



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

## COMMISSIONERS

**Chairperson**  
Samuel Hyun

**Vice Chairperson**  
Philjay Solar

**Treasurer**  
Haniya Syeda

**Secretary**  
Danielle Kim

Jonjy Ananth  
Meenakshi Bharath  
Bora Chiemruom  
Mary Chin  
Vira Douangmany Cage  
Cinda Danh  
Pralhad KC  
Betty King  
Nate Bae Kupel  
Wingkay Leung  
Mary K. Y. Lee  
Nina Liang  
Megha Prasad  
Dimple Rana  
Ekta Saksena

**Interim  
Executive Director**  
Jessica Wong

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## NOTICE OF MEETING AND AGENDA

January 19, 2021, 6:30pm –8:00pm

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, Mass Gen. Laws. ch. 30A, §18-25, notice is hereby given of a meeting of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission.

Register in advance for this meeting:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89899250354>

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

Included in meeting packet:

- 12/16/20 meeting minutes
- Staff and Executive Committee Reports
- FY21 budget recommendations & summary
- Non-profit budget
- Invitation to swearing-in ceremony
- Tax filing engagement letter

### 1. Call to order, Introduction of new Commissioners (Sam, 5 mins)

Sam calls meeting to order at 6:36pm

### 2. Minutes to be approved: 12/15/20 (Sam, 5 mins) – VOTE

Mary states minutes are too abbreviated. Mary requests her amendments in the minutes to be sent to her.

Betty said that there was a violation of Robert's Rules because there was not a 2/3 vote to move the meeting minutes to the bottom of the agenda. The minutes also need to have the time of adjournment

Danielle clarifies that AAC was in compliance with AAC bylaws on pg.7 states to waive transaction of business order with a majority vote

Betty states that we either have to follow Robert's Rule or AAC bylaws, not both  
Mary stated the minutes were too general

Sam motions to suspend minutes

Meena seconds

Yay: Betty, Mary Lee, Bora, Meena, Pralhad, Cinda, Philjay, Vira, Sam, Danielle

No: none

Motion passes

### 3. Executive Committee & Staff reports (Staff, 5 mins)

Congratulations to Commissioner Meena Bharath for being appointed to DESE's gifted and talented committee

Swearing-in Ceremony on Thursday, 1/21

New accountant for nonprofit budget, Eric Lampro



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We will be discussing the FY21 budget today, and will soon be meeting with Ways & Means staff to discuss the FY22 budget

#### **4. Update on Executive Director hiring process (Danielle, 3 mins)**

Job description posted on a number of job sites

6 completed applications with 12 additional resumes submitted from LinkedIn and MassCareers

Danielle encourages Commissioners to continue sharing the job posting with networks. The application deadline closes at the end of January

Betty states that she is bothered by former Commissioner Mabel Lam participating on hiring committee because Mabel is no longer a Commissioner and there are current Commissioners who want to participate on the hiring committee.

Danielle clarifies that former Commissioner Mabel Lam is interested in continuing to serve on the hiring committee as a member of the public. There is precedent for doing this. In 2017, Commissioner Kenneth Anh participated in the hiring committee as a member of the public. Since Mabel's term has ended, we have one open slot for another Commissioner to join the hiring committee. If any Commissioner is interested in filling that slot, please reach out to Danielle.

Betty states that even though there is a precedent, it does not mean we have to follow it. Betty says that two wrongs don't make a right. Betty states that in 2016 Ken Anh parked \$161,000 funds in the AAC trust fund that are monitored by the ED, Chair, and Treasurer who can pay out money.

Danielle reiterates that there is one open slot and she is happy to fill the vacancy with a current Commissioner. Danielle states she is not comfortable with commenting on what happened in 2016 as she was not a Commissioner during that time

Sam says that the hiring committee can meet to address this matter further and report back to the full Commission.

