



Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs

*Virtual ZOOM
Thursday, February 25, 2025
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.*

SPS II Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:

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
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
Ala'a Wafa, Member

Commissioners Absent:

Dr. Bagher Fardanesh, Member
Dr. Laura H. Salganik, Member

GOCI Staff:

- ❖ Dr. Antwan Brown, Administrative Director for GOCI
- ❖ Cheryl Madigan – Executive Assistant for GOCI

I. Call to Order:

Tharwat Abouraya, Chair – Meeting called to order at 6:05 p.m.

II. Commission Roll Call:

Tharwat Abouraya, Chair – confirmed that we had a quorum.



III. Adoption of Agenda:

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
To adopt the agenda, with the change of moving the order of Approval of the Minutes, Opening Remarks from the Chair and from GOCI.	Ammar Abdulhamid	Francis Ricciardone	13Y-0N-0A

IV. Presenter and Speakers:

Carol Preston led a discussion on effective public speaking, emphasizing the importance of understanding the audience and crafting persuasive messages. She introduced the "triangle of persuasion" concept, which consists of the audience, the message, and the speaker. Carol stressed the need for repetition in messages to ensure they stick with the audience, and the use of storytelling to make information more memorable. She also highlighted the importance of non-verbal communication, such as eye contact and body language, in engaging the audience

Delegate Sarah Wolek and Delegate Jared Solomon spoke on a bill HB 899 that has been sent to the General Assembly. The bill aims to declare January as Muslim Heritage Month and May as Jewish Heritage Month. The delegates explained the strategic reasons behind combining the two bills and the potential benefits of this collaboration. They also addressed potential pushbacks and encouraged the commission to provide written testimony in support of the bill. The commission agreed to follow up with more information on how to submit their support.

V. Approval of Minutes:

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
Approval of 01/30/25 Minutes	Ammar Abdulhamid	Ala'a Wafa	14Y-0N-1A

VI. GOCI Remarks:

Dr. Antwan Brown will start providing a monthly administrative director's report. GOCI is here to assist the commission. He stated that the Vice Chair nominations will not be addressed until the session is over. He wants the commissioners to let him know what topic they are working on, and he will get them state agencies contact information, or he will contact those resources himself. He stated that minutes will be completed in a timelier manner. All standing committees must follow the open meetings act if you have a quorum. Example: if the committee has 9 members, you will have a quorum if 5 or more members are present. All committees and working groups should be providing a written report of all updates of what they are working on and providing this information at the next public commission meeting. The reports are to be emailed to the chair, the administrator director at GOCI and the executive assistant at GOCI. The commission should try to stick to items that are on the Governor's plan, but there is some flexibility if the commission votes on it. Please keep in mind that these are recommendations. Dr. Brown would like all commissioners to utilize the working document for meetings.



VII. Standing Committees:

❖ Health & Education Committee:

Commissioner Ayesha Gulistan reported that there is a need to have community engagement and to focus on one specific goal. Some concerns included challenges that are faced by Maryland educational institutions regarding Middle Eastern issues, concerns for the need for resources for access to health care in the communities, and the need to prepare students for college through seminars and learning more on student financial aid programs. The first task they decided to focus on is “Building Cultural Awareness in Educational Institutions.” They would like to request a meeting with the Secretary of Higher Education and the Superintendent of Education. After discussion, the motion was withdrawn. Dr. Brown will reach out to see if a meeting will be held.

❖ Local Engagement & Inclusion:

Commissioner Ammar Abdulhamid spoke on nominations for Middle Eastern musicians that can be included in a professional orchestra.

Commissioner Ala’a Wafa informed everyone their next meeting will be March 12th at 11 a.m. If any other commissioner would like to join this committee, please let her know.

Chair Tharwat Abouraya will let the other commissioners know who he selected to be on this committee.

VIII. Working Groups:

❖ Strategic Communication/Legislation

Commissioner Anthony Browder said that their group has a meeting scheduled tomorrow to discuss contacting all the legislators’ members to cultivate relationships for future projects.

Commissioner Francis Ricciardone suggested in getting a Turkish commissioner for the commission. The Appointments Office handles the appointing of a commissioner.

❖ Event planning – nothing to report

❖ Partnerships/Focus Groups – nothing to report

❖ Strategy Planning – nothing to report

❖ Interfaith Programs

Commissioner Amal Ali informed the commission that they will continue the two projects that they started last year. The first one is to evaluate the situation regarding the accommodation for religious holidays in public schools and universities. The second one is to make a list of all interface organizations. They have a new project, which is to inform the communities the similarities of religions and having them understand each type of religion. They hope that this will reduce tension and conflict within communities.

IX. Motion for Adjournment:

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
To adjourn the meeting at 8:27 p.m.	Rafi Rone	Francis Ricciardone	13Y-0N-0A