



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

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Executive Director

Jenny Chiang

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Boston, MA 02108

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Meeting Minutes

July 21, 2020, 6:30pm – 8:00pm

Meeting will be held via teleconference in compliance with the Governor's Executive Order on the Open Meeting Law and COVID-19

Absent Commissioners are highlighted and remote participants are indicated by an asterisk*. Quorum was reached by attendance.

Attachments:

- Executive Committee and Staff Reports
- June 16 Meeting Minutes
- June 29 Meeting Minutes
- July 8 Meeting Minutes
- Draft Calendar of AAPI Events
- H.268: An Act ensuring equitable representation in the Commonwealth

Vira calls the meeting to order at 6:36pm.

Staff Present: Jenny Chiang, Jay Wong, Brooke Yuen, Sheila Vo

Guests Present: Daniel Pan, Ye Pogue

1. Meeting Minutes to be approved: 6/16/20, 6/29/20, and 7/8/20 – VOTE

Vira proposes to move approving the meeting minutes to the end of the meeting.

Betty: The Chair unilaterally moved 3 agenda items to the bottom of the page. The 3 meeting minutes need to be amended or discussed.

Mabel: Vira would like to reorder the discussion of the minutes to the end.

Betty: In order to change the order, you are required to have a 2/3 vote to change the order of the agenda.

Mary L: Can we establish an end time for tonight's meeting?

Philjay motions to table previous meeting minutes to end of the agenda. Danielle seconds.

Vote

Yes: Vira, Mabel, Danielle, Sam, Ying, Philjay,

No: Betty, Mary

Abstain: Haniya

Not recorded: Gilbert

Motion passes

Mary L motions to set an end time for the meeting of ending no more than 30-minute past posted end time. Sam seconds.



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Vote

Yes: Danielle, Sam, Ying, Philjay, Haniya, Mary L, Betty, Mabel

Abstain: Vira

Not recorded: Gilbert

Motion passes

Danielle: State bodies can vote to extend the meeting. Will this preclude us from extending the meeting?

Betty: Roberts Rules states that it needs to be done in the order of business. A lot of Commissioners had to leave early at the previous meeting.

2. Executive Committee & Staff Reports

- Staff provided an overview of the Executive Committee and Staff Reports
- Sam provided an overview of the Safe Communities Act.
- Danielle states the Commission voted to support the Safe Communities Act during the January meeting.
- Betty states we need to incorporate our own people in any racial justice programming. We need to concentrate on our own people. Get stories from ordinary people that have suffered injustice. We don't need people in positions to tell us what to do.
- Sam: Point of order. Sam appreciates Betty's commitment to the community. In the last meeting, Betty talked about creating a Commission for all communities.

3. Calendar of AAPI Events

- The Staff compiled a listing of AAPI events
- Commissioners are encouraged to contact staff if there are any events missing

4. Discussion on using Letterhead for AAC statements

- Gilbert - adding votes at the end of a statement is sufficient. It is better in dealing with one's own community.
- Mary L: are we removing all our names on the left-hand side?
- Mabel: To take out your name from the left side would remove yourself as a Commissioner. Indicating the vote on the bottom already makes it very clear. We cannot arbitrarily take out names if you do not agree.
- Sam proposes to compromise by keeping the names on the left so that people know who the Commissioners are and indicating votes on the top of the page. Danielle appreciates the compromise to have votes on the top to help with transparency.
- Betty does not agree with Sam's proposed compromise. Betty states we do not have the authority to make position statements because our authority is derivative from our Appointing Authorities. Therefore, when we make position statements, we have to make sure that it aligns with our Appointing Authorities because down the line every one of us will be



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accountable for those position statements. It's about public accountability.

- Vira proposes to table the vote to the next meeting. Gilbert motioned at the last meeting to remove the left column with names while leaving the logo. Gilbert states we need to clearly identify who voted and who didn't for these statements.
- Gilbert motions to record votes on the top of the page before the statement. Sam seconds.

Vote:

- Yes: Danielle, Sam, Ying, Philjay, Haniya, Gilbert, Vira, Mabel
- Abstain: Mary L, Betty

Motion passes

5. Discussion on H.2681: An Act ensuring equitable representation in the Commonwealth – VOTE

- Jenny would like to note that the AAC approved supporting a previous version of the bill (H.3361) in 2017.
- Betty states that before we do anything, we have to study the bill because it has unintended consequences. The bill is very misleading, it says equitable distribution, but it is not. If the data falls into the wrong hands, some mindless person stigmatizes that particular person, let's say a new immigrant, linguistically disadvantaged who does not understand, who will they go to? Do the other communities have disaggregation bills? For instance, the black community is not diverse, they are from Africa and ones from the West Indies. The Latinos are quite diverse. There are lighter skinned Latinos, the ones from Spain and Argentina. Do they have disaggregation bills?
- Philjay clarifies the bill includes African and Latinx communities.
- Sam states the bill includes all communities of color. It has the backing of the Black and Latino Caucus, and backing of Legislators of color. This is a different bill for all communities of color.
- Vira states that Jenny attached the bill in the meeting packet. On pages 4 and 5 on the attached bill, it mentions the very diverse Black and African American group and Latino group, as well as Caucasian groups.
- Gilbert is currently working with Tackey to write a letter to the Ways and Means Chairman Michlewitz to put a hold on the bill. Gilbert states that the language is vague. Gilbert would like to discuss with Tackey prior to taking a position on the bill.
- Betty motions to table the discussion to better understand the bill. Betty would like to share some articles about the bill and table the vote. Gilbert seconds.

