



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

COMMISSIONERS

Chairperson

Tuyet Tran

Vice

Chairperson

Rakashi Chand

Treasurer

Moana Bentin

Secretary

Bahara Hussaini

Leo Blandford

Emma Chen-Banas

Gary Chu

Richard Chu

Vaishali Gade

Rajashree Ghosh

Amy Goh

Christopher Huang

Bethany Li

Li Morrison

Beth Piosos

Jennifer Rubin

Ekta Srinivasa

Gary Yu

One Ashburton Place

12th Floor

Boston, MA 02108

aapicommission.org

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

6:46 PM – 8:10 PM • Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Held pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18–25 (Massachusetts Open Meeting Law)

OML Compliance Note. *This was a fully remote meeting. Accordingly, (1) the chair was required to announce at the outset which members were participating remotely (940 CMR 29.10(7)(a)); and (2) all votes must be recorded by roll call, even if unanimous (940 CMR 29.10(7)(c)). Every vote in these minutes is recorded by roll call. Remaining compliance gaps are marked with yellow boxes. Executive session minutes are maintained as a separate confidential document subject to periodic nondisclosure review under G.L. c. 30A, § 22(g)(1).*

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Tuyet Tran at 6:53 PM.

Chair Tran announced at the outset that all commissioners were participating remotely via Zoom, as required by 940 CMR 29.10(7)(a). The meeting was held pursuant to the temporary remote-meeting provisions of G.L. c. 30A, § 20, extended through June 30, 2027 by legislation signed March 28, 2025.

2. Roll Call and Attendance

Roll call was conducted by Chair Tran. All commissioners participated remotely via Zoom.

Member	Status
Tuyet Tran (Chair)	Present – Remote
Rakashi Chand (Vice Chair)	Present – Remote
Moana E. Bentin (Treasurer)	Present – Remote
Bahara Hussaini (Secretary)	Present – Remote
Leo Blandford	Present – Remote
Emma Chen-Banas	Present – Remote
Richard Chu	Present – Remote
Vaishali Gade	Present – Remote
Rajashree Ghosh	Present – Remote
Christopher Huang	Present – Remote
Bethany Li (joined ~7:02 PM)	Present – Remote
Li Morrison (joined ~7:37 PM)	Present – Remote



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

Beth Piosos	Present – Remote
Amy Goh	Absent: Unexcused
Gary Chu	Absent: Excused
Gary Yu	Absent: Unexcused
Jennifer Rubin	Absent: Excused
Ekta Srinivasa	Absent: Unexcused

Commission composition: 21 authorized seats; 3 seats currently unfilled; 18 appointed commissioners. Quorum confirmed: 13 of 18 appointed commissioners present, constituting a quorum (majority of appointed members). Note: Commissioners Bethany Li and Li Morrison joined after the meeting commenced; their arrival times are noted above.

Staff Present: Yasmin Padamsee Forbes (former Executive Director / Interim Consultant); Anita Yip, Communications and Social Media Manager; Pranim Magar, Policy and Advocacy Director; Shubhecchha Dhaurali, Program and Research Director.

Other Attendees: Jay Wong (Search Consultant); Executive Director candidates (see § 10 below); community members (public).

3. Documents and Exhibits

The following documents and exhibits were used at this meeting (G.L. c. 30A, § 22(a)):

- Meeting Agenda for May 19, 2026 (circulated to commissioners in advance of the meeting)
- Draft Minutes of the prior regular meeting (date to be confirmed – see § 4)
- Résumés of Executive Director finalists (distributed to commissioners in advance; withheld from public as personnel materials under G.L. c. 30A, § 22(e) – no presentations were circulated)

4. Approval of Minutes – April 19, 2026 Regular Meeting

The Commission reviewed the draft minutes of the April 19, 2026 regular meeting.

Motion: Commissioner Leo Blandford moved to approve the draft minutes.

Second: Commissioner Bahara Hussaini.

