



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

MEETING MINUTES

COMMISSION OF ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER AFFAIRS (CAPI)

Date: Saturday, June 22, 2019

Time: 10:00 – 1:00 PM

Location: West Des Moines Library, – 1st Floor Meeting Room, 4000 Mills Civic Pkwy,
West Des Moines, IA 50265

Commissioners Present:

Ben Jung, Chair – *West Des Moines*

James Suong – *Des Moines*

Karlai Thornburg – *Ames*

Peggy La – *Sioux City (by phone)*

Ritu Gurung – *Davenport*

Absent: Michelle Yoshimura-Smith – Des Moines; 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

Public Attendance: None

I. Call to Order

Chair Jung called the meeting to order at 10:25 AM. Five commissioners in attendance. Quorum present.

Jung welcomed Commissioner Gurung who made the drive to West Des Moines from her home-city of Davenport.

II. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the 4/25/19 meeting were reviewed. **Motion by Jung, seconded by Suong** to approve the minutes of 4/25/19 meeting. **Unanimous consent. Motion carried.**

III. New Business

A. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner La provided highlights from the Siouxland Asian Festival that took place on June 15. La noted it was the largest attendance in the seven years of its existence. Entertainment included youth performances representing varied Asian nations, and food vendors offered cuisine from Southeast Asian and Far East nations. Food lines were long. This year, press coverage and involvement was substantial in the Siouxland area. International students from Western Iowa Community College attended and enjoyed the experience.

Commissioner Thornburg shared details from a recent trip to Jordan to serve Syrian refugees in Irbid and Amman - roughly 30 minutes from the Syrian border. The average time of displacement is 5-7 years. Jordan has a policy of welcoming refugees, and the current population is 10 million. Thornburg shared that Syrian refugees who are widowed and single moms are not permitted to work. Her missions group visited with 15 families and noted that very few men resided in the camp with many listed as missing. Provisions are sparse, and a \$42 package consisting of basics such as flour and oil are expected to feed a family of six for 1 month.

Thornburg relayed that the United Nations has only six percent of its funding needs to address the Syrian Refugee crisis. Of the 1.3 million displaced Syrian residents in Jordan, only 20 percent reside in the refugee camp. Most are living outside the camp where their wages are considerably lower than the \$500/month average Jordanian wage. Average rent in Jordan is \$250 US dollars.

Differences in gender-related rights favor males. For example, men are able to divorce wives at any time; women 3 years. Muslim men may marry anyone of their choosing; Muslim women cannot marry outside the faith.

Commissioner Gurung is assisting the Community Action Agency Division by translating forms and informational brochures in Nepalese and shared that this exercise is proving that typing is more difficult than writing. Her father, an educator in Nepal, is assisting in cases where verbiage may be lost in translation where words do not have equivalents in Nepalese (i.e., heating bill, social security bill, pay stub). Gurung is from Nepal and lives in the Davenport area where nearly 200 Nepali families reside, many who immigrated to the United States by way of the Green Card Lottery system and family-based immigration.

Commissioner Suong shared that an EducAsian youth participant and recent Hoover High School graduate enlisted in the National Guard. After meeting Suong at an EducAsian workshop, the Burmese student contacted Suong and wanted to learn more. Suong worked with the student to enlist him.

Suong also shared his Khmer community's involvement in CelebrAsian over the Memorial Day weekend where he volunteered at the Khmer food tent, organized the color guard and participated in the Japan Village parade.

Chair Jung relayed developments in the Korean community to move toward one association with the hopes of merging the Korean American Society of Iowa with Korean Cultural Connection.

B. Office of API & CAS Division Report

Shaw provided a final wrap-up report of the EducAsian program and worked with the four CAPI scholarship winners to relay awards – three of whom will attend DMACC-Ankeny to pursue careers in education and healthcare and one who will attend Iowa State University for business and finance. The program evaluation phase will begin in late August, and Shaw invited CAPI commissioners to take an active role in the redesign and implementation phases.

Stone informed CAPI that DHR will invest in the EducAsian Program by providing \$5,000 toward the CAPI Scholarship Account for it to leverage additional funding. CAPI thanked DHR for this show of confidence and support for its work to improve post-secondary education opportunities for foreign-born, first-generation college students and those pursuing technical training for high-demand careers.

Stone provided an update on the Diversity Data Report in which the consultant is wrapping up work on 200 in-depth interviews (IDIs) representing minority groups and others served by DHR. State Public Policy Group is analyzing the qualitative data and will provide quantitative analysis in the final report due in September. The report will encompass issues such as isolation, lack of services, social connectivity, and economic successes and barriers. The final report will assist DHR Commissions in narrowing down areas where they want to drive policy recommendations and issues to be amplified.

Stone updated the CAPI on progress related to the Talent Bank and will send a link to the demo platform. Issues surrounding information security are being discussed. The organization representing Iowa's cities and counties, as well as corporate entities are supportive and on board. Stone asked the CAPI to consider ways to populate the Talent Bank and avenues to promote its utility. Ultimately, the goal of the Talent Bank is to encourage workforce diversity in the public sector, nonprofit and corporate boards and decision-making & leadership positions. Stone anticipates a September launch date.

Shaw relayed details of a visit to Spencer, Iowa to speak on a panel at a community dialog on workforce diversity issues. The invitation was extended by the Iowa Lakes Corridor Economic Development Corporation. A screening of the documentary "[Do We Belong?](#)" took place prior to the dialogue, followed by community questions and commentary.

Panelists included:

- Jay Dahlhauser: Youth Advocate & Operations Director, The Bridge of Storm Lake
- Sunayana Dumala: Database Developer, Intouch B2D & subject of short documentary, "Do We Belong?"
- Tina Shaw: Iowa Department of Human Rights, Executive Officer, Office of Asian Pacific Islander Affairs
- Francesca Yu: Employee, Spencer Hospital

Shaw invited CAPI to join CAS for an Immigrant Heritage Month event to take place in advance of the DHR Executive Board meeting on June 25 on the Lucas Lawn on the State Capitol Complex. This first-ever event was organized in partnership with the Iowa International Center and the Native American and African American Commissions. Jung asked if a CAS Division Report was available to better connect with what other commissions have identified as priorities. Stone stated she will provide CAPI with a copy of the CAS Division Report to be presented at the DHR Executive Board meeting.

Shaw invited commissioners to join her in attending the World Refugee Day event blocks away at the Valley Community Center hosted by the Refugee Alliance of Central Iowa and its many partners serving the refugee community. Iowa DHR is tabling at the event to provide resources and share its work with service providers and members of the refugee community.

IV. Old Business

a. Friends of CAPI Bylaws

Commissioner Yoshimura and Shaw met to work on draft bylaws to present to CAPI. Once drafted, they will be presented to the full Commission for review, edits and final consideration at its fall meeting. With a “Friends” nonprofit in place, fundraising for CAPI initiatives and community outreach may be streamlined. A separate board and treasurer are required and will be unaffiliated with the state of Iowa. Commissioners were asked to think about leaders in the API community who are capable of building, growing and leading Friends of CAPI in the right direction once the nonprofit is installed.

b. EducAsian 2.0 (see update above)

Program evaluation and redesign will begin in late-August with community outreach, program promotion and student registration to begin as early as October 2019. An April 2020 timeline similar to 2019 is expected.

V. Next CAPI Meeting

Shaw will circulate a link to an electronic poll to determine the next meeting date and time. Consensus discussion ensued for a meeting on a Saturday in late-September.

VI. Adjournment

Motion by Jung, seconded by Suong to adjourn the meeting at 12:23 PM. Unanimous consent. Motion carried.