



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

MEETING MINUTES

COMMISSION OF ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER AFFAIRS (CAPI)

Date: Saturday, August 8, 2020

Time: 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Location: Remote Meeting via Google Meet

Conference Call – Public access provided

Commissioners Present:

Ben Jung, Chair – *West Des Moines*

James Suong – *Des Moines*

Michelle Yoshimura-Smith – *Des Moines*

Ritu Gurung – *Davenport*

Karlai Thornburg – *Ames*

Peggy La – *Sioux City*

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: None

Public Comment: None

I. Call to Order

Chair Jung called the meeting to order at 9:35 AM. Six commissioners are in attendance. Quorum is present.

II. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the 5/23/20 meeting were reviewed. **Motion by Jung, seconded by Yoshimura-Smith to approve the minutes of 5/23/20 meeting. Unanimous consent. Motion carried.**

III. New Business

A. DHR and CAS Report – Monica Stone

Stone provided an overview of what DHR has done to provide language access materials and resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including a weekly resource newsletter.

Stone emphasized that the demand for improved equity and inclusion has skyrocketed inside state government giving DHR more opportunities to contribute throughout state government to improve public services across the board.

Iowa Attorney General – Eldercare Rights & Coordinated Community Response

Stone informed the commission of an opportunity to partner with the Iowa Attorney General's (AG) office to develop a webinar series to inform service providers about the API population, among others, in Iowa and elder issues. The concept was borne out of elder-abuse education and awareness but has grown more broadly to help others understand diverse elders and how to approach service delivery to them.

The AG's monthly fall webinar series timeline has a start-time of September and end-time of November 2020. The AG inquired whether CAPI would like to help construct the November segment that will include API elder information. Stone commented that the Commission of Persons with Disabilities has agreed to participate; the Native American Commission has not yet voted. Ideas for the CAPI to consider as ways to partner include: a commissioner with cultural elder-specific experience to speak on a panel or recruit an expert or culturally-aligned service provider in this field. Commissioners interested in workshopping ideas with Monica and Tina should send them an email. Chantelle Smith from the AG's Office has also reached out to ONE Iowa and Iowa State University Extension.

Yoshimura-Smith stated it was a good idea to enter into this partnership as eldercare and rights are aligned with the CAPI strategic plan. She believes it would be a loss for the API community, if CAPI did not participate.

Thornburg indicated she would be willing to join the working group on behalf of CAPI. Shaw suggested experts with technical knowledge that could include out-of-state service providers in areas of the country with high API densities. Shaw will research this and gather names of API-elder serving organizations for Commissioner Thornburg to consider, as well as Commissioner Basnet who has expressed the lack of resources for elders in the Nepalese community in the past.

Motion by Yoshimura-Smith, seconded by Suong to enter into a collaborative agreement with the Iowa Attorney General's Office and to appoint a CAPI working group for the express purpose of a diversity video series designed to educate service providers about best practices and cultural knowledge of the Asian & Pacific Islander communities in Iowa. **Unanimous consent. Motion carried.**

B. Office of API Affairs – Tina Shaw

i. Pacific Islanders & Disproportionate Impacts of COVID-19

Shaw provided a letter transmitted by the Dubuque County Board of Supervisors to the Governor's office encouraging the Governor to use the State's Medical Assistance Program to help legal residents under the Compact of Free Association (COFA), such as the Marshallese, so that they may have better access to health care. Since 1996, COFA residents have been barred from participating in the federal Medicaid program, which has had a negative impact on the Marshallese and other Pacific Islanders living in Iowa. The letter asserts this negative impact is urgently felt during this COVID-19 pandemic which has morbidly affected many Marshallese residents and their families. Nationally, the Marshallese population have suffered disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic due to this group's [prevalence of comorbidities such as diabetes and related autoimmune diseases](#). Marshallese fall under the [Census Bureau's Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander demographic category](#).