Roll call vote (940 CMR 29.10(7)(c) – remote meeting, roll call required for all votes):

Commissioner	Vote
Tuyet Tran (Chair)	Yes
Rakashi Chand (Vice Chair)	Yes



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

Moana E. Bentin (Treasurer)	Yes
Bahara Hussaini (Secretary)	Yes
Leo Blandford	Yes
Emma Chen-Banas	Yes
Richard Chu	Yes
Vaishali Gade	Yes
Rajashree Ghosh	Yes
Christopher Huang	No
Bethany Li	— (not yet present)
Li Morrison	— (not yet present)
Beth Pioscos	Yes

Result: Motion PASSED. Yeas: 10 | Nays: 1 (Christopher Huang) | Abstentions: 0 | Not yet present: 2 (Bethany Li, Li Morrison)

5. Chair Announcements

Chair Tran offered the following announcements and reminders to commissioners:

- Commissioners were reminded to respect each other's comments during deliberations, to turn on their video when speaking, and to use the raised-hand feature when wishing to be recognized.
- Philippine Independence Day community event: June 6, 2026. The Commission has secured a vendor booth. Chair Tran noted she would follow up with staff regarding available Commission materials and supplies for the booth.

6. Public Comment

Chair Tran opened the floor for public comment. Members of the public were present at the meeting. No public comments were offered.

7. New Staff Introductions

Anita Yip – Communications and Social Media Manager

Anita Yip introduced herself to the Commission and staff. She highlighted more than a decade of AAPI community communications experience, including service as Marketing Director of the National Association of Asian American Professionals (Boston chapter), where she received a national Excellence in Communications and Marketing award. She is the founder of Project Asian Joy, a public art initiative in Boston's Chinatown focused on elevating AAPI voices and stories. Ms. Yip expressed her intention to align the Commission's programs, policy, research, communications,



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

and community engagement around shared strategic priorities, and to build a cohesive public narrative around the Commission's impact across the Commonwealth.

Pranim Magar – Policy and Advocacy Director

Pranim Magar introduced himself to the Commission and staff. The majority of his career has been devoted to working with new Americans, refugees, and immigrant communities in the Greater Lowell area. Drawing on his personal background as a refugee, Mr. Magar emphasized that meaningful policy begins with listening and building genuine community relationships. He called on the Commission to engage communities continuously and intentionally, to strengthen feedback loops, and to communicate its work clearly and accessibly. His stated priorities include identifying shared policy goals, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring communities can see how their voices shape the Commission's initiatives.

8. Commissioner Introductions for New Staff

Chair Tran invited commissioners to briefly introduce themselves for the benefit of new staff. The following commissioners provided introductions:

- Leo Blandford – Social worker; first commissioner representing Cape Cod.
- Rajashree Ghosh – Newly appointed commissioner from Ashland.
- Moana E. Bentin – Treasurer; serving her third year on the Commission.
- Bethany Li – Civil rights attorney; Executive Director of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund; commissioner for over three years.
- Beth Piocos – New commissioner; former corporate R&D manager; currently a high school chemistry teacher.
- Richard Chu – History professor at UMass Amherst; serving his second term; based in Northampton.
- Vaishali Gade – New commissioner; CPA working in corporate finance.
- Bahara Hussaini – Second year commissioner; Secretary to the Executive Committee; bilingual liaison lead in public schools.
- Emma Chen-Banas – Commissioner from Western Massachusetts; works with a United Nations NGO.
- Rakashi Chand – Vice Chair; staff member at the Massachusetts Historical Society; based in Newton; approximately third year on the Commission.
- Christopher Huang – Photographer; second term commissioner; dedicated to amplifying stories of people of color.

9. Executive Director Search Update

Jay Wong, the Commission's executive director search consultant, provided a brief overview of the search process. The position was posted and open for over one month. The applicant pool was reviewed and narrowed from five finalist candidates to two candidates selected to present to the full Commission.



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

10. Executive Director Finalist Presentations

Chair Tran noted that commissioners had received candidate résumés in advance of the meeting. No presentations were circulated. Each finalist was invited to speak for approximately 5–10 minutes, covering their professional background and planned priorities for the first six months in the role. Commissioners were asked to hold questions for the executive session.

