



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

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Dimple Rana

Ekta Saksena*

Executive Director

Yasmin Padamsee Forbes

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Meeting Minutes

May 18, 2021, 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84538471699>

*Please note this meeting will be recorded

Meeting was held via teleconference in compliance with the Governor's Executive Order on the Open Meeting Law and COVID-19

Present Commissioners are marked with a *. Absent Commissioners are highlighted.

Commissioners present: Chair Hyun, Commissioner Solar, Commissioner Kim, Commissioner Sakena, Commissioner Chiemruom, Commissioner Douangmany Cage, Commissioner Syeda, Commissioner Prasad, Commissioner King, Commissioner Lee

Staff present: Executive Director, Yasmin Padamsee Forbes, Legislative Intern Sarah Lin, and Western Mass Coordinator, Community Engagements Coordinator of Western MA, Kamalani Yuen.

Members of the public: Charles Horenstein
The meeting is recorded.

Attachments:

- Four meeting minutes: March 9, March 10, March 16, April 21
- FY21 state budget spreadsheet
- FY21 nonprofit budget spreadsheet
- Commissioner compliance and attendance records
- Executive/Staff reports

1. Call meeting to order

The Chair Hyun calls the meeting to order at 6:36 pm. Chair Hyun acknowledges the growing violence in Palestine and Israel and states that the EC would like to create a working group to discuss how the AAC should respond to international incidents like this. Chair Hyun says that Commissioner Syeda will chair the working group, and Commissioners interested in discussing this topic are invited to join.

Commissioner Syeda reinforces the importance of intentionality and continued dialogue around these kinds of international issues. She welcomes the conversation and looks forward to working with other Commissioners on this.

2. Meeting minutes to be approved - VOTE

Chair Hyun welcomes any comments or questions about the March 9 meeting minutes.



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Commissioner Douangmany Cage motions to approve the March 9 meeting minutes. Commissioner Saksena seconds.

Yes: Commissioner Sakena, Commissioner Chiemruom, Commissioner Syeda, Commissioner Prasad, Commissioner Kim, Commissioner Solar, Commissioner Douangmany Cage, Chair Hyun

No: none

Abstain: none

Motion passes.

Chair Hyun welcomes any comments or questions about the March 10 meeting minutes.

Commissioner Chiemruom motions to approve the March 10 meeting minutes, Commissioner Saksena seconds.

Yes: Commissioner Chiemruom, Commissioner Kim, Commissioner Saksena, Commissioner Syeda, Commissioner Prasad, Commissioner Solar, Commissioner Douangmany Cage, Chair Hyun

No: none

Abstain: none

Motion passes.

Chair Hyun welcomes any comments or questions on the March 16 meeting minutes.

Commissioner Kim motions to approve March 16 meeting minutes and Commissioner Saksena seconds.

Yes: Commissioner Chiemruom, Commissioner Kim, Commissioner Saksena, Commissioner Syeda, Commissioner Prasad, Commissioner Solar, Commissioner Douangmany Cage, Chair Hyun

No: none

Abstain: none

Motion passes.

Chair Hyun welcomes any comments or questions on the April 21 meeting minutes.

Commissioner Syeda motions to approve April 21 meeting minutes, Commissioner Chiemruom seconds.

Yes: Commissioners Commissioner Chiemruom, Commissioner Kim, Commissioner Douangmany Cage, Commissioner Saksena, Commissioner Syeda, Commissioner Prasad, Commissioner Solar, Chair Hyun

No: none

Abstain: none

Motion passes.



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3. Executive & Staff Reports

Executive Director Padamsee Forbes gives the Executive Report, mentioning that she has been meeting with the EC, staff, and Treasury's team and welcomes one-on-one meetings with all Commissioners. She reports that the annual tax returns have been submitted successfully. She states that 23 applications have been received for AAC's small grants opportunity, and most of the applicants have requested the maximum \$1,000 amount. The Grants Committee will be meeting shortly to review these applications and recommend organizations to fund.

She developed a staff work plan that the EC and staff will review and finalize next week. She reports that over \$8,300 have been received in donations total over the past few months. In addition, she notes that the EC has approved \$500 for the Indian Visa Camp. Finally, she highlights recent community engagement events, including a current panel with OceanSpray company to highlight issues related to the AAPI community. She also spoke at the UMass Boston Oral Heritage Project. She mentions an upcoming event with the EPA. She highlights that the AAC recently posted a statement in support of India and Nepal's COVID-19 crisis.