Shaw recapped state legislators' inquiries as it relates to Medicaid for COFA migrants - expressly the inquiry made by House Human Resources Chair Lundgren to DHS for [a cost estimate for a federal waiver](#) to include COFAs under Iowa's Medicaid system. Stone shared that two tests must be met by the state prior to any approval: 1) state must prove that a specific population is not currently covered; and 2) after the date of the waiver, it will not result in increased expenses. Stone relayed that Iowa DHS is currently in the data-gathering stage, but that disaggregating existing data presents a big challenge. DHS is working with new census data (2019 vintage data).

La affirmed that the Marshallese and Micronesians are extremely under-represented and supports CAPI drafting a letter to the Governor to point out the needs of this population and how the pandemic is compounding their lack of access to healthcare and other public services. Suong and Yoshimura-Smith vocalized agreement with this sentiment.

Motion by Thornburg, seconded by Yoshimura-Smith to direct the Office of API Affairs to draft a letter to the Governor, select state legislative bodies and state agencies about the growing population and needs of the Marshallese population and other COFA migrants in Iowa. **Unanimous consent. Motion carried.**

ii. EducAsian 2020 Scholarship Winners

Shaw provided a summary of the six (6) scholarship awards made possible with a generous sponsorship of President Robert Denson of the Des Moines Area Community College to support post-secondary aspirations of high school graduates from refugee and immigrant backgrounds. Four of the awardees will attend DMACC and two to Iowa State University. Shaw thanked Cmsnr. Ritu Gurung, Mr. Vinh Nguyen of Des Moines Public Schools, and DHR Director San Wong for judging the competition.

Gurung conveyed the balanced approach by the judges to factor financial need with academic achievement. By ranking the awards, it rewarded effort in a positive and helpful way. Shaw indicated winners will be sent a certificate of achievement by the State of Iowa signed by the Governor and Director Wong.

C. Commissioner Reports

Suong shared that Asian business owners contacted him about the next round of federal COVID-19 relief assistance. Paycheck Protection Program and other loan forgiveness programs were at the top of their concerns. He referred them to Community CPA which is doing a great job of reaching out to immigrant-owned businesses. Some took advantage and those who did not did not understand the process and documentation needed. Businesses included nail salons, restaurants, and other retail establishments.

Commissioners congratulated Suong on being selected as an honoree by the Iowa International Center for his distinguished career and long-standing work to benefit Asians in Iowa. This recognition takes place in September during the [Passport for Prosperity line-up of events](#).

Thornburg agreed the length for approvals and the “first-come, first-serve” basis was a chronic access problem. Thornburg also expressed concern of immigrant-focused businesses charging high fees with claims approvals are guaranteed typically over \$1,000 totaling 15-20% cut of the relief. Rather, Thornburg noted more success with state small business relief program such as the [Iowa Small Business Relief Program](#).

Jung concurred and added if accounting paperwork was not organized and ready, people would not know what to use or scramble to generate it.

Discussion on suicidality and depression among API youth took place.

IV. CAPI Reorganization: Goal-Setting and Objectives

Jung initiated a conversation focused on retooling how the commission is functioning and organized for it to become more proactive and less reactive, as well as focus on core areas and issues that have risen in importance for Iowa’s API demographic. He would like to reverse the perception that CAPI reacts and instead leads by being vocal on emerging policy issues.

Yoshimura-Smith concurred and that her experience in the corporate world is to keep striving toward mission-specific goals. Time spent on commission meetings is more efficiently used, if a game plan of offense vs defense, utilized strengths and division of labor are agreed upon when commissioners meet for concerted efforts.

Thornburg urged commissioners to use quorum to our advantage and raise, as well as take votes on key issues.

Jung suggested one area where CAPI is positioned to lead: Census data collection. This is a priority area for CAPI and one where the commission may be more visible. Recently, a federal-state Census data-sharing agreement was entered into by Iowa and the Census Bureau to allow access to Iowa DOT data sources. Jung will craft a first draft of a letter and will send to the commission via email for review and vote at the next meeting.

V. Public Comments – None

IV. Next Meeting

Two possible dates were selected for the next commission meeting to take place by Google Meet: 1) Saturday, August 22; or 2) Saturday, August 29. Either would take place 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM.

VII. Adjournment

Motion by Jung, seconded by Suong to adjourn the meeting. **Unanimous consent.** Meeting adjourned at 11:36 AM.