



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

MEETING MINUTES - APPROVED

COMMISSION OF ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER AFFAIRS (CAPI)

Date: Saturday, October 3, 2020

Time: 9:00 AM – 11:00 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*

Suresh Basnet – *Cedar Rapids*

Absent: Peggy La – *Sioux City*

DHR/CAS/API Staff:

Monica Stone, Community Advocacy & Services Division Administrator

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

Guest Attendance: None

Public Comment: None

I. Call to Order

Cmsnr. Jung presided and called the meeting to order at 9:09 AM. Six commissioners are in attendance. Quorum is present.

II. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the 9/2/20 meeting were reviewed. **Motion by Yoshimura-Smith, seconded by Suong** to approve the minutes of 9/2/20 meeting. **Unanimous consent. Motion carried.**

III. Old Business

A. Status of transmitted letters re: 2020 US Census & COFA Population in Iowa

Shaw provided a recap and the background information presented at the last meeting leading to the Commission's decision to craft and approve two letters to the Governor's office with recommendations related to: 1) census enumeration; and 2) DHS study of a Medicaid waiver for COFA Pacific Islanders in Iowa. Both letters were transmitted to the Governor and select parties on September 3, 2020.

Stone added that a DHR policy advisor from the Governor's office is still not known at this time, but that one will be named shortly. Stone relayed that once that is determined, the Governor's office will appoint a policy advisor to liaison with the Commission on its policy recommendations. Also, an invitation was made to the Governor's office to join a future Commission meeting, and a request for commissioners to meet with the Governor and/or staff was also submitted.

Ben urged commission members to share the letters with the broader API community to make it a community-driven effort.

Stone thanked the Commission for providing ample response time before contacting media and other parties.

Jung shared that Dan Wolter, point person for the Governor's Complete Count Committee, did not indicate whether the CCC has expired now that enumeration activities have ended. He plans to reach out to Wolter on this matter.

Yoshimura-Smith asked for clarification on what being assigned a policy advisor means. Stone responded that it would allow for deeper conversation, at a public policy level, to take place.

Jung shared an article about a recent court ruling for the census and thought it possible for census staff to continue to turn out survey responses despite the confusing guidance to Census Bureau by the Administration and the courts.

Basnet asked about actionable items related to the census at this juncture and suggested some members of the Commission speak separately as a committee to determine them. Basnet plans to organize something separately respecting quorum rules.

Jung asked if a policy advisor would be assigned per topic or both topics framed in the letters. Stone indicated she does not know. Currently, Megan O'Brien is the outgoing DHR liaison and also the healthcare policy advisor. DHR has made this inquiry and is deferring to Governor's office on how it would like to proceed. DHR continues to make follow up contact.

Jung stated this is more reason to take the initiative to advocate for a direct meeting with Governor and/or Lt. Governor.

B. Plan to update next CAPI Strategic Plan

Shaw gave a historical view of the current strategic plan and the process to create it that included extensive outreach across the state speaking to community members, stakeholders and advocates to identify what priorities rise to the top in urgency.

Thornburg emphasized the need for a more focused effort on the part of all Commissioners than before. She urged each commissioner to express their opinions about their communities and to talk with Shaw to express and capture ideas.

Shaw suggested a listening session format for the December meeting to fold into the close-to-final version of the next strategic plan. It would be a learning opportunity for the new API Office staff person. Basnet expressed agreement with Thornburg and Shaw.

Jung inquired what policy areas should be given new or renewed emphasis. Thornburg responded that healthcare is paramount, and in Ames, even the middle class has no idea of the array of public programs and benefits available. Navigating the healthcare system for people with limited-English proficiency is extremely difficult. She would like to see an education initiative focused on public healthcare benefits.

Basnet stated voter engagement is his current area of effort. In Cedar Rapids, organizations are trying to register voters, but the biggest challenge continues to be the language barrier. Many are unsure where to register. He asked how best to identify people who are eligible to vote that may not be registered. Shaw stated the Secretary of State can likely generate data of unregistered, eligible voters using DMV-DOT driver's license information since the Motor Voter Act requires DMVs to ask new drivers to register to vote upon licensure. Naturalization events around the state also present opportunities to register new citizens – League of Women Voters have made these ceremonies a part of their public outreach.

Suong agreed that naturalization ceremonies are a good way to register voters, but that it continues to be difficult for Asian elders to pass naturalization testing.

Gurung remarked that for the Nepali community information dissemination on early-voting and civic engagement is critical. She indicated a strong interest in preparing a resource explaining the US electorate system, among other things. Shaw noted that past efforts in this area, focusing on US and Iowa civic engagement, produced several public educational materials. She will send these to Gurung following the meeting to determine if CAPI can revive something similar with the goal to advance civic engagement education.

IV. New Business

A. Commissioner Reports

Cmsnr. Gurung reported that the Davenport Census Committee, on which she serves, has been meeting virtually. As of their last meeting, response rates decreased slightly to 69.2 percent compared to 70% last census. The pandemic is primarily behind the lag in participation rates.

Jung congratulated Suong on being selected as an honoree by the Iowa International Center for its Passport to Prosperity Awards awarded to immigrants/refugees who have made significant accomplishments and efforts for their community.

B. DHR Update – Monica Stone

Stone plans to update the DHR Executive Board at its next meeting re: changes across the CAS Division. One of the changes is Shaw’s transfer from the API Office to a new data-focused position to assist each commission on reaching data objectives and craft a biennial DHR Data Report.

Stone explained her plans to fill the API Office staff vacancy and asked CAPI to assist by making recommendations. In CAS, Stone’s plan is to reclassify positions appropriately for the work that has been and is being done. A job posting for the API Office will be posted soon.

Stone reported that DHR is still working on Language Access projects to communicate pandemic-related updates and announcements, and emergency-response work continues to change with ebbing dynamics. She feels the translation work has made a difference for Iowans and the state overall.

Basnet asked about the timeline for new API Commission/Office support staff person. Stone anticipates the position would be posted in the next 2-3 weeks, but by the end of October at the latest. She will share the job posting with CAPI so it may be shared more broadly. Stone described the state hiring process that includes posting the position for longer than 10 days. Following the posting, there will be a week to review applications before the interviews begin. Stone estimated that ideally a new staff person could be installed and onboarded by the end of November.

Basnet asked if the new API Office support person will also support another commission. Stone responded in the affirmative. Currently, the API and Status of Women Offices are clustered in the DHR organization chart.

C. Office of API Affairs – Tina Shaw

Shaw briefed the Commission on the EducAsian scholarship winners and the plan to feature them via DHR social media in November – National Scholarship & Education Month.

V. **Public Comments** – None

IV. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Saturday, December 12 from 9:30 AM to Noon. The listening session format will allow for ample public comment on issues of import to the community and advocates. A final draft the Strategic Plan will be prepared following the meeting.

VII. **Adjournment**

Motion by Jung, seconded by Suong to adjourn the meeting. Unanimous consent. Meeting adjourned at 11:00 AM.