



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

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Yasmin Padamsee Forbes

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Meeting Minutes

March 19, 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.

Commissioners Present: Gary Chu, Gary Yu, Marilyn Park, Tuyet Tran, Saatvik Ahluwalia, Ekta Srinivasa, Danielle Kim, Richard Chu, Bethany Li, Philjay Solar, Karen Chen, Christopher Huang, Meena Bharath

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

1. Call to Order

Chair Gary Chu calls the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

2. Commissioners Check-in

Commissioner Gary Yu has been in conversations with the Lt. Governor's Office about speaking at the Unity Dinner. He also invites everyone to join a concert on March 30th through his organization.

Commissioner Karen Chen joins at 6:36PM.

Commissioner Bethany Li joins at 6:36PM.

Commissioner Philjay Solar joins at 6:37PM.

Commissioner Philjay Solar provides an update about the annual AAPI night for the Boston Red Sox.

Commissioner Christopher Huang joins at 6:43PM.

3. Public Comment

4. Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes February 27, 2024 (VOTE)

Commissioner Tuyet Tran motions to approve the meeting minutes from February 27, 2024. Commissioner Ekta Srinivasa seconds.

Yes: Tuyet Tran, Marilyn Park, Gary Yu, Saatvik Ahluwalia, Ekta Srinivasa, Bethany Li, Karen Chen, Christopher Huang, Gary Chu

Abstain: Philjay Solar, Richard Chu, Danielle Kim

The motion passes.

5. Community Engagement & Visibility Subcommittee Chair Gary Yu (VOTE)



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Commissioner Saatvik Ahluwalia motions to approve Gary Yu as Chair of the Community Engagement & Visibility Subcommittee. Commissioner Tuyet Tran seconds.

Yes: Tuyet Tran, Marilyn Park, Gary Yu, Saatvik Ahluwalia, Ekta Srinivasa, Danielle Kim, Bethany Li, Karen Chen, Philjay Solar, Richard Chu, Christopher Huang, Gary Chu

The motion passes unanimously.

6. Budget changes (VOTE) and discussion on the refugee program

Executive Director Yasmin Padamsee Forbes provides an update on the budget, including what projects have funding committed but not spent yet. There is some leftover funding (at the end of the year, likely \$20,000-\$30,000) which can be reallocated. Rep. Tackey Chan suggested the idea of using funding for a refugee program.

There will be a Governance subcommittee meeting on April 5, 12:10-1:10, in relation to the FY25 budget and leftover funds. To provide input on the FY25 budget and leftover funds, please join the meeting or contact Yasmin.

The budget ask of the State for FY25 is the same as this year, though there are state worries about budget cuts.

Commissioner Christopher Huang proposes to increase the number of grants that can be allotted to artists, through the grants for AAPI artists program.

Commissioner Danielle Kim asks for a more nuanced, itemized budget and asks about the creation of an FY25 Budget.

Commissioner Tuyet Tran provides updates on a number of organizations and groups doing work in relation to refugees.

Commissioner Meena Bharath joins at 7:10PM.

Commissioner Bethany Li suggests that it might make sense for funding for a refugee program to come through state appropriations, rather than the Commission.

Commissioner Li also highlights that Southeast Asians are one of the largest refugee populations in the US, and that much can be learned about how to develop an effective refugee program.

Commissioner Meena Bharath suggests prioritizing programming for refugee communities that is not costly, such as creating community to counter the loneliness and lack of community reported in our listening sessions. She echoes sentiments from Commissioner Li, adding that the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (CMAA) has knowledge in this area and has expressed interest in supporting Afghan and other refugees.

Commissioner Gary Chu highlights that the Commission cannot do this alone, but can be a partner in bringing groups together.



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The Commission met with the Asian Caucus about the budget. The Asian Caucus reported that budget cuts across the state are very likely. In the future, the Commission might have to rely more on the nonprofit funds.

Commissioner Richard Chu provides an update on the Ways and Means hearing, attended by him and ED Yasmin Padamsee Forbes, reporting that it went well.

7. Update on Listening Sessions on February 24 with the Bhutanese community and March 2 with the Afghani community.

Program & Research Director Shubhecchha Dhaurali gives updates. Some of the most pressing issues brought up include the citizenship/naturalization process, cost of living, healthcare/insurance, access to resources, and language access.

8. Reports

a. Sub-committees

b. Staff reports

There will be an event with MCSW, YW Boston, and the Governor's Office about women serving on boards on Monday, March 25 at 1:30PM at the State House.

Commissioner Gary Yu leaves at 7:25PM.

Rep. Tackey Chan will speak at the Unity Dinner. All awardees have been informed.

Commissioners are encouraged to connect with potential sponsors for the Unity Dinner. Sponsorships support other groups to attend the Unity Dinner who might not otherwise be able to attend.

All nominees will receive awards at the Unity Dinner, per subcommittee.

Commissioner Gary Chu proposes the idea of researching awardees for potential controversy before awarding them - have a plan for the future.

Commissioner Saatvik Ahluwalia proposes a press plan for the Unity Dinner.

Commissioner Bethany Li proposes having stronger guidelines in regards to awardee guidelines. Commissioner Tuyet Tran echoes this, as it is not always possible for the person nominating someone to know potential issues in the person's background.

Commissioners discuss attestation statements for awardees. No vote is taken to institute attestation statements this year.

9. Future Agenda Items Suggestions

Plan for awards - attestation statements - leave it alone for this year.

Refugee programs



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Commissioner Karen Chen makes a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Philjay Solar seconds

Yes: Tuyet Tran, Marilyn Park, Saatvik Ahluwalia, Ekta Srinivasa, Danielle Kim, Karen Chen, Philjay Solar, Richard Chu, Christopher Huang, Meena Bharath, Bethany Li, Gary Chu

The motion passes unanimously. The meeting is adjourned at 7:59PM.

Next Commission Meeting: April 16, 2024



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