



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

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Interim

Executive Director

Jessica Wong

One Ashburton Place

12th Floor

Boston, MA 02108

www.aacommission.org

Meeting Minutes

February 3, 2021, 7:30pm to 8:30pm

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZUvc--hpzguHdPtI7f-KeoznXLiWxKMvoPS>

*Please note this meeting will be recorded

Meeting will be 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:

- Modified FY21 budget

Sam calls the meeting to order at 7:32pm

Sam explains that there was an error in our budget that was discovered during a meeting with the Ways & Means staffer this week. The \$21K for Jenny Chiang has already been expended but it was not reflected in the FY21 state budget that the AAC voted to approve last week. Also, we did not account for Sheila's salary increase, going up from \$14 to \$18 an hour. As a result, we are over budget by \$184, and need to cut an additional \$184 from the budget

Sam opens it up for questions or comments at 7:34pm.

Mary Lee asks Sam for further clarification of what happened.

Sam explains that there was an oversight in the FY21 state budget that no one noticed until this week. The AAC has already spent the \$21K on Jenny's salary between July 1 and November 21, 2020, prior to her departure. This line item was incorrectly omitted from the budget spreadsheet that the AAC approved on 1/27/21. We are meeting today to correct this error and approve a revised budget. We will also meet later this spring to review the FY22 state budget.

Mary asks for clarification on whether we're discussing the FY22 or FY21 state budget today.

Sam states that we are meeting to correct an error in the FY21 state budget. Later this spring, before the new fiscal year starting July 1, we will meet to discuss and approve the FY22 state budget.

Danielle says that this was an error that was not noticed until this week when the AAC met with the Ways & Means staff to review our annual state budget. The Interim Executive Director notified the Executive Committee of this issue and the EC met immediately to discuss how to resolve this issue. The EC then informed



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the full Commission later that evening and called for an emergency meeting -- all within the same day that this error was identified.

Betty said that the AAC's state budget is very small and wonders why this error wasn't noticed internally.

Vira says that this incident just shows that there is oversight of our state budget. We all missed the \$21K that was missing from the budget that the full Commission approved. She welcomes the opportunity to hear how we will reorganize funding for line items to make up this difference.

Sam takes responsibility for this error and apologies for the oversight. The purpose of this meeting is to account for this error and vote on reallocating funds for certain line items to appropriately balance our FY21 budget.

Betty says that this is egregious. She applauds the new Executive Committee for navigating the transition and trying to be accountable for it.

Vira mentions that she always thought that it would be a good idea to hire a consultant to do the AAC's bookkeeping. Vira suggests that the AAC should consider hiring a part-time bookkeeper to help with Quickbooks and the budget spreadsheet. All Commissioners had an opportunity to review the budget. We all missed it, and we all have a fiduciary responsibility.

Sam reminds Commissioners that in his email on Monday announcing this meeting, he encouraged Commissioners to call him if they had any questions about this matter. He only heard from Meena who couldn't make the meeting, and she said that she supports the new revised budget proposed by the Executive Committee. He also reminds Commissioners that we will not be speaking about individuals who aren't present to defend themselves

Cinda states in chat that she agrees with Vira that this is on all of us, and appreciates Jay for stepping up and into the role.

Betty states that moving forward we should have an income expense report or a P&L statement prepared every month.

Sam transitions to discuss the new revised budget proposed by the Executive Committee. He highlights that the EC proposes cutting the professional development costs, the strategic consultant, travel reimbursements, liability insurance, the executive director transition cost -- as well as reducing the COVID-19 grant fund. These are all costs that have not yet been spent.

Betty asks for clarification about the Interim Executive Director stipend.



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Danielle responds that when the former Executive Director left the organization in November, the AAC voted to provide an additional \$2K stipend per month to the Interim Executive Director in recognition of her increased duties. The stipend is for December, January, and February.

Betty asks if the total is \$6K and if it's reflected in the budget spreadsheet.