Chair Hyun gives the Staff Reports, noting that several of them had conflicts with this evening's meeting. Chair Hyun reads the Program Director's report, stating that she has helped onboard the new ED and helped organize the first Commonwealth Seminar session to train AAPI people about getting more civically involved. She also helped organize a city resolution for Fall River to acknowledge and celebrate AAPI Heritage Month. PD began researching local elections throughout the state to provide educational and translated content in July. She will support Sarah Lin, AAC intern, to identify and deliver programming this summer focused on AAPI women in government. Finally, PD met with the Education and Leadership Development Committee to plan listening sessions for June and review long-term goals for the year.

Chair Hyun read the Community Engagement Coordinator's report, mentioning that she participated in a Western MA anti-Asian racism panel in Springfield. Kama helped organize a one-day Commonwealth Seminar session focused on the Western MA community. She worked to help update the MOU with the Bhutanese Society. Kama is also exploring the possibility of the AAC providing anti-Asian racism bystander training. She is working to develop a Western MA internship job description. She met with several members of the Pacific Islander community, particularly in the Western MA region. She attended the UMass Boston Oral Heritage Project.

Chair Hyun gives the Marketing and Communications Coordinator's report, noting that the AAC's social media platforms have seen growth in likes and followers compared to last month. She helped prepare infographics on the legislative process



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in Massachusetts, the Commonwealth Seminar session, the Biracial AAPI Women's Experience event, and the forthcoming Pacific Islander event. In addition, Sheila promoted information on various issues, including the AAC's small grants opportunity and translated materials related to vaccine equity. She also helped develop and design a donor report for the AAC. Finally, Sheila encourages Commissioners and staff to notify her if they will be participating in external events so that she can highlight them on the AAC's website calendar.

Commissioners Betty King and Mary Lee join the meeting.

4. Commissioner compliance and attendance records

Chair Hyun reports that not all Commissioners have yet completed the required compliance documents. Therefore, this is the last notice before the EC will send a message regarding Commissioner compliance and attendance to Appointing Authorities. Chair Hyun gives Commissioners a deadline of next Tuesday, May 25, to complete all the necessary submissions.

5. Ideas for AAC Commissioner/staff retreat

Chair Hyun reports that Covid canceled the annual AAC Commissioner/staff retreat last year. The EC would like to propose holding a retreat this year to allow for goal setting and relationship building.

Commissioner King asks about the member of the public joining the meeting. Charles Horenstein introduces himself.

Chair Hyun welcomes ideas from Commissioners and staff regarding the retreat. Discussions included whether to hold an in-person or hybrid retreat. Various locations were proposed in Boston and the suburbs. Commissioner Chiemruom offered that the AAC could use her organization's space in Lowell for no cost.

Commissioner King raised questions on the purpose of the retreat, aims, and attendance. The Executive Director noted the importance of developing a clear plan and getting everyone's feedback and input on the agenda. She continued that it would be valuable to have the retreat sooner than later to discuss the future direction and goals of the AAC for the remainder of the year.

Chair Hyun expressed confidence that with ample feedback and input from the Commissioners and staff, AAC will develop a clear plan and goals for the retreat. Chair Hyun said we could come to know each other better and benefit the Commission. He hopes that one of the retreat outcomes will be ensuring that every Commissioner, staff member, and member of the public feels like they are a part of the AAC's work.

An agreement was reached on the importance of a retreat to meet and discuss priorities and next steps with Commissioners and staff. It would also be essential to have a skilled facilitator to assist with programming, planning, and relationship



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building. Chair Hyun said that the EC will plan the retreat out thoroughly and that any commissioner can join the planning sessions. Will send out information to all commissioners.

It was discussed to consider budgeting to hire a facilitator using the forthcoming FY22 state appropriation. The new fiscal year begins in July 2021.

6. Sub-Committee Updates

Development: UMass Lowell space is holding AAC's \$1,000 deposit for the Unity Dinner. The event space is not yet open due to COVID-19. Commissioner Solar will convene a Development Committee meeting later this month or early next month to discuss a plan for the Unity Dinner moving forward.

