



Governor Kim Reynolds  
Lt. Governor Adam Gregg  
San Wong, Director

## **MEETING MINUTES**

### COMMISSION OF ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER AFFAIRS (CAPI)

**Date:** Saturday, January 25, 2020

**Time:** 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**Location:** Grand View University, Rasmussen Center for Community Advancement Professions,  
Des Moines, Iowa

**Conference Call** – Public Access Provided

#### **Commissioners Present:**

Ben Jung, Chair – *West Des Moines*

James Suong – *Des Moines*

Michelle Yoshimura-Smith – *Des Moines*

Karlai Thornburg – *Ames (by phone)*

Peggy La – *Sioux City (by phone)*

Ritu Gurung – *Davenport (by phone)*

**Absent:** Suresh Basnet – *Cedar Rapids*

#### **DHR/CAS/API Staff:**

Monica Stone, CAS Division Director/DHR Deputy Director

Tina Shaw, Executive Officer for Office of Asian & Pacific Islander Affairs/CAS

**Guest Attendance:** Mr. Wihden Aise, Compact of Free Association (COFA) Community Action Network

**Public Comment:** None

#### **I. Call to Order**

Chair Jung called the meeting to order at 9:07 AM. Four commissioners in attendance. Quorum present.

#### **II. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes**

Minutes of the 9/28/19 meeting were reviewed. **Motion by Jung, seconded by Suong** to approve the minutes of 9/28/19 meeting. **Unanimous consent. Motion carried.**

Minutes of the 10/8/19 meeting were reviewed. **Motion by Jung, seconded by Yoshimura-Smith** to approve the minutes of 10/8/19 meeting. **Unanimous consent. Motion carried.**

### **III. EducAsian 2020: Year-Two Programming**

Following the successes of the 2019 post-secondary program, the Commission had during a previous meeting agreed that a second year should be pursued. Shaw provided an update and discussed this year's programming framework and promotional changes to increase recruitment of Central Iowa high school students. Des Moines Area Community College and Mr. Vinh Nguyen, long-time English Language Learner instructor at Des Moines Public School, again have committed their resources and time to build on the previous year's positive outcomes. DMACC pledged to financially support the scholarship program.

Thornburg encouraged more integration of Iowa State University disciplines, especially those in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programs. Professor Wallapak Tavanapong, an ISU computer science professor and EducAsian 2019 presenter, had shared that public schools can often be difficult to engage, possibly due to oversaturation of competing, college-bound programs focused on high school students. Shaw indicated there will be added emphasis and more time allotted this year to academic STEM, business and health care disciplines, as they were interests most cited by students.

### **IV. New Business**

#### **A. Commissioner Reports**

Jung will provide remarks at the Lunar New Year event hosted at the Grand View University Student Commons by the Chinese Association of Iowa immediately following the commission meeting. CAI hosts this event annually to remind and educate Iowans about the significance of Lunar New Year. The official program has grown over the years and recognizes entities that work to promote diversity and includes entertainment, food and an awards ceremony.

Suong will accompany Iowa National Guard Brig. Gen. Ford to the same event to accept a Diversity Award on behalf of the Guard. That award presentation begins at 2:00 PM.

Jung serves on the Iowa Census Complete Count Committee and shared that in 2010, Iowa ranked high for survey response rate: second place, alongside Wisconsin and Minnesota. Areas in Iowa with low response rates clustered in areas with higher than average rates of poverty in rural areas with language and misunderstanding about the Census. In 2020, the Iowa Committee's goal is a complete count of all Iowans. Jung noted \$8.7 billion at stake in federal funding and most state agencies' budgets are tied to this funding. April 1, 2020 is Census Day and a robust marketing campaign is underway. Jung noted we should be hearing more about statewide efforts soon. Jung serves on the Committee that is co-led by Lt. Governor Gregg and Iowa Secretary of State Pate; it is comprised of 30 members representing all facets of Iowa. Outreach meetings in Coralville and Sioux City are planned, among others. Jung will keep CAPI apprised of any significant developments.

Gurung serves on the City of Davenport Complete Count Committee and serves as a conduit to promote the census to API-affiliated and serving organizations. Gurung noted she is also involved in campus efforts at St. Ambrose University to promote the census and offered to connect with the World Affairs Council based in Davenport to inquire about joint possible efforts.