Danielle says yes, the total is \$6K. It's reflected in the budget spreadsheet in cell B7, and says that the stipend is set to expire on February 26.

Mary Lee asks if someone can share their screen so that we can look at the budget document together.

Sam shares his screen to display the budget.

Vira states that liability insurance is critical to protect the AAC's nonprofit assets. She also believes that the professional development line item is very important so that individuals can get the training and supports that they need. She believes that we should consider using the nonprofit funds that we have to help cover robust programming and professional development for staff. She would rather to see deeper cuts coming out of the community grants -- and not from some of the important internal cuts that we are proposing.

Sam mentions that it's important to think about what expenses are most reasonable and justifiable for MA taxpayers. He believes that it would be more appropriate for professional development and liability insurance to come from the nonprofit side.

Mary Lee says that we should look into how we can spend the nonprofit budget, and that perhaps we should evaluate the nonprofit budget before we decide on the state budget tonight.

Sam states that the Governance, Communications, and Finance Committee will be gathering later this month to look at the nonprofit budget -- and then will bring it to the full commission to review and vote. Sam also reiterates that the deadline for finalizing the budget is tomorrow, so we have to take a vote on the budget tonight, as his email noted.

Betty asks when we were aware of the February 4th deadline for this budget. She states that it feels like this was very rushed and held until the last minute.

Danielle states that she's unaware of exactly when the AAC was informed about this deadline, but her understanding is that this is something that happens around this time every year. She adds that the FY21 state budget was included as part of the agenda for our monthly January meeting. Given how complex and rich the discussion would likely be on this topic, the EC scheduled another special budget



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meeting last week to further discuss and vote on the budget. We all believed that it was finished at this point, and the budget would be submitted ahead of the deadline. It was only due to the discovery of the error this week, that made us reopen the conversation. All of the recent staff and leadership transitions may also contribute to why the FY21 state budget was not addressed before January. Our last ED left in late Nov, and the new EC wasn't voted in until December.

Betty says that the former ED and current Interim ED should have been aware of the deadline.

Sam affirms that we will not speak about individuals who are not present to defend themselves.

Vira makes a motion to amend the revised FY21 state budget to reduce \$184 from the AAPI Community Resources Fund and update the figure to \$11,316. Philjay seconds.

Sam opens the floor for discussion.

Mary Lee states that we all have a fiduciary responsibility to conduct our due diligence. Therefore, we need further discussion on where these cuts should come from.

Sam clarifies that this revised budget was sent 48 hours in advance and that Commissioners had time to review it ahead of this meeting.

Mary Lee appreciates all the work that Sam and the Executive Committee has done. And says that there wasn't enough time for discussion on the proposed revisions. Mary states that she has to leave.

Mary Lee leaves the meeting at 8:11pm.

Sam asks if we still have quorum.

Danielle states that there are 8 Commissioners on the line and we still have quorum.

Betty King drops off the meeting at 8:12pm with no announcement.

Sam states that we now have 7 Commissioners. Danielle affirms that we still have quorum.

Bora states that in her opinion, this is a minor oversight. The FY21 budget got delayed because of COVID-19. We simply wouldn't be in this position if it weren't for COVID. We would just be voting to make small adjustments and modifications as needed.



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Sam closes discussion and conducts a roll call vote on the amendment proposed by Vira.

Ays: Bora, Cinda, Danielle, Haniya, Philjay, Vira, Sam

Nays: none

Abstentions: none

The motion passes.

Bora motions to approve the FY21 budget as amended. Cinda seconds.

Ays: Bora, Cinda, Danielle, Haniya, Philjay, Vira, Sam

Nays: none

Abstentions: none

The motion passes.

Sam calls to adjourn the meeting.

Danielle motions to adjourn the meeting, Bora seconds.

Ays: Bora, Cinda, Danielle, Haniya, Philjay, Vira, Sam

Nays: none

Abstentions: none

The motion passes.

Meeting adjourns at 8:18pm.