



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

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Executive Director

Yasmin Padamsee Forbes

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Meeting Minutes

May 21, 2024, 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: April 16, 2024
- Budgets
- Staff reports

Commissioners Present: Gary Chu, Richard Chu, Ekta Srinivasa, Emma Chen-Banas, Bethany Li, Jennifer Rubin, Moana Bentin, Karen Chen, Danielle Kim, Marilyn Park, Rakashi Chand, Tuyet Tran, Christopher Huang

Staff Present: Executive Director Yasmin Padamsee Forbes, Program & Research Director Shubhecchha Dhaurali, Executive Communications Specialist Lizette Sta. Maria

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Gary Chu calls the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

2. Commissioners Check-in

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes April 16, 2024 (VOTE)

Commissioner Ekta Srinivasa leads the motion to approve the April 16 meeting minutes. Commissioner Karen Chen seconds.

Yes: Ekta Srinivasa, Emma Chen-Banas, Karen Chen, Jennifer Rubin, Bethany Li, Danielle Kim, Rakashi Chand, Gary Chu

Abstain: Richard Chu, Moana Bentin, Marilyn Park

The motion passes.

Commissioner Rakashi Chand joins the meeting.

4. Public Comment

New Commissioners from the Office of the Attorney General are introduced: Emma Chen-Banas and Rakashi Chand.

Commissioner Tuyet Tran joins around 6:40 pm.



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5. Unity Dinner Budget Discussion & Unity Dinner Chair (VOTE)

An explanation of the Unity Dinner 2024 budget breakdown was provided, detailing the utilization of nonprofit funds. This year, we experienced a loss primarily due to increased catering costs, higher payments to performers, and additional discounts offered to attendees. Notably, one of our goals was to increase low-cost invitations to community groups, which contributed to the increased discounts.

Past Unity Dinners have not incurred a loss, and it was noted that we should remain mindful as we plan future gatherings.

Unity Dinner Chair (VOTE)

Commissioner Tuyet Tran leads the motion to approve Moana Bentin as the 2025 Unity Dinner Chair. Commissioner Rakashi Chand seconds.

Yes: Ekta Srinivasa, Emma Chen, Richard Chu, Karen Chen, Jennifer Rubin, Bethany Li, Moana Bentin, Marilyn Park, Danielle Kim, Rakashi Chand, Tuyet Tran, Gary Chu

The motion passes unanimously.

6. Grants and Endorsing projects, Commission Goh

Commissioner Amy Goh is absent. This discussion is tabled to the next meeting.

7. Afghan and Refugees Discussion: Next Steps

Chairperson Gary Chu recapped a discussion with members of the Asian Caucus following the Afghan listening session in early March. He also informed the Commission that Rep. Tackey Chan inquired about the Commission's plans for assisting refugees, raising key questions about our role: Should we engage in direct programming or support community-based organizations?

The discussion highlighted several key points:

- Identifying gaps in support and suggesting that the State should take on more responsibility. Organizing a listening session with State officials was proposed to gather data-driven insights about refugees in Massachusetts, including a breakdown of their countries of origin.
- Addressing significant housing issues faced by refugee communities.
- Serving as a resource for connection by establishing a directory of community-serving organizations and collaborating with the AG's office's immigrant surveying committee.
- Increasing funding for refugee groups and identifying which community organizations are best positioned to assist specific refugee groups.
- Focusing the small grants fund program on refugees and considering ways to help refugees secure employment when their qualifications are not recognized in



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the U.S.

- Advocating for hearings between the Asian Caucus and community members and emphasizing the need for capacity-building to support refugees in the future, beyond just conducting listening sessions.

Chairperson Gary Chu called for a follow-up with the Afghan and Bhutanese communities from our listening session to identify how we can assist them further. In summary, the AAPI Commission will not undertake any programmatic activities at this time to serve refugee communities. A follow-up discussion will be held with the Massachusetts Baptists Multicultural Ministries and the ACE New American Center, the partner organizations that helped organize the Bhutanese and Afghan listening sessions in February and March 2024.

Commissioner Christopher Huang joins at 7:08 pm.

8. Discussion on Financial Allocation and Invoices

All funds for FY24 have been allocated. However, there is a delay in receiving invoices from UMass Boston's Institute for Asian American Studies, with whom the AAPI Commission is partnering for the survey subcommittee.

UMB has been granted an additional two weeks to prepare the necessary financial materials. Consequently, the next AAPI Commission meeting has been rescheduled from June 18, 2024, to June 11, 2024, to provide sufficient time to adjust the plan if the financial situation remains unresolved.

Commissioner Tuyet Tran motions to end the meeting. Commissioner Moana Bentin seconds.

Yes: Ekta Srinivasa, Emma Chen-Banas, Richard Chu, Karen Chen, Moana Bentin, Marilyn Park, Rakashi Chand, Tuyet Tran, Danielle Kim, Gary Chu

The motion passes unanimously.