Vote

- Yes: Gilbert, Mary L, Betty
- No: Danielle, Ying, Philjay, Haniya, Vira, Mabel

Motion does not pass



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Danielle motions to take a vote in support of the bill. Mabel seconds.

- Mabel states the pandemic highlighted the need to collect data. It's important to have data to do rapid response. Amendments can always be provided later if there are any unintended consequences. All members of the House Asian Caucus have sponsored the bill.
- Danielle personally supports the bill, and it's especially critical during COVID-19 where there are disparate health outcomes. We cannot erase deep inequities in the country without disaggregated data on all racial groups. It's especially powerful to include all racial groups.
- Betty would like to highlight the negative consequences. It's collecting national origin from immigrants. It is painful and dangerous in this political environment to even put optional. It puts grave stress on immigrants. This will have negative consequences on immigrants and refugees.
- Mary L. asks what supporting the bill would mean. Vira responds that it would encompass the AAC publicly supporting and making a statement. Mary L. asks if Vira is asking for individual private opinions from Commissioners and how it relates to the AAC mission. Vira responds that the bill will ensure people are represented in allocation of resources, we need to understand where there are disparities, who are the underserved populations, and putting resources in communities where it is needed.
- Haniya expresses support for the bill as a public health researcher in an underserved community at Boston Medical Center. Research relies a lot on publicly available data for interventions and programming to understand resource gaps. This data needs to be available to address health disparities on every level.
- Philjay expresses support. It is very similar to a bill passed in California called the Ahead bill spearheaded by a Filipino American Congressman to collect data on Asian American ethnicities, specifically in the health department. California has a large Asian American population and does not see why we should not be in support if another state that has a large Asian American community is doing something similar.
- Mary L. suggests opening it up to the community for opinions and feedback before voting on behalf of the community. We each represent different ethnic communities. We are privileged to represent these communities, but really, we represent the opinions of our communities.
- Ying asks for clarification. If we support the bill, is the issue that we will be writing a statement in support of the bill? Vira clarifies that supporting would mean joining coalitions to pass the legislation and educate communities about the bill. Ying asks Mary L. how to utilize thoughts from the community in voting for this bill.
- Mary L. states a vote would represent our individual opinions rather than the representation of the larger communities we serve.
- Member from the public, Daniel Pan provides an opinion. Daniel states that they are a Chinese immigrant who has been following the bill. Daniel



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had very strong objections against the bill. Ethnicity is not based on biological connection, it's a social context. So, there is a very weak connection between ethnicity and disease state. As an immigrant, we are facing prejudice on a daily basis. The bill pressurizes where we are from, not just to me but also my children. They are born here so I wish they do not have to be judged by where their parents or grandparents are from. This bill will not be able to achieve what it intends. The bill will segregate the community into smaller groups and creating policies specific to smaller groups. That will pit one group against another. There is sufficient information available that certain groups are actually underrepresented and in a worse socioeconomic status than others. Why can't we use available data and find a way to address those problems first before we take on this huge data collection ask to all agencies.

- Member from the public, Ye Pogue provides an opinion. Ye is a public health researcher studying mental health and trauma. Ye has opposed this bill and similar bills for more than 3 years. We are a country built on the back of immigrants. We are facing tremendous pressure from all over the country. Chinese people don't want to see more data collection on national origin, because we have been traumatized by this question of where are you really from. Ye understands that it's optional and there is very good intention behind the bill. However, as immigrants we have to go through so much, these types of questions triggers nothing but trauma. If we want to do research, there are always ways to collect. We need to go through an IRB protocol to assess the risk and burden of data collection data rather than using government power to collect data. That will just discourage immigrants from using public resources. Why do people feel safe about data collection?
- Vira closes public comments and debate.

Vote:

- Yes: Danielle, Ying, Philjay, Haniya, Vira, Mabel
- No: Betty,
- Abstain: Mary L., Gilbert

Motion passes

6. Subcommittee Updates (if any): max time 3 mins each

- Development (Vanna, Chair)
Deferred for subsequent discussion
- Government Relations, Advocacy, & Civil Rights
 - Governments Relations (Sam, Chair)
 - Civil Rights (Bora, Chair)
 Deferred for subsequent discussion



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- Governance, Finance, & Communications

- Governance (Nate, Chair)
 - Bylaw Change Proposal
- Finance (Bora, Chair)
- Communications (Danielle, Chair)

Deferred for subsequent discussion

- Education & Leadership Development

- Education (Meena, Chair)
- Leadership Development (Philjay, Chair)

Deferred for subsequent discussion

- Health and Human Services (Mabel, Chair)

Deferred for subsequent discussion

- Small Business & Economic Development (Nina, Chair)

Deferred for subsequent discussion

7. Old Business

8. New Business

9. New Commission Meeting & Proposal for 2 meetings/month

10. Meeting adjourned

Mary L motions to adjourn. Betty seconds.

Vote

- Yes: Danielle, Ying, Philjay, Haniya, Gilbert, Mary L., Vira, Betty, Mabel

Motion passes unanimously