



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

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Ekta Saksena*

Executive Director

Yasmin Padamsee Forbes

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Meeting Minutes

July 1, 2021, 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83228465246>

*Please note this meeting will be recorded

(AAC postponed from June 23 to July 1, 2021)

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 KC, Commissioner Saksena, Commissioner Kim, Commissioner Chu, Commissioner Bae Kupel, Commissioner Bharath, Commissioner Solar, Commissioner Douangmany Cage, Commissioner King, Commissioner Syeda

Staff present: Executive Director, Yasmin Padamsee Forbes, Legislative Intern Sarah Lin

Members of the public: none

Meeting is recorded.

Attachments:

- Three meeting minutes: May 18, May 27, June 3
- FY21 state budget spreadsheet
- FY21 nonprofit budget spreadsheet
- Commissioner compliance and attendance records
- Executive/Staff reports
- Proposed Policy for AAC Funding Requests and Conflict of Interest

1. Call meeting to order

Chair Hyun calls the meeting to order at 6:34pm. Chair Hyun welcomes the AAC's newest Commissioner Gary Chu.

2. Introduction of new Commissioner: Dr. Gary Chu

Commissioner Chu introduces himself, citing his commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and his past experience advancing this work in the field of optometry. Commissioner Chu mentions his excitement to serve the AAPI community, and explains the importance of the AAC amidst the rise in anti-Asian racism.

Chair Hyun acknowledges the critical work that Commissioner KC has been doing in Nepal. Chair Hyun yields the floor to Commissioner KC to offer comments. Commissioner KC expresses appreciation to fellow Commissioners for sending best wishes and prayers to the Nepalese people. Commissioner KC describes his two months in Nepal, citing the urgency of the COVID-19 crisis and the little public



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attention that the country has received. Commissioner KC reports that he has been reaching out to elected officials, community leaders, and others to help raise awareness of Nepal's dire situation and try to secure 100,000 vaccines to send to Nepal. Commissioner KC encourages Commissioners looking to learn more details to contact him. Chair Hyun thanks Commissioner KC for his leadership.

Commissioner Bharath expresses appreciation to Commissioner KC for sharing these stories about Nepal and commends him for his leadership. Commissioner Bharath asks what the AAC can do to help the Nepalese people.

Commissioner KC explains that there are 20,000 Nepalese people in the Boston area and mentions an organization called the Greater Boston Nepalese Community. Commissioner KC raises the need for more oxygen concentrators, which cost \$400-500.

Commissioner Chu mentions having connections to Johnson & Johnson and offers to connect with Commissioner KC to discuss this further.

Commissioner King commends Commissioner KC for his leadership and for his service to the Asian American community and the AAC. Commissioner KC expresses appreciation to the AAC for discussing this issue and to Commissioner Chu for offering to help make a connection.

Commissioner Bae Kupel asks via chat if the AAC can help raise awareness about the needs of the Nepali community through our social media channels and through a press release. Chair Hyun agrees, and states that he would welcome the opportunity for Commissioners, in their individual capacity, to sign onto a letter urging that elected leaders offer support to Nepal.

Commissioner KC expresses appreciation for the AAC and the vital work of using our connections and voices to support the immigrant community.

Chair Hyun acknowledges the growing incidents of violence targeted against the Southeast Asian community and Sikh community, and affirms that we cannot tolerate Islamophobia or racism of any kind.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Chair Hyun welcomes any discussion pertaining to the May 18 meeting minutes.

Commissioner Bharath motions to approve the May 18 meeting minutes.
Commissioner Kim seconds.

Yes: Commissioner KC, Commissioner Kim, Commissioner Bharath,
Commissioner Saksena, Commissioner Solar, Commissioner Syeda, Chair Hyun

No: none

Abstain: Commissioner Chu, Commissioner Bae Kupel

Not recorded: Commissioner King



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Seven in Affirmative and two Abstentions. Commissioner King does not respond to Chair Hyun's request to submit a vote. Motion passes.

Chair Hyun welcomes any discussion pertaining to the May 27 meeting minutes.

Commissioner Bae Kupel motions to approve the May 27 meeting minutes.

Commissioner Saksena seconds.

Yes: Commissioner KC, Commissioner Kim, Commissioner Bharath,
Commissioner Bae Kupel, Commissioner Saksena, Commissioner Solar,
Commissioner Syeda, Chair Hyun

No: none

Abstain: Commissioner Chu

Not Recorded: Commissioner King

Eight in the Affirmative and one Abstention. Commissioner King does not respond to Chair Hyun's request to submit a vote. Motion passes.

