



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

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Yasmin Padamsee Forbes

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Meeting Minutes

September 17, 2024, 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm

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

*Please note that this meeting was recorded

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

Commissioners Present: Saatvik Ahluwalia, Ekta Srinivasa, Gary Yu, Marilyn Park, Gary Chu, Karen Y. Chen, Amy Goh, Rakashi Chand, Tuyet Tran, Emma Chen-Banas

Staff Present: Yasmin Padamsee Forbes, Lizette Sta. Maria, Shubhecchha Dhaurali

Attachments:

- Draft meeting minutes
 - Budgets
 - Staff report
-

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Gary Chu calls the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

2. Commissioners Check-in

Gary Yu shares that the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival is today, September 17.

Karen Y. Chen shares the APIs CAN Ballot Measures Training, which is an information session on the ballot questions on October 9 (Registration: <http://bit.ly/apis-ballot-govt>), and today, September 17, is National Voter Registration Day.

3. Public Comment

No members of the public were in attendance.

4. Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes August 20, 2024 (VOTE)

Commissioner Saatvik Ahluwalia motions to approve the August 20, 2024, draft meeting minutes. Commissioner Tuyet Tran seconds.

Yes: Saatvik Ahluwalia, Tuyet Tran, Amy Goh, Karen Chen, Marilyn Park, Rakashi Chand, Gary Yu, Gary Chu

Abstain: Richard Chu

The motion passes.

5. Nonprofit funds update (VOTE)

Yasmin P. Forbes provides updates on the nonprofit funds, including a \$26,000 check from East West Bank deposited after the Unity dinner and a financial summary, including



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expenditures for Unity dinner and non-unity dinner items. Commissioners discussed moving the funds to a high-yielding savings account for flexibility and interest earnings.

Commissioner Tuyet Tran motions to put money into a High-Yield Savings account and for ED Yasmin Padamsee Forbes and Treasurer Tuyet Tran to choose the specific account. Commissioner Marilyn Park seconds.

Yes: Tuyet Tran, Saatvik Ahluwalia, Gary Yu, Amy Goh, Karen Chen, Marilyn Park, Rakashi Chand, Richard Chu, Ekta Srinivasa, Gary Chu

No:

Abstain:

The motion passes.

Commissioner Emma Chen-Banas joins the meeting at 6:49 pm.

6. Small Grants Criteria discussion

Yasmin details the different roles for the small grants program moving forward.

Shubhecchha Dhaurali provides a detailed analysis of the funding distribution of AAPIC's small grants program for AAPI communities in Massachusetts (presentation link: [2022-2024 Small Grants Summary](#)). A summary from the past few grant cycles is that 76 organizations received small grants; 32 were funded multiple times, totaling over \$165,000.

Commission members discuss mini-grant criteria, including geographic and ethnic diversity, and question whether for-profit organizations should be eligible. Commissioner Tuyet Tran encourages granting not only nonprofit organizations but also considering charities. Commissioner Karen Chen suggests increasing grant amounts for organizations as more significant amounts create a greater impact.

Commissioner Gary Chu suggests focusing on refugees and smaller groups for grant funding, prioritizing impact and language skills. Commissioner Karen Chen suggests focusing grant criteria on specific themes to promote diversity. The Commissioners agree on \$5,000 grant amounts for 5-10 organizations, depending on preference. Commissioner Tuyet Tran suggests grants of up to \$5,000 for organizations helping refugee communities in Massachusetts. Commissioner Rakashi Chand brings up the possibility of offering grant writing sessions or interviews for organizations to apply for funding.

Commissioner Gary Chu and ED Yasmin Padamsee Forbes discuss forming a subcommittee to review grants, with Commissioners who indicated interest in participating in the small grants subcommittee, which is managed by staff member Jennifer Best: Tuyet Tran, Emma Chen-Banas.

Commissioner Amy Goh leaves the meeting at 6:58 pm.

Commissioner Marilyn Park leaves the meeting at 7:05 pm.



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7. Upcoming meeting with Asian Caucus and Governor's Office

Under the strategic plan, ED Yasmin Padamsee Forbes has set up a meeting between the Commission and the Asian Caucus, scheduled for October 21, 2024, at noon.

ED Forbes and the Executive Committee will meet with the Governor's Office on October 16.

AAPIC and the Southeast Asian Coalition of Central MA are partnering to welcome the Department of Health and Human Services New England to Worcester, MA, on October 15.

Old Business:

8. Reports

- Staff reports

Shubhecchha Dhaurali shares that the new cohort of Youth Council members is starting soon and invites commissioners to mentor or work on community service projects.

Commissioner Tuyet Tran offers to support and aid any YC members interested in pursuing projects in Central Mass.

Yasmin Padamsee Forbes (AAPIC) invites commissioners to a joint event with Beacon Press on September 30 featuring Yashica Dutt, a Dalit woman sharing her story of discrimination and identity.

Lizette Sta. Maria shares the upcoming Unity Dinner 2025 Theme: Bridging Cultures, Building Strength: A Celebration of Unity. The possible keynotes were also discussed. Unity Dinner award nominations are now open until Sunday, October 20. Commissioners may submit their nominations using forms that Jennifer Best sent. Lizette Sta. Maria and Yasmin P. Forbes encourage all Commissioners to bring in at least one sponsor by Friday, November 1. The Commission hopes to raise at least \$20,000.

Chairperson Gary Chu and ED Yasmin Padamsee Forbes are looking for an HR consultant. Status: ongoing.

- Sub-committees

Yasmin Padamsee Forbes suggests starting commission meetings at 6 pm to encourage more public attendance and youth involvement.

Shubhecchha Dhaurali discusses the Program & Research subcommittee meeting using technology like the "OWL tool" to make commission meetings more accessible.

The Commission is interested in creating space in the October Commission meeting to discuss the MA ballot question in MCAS as a high school graduation requirement and address the needs of Asian American communities in education. Saatvik Ahluwalia suggests using the organization's advertising network to promote the event. Karen Chen agrees that engaging the public is crucial for the Commission's success. Tuyet Tran supports holding a "Public Hearing" to gauge public interest and involvement.



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9. Future Agenda Items Suggestions

Commissioner Tuyet motions to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 pm. Commissioner Emma Chen-Banas seconds.

Yes: Karen Chen, Richard Chu, Tuyet Tran, Gary Yu, Saatvik Ahluwalia, Rakashi Chand, Emma Chen-Banas, Gary Chu

No:

Abstain:

The motion passes.

The meeting concludes at 7:30 pm.

Next Commission Meeting: October 15, 2024



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