



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

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Notes

Saturday, February 22, 2025

10 AM - 1 PM

UMass Amherst Center at Springfield, 1500 Main St. Springfield, MA, 01115

Event Started: 10:17 AM EST (Waiting on folks to arrive)

Key Attendees:

- **AAPIC Commissioners & Staff:**
 - Dr. Richard Chu, AAPIC Commissioner & UMass Amherst Professor
 - Jennifer Rubin, AAPIC Commissioner & Labor/Union Lawyer
 - Shubhecchha Dhaurali, AAPIC Programs & Research Director
 - Cha Lor, AAPIC Western MA Regional Coordinator
- **Community & Organization Representatives: 19**
 - Chinese Association of Western MA
 - Bayanihan Association of America
 - Springfield Vietnamese Association
 - Law students from Western New England University
 - Attorney from Central West Justice Center
 - Local AAPI Business Owners (SouLao'd Kitchen)

Housekeeping

- Disclaimer: Confirmation that the meeting will be audio recorded for AAPIC records.
- Photos Taken: Group picture for AAPIC social media.

AAPIC Updates

- Meeting Schedule Change: Quarterly meetings will now be bi-monthly.
 - After meeting: Folks asked to keep the meetings Quarterly versus Bi-Monthly, because Bi-Monthly is not a realistic commitment time. There would be too many meetings which would not fit in everyone's busy schedule.
- Announcement about Unity Dinner: Community-wide dinner to promote solidarity. [Link: bit.ly/ud25-build-bridges]



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Organization Updates

Chinese Association of Western MA

- AAPI Cultural Highlights Event (fashion show, cultural art displays, news reports).
- Chinese Lunar New Year - Year of the Snake
- Cultural workshops & Basketball Hall of Fame event

Bayanihan Association of America

- Feb 15, 2025: Valentine's Day Event
- June 1, 2025: NYC Trip for Philippine Independence Day Parade
- Dec 14, 2024: Bayanihan Christmas Party @ Sheraton

Springfield Vietnamese Association

- New Year's Event Recap: Over 800 attendees!
- April 30th: Upcoming community event.

Other Notable Events

- March 22, 2025: International Women's Day Fundraiser (Springfield Elks Lodge)
- May 17, 2025: Agawam Town Multicultural Event
- April 5, 2025: Global Village Festival, Amherst AAPI Celebration

- Community Newsletter Contribution: Attendees encouraged to add events.

Community Discussion Topics

AAPI Higher Education & Federal Funding Cuts

- Reports from the Asian American Student Success Program indicate funding cuts will disproportionately affect low-income and minority students, including AANAPISI (Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions) funding.
- Concerns raised about impacts on Ph.D. and Postdoc students, including wage cuts and job loss.
- Proposed Action: Engage more AAPI undergraduate and graduate students in advocacy efforts.



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AAPI Business & Entrepreneurship Challenges

- Challenges Identified:
 - High rent set by developers (notably in Amherst, per Vira Cage).
 - Lack of access to funding and financial literacy support.
 - Language barriers and difficult grant applications.
- Proposed Support:
 - Small Business Legal Clinic (provides legal assistance for LLC setup, trademarks, compliance).
 - Women's History Month Small Business Event: Connects entrepreneurs with Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office (SDO) & Economic Development Office.
 - Potential Western MA AAPI Business Survey to assess needs and barriers.

Protecting AAPI Immigrants & Community Resources

- Concerns:
 - Federal funding freeze affecting access to community resources.
 - Increased rates of homelessness within AAPI communities (research by Ms. Kim).
 - Barriers to voting for unhoused individuals.
- Government Engagement Issues:
 - Western MA Representatives from Gov. Maura Healey's office were invited but did not respond.
 - Need for stronger advocacy and government accountability.

Action Items & Next Steps

- Engage more students in AAPI advocacy.
- Expand financial literacy and grant assistance for small businesses.
- Conduct a Western MA AAPI Business Survey.
- Increase advocacy efforts for community resources and immigrant protections.
- Follow up with state representatives on community concerns.

Resources & Links:

- [AAPIC Unity Dinner](#)
- [Small Business Legal Clinic](#)
- [Metro South Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office](#)
- [Executive Office of Economic Development](#)



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- [Boston Foundation Grants & Asian Business Empowerment Council](#)

Next Meeting: TBD

Notes by: Shubhecchha Dhaurali

Prepared and organized by: Cha Lor



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