,” the awareness tends to change. Seeing the details of past consultations, we can say that troubles occur among people in close proximity.
- Awareness-raising is of course necessary, but it is difficult to prevent collision no matter what kind of awareness-raising we promote. The ability of the community is judged by how its members find solutions when troubles occur. It is important for the communities to develop their abilities and networks so that they can solve their problems by themselves.
- I think that the national government and accepting organizations will be responsible for the acceptance of foreign workers with the newly established status of residence of “Specified Skilled Worker,” based on what they have learned from past experience. However, at the end of the day, newcomers will select familiar contact points for consultation, such as teachers in Japanese language classes or consultation desks at local governments. Therefore, a follow-up system by local governments is essential. In this context, we need to apply the City’s existing policies to

newcomers. The City should not handle existing foreign residents and newcomers in different ways, but should establish future policies for both communities.

- Discussions on to what extent we should expand our projects in response to national policies are needed, but we would appreciate active expansion.
- We need not think separately about foreign residents in the City with the status of residence “Specified Skilled Worker.” They may have different reasons for coming to Japan, but they will face similar challenges in their everyday lives.
- Would it be right to assume that, for the time being, there will be foreign residents who change their status of residence from “Technical Intern Training” to “Specified Skilled Worker”? No exams are required for the change, so there will be people who hope to do this.
- I understand that there already are many foreign workers and technical intern trainees in the City. But in many cases, they are living in groups near their workplaces, and I think they have little contact with their neighbors in their everyday lives due to the language barrier and other problems. Families with children have networks within their children’s nursery centers or schools, but this does not apply to technical intern trainees since they cannot bring their families with them. Networking opportunities to promote positive encounters may be provided as a support measure by the City or private organizations. Without positive encounters, discrimination and prejudice may flourish.
- There was a comment that, in many cases, foreign residents live in groups near their workplaces. In such cases, do they not even have contact with their compatriot communities?
- I think Vietnamese people have contact with their compatriot community. I have heard that many Vietnamese people participate in local gatherings outside of work. But the situation may depend on the region. Some say they have never met their compatriots.
- Indonesian people also often gather together. I have heard that there are gatherings for those who have come to live in Japan through international marriage, and technical intern trainees, at mosques or other places.
- We need to exercise our ingenuity in preparing opportunities for foreign residents to have encounters with their Japanese neighbors.
- Companies must support foreign workers as their responsibility as an accepting party, but they will face difficulties. It would be ideal if we could establish supporting systems provided by the communities and local governments by that time.
- Not all foreign residents in the City are new. Those who have lived in Japan for 30 or 40 years over multiple generations have received education in Japan, and their native language is Japanese. Their backgrounds are completely different from those of newly arrived foreign residents. It is regrettable that discussions in the media seem to focus only on newly arrived foreign residents as objects of the policies for foreign residents.

- I hope that the City will comprehensively consider both long-term foreign residents and newly arrived persons as “foreign residents,” and analyze what the specific needs of newly arrived people are and what challenges long-term residents face.
- There are various ways to define foreign residents (focusing only on their nationality, or also on their roots, etc.), but we can surely say that they are more diversified than before. It is necessary to see the whole before starting to consider policies.
- It is not true that foreign residents who have lived for a long time in Japan have no problems. They may suffer in terms of their relationships with the Japanese people around them, face an identity crisis, feel concerned about finding a job, or suffer discrimination. We hope that the City will take this point into consideration when drawing up policies.
- For Vietnamese people living in the City, there is a community called *Hoi Nguoi Viet Yao* (“Yao Vietnamese Meeting”), which organizes events such as the celebration of the Lunar New Year and the Mid-Autumn Festival. So they have a place to gather at. They can also communicate with Japanese people there, and have opportunities to learn Japanese culture. That being said, it is difficult to find places of contact for Vietnamese people and Japanese people in their everyday lives. I do not know if such places exist, or where.
- Even if supporters hope to provide support and seek communication, there are cases where potential support recipients do not hope to receive support. I feel the difficulty in creating opportunities for communication.
- Of course, companies must provide steadfast support. However, there is a limit to what they can do, due to the language barrier and other problems. It would be nice if we could dispatch interpreters on such occasions, but we must also consider to what extent the City should provide support.
- The strong point about technical intern trainees is that they all belong to business cooperatives, and they are supported not by their companies but the business cooperatives. This is one of the reasons the technical intern trainee system is working well. The system is different for specified skilled workers, so we are somewhat concerned.
- Business cooperatives are sometimes accused of maltreatment, but not all cooperatives commit wrongful acts. Some cooperatives decide not to continue to dispatch trainees to certain companies since they are not good for foreign workers.
- I am concerned if the same level of salary is paid for the same work.
- Even foreign residents who have been in Japan for a long time sometimes feel isolated, so it is truly difficult to prevent the isolation of newly arrived foreign residents.
- The major method of sharing service information will be the Internet, so it will be necessary to improve the Internet environment by, for example, increasing the number of hot-spots.
- After arriving in Japan, foreign nationals will first have to make a contract for a smartphone, etc. Just having someone who can help with this procedure will make it significantly easier for them to

