



Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs

Virtual ZOOM
Thursday, November 7, 2024
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 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

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

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.

II. Commission Roll Call:

Tharwat Abouraya, Chair – confirmed the roll call that was done when each entered the meeting.

III. Adoption of Agenda:

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
To adopt the agenda.	Rabbi Susan Grossman	Laura Salganik	12Y-0N-0A

IV. Chair Remarks:

Chair Tharwat Abouraya said that the minutes can be emailed to the commissioners, and we can vote on it electronically. We thanked everyone for their hard work on the October 27th event. We would like 2025 planning of events to start 120 days prior to an event. There was an internal commissioner survey he sent out. Eight out of thirteen

that attended the event completed the survey. In the future events, the commissioners would like time in the program to briefly introduce themselves with their story, market the event to others that are not from the middle eastern background. We need to plan earlier to give more time to fundraise and to ensure better participation, and to share on more social media platforms.

V. GOCI Remarks:

Dr. Antwan Brown congratulated everyone on the October 27th event. He mentioned that GOCI would send out the same survey concerning the event to all the guests. Minutes Are being worked on minutes and he mentioned a planning meeting with a commission in the near future. Cheryl Madigan stated the 2025 commission dates, which are, January 30th, February 25th, May 15th, July 17th, September 18th and November 13th. Dr. Brown spoke about the SPS I meeting, which will include the topic of the budget. He advised that the commissioners still should be out there with their communities and still work on tasks until we meet again in January.

VI. Presenter Retired Ambassador Frank Ricciardone:

Chair Abouraya introduced Mr. Ricciardone, and he spoke about his travel to Egypt and Jordan. He attended an annual board meeting at the British University in Egypt and visited his family in Jordan.

VII. Sub Committees Reports/Discussion:

- ❖ Higher Education & International Relations - Francis Ricciardone spoke about his visit to Egypt and Jordan. He visited two university campuses, the American University in Cairo and the British University. The people in charge report great student stress and anxiety. He was able to connect Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East, Barbara Leaf and an Egyptian American working with Gazans and with foreign donors, to get scholarships to higher education for young Gazans. He also spoke of Fanta Aw of Maryland.
- ❖ Humanity Bridges – Anthony Browder was absent from this meeting and didn't provide a report.

Interfaith Partnership – Rabbi Susan Grossman mentioned that Imam Mohamad Bashar Arafat would like to work with us in future. He is in the works of creating an American Islamic seminary and part of that program is based at the Dar Altaqwa in Howard County. She mentioned working with other commissions on legislation concerning state holidays for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Eid ul-Fitr, Eid ul-Adha, Diwali and Lunar New Year.

Interfaith Partnership – Ala's Wafa reported that they are still working on the list of organizations and entities for interfaith work in Maryland. She would like other commissioners to add to this shared list. They are working on a partnership with Dr. Heather Miller Rubens, of the Institute for Islamic, Christian and Jewish Studies in Baltimore. This will consist of working on religious tolerance in Maryland. This organization is looking for minority congregations to contact them if they have any historical documents.

VIII. Working Groups Report/Discussion:

- ❖ Event Planning – Shivaani Arya provided feedback from the October 27th event. There were 13 registrations, 92 showed up, 26 walk-ins, which equaled 118 in attendance. This included commissioners and GOCI staff. She created a report on what she would like to do next year and Chair Abouraya asked her to forward it to the commissioners to read. The report includes support for immigrants and small businesses. Recommendation for an annual summit to gather leaders to discuss key issues, media, and advocacy for fair portrayals and cultural preservation projects. Also, she mentioned things that we can improve on for future events. She suggested having an interpreter for events and other items.
- ❖ Partnership Development – Rafi Rone mention that they have added the Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County, which Commissioner Laura Salganik is chairperson. They are working on adding additional partnerships, now that the election is over. He said it would be helpful to have a sense of the Governor’s agenda to draw new partners.
- ❖ Strategy Planning – Mona Kishore stated that they are working on consolidating their material and created a spreadsheet with partnership organizations. They are also creating a document to list what commissioners are on each committee, subcommittee and working group. This has been shared with the commission.

IX. Open Discussion:

- ❖ An in-person commission meeting
- ❖ Listening Sessions - Townhall Meetings
- ❖ Health Fair/Summit
- ❖ Centralize place for Resources
- ❖ Have a 211 Maryland representative to present at a commission meeting
- ❖ Working with all the Chairs of each GOCI commissions

IX. Motion for Adjournment:

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
To adjourn the meeting at 7:39 p.m.	Francis Ricciardone	Mohammad Khalil	13Y-0N-0A

Action/Initiative	Status	Responsible Commissioner	Due by
Approval 6/20/24 Minutes	on-going	T. Abouraya	7/25/24
Approval 7/25/24 Minutes	on-going	T. Abouraya	9/12/24
Approval 9/12/24 Minutes	on-going	T. Abouraya	11/07/24
Approval 11/07/24 Minutes	on-going	T. Abouraya	11/21/24