Chair Hyun welcomes any discussion pertaining to the June 3 meeting minutes.

Commissioner Saksena motions to approve June 3 meeting minutes, Commissioner Bharath seconds.

Yes: Commissioner Bae Kupel, Commissioner Saksena, Commissioner Solar,
Commissioner Syeda, Chair Hyun

No: none

Abstain: Commissioner Chu, Commissioner KC, Commissioner Kim,
Commissioner Bharath,

Not Recorded: Commissioner King

Five in the Affirmative and four Abstentions. Commissioner King does not respond to Chair Hyun's request to submit a vote. Motion passes.

4. Executive & Staff Reports

Chair Hyun reviews the executive and staff reports. He encourages Commissioners to follow up with staff directly if they have any specific questions.

Commissioner Bharath applauds the AAC's staff for producing an excellent annual report for the AAC, citing the terrific design and content. Commissioner Bharath asked if there was a reason why some staff members were not able to attend tonight's meeting. Chair Hyun responds that they informed him of independent personal commitments this evening.

Commissioner KC commends the staff, specifically Yasmin and Sheila, for their efforts to compile a list of AAPI small businesses across the Commonwealth.



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Commissioner Bae Kupel expresses appreciation to staff for putting in tremendous work on the AAC's programming and events. Commissioner Bae Kupel recommends holding time at the start of our next monthly meeting to express gratitude to our staff.

Commissioner Kim echoes Commissioner Bae Kupel's remarks, citing the growing visibility of the AAC and the importance of supporting the AAPI community during this challenging year. Commissioner Kim specifically thanks Sarah Lin, on her ongoing efforts to support the AAC's policy work and her research this summer to understand opportunities for AAPI women to enter into government and public service.

5. Commissioner compliance and attendance records

Chair Hyun reinforces the importance of completing the required compliance documents. He notes that the majority of Commissioners have fulfilled this obligation, but there are a few Commissioners who have not yet done so.

Commissioner Kim thanks the Commissioners present on today's call, citing that they have all fulfilled the compliance requirements. She mentions that Yasmin can work with Commissioner Chu to help him complete his documents. Commissioner Kim also explains that Yasmin and the Executive Committee intend to provide a six-month attendance update to Appointing Authorities in July. She notes that the attendance records will be distributed to all Commissioners shortly, and she encourages Commissioners to check the spreadsheet for accuracy before these letters are sent.

6. Ideas for AAC Commissioner/staff retreat to be held on August 14 or Aug 15

Commissioner Bae Kupel asks for an explanation about the goals of the retreat. Chair Hyun explains that the goals are to dive into strategic planning for the upcoming year, build personal relationships with each other, and discuss how to streamline workflows.

Commissioner Bharath states that she is looking forward to the retreat, and she is eager to meet and discuss a long-term strategy for the AAC. She states that India Day is around that time, and she will do her best to prioritize the AAC retreat. Chair Hyun asks Commissioner Bharath to keep the AAC informed about upcoming events.

Commissioner Solar mentions the August Moon Festival, and notes that the AAC should double check those dates as well.

Commissioner Bae Kupel asks if we're planning to hire an external facilitator. Chair Hyun responds that we're exploring this question, and if the AAC proceeds with hiring a facilitator, he recommends using the nonprofit budget to pay for this



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expense. Commissioner Hyun notes that it will be approximately 4 hours, morning through lunch.

Commissioner Chu asks if the proposed dates are firm. He offers the New England College of Optometry as a potential no-fee meeting location.

Commissioner Bae Kupel cites that many of the past AAC events and meetings have been in Boston. He recommends meeting in a more central location in Central MA, like Lowell. Commissioner Bae Kupel mentions the Lowell Community Health Center, and notes that he could make a request to use that space if needed.

7. Unity Dinner - AAC's 15th Anniversary conversation

Chair Hyun yields the floor to Commissioner Solar, who chairs the Development Committee.

Commissioner Solar notes that the members of the Development Committee are himself, Yasmin, and Commissioner King. Commissioner Solar states that the Unity Dinner was cancelled last year, and Committee members discussed some concerns about hosting an in-person event this fall. Committee members thought that a virtual meeting may be less impactful than an in-person event. Commissioner Solar states that UMass Lowell is willing to hold our deposit from last year's cancelled Unity Dinner or give us a refund.

Commissioner Bharath states that the Unity Dinner is an excellent opportunity to bring the AAPI community together to meet and listen to community voices.

