



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

## COMMISSIONERS

### Chairperson

Vira Douangmany  
Cage\*

### Vice Chairperson

Mabel Lam\*

### Treasurer

Bora Chiemruom\*

### Secretary

Philjay Solar\*

Jonjy Ananth

Meenakshi Bharath

Mary Chin\*

Gilbert Ho\*

Vanna Howard\*

Samuel Hyun\*

Pralhad KC\*

Danielle Kim\*

Betty King\*

Nate Bae Kupel\*

Wingkay Leung

Mary K. Y. Lee\*

Nina Liang\*

Dimple Rana\*

Haniya Syeda\*

Ying Wang\*

### Executive Director

Jenny Chiang

One Ashburton Place

12th Floor

Boston, MA 02108

www.aacommission.org

## Meeting Minutes

June 16, 2020, 6:30pm to 8:00pm

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

Absent Commissioners are highlighted and remote participants are indicated by an asterisk\*. Quorum was reached by attendance.

### Attachments:

- March 31 Meeting Minutes
- April Meeting Minutes
- Mary Meeting Minutes
- Communications Coordinator Job Description
- Finance Committee Meeting Notes
- Bylaw amendment Proposal
- Springfield Office Space Opportunity

Staff Present: Jenny Chiang, Jessica Wong, Brooke Yuen

Guests Present: Senator Dean Tran, Scott Ford, Cary Shuman

Vira calls for meeting to order at 6:36pm

Vira shares there's been tensions within the AAC regarding the Black Lives Matter statement. The Executive Committee recommends that the Executive Session will be postponed until we are able to get legal counsel. Vira provides three clarifications for the record; rejection that there was retaliation, rejection of the claim that Ms. Chiang abused the AAC email system, and rejection of the claim that AAC violated Open Meeting Laws. Vira shares that she will allow 10 minutes of conversation about the Black Lives Matter statement.

Philjay motions for a 2-minute time limit per Commission with a limit of 2 speaking times during this 10-minute open discussion. Sam seconds.

### Vote:

Yes: Vanna, Bora, Gilbert, Sam, Pralhad, Danielle, Mabel, Haniya, Dimple, Nina, Nate, Ying, Vira, Philjay

Abstain: Mary C., Mary L., Betty

Motion carries

Sam shares statement made by AAPI leaders

Vira shares that this discussion is to allow conversation about the Black Lives Matter statement or the letter sent to the Commission by the Attorney.

Mary L. suggests to not talk about the attorney letter until the Commission seeks legal counsel.



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Nina agrees to hold off on conversations on legal matters. Nina shares that she came on the Commission to serve the AAPI community. The incidents have opened up both sides of the conversation. Nina hopes to move forward to work together as one body.

Mary C. shares that the statement should have been included on the agenda for discussion. Nina shares that the space has been created by Vira to have this conversation.

Commissioners, Sam, Danielle, and Philjay express that there were 13 votes in favor of the statement and that the guidelines were clear. The urgency was for the AAC to respond to the black lives matter movement in a timely manner.

Philjay suggests for an emergency meeting for further discussion. Jenny will send out a doodle poll to find a date/time to reconvene.

Vira shares that we can form a special committee to talk further.

Mary L. shares that we need to address this as soon as possible and recommends to address this today by vote.

Danielle shares that she sees this as a space to discuss the statement.

Philjay suggests to bring this matter back up for a vote during new business at the end of the meeting.

Danielle states that she is not interested in creating a committee to talk about differences on the statement. A majority of Commissioners voted to approve the statement. She would like to talk about how we can move forward with possible programming to advance needs of all people of color.

Pralhad states the statement was not approved by everyone. It has brought up a lot of conversation and it caused damage to the community. It was not approved by the whole Commission. It has divided the community throughout the state. Pralhad believes the statement was rushed.

Mary C. felt it was rushed. Mary asks for clarity and says the Chair had previously said it was supposed to be unanimous.

Sam asks for callers to identify themselves. Sam states that the 13 votes were unanimous in favor. Furthermore, it was stated that those who did not vote would be marked as no vote. Sam states that he did not feel the guidelines were not made clear.

Mary C. states that there was an issue with the process of approving the statement. Jenny clarifies that the original statement was sent out on June at 4pm. Pralhad asks what the urgency is for the letter.

Mary L. states that a 24 hour notice was not given according to our bylaws. Philjay states the urgency



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Danielle states that there was an urgency for the Commission to respond for the black lives matter movement. Danielle clarifies that the bylaws do state that for emergency meetings,

Senator Dean Tran states that he called in to listen and not debate. He points out the use of the word solidarity. Sen. Tran says that we need solidarity within our own community. Sen. Tran states that he personally does not see himself having white privilege or anti-blackness.

Betty states that the assertion to model minority and white privilege is offensive. Asian Americans have faced oppression not privilege. Betty states that historical events . Bringing up black panthers endorses violence. Asian Americans have long remained silent from politics. We are throwing our own people under the bus. Betty says the statement is overly explosive and quite dangerous. Betty prepared an alternative press statement. While we strongly support black lives matter, we didn't have to go into dangerous areas and divide our communities.

Gilbert states that she replied with suggestions to Jenny. Everyone should be working together and every comment needs to be recognized. Gilbert states that Commissioner opinions were ignored.

Mary C. states that the issue is very important. Mary asks is a majority vote can really represent the whole Commission.

Betty asks Gilbert what the procedures are for approving statements in AAC.

Gilbert states that topics are open for discussion. Commissioners should feel free to chime in with suggestions.

Mary L. would like to hear next steps from Vira.

Vira calls for Commissioners to reach out to the Executive Committee on further thoughts on next steps. Mary suggests that the full Commission needs to discuss next steps collectively.

