



Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs

Virtual ZOOM
Thursday, May 15, 2025
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

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
Alissa Deaver, Member
Rabbi Dr. Susan Grossman, Member
Dr. Ayesha A Gulistan, Member
Mohammad Khalil, Member
Rafi Rone, Member
Dr. Laura H. Salganik, Member
Ala'a Wafa, Member

Commissioners Absent:

Anthony Browder, Member
Dr. Bagher Fardanesh, Member
Mona Kishore, Member
Francis J. Ricciardone, Member
Dr. Aharona (Roni) Rosenthal, 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 6:11 p.m.

II. Adoption of Agenda:

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
To adopt the agenda	Laura Salganik	Ayesha Gulistan	11Y-0N-0A

III. Approval of Minutes:

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
Approval of 01/30/25 Minutes	Ammar Abdulhamid	Ala'a Wafa	11Y-0N-0A



IV. Opening Remarks:

Chair Tharwat Abouraya provided accomplishments that the commission provided from April 2024 through the middle of May 2025. Middle Eastern American Commissioners successfully became a cohesive force during a time of unprecedented political turmoil in our homelands. Provided recommendations to deliver meeting minutes and other data collection to GOCI, Executive Director, Walker, to implement. On December 11, 2024, a reset of Commission Standing Committees initiated. Successfully organized the public MEAA commissioned culture event with all high standards. He takes great pride in the efforts of the committees and working group members who have achieved MEAA Commission's expectations and new plans.

V. GOCI Remarks:

AD Antwan Brown provided the following information:

- ❖ 150 days for the MEAA event in October and they need to create a working group.
- ❖ Create a working group for Maryland 250 celebration, maybe an Art event. (Tharwat Abouraya said he has two sponsors for this event).
- ❖ The annual report is due at the end of June; commissioners need to submit data.
- ❖ Budget needs to submit a budget for each event.

VI. Standing Committees:

- ❖ Education & Health Committee:

Commissioner Ayesha Gulistan reported that there are nine members on the committee, and they met in February. Their initial task is to build on cultural awareness in educational institutions. They met with the Howard County public school system and discussed the need for initiatives within the school system that promote civility and enhance cultural sensitivity among students and educators. They again met on May 9th DEI head, Miss Caroline Walker. The commission offered the commitment to offering support, resources, and guidance in developing these initiatives in schools, that foster civility and cultural awareness. They will be demonstrating how this dialogue works on June 18th with fourteen administrative executive staff members from the Howard County school system. The session will be done by previously trained Howard County courageous conversation facilitators. The model of these dialogues is based on the work of the nationally recognized organization called Essential Partners. The committee's next meeting will be May 28th. She thanked Chair Abouraya for everything he brought to the commission.

- ❖ Local Engagement & Inclusion:

Commissioner Susan Grossman present the statement on the HB899 bill. AD Antwan Brown asked if they want their message placed on social media or do they want a press release, which then will need approval from the Comms department.



Approval of Statement on the HB899 Bill:

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
Statement on the HB899 Bill	Amal Ali	Laura Salganik	11Y-0N-2A

Commissioner Ala'a Wafa informed everyone that the committee met in mid-March. They identified three priority areas to concentrate on that aligned with the Governor's top priorities, which are creating safer communities, desirable state for all residents, and connecting Marylanders to opportunities and each other. One of their goals is to have a focus group for each county by the end of the year.

VII. Working Groups:

- ❖ Event planning – **Chair Abouraya** mentioned their annual event at Government House. Sunday, October 26th would be a good date. This event will be invited only (75 invites), 2–3-hour program. University of MD in PG County can be an option. **Commissioner Deavers** and **Commissioner Bayoumi** will take the lead. GOCI will also be working with the leads.

Approval of Date and Venue for MEAA Annual Event:

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
Approval of October 26 th at Government House - Tentatively	Ala'a Wafa	Susan Grossman	13Y-0N-0A

- ❖ Interfaith Programs – Commissioner Susan Grossman provided gratitude to everyone, especially to **Chair Abouraya**. **Commissioner Amal Ali** has started compiling a list of Muslim groups or mosques in Maryland. She has been providing resource contacts to the communities. **Commissioner Grossman** informed us that they are working jointly with the Education & Health committee on the courageous conversation dialogues.
- ❖ Partnerships/Focus Groups – nothing to report
- ❖ Strategic Communication/Legislation – nothing to report
- ❖ Strategy Planning – nothing to report

VIII. Open Discussion:

- ❖ **Commissioner Bayoumi** thanked **AD Brown** for the information on grant opportunities with the Governor's Office of Crime, Control & Prevention that is available for non-profits and religious organizations. He wants to meet up with her before the 21st of May.
- ❖ **Commissioner Ammar Abdulhamid** provided details on his visit to Syria.
 - ❖ **AD Antwan Brown** announced that the Appointments Office should have all letters sent out by June 1st.

IX. Motion for Adjournment: NO QUORUM

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
Adjourn the meeting at 7:48 p.m.	Ammar Abdulhamid	Rabbi Susan Grossman	8Y-0N-0A