Commissioner Kim says that we have a unique fundraising window this year with the AAPI community finally getting the attention that it so long deserved. She notes that it is also an important organizational milestone, with the 15th anniversary of the AAC, and she sees this as a potential opportunity to commemorate the previous Commissioners and staff who have laid the groundwork for the AAC.

Commissioner KC agrees with Commissioner Kim's comments. He also cites the importance of recognizing members of our community who have provided tremendous contributions and service to the broader AAPI community.

Commissioner Bae Kupel agrees that this is an important milestone, and thinks there's an opportunity to do a series of events, for example: town halls focused on different issue areas and conversations to help shape the next 15 years of the Commission.

Chair Hyun thanks the Committee. He cites the importance of coming together as an AAPI community and engaging other communities as well. He is open to delaying the event to allow for more thoughtful planning. He cites the importance of other Commissioners helping to support planning for the Unity Dinner and the



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Development Committee's work. He also proposes reaching out to members of the broader AAPI community to support this effort as well.

Commissioner Solar reaffirms his interest and commitment to driving this work forward, in collaboration with the full AAC. He cites that Commissioner King previously raised concerns about in-person events. Commissioner Solar invites Commissioner King to share her thoughts to the group. Commissioner King does not respond.

Commissioner Solar also cites an opportunity to more proactively promote fundraising opportunities for the AAC's nonprofit arm. He mentions that the AAC's nonprofit received over \$8,000 in unsolicited donations, following the horrific attacks against the AAPI community.

Chair Hyun encourages the Development Committee to continue these discussions, and keep Commissioners updated on how we can support them..

8. Conflict of Interest and Grants discussion

Commissioner Kim notes that the Executive Committee and Executive Director developed this draft policy in response to questions from Commissioners, including Commissioner Mary Chin, about whether organizations that Commissioners are affiliated with can apply to the AAC for financial grants.

Commissioner Kim notes that the intention is to present and preview the draft policy around grants and conflict of interest at this meeting, and consider taking it up for a vote at the July meeting. Commissioner Kim reviews the language of the draft policy.

Commissioner Bae Kupel asks if Commissioners will be expected to send their completed disclosure form to the Executive Director and Executive Committee, noting that there may be private information in the disclosure form. Commissioner Kim responds that it is not necessary to send the completed disclosure form. She notes that simply informing the EC that they have a relationship with an applying organization and they have submitted a disclosure form is sufficient.

Commissioner Bharath offers a personal example of knowing an organization that applied to the AAC for a grant. She notes that many Commissioners have relationships with various AAPI-serving organizations, so this is likely to happen with some level of frequency. Commissioner Kim notes that this policy would only pertain to situations in which a Commissioner themselves; their immediate family member; or an organization for which a Commissioner is an employee, partner, trustee, or board member would have a financial interest in the funding request.

Commissioner Kim notes that the example Commissioner Bharath provided of simply knowing an organization would likely not trigger the requirements outlined



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in this draft policy. Commissioner Kim encourages Commissioners to call the State Ethics Commission if they have any questions about their particular situation.

Commissioner KC cites a past example of needing to check with the State Ethics Commission about a Unity Dinner honoree. He notes that the State Ethics Commission was helpful in clarifying that situation.

Commissioner Kim reiterates that this policy is only relevant to funding requests in which a Commissioner or an organization they have a direct relationship to would stand to benefit financially.

9. Sub-Committee Updates

Small Business: Commissioner KC states that they had a meeting on June 10 and expresses appreciation to the Committee members for their participation. He has connected with Leader Bank and Eastern Bank to discuss potential opportunities for collaboration.

Young Leaders Symposium: Commissioner Solar states that planning for YLS is starting shortly, and he encourages Commissioners to reach out if they are interested in helping with this event. Commissioner Solar mentions that they are thinking late summer/fall for YLS this year.

Governance, Finance, and Communications: Chair Hyun encourages Committee Chairs to reach out with funding requests for the FY22 state appropriation. He notes that he is planning to allocate approximately \$30K for Committees in FY22.

10. Old Business

No old business to discuss.

11. New Business

12. Next Commission Meeting: July 20, 2021

13. Other community updates & Meeting adjourned

Commissioner Bae Kupel motions to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Chu seconds.

YES: Commissioner Chu, Commissioner Kim, Commissioner Bae Kupel, Commissioner KC, Commissioner Saksena, Commissioner Solar, Chair Hyun

NO: none

Abstain: none

Motion passes.

Meeting adjourned at 8:03pm.