



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

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Jennifer Rubin
Ekta Saksena
Philjay Solar

Executive Director

Yasmin Padamsee Forbes

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Meeting Minutes

April 18, 2023, 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83421971270>

*Please note that this meeting will be recorded

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

Attachments:

- Draft meeting minutes: March 21, 2023
 - Powerpoints on Commission
 - Budgets/Finance
 - Bylaws
-

Commissioners present: Commissioner Gary Chu, Saatvik Ahluwalia, Danielle Kim, Richard Chu, Cinda Danh, Christopher Huang, Philjay Solar, Jennifer Rubin, Bethany Li, Pralhad KC, Ekta Saksena, Marilyn Park, Mary Chin (13)

Staff present: Executive Director Yasmin Padamsee Forbes, Program & Research Director Esther Kim, Communications & Outreach Manager Jennifer Best, Health Coordinator Siale Teaupa, Regional Coordinator Hannah Ku, Policy Coordinator Benjamin Wang

Guests: Elaine Jeon, Arista Jhanjee

1. Call to Order (6:33 PM)

Chair Gary Chu calls the meeting to order.

2. Commissioners Check-in

- Yasmin commented on excellent listening sessions on Saturday and Sunday - Older adults in Quincy and Tongan community in Framingham.
- Philjay reminds that he partnered with the Red Sox for tickets for AAPI Heritage Night - \$40/per person with limited edition Red Sox hat. Needs to know by Tuesday, April 25.
- Gary mentions that Meena won a nomination for the Women of the Year Award from India New England

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- March 21, 2023 (VOTE)

VOTE: Commissioner Danh motions to approve the minutes. Commissioner Rubin seconds.

YES: Richard Chu, Ahluwalia, Solar, Huang, Kim, Danh, Li, Rubin, Saksena, Gary Chu

Abstain: KC



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With 10 votes in the affirmative, the motion passes.

4. New Interns and Harvard Chan school introduction

- a. Yasmin introduces interns.
 - i. Siale works for the commission and is also a student for the class "Community-based participatory research" at Harvard T. Chan School of Public Health.
 - ii. Elain Jeon - MPA at Harvard who grew up in Korea and lived in Western Mass at Amherst.
 - iii. Arista Jhanjee - MPA at Harvard and born in Calcutta. Excited to learn about Commission's work.
 - iv. Bethany asks what kind of questions the interns intend to ask community groups. Siale responds they are questions to ask if community orgs know what the Commission is, what it does, and if it does the job well.
 - v. Christopher asks how long they'll be working with the Commission. Siale says its just for the length of the course ending in May.

New Business:

5. Introduction to the Commission's Goals and Processes

- a. Gary explains that with many new Commissioners and many first-time EC members, it is valuable to do a refresh for everyone on Commission goals and processes.
- b. Gary asked Commissioners, Staff, and Guests to respond to two questions using www.menti.com:
 - i. What countries comprise AAPIs?
 - ii. What is the purpose of AAPIC Commissioners
- c. Gary and Prahlad covered brief history of the Commission.
- d. Gary covers AAPIC responsibilities per statute
 - i. Promote Research and be a clearinghouse and source of information
 - ii. Inform members of the public about issues impacting AAPIs
 - iii. Foster united among AAPI communities and organizations
 - iv. Serve as liaison before government and private interest groups and AAPI communities
- e. Powers of the commissions
 - i. Hold public meetings and fact-find meetings/forums
 - ii. Make policy recommendations
 - iii. Request information and assistance from state agencies
 - iv. Accept and solicit
- f. Questions
 - i. Christopher asks about why there is a non-profit and if other state commissions have associated non-profits? Prahlad answers that the Non-profit allowed them to raise outside funds to



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- power the Commission's work.
- ii. Christopher also asks if the AAPIC responsibilities conflict with Conflict Of Interest laws. Prahlad answers that lawyers have, so far, not said that we're in breach with Conflict of Interest laws.
- iii. Danielle adds:
 - 1. Non-profit is so there is a back up in case the State appropriation doesn't materialize for a given year. That way we could raise money to continue doing the work for AAPIC.
 - 2. Regarding Conflict of Interest - there is a hotline for the State's ethnics office, so if you're feeling you may conflict with something, you can call the hotline to gain clarity.
- iv. Mary adds: The non-profit money should have been subject to audit but it is unclear if that has ever happened.
- v. Philjay adds - Non-profit would be subject to an audit if there is a report to the state that something inappropriate has happened. But that hasn't happened in 15 years. We can do a private audit, but it is costly.
- vi. Yasmin comments that there is a effort to start moving money from the private bank to the trust in the treasury. Once it is there, it is managed exactly like the government appropriated funding.