Bora motions to move on to the next agenda items.

Philjay suggests for an emergency meeting for further discussion to have all Commissioners on the call.

Vira suggests Jenny send out a doodle poll to see times/dates that would work to reconvene.

Betty states that it's important for the Commission to be fully transparent. All of us should make informed decisions.



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Sam states that he acknowledges this is a painful and uncomfortable conversation. Sam appreciates that we will have the conversation, but we have exceeded the allotted time originally agreed.

Betty states we will not always agree but we have to treat each other with respect and dignity.

## 1. Approval of minutes from March 31, 2020, April 21, 2020, & May 19, 2020

### March 31, 2020

Philjay states that the Commissioner who made amendments is not currently present. Sam states that we had ample time to review the March minutes. Philjay moves to approve the meeting minutes of March 31 with the suggested amendments. Mabel is not comfortable amending the minutes. Bora agrees that the amendments are not necessary.

#### Vote:

Nay: Vira, Mabel, Bora, Danielle,

Abstain: Philjay, Sam, Nate, Nina, Haniya

- Motion does not pass

Vira proposes to proceed with a vote on approving the minutes as written.

#### Vote:

Yes: Vira, Mabel, Bora, Philjay, Sam, Danielle, Haniya

Abstain: Nate, Nina

- Motion passes

### April 21, 2020

Sam motions to approve the April 21 minutes. Bora seconds.

#### Vote:

Yes: Vira, Mabel, Bora, Philjay, Sam, Danielle, Haniya

Abstain: Nina, Nate

- Motion passes

### May 19, 2020

Danielle motions to approve minutes from May, Sam seconds.

#### Vote:

Yes: Vira, Mabel, Bora, Philjay, Sam, Danielle, Nate, Haniya

Abstain: Nina

- Motion passes

## 2. Executive Committee & Staff Reports

- Staff provided an update on work completed since the May meeting

## 3. Marketing / Communications Job Description

- Jenny presented a job description to retain our intern, Sheila as staff. Her internship has ended with us and she has been continuing voluntarily.
- Mary C. asks if this is a valuable use of our funds. Mary asks our FTE value. Jenny clarifies it is currently 2.5 FTE.
- Sam confirms that the traffic and visibility on our social media has been



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amplified. Sheila has gone above and beyond, showing exemplary work for little compensation.

- Betty states that 75% of our state budget already supports salary. We don't have programming or a central office. We have projects and events, and piggy back on other nonprofit organizations. Mabel shares that the AAC used to only have the budget for a part time Director. Philjay states that although an office space was an original desire. We need to reconsider if an office space is feasible at this time.
- Gilbert asks if this is separate from the website consultant brought up previously. Jenny clarifies that this position is separate but website design does require staff time and capacity to ensure updates and maintenance. Nate points out that the job description has a huge chunk of duties dedicated to website development. Danielle points out that the description also states updating contact databases.

Bora moves to close discussion and move to a vote. Philjay seconds.

#### Vote:

Yes: Vira, Mabel, Bora, Philjay, Sam, Danielle, Nate, Haniya

No: Betty

Abstain: Gilbert

Motion passes

#### 4. Springfield, MA Office Space

- Vira presents an opportunity in Springfield for an office space in Springfield
- A subletting opportunity had been presented from the Women's Fund in the same office space as TechSpring, which is our current satellite office in Springfield
- Brooke presents that a space in Springfield is essential for members to meet
- Betty states that Commission meetings are in greater Boston and suggests that we see the space first.
- Sam motions that we table the discussion until we know our budget and pending the conditions of the pandemic. Gilbert seconds. Vira asks for objections. None heard.

#### 5. Subcommittee Updates (if any)

Development (Vanna, Chair)

- Deferred for subsequent discussion

Government Relations, Advocacy, & Civil Rights

- Governments Relations (Sam, Chair)
- Civil Rights (Bora, Chair)
  - Deferred for subsequent discussion

Governance, Finance, & Communications

- Governance (Nate, Chair)
  - Update on bylaw changes – **VOTE**
    - Nate shares recommendations from last meeting on gender pronouns in our bylaws.
    - Danielle states that other state Commissions and bodies have already made this change.
    - Vira calls for any further discussion. None heard.





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Vote to update the gender pronouns in the bylaws

Yes: Vira, Mabel, Bora, Philjay, Gilbert, Sam, Danielle, Nate, Nina, Haniya

No: None heard

Motion passes

- Finance (Bora, Chair)
  - Recommendations from the finance committee on FY20 funds
  - Bora shares committee recommendations for use of funds

Nina motions to approve the budget recommendations. Danielle seconds.

Vote:

Yes: Vira, Mabel, Bora, Philjay, Sam, Danielle, Nate, Nina, Haniya

No: None heard

Motion passes

- Communications (Danielle, Chair)

Education & Leadership Development

- Education (Meena, Chair)
- Leadership Development (Philjay, Chair)

Health and Human Services (Mabel, Chair)

- Deferred for subsequent discussion

Small Business & Economic Development (Nina, Chair)

- Deferred for subsequent discussion

6. **Roll call vote to enter executive session pursuant to Open Meeting Law (Chapter 30A Section 21 (a)(1):** "To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual," *specifically Commissioner, Betty King*
  - Deferred for subsequent discussion

## 7. Old business

## 8. New Business

## 9. Next Commission meeting and proposal for 2 meetings/month

- Philjay motions to table the discussion. Mabel seconds.

## 10. Other Community updates & Meeting adjourned

- Sam motions to observe Robert's Rules to respect time limits. Philjay states that Vira can open up to embody Robert's Rules at the next meeting.
- Mabel motions to adjourn the meeting. Motion passes unanimously.

Meeting adjourns at 9:19pm.