Presentation – Sophan Smith

Sophan Smith addressed the Commission. Key highlights of her remarks:

- 20 years of experience spanning nonprofit, corporate, and workforce development sectors.
- Most recently served as Executive Director of Entrepreneurship for All (EforAll) – Merrimack Valley, serving the Lowell, Lawrence, and Haverhill communities.
- 2022 Community ABC Award recipient from Eastern Bank.
- Board member of the Asian Community Fund.
- Cambodian American, born in Cambodia and raised in Lowell; brings firsthand lived experience of immigrant and refugee barriers and opportunities.
- Described personal advocacy on behalf of her brother's immigration case in 2025–2026 as an illustration of community-based advocacy.

Priorities she identified for the first six months, if hired:

- Build cross-sector stakeholder partnerships statewide, extending beyond Greater Boston.
- Deepen community engagement rooted in trust and collaboration.
- Translate community voice and data into concrete policy and programming.
- Establish internal team alignment, transparency, and accountability.

Presentation – Amihan Matias

Amihan Matias addressed the Commission. Key highlights of her remarks:

- 1.5-generation immigrant from the Philippines; family relocated to the Boston area via Toronto and San Francisco.
- Early career work in HIV/AIDS prevention; co-founded the Massachusetts Asian AIDS Prevention Project (MAP), now MAP for Health, which supports AAPI LGBTQIA+ youth health and well-being.
- Deep ties to Boston-area AAPI organizations including ARW, BCNC, the Chinese Progressive Association, and the Asian American Women's Political Initiative.
- Founded the AAPI Alliance of Western Massachusetts approximately 11 years ago.



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

- Created the “And Still We Rise” BIPOC Leadership Institute (currently in its ninth cohort in Western Massachusetts).
- Most recently served as Senior Director of Community Partnerships at the Women’s Fund of Western Massachusetts.
- Trained mediator with expertise in cultural humility and cross-cultural communication.

Priorities she identified for the first six months, if hired:

- Develop and deepen relationships with staff, commissioners, and communities.
- Implement a community-based participatory research model to gather disaggregated data, including from hard-to-reach populations such as undocumented AAPI community members.
- Build partnerships with legislators, government agencies, and community organizations across the state.
- Foster a cohesive team culture as new staff join the Commission.

11. Motion to Enter Executive Session

Following the finalist presentations, Chair Tran announced the Commission would move to executive session. Chair Tran publicly stated the following as required by G.L. c. 30A, § 21(b):

Purpose (G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(2)): To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for, and to conduct, negotiations with nonunion personnel — specifically, compensation, employment contract terms, and negotiation strategy for the Executive Director position. Open discussion of this matter would be detrimental to the Commission’s negotiating position.

Chair Tran publicly announced that the open session would reconvene following the executive session.

Motion: Commissioner Rajashree Ghosh moved to enter executive session for the stated purpose.

Second: Commissioner Bahara Hussaini.

Roll call vote to enter executive session (G.L. c. 30A, § 21(b)(2); 940 CMR 29.10(7)(c)):

Commissioner	Vote
Tuyet Tran (Chair)	Yes
Rakashi Chand (Vice Chair)	Yes
Moana E. Bentin (Treasurer)	Yes
Bahara Hussaini (Secretary)	Yes



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

Leo Blandford	Yes
Emma Chen-Banas	Yes
Richard Chu	Yes
Vaishali Gade	Yes
Rajashree Ghosh	Yes
Christopher Huang	Yes
Bethany Li	Yes
Li Morrison	Yes
Beth Pioscos	Yes

Result: Motion PASSED unanimously. Yeas: 13 | Nays: 0 | Abstentions: 0

Staff, the search consultant, and community members were asked to exit the meeting. The Zoom recording was paused prior to the executive session commencing. Commissioner Moana E. Bentin was designated by Chair Tran to take notes during the executive session.