6. Context of what the commission has been doing in the past few years

7. Explanation of the State funded budget

- a. Budgeting
 - i. Gary explains the State budgeting process and what the timeline looks like
 - ii. Yasmin previews where we are in the process and outlook for upcoming financial year budget.
 - 1. Goes over FY 23 budget line items
 - iii. Saatvik asks the best way for staff and commissioners pitch ideas if they want to use unused funding? Danielle adds that - the Governance, Finance, and Comms subcommittee members met to review the budget surplus and make a recommendation on reallocating funds, which was then brought to the full body for deliberations and a vote
 - iv. Jennifer asks if the unused funding could be allocated as grants to community organizations? Saatvik adds on what timeline would look like if we were to open grants up to an RFP process? Yasmin responded that an open process can take up to two months and that money could also be allocated directly to groups by following a strict and ethical voting process.



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8. Work of Subcommittees

- a. Yasmin brings up list of subcommittees.
- b. Gary brings up the question of if we have the right subcommittees?
- c. Richard proposes new subcommittees around research and education, focused on curriculum changes
- d. Saatvik asks if new subcommittees can be made or if they're based on the law. Gary responds that subcommittees are based in our bylaws and the number, name, or responsibilities can be changed by the commission.
- e. Gary proposes sending out a survey regarding subcommittees and encourages every Commissioner to attend at least one listening session and attend the Unity Dinner.

Old Business:

9. Update on Western Mass meeting held on March 25

- a. Hannah Ku updated the Commission on the listening session. Briefs about their work and concerns brought by seven community organizations. Overall concern was lack of information to Western Mass communities and expanding AAPI education in curriculum or AAPI Book Club. Voting guides, information for small businesses, and mental health resources.

10. Update on Listening sessions: Older Adults, Mental Health, and Tongan community.

- a. Esther updated the Commission on this listening session. Described how the idea came from responding to the trend in violence against Asian seniors. Invited six groups to come present that had been suggested by various Commissioners.
- b. Yasmin adds that the event was successful and served as a powerful space for the community groups to meet each other.
- c. Esther updated us that we are working on a Mental Health focused listening session that will be multi-generational and online. Targeted for June.
- d. Siale talked about the Tongan listening session. Gary, Jennifer, and Marlyn joined along with State Sen. Kate Donahue. Heard concerns around the lack of network and means of support when they immigrate here. Difficult to get integrated. Can we add community resources to the website.

Commissioner Ekta Saksena logs off at 7:46pm.

11. Reports

- a. **Commissioners Report**
- b. **Staff reports.**
- c. **Sub-committees (including Unity Dinner)**
 - i. Unity Dinner Update
 1. Planning committee will be meeting weekly starting 4/18. Currently have 180ish tickets (registered, discount, complimentary total). Capacity is 300. Discounts ended.
 2. Dances confirmed. Waiting on Mayor Wu. Six unsung hero



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awards confirmed. Two videos.

3. Instead of doing plated dinners, moved to buffet style.

12. Future Agenda Items Suggestions

- a. Updates on Subcommittees
- b. How will unused, allocated money be used.
- c. Training on how bills are passed
- d. Information on who Asian Caucus is and what the body does.
- e. Christopher asks if it is typical to get Agenda documents two days before and is it possible to get it further in advance so Commissioners can be better prepared? **Gary and Yasmin** agree that we can get materials with five business days before the upcoming meeting.

VOTE: Commissioner Solar motions to adjourn. Commissioner Ahluwalia seconds.

Yes: Commissioner Richard Chu, Ahluwalia, Solar, Huang, Li, KC, Rubin, Park, Chin, Gary Chu.

The motion passes unanimously. The meeting adjourns at 8:01PM.

13. Next Commission Meeting: May 16, 2023



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