Education: Recently met with Commissioner Bharath and Kamalani and decided to elevate student voices (Kto 8) to discuss transitioning to fall, so listen to students to see what we can do as a commission. Anti-racism training may be with another organization.

Young Leaders Symposium holding it in Sept or Aug, possibly a virtual or in-person event.

Health and Human Services: The Committee is working on a social media campaign to help promote vaccination among the AAPI community. They are working on translating these materials into several Asian languages. She mentions collecting testimonials from Commissioners about getting vaccinated and encourages other Commissioners interested in sharing this information via a Google form https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScaRKY_krgC-6rdbY100Q6-7ES0HicBcIZj57g12XkhsR9hIQ/viewform, in whatever language they choose. Commissioner (Commissioner Douangmany Cage, Commissioner Prasad, Meena, Nate, and Dimple) and Lily have submitted their testimonials thus far. The committee is also working to organize healing circles to support mental health needs.

Government Relations and Advocacy:

The Gov Relations Subcommittee recently met to discuss two additional bills: the vaccine equity bill and the genocide education bill. The Subcommittee would like to work with the Health and Human Services Subcommittee to organize a town hall on the issue of vaccine equity to hear from the public and community organizations about their experience with vaccination and any barriers they're facing. In addition, the Subcommittee recommends organizing two special meetings between now and the June meeting so that all Commissioners can discuss and hear from the public about the four remaining bills that the Subcommittee has advanced to complete AAC. These bills include the AAC name change bill, the driver's license bill, the language access bill, and the genocide education bill.



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Commissioner King raised questions on what it means for the AAC to support legislation? For example, how AAC selected the bills to discuss and the criteria involved?

Commissioner Kim responded that the EC and Subcommittee members have discussed taking several actions on supported bills. They include: providing oral or written testimony when the bill is heard in committee, including the bill on the policy page of the AAC's website, and providing information about the policy issue on the AAC's social media pages where appropriate.

All state bills have been referred to committees, and legislative committees will be holding hearings this month into the summer to accept testimony on these bills. So far, none of the AAC's supported bills have yet been scheduled for a hearing, but she will keep the Commission informed about when they happen. The Gov Relations Subcommittee discussed 30 bills and identified a shortlist on which bills should be brought forward to the full Commission.

Governance, Finance, and Communications - Chair Hyun mentions that he will call a committee meeting shortly to discuss the next steps.

7. Old Business

No old business to discuss.

8. New Business

Chair Hyun reiterates that Commissioner Syeda will create a new task force to discuss a strategy for addressing international incidents and appropriate actions that the AAC should take related to those issues. In addition, an email asking Commissioners who are interested in volunteering will be circulated.

Discussions arose on invitations to commissioners to speak at various speaking engagements. Commissioner Betty requested that all Commissioners are informed of these public opportunities. It was agreed to share events with a more significant turnaround time with all the Commissioners and other cases; the Chair noted, the EC and the ED would work together to identify which Commissioner is the best fit for various speaking opportunities. All Commissioners were requested to inform the EC and staff about their speaking engagements to avoid any potential conflicts for the AAC. Commissioners should be aware and clarify that they are not speaking on behalf of the full Commission - only as an individual member who sits on the public body.

Commissioner Prasad sought clarification on the procedure if one was invited to speak, but later their affiliation with the Commission is highlighted. Chair Hyun states that the Commissioner should inform the EC and the ED on the particular situation in those cases.



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Discussions on the format of future AAC meetings once the Commonwealth opens up were held, noting that some staff and public members may prefer to remain virtual. The meeting format will depend on the guidance put by the open meeting law division. Chair Hyun said that it is essential to follow up on the recommendation of the Commonwealth, but it is also accessible to members of the public.

9. Next Commission Meeting: June 15, 2021

10. Other community updates & meeting adjourned

Commissioner Prasad motions to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Prasad moves, and Commissioner Douangmany Cage seconds.

YES: Commissioner Prasad, Commissioner Douangmany Cage, Commissioner King, Commissioner Kim, Commissioner Saksena, Commissioner Syeda, Mary Lee, Commissioner Solar, Chair Hyun

NO: none

Abstain: none

Motion passes.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.