Danielle reports for the record that the hiring committee is responsible for screening applicants and recommending finalists to the full Commission for consideration. Only current Commissioners will be able to vote on the selection of the Executive Director. Mabel Lam, as a member of the public, will not be able to vote on the final decision -- however, we are grateful for her willingness to continue serving on the hiring committee.

#### **5. Recent incidents of anti-Asian racism in Massachusetts (Sam, 10 mins)**

Sam mentions that we have become aware of recent incidents of anti-Asian racism at public meetings across Massachusetts, including a situation affecting Winchester Town Manager Lisa Wong, a situation at an Acton-Boxborough school committee meeting, and a situation at a Boston School Committee meeting.



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Betty stated that AAC was silent during the BSC incident. What action will AAC take? Will AAC ask the Asian political leaders to demand the resignation of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Boston School Committee who were complicit with Laconto?

Betty stated that the Executive Committee received an email from parents of Boston Public Schools for help to demand resignation and this letter did not disclose the letter. Betty stated a person came to her asking if she had received this letter. Betty stated she attended meeting and one of the grief parents reached out to her two weeks ago

Sam stated EC was made aware of the letter during AAC leadership transitions. Sam states he is bringing it up during the first Commission meeting. Sam expresses regrets that the commission did not address it in immediate notice. Sam states Betty had two weeks to notify AAC but did not notify EC.

Betty asks why it wasn't disclosed

Sam states it is being brought up during the meeting tonight

Bora confirms that Sam is bringing up the letter. Bora states this is the space to bring up the letter and issue at hand. Bora states EC looks at issue, discusses, and brings it to the entire Commission

Betty states the letter was not included in the meeting packet

Bora states it is not disclosed due to confidentiality

Betty states there is no confidentiality for the letter

Vira shared quote from article:

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/boston-school-committee-elects-new-chair-apologizes-for-not-standing-up-to-racism/ar-BB1bb1AG> Vira suggests contacting

Commissioner Liang to discuss civil rights issues

Meena suggests there might be a need for email protocol with releasing emails from members of the public to the Commissioners. Meena offers help to anyone who is willing to work on these issues

Sam states he is willing to create clear protocols on how to address certain issues. Expresses difficulty with how infrequent Commission meets to address immediate issues and understanding Commissioners have personal lives to attend to. Sam agrees to meet with Asian caucus to take a more firm stance on anti-Asian racism and meet with the families to see what actions they would like taken.

Betty motions to extend the meeting to 8:30. Danielle seconds.

Yeas: Betty, Danielle, Mary Lee, Meena, Bora, Pralhad, Cinda, Haniya, Vira, Philjay, Sam

No: none

Motion passes

## 6. Public Input

Monica Pabla (5 mins)



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Monica requests Commissioners to direct attention to the largest protests happening in India. November 26, 2020, people protested for three agricultural laws passed in India. One of the laws includes privatizing farming.

Monica reports that there have been a number of protests around the world, including here in Boston, to bring awareness of the plight facing these farmers. These issues are affecting the South Asian community here in MA.

Monica requested that the AAC speak about this during our committee meeting, raise it on social media, and discuss it with legislators to raise awareness for this issue.

Betty asked what part of India this is affecting because the nation is so diverse.

Monica responds that it started in Punjab but has spread to other regions as well Sam expresses appreciation to Monica for raising this issue, and welcomes Monica too connect with him, Sheila, and other interested commissioners to help craft language that the AAC can use on social media to help raise awareness of the issue Meena says that this is a significant issue affecting our community and suggests setting a standard procedure of when the AAC will respond to similar global events like this.

Betty affirms that it would be helpful to have a standard procedure for this.

Mary Lee requests a timeline of items previously discussed at this meeting that need to be addressed at a follow up meeting.

Sam confirms that there are 5 topics that the AAC needs to follow up on:

Discussion and vote on FY21 budget

Addressing recent anti-Asian racist incidents

Standard protocol/policy about addressing international crises

Procedure for moving the approval of meeting minutes to the end of the agenda

Hiring committee

Danielle states that the hiring committee is currently in the process of scheduling their next meeting, so it's only 4 issues that the AAC needs to take up as a full group

Sam states that there will be special meetings scheduled between now and the February meeting to address these issues. These meetings will be optional for any commissioner that is able to attend.

Betty motions to extend the meeting to 8:30. Danielle seconds.

Yeas: Betty, Danielle, Mary Lee, Meena, Bora, Pralhad, Cinda, Haniya, Vira, Philjay, Sam

## **7. Review FY21 Budget Recommendations (EC, 30 mins)**

Sam states that the AAC had its FY21 state appropriation increased to \$170K by the State Legislature -- an increase compared to \$150K in FY20.



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Sam describes the line items from the Corrected FY21 Budget Recommendations spreadsheet

Meena states that the salaries seem low and our staff work incredibly hard, and she'd like the AAC to consider higher salaries.

Betty proposes to allocate \$10K for a general audit of operations and finances.

Betty states that Sam proposed at the March 31, 2020 meeting a motion to defer conducting an audit of our nonprofit budget.

Sam states that her proposal is related to the nonprofit budget and we're currently discussing the state budget. Sam expresses appreciation for Betty's comments and says that they will be recorded.

Vira says that our state budget is reviewed and approved by the legislature and the treasury so there is oversight and accountability.

Betty says that she has not seen an Income Expense report. She would like to see one monthly from the Executive Director and Treasurer.

Betty requested from the state auditor a spending report on the AAC's FY20 state budget. The staff-related exigent expenses exceeded \$10,000, which is much higher than was budgeted. Betty reports that staff-related exigent expenses include travel, technology, professional development and other expenses.

Bora recalls that this budget change was brought to the full Commission for a vote, and clarifies that the Executive Director cannot spend more than \$1,000 and the Executive Committee cannot spend more than \$500 without the full Commission's approval.

Vira asks about the COVID-19 Grant Fund and the AAPI Community Resources Fund. Danielle clarifies that the COVID-19 Grant Fund would be administered by the AAC, like we did in 2020, to provide grants to nonprofits and small businesses that have been financially affected by the pandemic. The AAPI Community Resources Fund would also go out directly to the community to support agencies or organizations that are serving the AAPI community.

Meena says that we also have budgeted \$10K for a strategic planning consultant and perhaps those funds would be better utilized by investing in our internal capacity, and supporting an AAC retreat to help rebuild trust among Commissioners

Betty says that the AAC works on short-term projects, not long-term programs. She supports the idea of establishing a youth council.

Vira asks if we are voting on the budget tonight. Sam says no. Vira affirms that internal capacity is important but we also need to invest deeply in providing direct resources to the AAPI community and organizations that are serving our community.

## **8. Subcommittee Updates (if any): max time 3 mins each**





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## Development

Philjay, as Unity Dinner co-chair, mentions that the AAC has been in touch with the Lowell space to see if they could postpone our in-person event to the fall. He is also exploring the possibility of making the event virtual if

## Government Relations, Advocacy, & Civil Rights

Sam is meeting with our intern Sarah to outline priorities for the legislative session ahead.

## Governance, Finance, & Communications

Deferred

## Education & Leadership Development

Meena provides an update that there are currently 5 proposed initiatives, including one to establish a youth council, implement anti-racism training, and establish a director of educational resources for young people and families. The two interns have completed their commitment with us. Jay and Sheila are working to issue letters of appreciation. Meena would like to consider bringing on a new intern.

## Health and Human Services

Deferred

## Small Business & Economic Development

Deferred

## **9. Old Business**

None

## **10. New Business**

## **11. Next Commission meeting: February 16, 2021**

## **12. Other Community updates & Meeting adjourned**

Meena motions to adjourn. Philjay seconds.

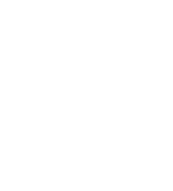
Yeas: Meena, Philjay, Cinda, Danielle, Haniya, Vira, Sam

Motion passes

Meeting adjourns 8:27pm



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