obtain information.

4. Summary of the Yao City Foreign Residents' Council Meetings

A member of the Secretariat explained Document 5.

- Please check the contents and see whether or not there are any errors or omissions.

<Opinions>

- Article 2 of the Guidelines for the Establishment of Yao City Foreign Residents' Council states, "The Foreign Residents' Council shall discuss matters related to the promotion of policies for the internationalization of the City, including the promotion of a more convenient living environment for foreign residents, their coexistence with local residents, and their participation in administrative planning, and submit its opinions to the City." We will add the contents of today's discussions to Document 5, and compile and submit the document as "Opinions of the Yao City Foreign Residents' Council."
- In regard to hate speech, an act on its elimination was established by the national diet, and we are also promoting awareness-raising by displaying posters in the City. However, on the Internet, we feel that expressions that fuel discrimination and prejudice against specific races or ethnic groups are becoming increasingly radical. I think it is necessary for the City to present a message that it will not tolerate hate speech.
- We find expressions that fuel discrimination and prejudice against specific races or ethnic groups in election campaigns. I feel it would be nice if we could promote the strong points of the City, such as its initiatives toward fostering a multicultural society, so that the City will become a city where human rights are respected.
- This year marks the 40th anniversary of Japan's ratification of the International Bill of Human Rights. At this milestone, we should think again about human rights in administration, and I hope that the City will continue its administration focused on welfare and human rights so that Japanese and foreign residents can live together in harmony.
- We have problems that the City alone cannot deal with, but all the same, they are challenges within our communities. In this context, we at this council need to confirm that a stance against discrimination is included in the perspectives of respecting human rights and accepting diversity, and reflect that concept in policy-making.

5. Others

A member of the Secretariat explained that the tenure of the fourth Foreign Residents' Council members would end as of March 31, 2019, and that this was the final meeting during current term.

- As described in the Yao City Plan to Promote a Multicultural Society, the council will continue. We would like to ask for opinions and feedback from each member so that we can use them as

reference in the future.

<Opinions and feedback>

- When the council dealt with large-scale matters, I sometimes had difficulty offering my opinions, but I learned a lot. I would like to make good use of this experience and continue to contribute to the promotion of a multicultural society in Yao City.
- Though it is becoming difficult to focus on human rights in administration, I hope that the City will continue its initiatives toward the promotion of a multicultural society that it has already been working with.
- Through the meetings, I was able to share the activities of Yao International Center with you. I would like to ask for your opinions on a continuous basis, and further expand the scope of our activities toward the development of a multicultural society.
- I was happy I was able to exchange opinions with you members at the meetings. I have lived in Japan for a long time, and feel comfortable living here.
- I think this is a unique opportunity for foreign residents to express their opinions to administrative bodies, and so I served my term as a council member with the intention to support, continue and improve this council. I hope that the discussions at this council have contributed to the improvement of the City's initiatives toward the development of a multicultural society.
- I think opportunities for foreign residents to express their opinions, like this council, are very valuable. Even among foreign residents, our opinions vary depending on our backgrounds and other factors. As such, I have learned a lot during these two years. I understand that the City treats foreign residents very well, and I hope that the City will continue this project and make it an even more meaningful opportunity.

6. Closing