12. Executive Session

Executive session minutes are maintained as a SEPARATE, CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENT pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, § 22(f). Those minutes may be withheld from public disclosure as long as release would defeat the lawful purpose of the executive session. The Commission must periodically review executive session minutes to determine whether continued nondisclosure remains warranted (G.L. c. 30A, § 22(g)(1)). All votes taken in executive session must be recorded by roll call (G.L. c. 30A, § 22(b)).

13. Actions Taken Following Executive Session

Note on public disclosure: The specific candidate name and proposed salary are recorded below because they are the subject of a formal vote constituting a “decision made” under G.L. c. 30A, § 22(a), and because disclosure is required for State Treasurer and payroll purposes. Per G.L. c. 30A, § 22(e), the supporting résumés and deliberative materials used in executive session remain withheld from public disclosure as personnel appointment materials.

14. Vote A – Hiring of Executive Director

Following deliberation in executive session, the Commission returned to take the following vote for the public record.

Motion: Commissioner Bethany Li moved to hire Amihan Matias as Executive Director of the Massachusetts Asian American Pacific Islander Commission, at an annual base salary of \$120,000, effective upon execution of the employment agreement.

Second: Commissioner Leo Blandford.



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

Roll call vote (G.L. c. 30A, § 22(a) – record of all votes; 940 CMR 29.10(7)(c)):

Commissioner	Vote
Tuyet Tran (Chair)	Yes
Rakashi Chand (Vice Chair)	Yes
Moana E. Bentin (Treasurer)	Yes
Bahara Hussaini (Secretary)	Yes
Leo Blandford	Yes
Emma Chen-Banas	Yes
Richard Chu	Yes
Vaishali Gade	Yes
Rajashree Ghosh	Yes
Christopher Huang	Yes
Bethany Li	Yes
Li Morrison	Yes
Beth Pocos	Yes

Result: Motion PASSED unanimously. Yeas: 13 | Nays: 0 | Abstentions: 0

Vote B – Authorization of Salary Negotiation Range

The Commission voted to authorize the Executive Committee to negotiate a revised salary if the candidate seeks to negotiate.

Motion: Commissioner Vaishali Gade moved that, should Amihan Matias seek to negotiate the proposed starting salary of \$120,000, the Commission hereby authorizes the Executive Committee to approve a revised annual salary not to exceed \$130,000.

Second: Commissioner Leo Blandford.

Roll call vote:

Commissioner	Vote
Tuyet Tran (Chair)	Yes
Rakashi Chand (Vice Chair)	Yes
Moana E. Bentin (Treasurer)	Yes
Bahara Hussaini (Secretary)	Yes
Leo Blandford	Yes



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

Emma Chen-Banas	Yes
Richard Chu	Yes
Vaishali Gade	Yes
Rajashree Ghosh	Yes
Christopher Huang	Yes
Bethany Li	Yes
Li Morrison	Yes
Beth Pioscos	Yes

Result: Motion PASSED unanimously. Yeas: 13 | Nays: 0 | Abstentions: 0

14. Adjournment

Motion: Commissioner Leo Blandford moved to adjourn.

Second: Commissioner Rajashree Ghosh seconded the motion.

Roll call vote (940 CMR 29.10(7)(c) – all commissioners voted to adjourn):

Commissioner	Vote
Tuyet Tran (Chair)	Yes
Rakashi Chand (Vice Chair)	Yes
Moana E. Bentin (Treasurer)	Yes
Bahara Hussaini (Secretary)	Yes
Leo Blandford	Yes
Emma Chen-Banas	Yes
Richard Chu	Yes
Vaishali Gade	Yes
Rajashree Ghosh	Yes
Christopher Huang	Yes
Bethany Li	Yes
Li Morrison	Yes
Beth Pioscos	Yes

Result: Motion PASSED unanimously. Yeas: 13 | Nays: 0 | Abstentions: 0

Meeting adjourned at: 8:10 PM



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

Next Regular Meeting: Tuesday, June 16, 2026 at 6:30 PM



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission