



Governor’s Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs Strategic Planning Session (SPS) Meeting

Virtual ZOOM
Thursday, April 25, 2024
6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Attendance: **Yes**

Ammar Abdulhamid, Member
Tharwat Abouraya, Chair
Dr. Majd AlGhatrif, Member
Dr. Amal K. Ali, Member
Shivaani Arya, Member
Athar Bayoumi, Member
Anthony Browder, Member
Alissa Deaver, Member
Ali Esfahani, Member
Dr. Bagher Fardanesh, Member
Rabbi Dr. Susan Grossman, Member

Dr. Ayesha A Gulistan, Member
Mohammad Khalil, Member
Mona Kishore, Member
Francis J. Ricciardone, Member
Rafi Rone, Member
Dr. Aharona (Roni) Rosenthal, Member
Dr. Ahmed Saleh, Member
Tarek Saleh, Member
Dr. Laura H. Salganik, Member
Ala’a Wafa, Member

GOCI Staff:

Dr. Antwan Brown, Administrative Director for the Governor’s Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs
Gregory Yancey, Chief of Staff for the Governor’s Office of Community Initiatives
Cheryl Madigan, Fiscal Administrator-Ethnic Project Coordinator for the Governor’s Office of Community Initiatives

I. Call to Order:

Tharwat Abouraya, Chair – Meeting called to order at 6:01 p.m. He called for a few moments of silence for the victims of violence in the Middle East and the workers who passed away from the Key Bridge tragedy.

II. Commission Roll Call:

Tharwat Abouraya, Chair – provided the roll call for attendance.

III. Adoption of Agenda:

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote	
To adopt the agenda.	Ala’a Wafa	Anthony Browder	18Y-0N-0A	

IV. Opening Remarks:

Tharwat Abouraya, Chair stated “Being a commissioner is a practice and commitment, not merely an appointment.” Today’s meeting is our window into public service. He provided a quote from the late renowned radio broadcaster, Paul Harvey. “For myself, success is, during this temporary life, to leave the woodpile a little higher than I found it.” Also, a quote from the business leader, Win Halliburton. “No community could function without people who consistently give more than they get.”

V. GOCI Remarks:

Dr. Antwan Brown, Administrative Director, welcomed everyone to this first commission meeting. He is here to serve everyone and provide the commission with resources and serve as a middle person to the executive branch of the government.

VI. GOCI /Commissioner Overview Presentation:

Administrative Director Antwan Brown introduced GOCI’s Chief of Staff, Gregory Yancey. He gave welcoming remarks and emphasized three things.

- Issues - things that the commission will advocate for and bring those issues to GOCI. GOCI will see how we can get these issues heard and what changes can be made, like through legislation or executive orders.
- Events - getting the public to see the culture, museums, art and history.
- Infrastructure – preparing for the next administration, the next generation. GOCI is already working on databases by regions.

Dr. Brown present his brief onboarding presentation. To spoke of GOCI’s message, mission, vison and values. He briefly went over the Commissioner’s Handbook. He stated that the Chair of the commission need to take the Open Meetings Act class and get certified, but he asked that each commissioner also take it and get certified. He then went over Robert’s Rules of Order. There will be a State Ethic’s representative at a future meeting. An understanding of the Maryland Public Information Act (PIA) was provided.

Mr. Yancey presented on the Cultural and Ethnic Commissions Purpose. He went over the Moore-Miller Administration Top Priorities and all the GOCI’s Commissions and Offices, he gave a brief understanding of the Open Meetings Act, Maryland State Ethics Law and Maryland Public information Act (PIA).

Questions and Answers:

Commissioner Rone – Can they contact other commissioners from other commissions?

Answer: Right now, contact Dr. Brown or Chair Tharwat Abouraya.

Commissioner A. Saleh – Can their emails be accessed through their cell phones or forwarded to another email account?

Answer: Emails can be accessed through your cell phones. You can group your calendars together. For further assistance, please contact Ronald Mundy at ronald.mundy@maryland.gov.

Commissioner Khalil – Would like examples how other commissions have created impacts on things.

Answer: A commission for the first time being recognized by the Governor or it might be the first time a commissioner attends an event at the Government House. Another one is where the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs had three to four Maryland Indian tribes meet in the Governor's reception room at the State House. The African Affairs commission partnered with the Nelson Mandela Fellows. They received a tour of the State House and met different people, including the Secretary of State. Speak with legislation relating to different things.

Commission Grossman – Wants to know if they will get help pushing their commission emails to their personal emails.

Answer: Dr. Brown will see that they will get assistance on this.

Commission Grossman – How would they get the State of Maryland to grant school days offs for Jewish holidays, Eid, Dwali and Lunar New Year?

Answer: These types of questions should be discussed and handled through your Working Groups or Subcommittees. This can go through legislation, executive order, social media and campaigns. You can work with different counties. Also, GOCI's interfaith director would be able to help guide you with this issue.

Commissioner Wafa – The difference of scope of work between GOCI's Interfaith Outreach and the commission's interfaith subcommittee.

Answer: The commission's subcommittee builds their own scope of ideas.

Commissioner Wafa – Is there a special format for a proposal for an executive order verses a proposal for legislation?

Answer: The commission's ideas can be in any format and are given to Dr. Brown, for him to place in his weekly reports, which are submitted to the Governor for consideration. Within the Governor's office, there is a Legislative office where they write legislation proposals and send it to the General Assembly, who would then put it into law. Then there will be hearings on the proposal. Now, referring to the executive order, this is when the governor is writing something that says this has to happen, which is not a law, but the governor has control or say what happens over other state agencies within the executive branch.

Dr. Brown went over the Executive Orders.

Question and Answer:

Commissioner Ricciardone – What can the commission do for Maryland?

Answer: With everyone’s expertise and education they bring to this commission will create and come up with ideas on how to make Maryland better.

Chair Abouraya announced that the Bylaws will be tabled for now.

VII. Standing Committees:

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote
To create the Higher Education & International Relations standing committee To create the Humanity Bridges standing committee To create the Interfaith Partnerships standing committee	Francis Ricciardone	Rafi Rone	17Y-0N-1A

Chair Abouraya appointed the following chairs and vice chairs to the Standing Committees.

- **Higher Education & International Relations**
Chair – Francis Ricciardone
Vice Chair – Tarek Saleh
- **Humanity Bridges**
Chair – Anthony Bridges
Vice Chair – Dr. Majd AlGhatrif
- **Interfaith Partnership**
Co-chair – Rabbi Dr. Susan Grossman
Co-chair – Ala’a Wafa

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote
To create the Partnership Development working group To create the Strategy Planning working group	Dr. Ayesha Gulistan	Dr. Laura Salganik	18Y-0N-0A

Chair Abouraya provided a description of each working group. The Partnership Development working group is to compile a list of partnerships that we have in the Middle East by reaching out to the communities. The Strategy Planning working group is to develop the commission’s plan and strategy for the next three and a half years.

Chair Abouraya appointed the following members to the Working Groups.

- **Partnership Development**
 Ammar Abdulhamid
 Dr. Amal Ali
 Shivaani Arya
 Alissa Deaver
 Ali Esfahani
 Mohammad Khalil
 Rafi Rone
- **Strategy Planning**
 Chair, Tharwat Abouraya
 Athar Bayoumi
 Mona Kishore
 Dr. Bagher Fardanesh
 Dr. Aharona (Roni) Rosenthal
 Dr. Ahmed Saleh
 Dr. Laura Salganik

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote	
To add a Vice Chair Nomination for Mona Kishore	Rafi Rone	Anthony Browder	18Y-0N-0A	

VIII. Closing Remarks and Motion for Adjournment:

For tonight’s closing remarks, Chair Tharwat Abouraya provided this quote from Teddy Roosevelt: “We see across the dangers of the great future, and we rejoice as a giant refreshed, the great victories are yet to be won, the greatest deeds yet to be done.”

He stated that we are a Commission caring about one another and caring enough to be of service to our Middle Eastern communities. He thank everyone for their participation and attention and wished them to stay well.

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote	
To adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m.	Rafi Rone	Anthony Browder	18Y-0N-0A	