



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

MEETING MINUTES

COMMISSION OF ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER AFFAIRS (CAPI)

Date: Saturday, September 28, 2019

Time: 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Location: North Side Public Library, 3516 5th Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50313

Commissioners Present:

James Suong – *Des Moines*

Karlai Thornburg – *Ames*

Michelle Yoshimura-Smith – *Des Moines*

Peggy La – *Sioux City*

Suresh Basnet – *Cedar Rapids*

Absent: Ben Jung – *West Des Moines*, Ritu Gurung – *Davenport*

DHR/CAS/API Staff:

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

Public Attendance: None

I. Call to Order

In Commissioner Jung's absence, Commissioner Thornburg served as acting-Chair and called the meeting to order at 10:46 AM. With five of seven commissioners in attendance, a quorum was present.

II. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the 6/22/19 meeting were reviewed. **Motion by Yoshimura-Smith, seconded by Suong** to approve the minutes of 6/22/19 meeting as presented. **Unanimous consent. Motion carried.**

III. New Business

A. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Suong reflected on a busy summer of events and community engagement activities. Suong is part of the team at Camp Dodge that annually hosts The Diversity and Unity Day for the troops. This year, the event was well-planned and offered a generous portion of ethnic food from

countries such as Africa, Ecuador, Thailand and China. Soldiers were entertained by Native American and African dancers. The event drew over 200 soldiers.

To help commemorate the 66th Anniversary of the Korean Armistice Signing, Suong recruited a color guard to participate at the event on the State Capitol Complex hosted by the Korean War Veterans Association of Iowa. The API Office had contacted Suong and assisted KWVA in promoting and producing the event. Korean community leaders attended, and one member read aloud a letter from the Republic of Korea General Consulate's Office in Chicago. Local media outlets covered the event and provided an emotional tribute to the armed forces who defended the Korean peninsula. A state proclamation signed by the Governor designating July 27, 2019 as Korean War Veterans Day was read aloud by the Lt. Governor.

Commissioner Yoshimura-Smith shared information regarding upcoming community events: 1) 10/12/19 The Japanese American Society in Iowa will celebrate its 30th Anniversary in Des Moines, and 2) Iowa Asian Alliance will host its annual Pho King Contest in West Des Moines 11/9/19.

Commissioner La provided an update on the Siouxland Census Kick-Off Event taking place 10/26/19 at the Mary Treglia House. La and Shaw are working with local leaders and the municipal Complete Count Commission to raise awareness of the 2020 Census in the Siouxland area - where it is anticipated that 20 percent will not respond to the survey.

La also reported on the plight of newly-arrived Micronesian Pingalapese from Pohnpei (Federated States of Micronesia) recruited by Seaboard Triumph Foods (STF) in Sioux City. Numerous allegations have surfaced that STF is acting unethically, the company recruiter confiscated passports, and paychecks are being garnished unknowingly. The government of the Federated States of Micronesia wrote a letter to the US State Department to investigate STF's alleged dubious recruitment practices. Shaw will look into the situation further and contact the Sioux City Human Rights Office for more information.

Commissioner Thornburg conversed with a professor from the business school at Iowa State University conducting research involving marketing practices in the United Kingdom and South Africa. The focus of research is to study how best to integrate immigrants' purchasing patterns and behaviors into curriculum studied by marketing students. It impressed upon Thornburg the importance of diversity and inclusion of all minorities and how they are perceived by retail businesses. The finished report will be published in early 2020 and could offer eye-opening approaches to apply to CAPI's work.

Commissioner Basnet provided an update on the political campaigns and candidates visiting the Cedar Rapids area, as well as climate change issue campaigns. Basnet is sharing a flyer and engaging groups to attend an event hosted by the US Department of Justice for protecting places of worship.

B. Office of API & CAS Division Report

1. EducAsian 2020

Shaw updated Commissioners on the plan for outreach to Central Iowa youth to participate in this post-secondary education and career-readiness program in the spring of 2020. Like last year, the program will run for six consecutive Saturdays (April 11 – May 16) at Des Moines Area Community College – Urban Campus. Workshop content includes academic planning, high-demand careers and soft skills such as communications. Two college-campus visits will once again be a highlight of the program. A more formal discussion of CAPI-sponsored scholarship amounts will be on future meeting agendas.

Thornburg asked if the program is replicable and how it can be scaled up to be offered elsewhere in Iowa and whether CAPI should approach Iowa State University's Office of Diversity and Inclusion for a partnership again. Shaw explained that in order for the program to be replicated in other API-dense communities, community members with connections to the school district and area community colleges and universities are essential to support workshops and sustainability long-term, in addition to funding to support scholarships.

2. DHR Data Report Update

Shaw provided an update and timetable for the report's release. Commissioners will be provided a copy once DHR and SPPG finalize it.

3. Census and Cross-Commission Efforts

As reported by La, Iowa DHR Commissions representing African Americans, Asian & Pacific Islanders, Latino Affairs and Native Americans will join forces with the Siouxland Complete Count Committee and Siouxland-area leaders for a regional Census Kick-off Event to build awareness of the importance of a complete, accurate census count.

Census data is used to distribute over \$675 billion annually in federal funds to the states and ultimately local communities. In Fiscal Year 2016, Iowa received \$8,787,280,545 through 55 federal spending programs guided by data derived from the 2010 Census. Inaccurate data means Siouxland and other Iowa localities miss out on federal funds to expand infrastructure, improve and build new schools and hospitals, and develop resources to help children, businesses and diverse populations.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are the least familiar with the census and are the least likely to report their intention to fill it out, according to a Census Bureau study released in January. The analysis also found that there are five main barriers that might prevent people from participating: 1) concerns about data privacy and confidentiality; 2) fear of repercussions; 3) distrust in government; 4) lack of efficacy; and 5) belief that there is no personal benefit.

Education and awareness-building efforts are components of the CAPI 2018-2020 Strategic Plan.

C. Strategic Planning - Revisited

Shaw recapped CAPI activity in each of the five target areas of the CAPI Strategic Plan and the work conducted by the office in each. Yoshimura-Smith suggested the current matrix be updated to include this information. Shaw agreed to prepare a document in advance of the next meeting.

On the topic of citizenship and voter registration, Thornburg inquired on whether opportunities existed to conduct outreach following naturalization ceremonies opportunities. La commented that in Sioux City, Mary J. Treglia House, a nonprofit serving immigrants, conducts naturalization ceremonies. La believes it would be advantageous to invite groups such as the League of Women Voters and others whose mission is to register new citizens to vote.

Basnet commented that groups in Cedar Rapids are conducting caucus trainings with the aim of promoting civic engagement and increasing voter-turnout in the next election cycle.

Prior to the next meeting, Thornburg asked fellow commissioners to contemplate the direction of the strategic plan, level of participation to advance the priorities identified, and the four terms that are set to expire on April 30, 2020: Ben Jung, Ritu Gurung, Peggy La, and James Suong.

V. Public Comments

None

VI. Next Meeting

Shaw reflected on the total number of CAPI meetings held in 2019 (seven) and noted that as a positive indication of the high level of collaboration to move initiatives forward. CAPI discussed the possibility of hosting a CAPI Listening Session in Ames in early 2020 in conjunction with the API community. Shaw will send an online poll to gauge interest and availability.

VII. Adjournment

Motion by Yoshimura-Smith, seconded by La to adjourn the meeting at 12:05 PM. Unanimous consent. Motion passes.