



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

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Meeting Minutes

March 17, 2021, 7:00pm to 8:00pm

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

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

Attachments:

- Statement on Atlanta shooting

Staff: Sheila, Kamalani, Jay

Meeting is recorded

1. Call meeting to order (Sam)

Sam calls meeting to order at 7:06pm

2. Statement – VOTE

Vira proposes to remove the word “zero tolerance” because it evokes the disparities in school discipline and pushout practices.

Megha points out the inconsistency in the use of the word “womxn” and “women”, and recommends changing it to “womxn” throughout.

Jay reports that Lisa Wong, City Manager of Winchester, approved the sentence pertaining to the racist incident that she experienced.

Megha asks how we'll share the mental health resources listed at the bottom of the document. Jay and Sheila state that they will also update the resources list on the AAC website and add them to the AAC's linktree. Sheila asks for Commissioners to provide additional resources

Cinda raised concerns with the term “massage parlors”, and suggested replacing it with “Asian-owned spas”. Sam asks Commissioners to double check whether they are Asian owned. Megha states that it appears that the information is not yet confirmed.

Danielle states that the nuance of known-Asian businesses is important, and wonders if there's a different word we could use instead. Ekta mentions a recent news story confirming that Gold spa is to be Asian-owned. Danielle comments that Young's Asian Massage appears to be Korean owned. Jay suggests changing “Asian-owned” to “predominantly Asian-employed”. Danielle suggests deleting the word “different” in “three different predominantly Asian-employed spas”.



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Megha suggests changing the second bullet to read “provide resources to do so locally.”

Danielle notices the repetitive use of “condemn” and suggests changing one of them to “denounce”. Sam states that he prefers the word “condemn” so that it’s stronger. Megha agrees.

Ekta suggests being consistent with “Asian American community” Sam states that not everyone is American. Vira asks if we should use the word “AAPI” instead. Jay reiterates that Kama suggested that we should stick with Asian or Asian American. Haniya affirms that Asian feels more inclusive because not everyone identifies as American. Vira suggests Asian and Asian American.

Danielle recommends changing “Asian American Caucus” to “Asian Caucus”.

Vira asks about using the term “homegrown white supremacist”. Megha asks about the use of the term “homegrown” and suggests changing it to “domestic”. Haniya clarified that the language previously read “homegrown white terrorist” and that was changed to “white supremacist” given the racist implications and stereotypes of the word “terrorist”. Danielle suggests deleting the word “homegrown/domestic” to avoid reinforcing the othering of the Asian victims.

Ekta suggests changing “last night” to “on March 16th”.

Megha asks when this statement will go out. Sam asks Sheila how long it will take to prepare and post it online. Sheila says approximately one hour.

Philjay asks how we will list the names of Commissioners on the letterhead.

Concerns around AAC letterhead with Commissioners not being present and Commissioners who wanted to attend tonight’s meeting but could not be here. Suggestions around giving Commissioners to sign on their name until midnight before the release tomorrow morning. Vira and Sam clarify that Commissioners will be asked to sign onto the final letter, as is, and not provide additional edits to it.

Meena joins at 7:48pm

Sam cites an article recommending and affirming that the term “spas” be used instead of “massage parlors”.

Vira recommends changing the word “killing” in the first sentence to “murdering”.

Meena asks about the pronunciation of the word “womxn”. Megha responds that this term is pronounced similarly as “women” and is used to be more inclusive of nonbinary and trans people. Meena asks in the way we are using the Asian and Asian American community that this is geared more towards East Asians. Sam



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recognizes that South Asians have been targeted against racial violence. Confirms comfort with using Asian and Asian American community.

Meena asks if we can broaden endorsement of the statement and allow other AAPI orgs to sign on. Philjay states in chat that APIs CAN, a coalition of AAPI orgs, have been accepting sign-ons from MA-based organizations and individuals. Sam affirms and states that he welcomes other AAPI orgs to share the AAC's statement.

Meena asks about the possibility of running this statement by Southeast Asian and Indian community orgs. Sam affirms Meena's comment and recommends that we vote to approve it tonight, and give all Commissioners until midnight to sign on. Meena states that her preference is for the statement to come from the full Commission, as a public body.

Megha proposes adding language to clarify that the recent hate crime was specifically perpetrated against East Asians; however, we're cognizant of the

Bora joins at 8:03pm

Meena motions to approve statement as currently written.

Ekta asks for the language to be consistent with us saying Asian community and referring to individuals as Asian and Asian Americans.

Meena asks why we're making the distinction between Asian and Asian American. Ekta responds that the intent is to be more inclusive. Megha adds that Pacific Islander isn't being used because prominent PI leaders have recommended focusing on Asian and Asian American community. Haniya states that she has seen organizations using the term Asian communities.

Vira suggests changing "killed" to "succumbed", and "killing" to "murder". Vira suggests clarifying "East Asian" in the sentence about "yellow peril".

Meena asks if we had reached out to appointing authorities. Sam states that we have not yet.

Vira proposes combining the third paragraph. Megha suggests deleting the second sentence in the third paragraph. Haniya proposes deleting the second sentence in the last paragraph. Ekta proposes adding the word "communities" back in. Vira suggests deleting "committed to advocating for the Asian American community in Massachusetts" because it is redundant with the previous sentence.

Meena motions to approve the statement as is, and empowering the Executive Committee and Megha as chair of the Anti-Racism Advisory Committee to make minor changes as needed for accuracy. Vira seconds.



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Yes: Ekta, Danielle, Megha, Vira, Meena, Philjay, Haniya, Cinda, Sam, Bora
No: none
Abstain: none
Motion passes.

Sam clarifies that all names will be listed on the left-hand side. And the letter will be signed by the EC and the Co-Chairs of the Anti-Racism Advisory Committee: Megha and Ekta.

Meena asks if we have reached out to our appointing authorities asking them to publicly condemn anti-Asian racism. Danielle suggests sharing the final statement with our appointing authorities after it is published, and asking them in our email to take a public stance against anti-Asian violence. Vira and Sam reinforce the urgency and necessity of our state leaders standing with Asian communities.

3. New Business

4. Next Commission Meeting: April 21, 2021

5. Other community updates & Meeting adjourned

Vira motions to adjourn the meeting, Meena seconds

Yes: Meena, Haniya, Bora, Cinda, Danielle, Ekta, Megha, Philjay, Sam, Vira

No: none

Abstain: none

Motion passes.

Meeting is adjourned at 8:37pm.