Jung shared information on an upcoming Iowa Asian Alliance/Asian Pacific Islander Caucus Training event.

La announced that Pacific Islanders in Sioux City and Storm Lake requested a second round of town halls. La indicated the best dates to conduct them are Saturday, February 15 in Sioux City; Sunday, February 16 in Storm Lake. Word of mouth promotion has reached a larger segment of the affected populations.

La shared that Sioux City's first census meeting will take place, Thursday, January 30.

#### **B. DHR Office of Asian & Pacific Islander Affairs – Tina Shaw**

Shaw provided an update on the conditions of newly arrived, displaced Micronesians who were recruited by Seaboard Triumph Foods, a meat-processing plant in Sioux City. Shaw will travel to Sioux City and Storm Lake, along with an Iowa-based COFA community advocate, to host two town halls designed to assess needs and provide state government access and resources. For background, COFA is a compact between the United States and three island nations: The Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and Palau. Nationals from these islands are considered non-immigrants and work-eligible upon entry in the US. COFAs are subject to taxes, but are not eligible for Medicaid due to a federal change made in 1996.

In a partnership with Monsoon – APIs in Solidarity, Commissioner Peggy La, Shaw and Wihden Aise, a Micronesian community advocate and member of the Pacific Islander Health Project, assisted nearly 100 families with coats and warm-weather clothing. Monsoon hosted a fundraiser in Des Moines and raised \$1,800 a week before Christmas, and Mary J. Treglia Community House in Sioux City solicited local donations - making it possible to aid many displaced persons with emergency food, coats and grocery gift cards. La's grocery business facilitated cultural food purchases.

Aise thanked CAPI for its continued concern over workers' claims of bogus employment contracts and dubious business practices. Aise explained that the immediate goal is to identify community leaders and document claims of possible labor trafficking, as cited in multiple New York Times featured articles.

Iowa Legal Aid and other local agencies are on the ground to directly assist, if needed. The goal of the town halls is to connect local service providers and increase awareness of the COFA community in Iowa.

The API Office crafted "Know Your Rights" documents tailored to Sioux City and Storm Lake that lists resources and organizations to help new arrivals to navigate Iowa systems, including DOT/Drivers' Licenses and public health locations.

#### **C. DHR and CAS Report – Monica Stone**

Stone provided a macro view of DHR activities, including promotional work to elevate a new state civic engagement tool: Talent Bank. A request for proposal for a marketing and outreach work was issued to assist the department. Other DHR work includes student engagement to attain post-secondary graduation, anti-poverty programming and an initiative to increase diversity in state employment.

DHR Day on the Hill will take place at the State Capitol on February 27. Details provided on flyer circulated to CAPI. Stone indicated remarks related to the census will be a part of the official program, as is the new Native American Flag display.

Jung indicated he would take part in DHR Day and provide remarks regarding the Census. Jung also asked if the department is facilitating legislator meetings and providing talking points this year. Stone noted she can connect Jung to the department's legislative liaison.

As part of DHR's body of work relative to the Census, Jung asked whether DHR is able to build upon his idea to work with older-generation Asians and those with low-education levels to target educational materials. Stone explained that Iowa's "English only" law is in relationship to legal documents, and funding may be used for translation of non-legal materials. Stone and Jung agreed to schedule a time to further discuss.

#### **V. Strategic Plan: 2020 Plan Review and Revisions**

Shaw re-framed the need for CAPI to revisit the existing, joint CAPI and Office of API Strategic Plan. Some policy elements of the plan will expire (i.e., 2020 Census and Voter Engagement) and the CAPI should scan for new, emerging issues. Shaw suggested more public outreach to API community representatives and service providers to hear what is on the minds of this segment of Iowa's population.

#### **VI. Public Comments – None**

#### **VII. Next Meeting**

Shaw will work with commissioners to find a date for the second quarter meeting.

Thornburg reported that an Ames CAPI Medicare Outreach event is in the planning stages and will take place likely sometime during spring break. She has offered to host it and will work with Ames-area API points of contact to promote it. Shaw will connect technical experts to make presentations.

#### **VIII. Adjournment**

**Motion by Jung to adjourn the meeting, Suong seconded. Unanimous consent.** Meeting adjourned at 11:51 AM.