



Governor's Commission on South Asian American Affairs

*Wednesday, January 31, 2024
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.*

Meeting Minutes

Commission Attendance: Yes

Obaid Ahmad, Member

Dr. Bishal Bhandari, Member

Arti Bhatt, Member

Raj Borsellino, Member

Dr Kausik Das, Member

Preeti Emrick, JD, Member

Dr. Ahmad (Raza) Khan, Member

Preeti Menon, Member

Dr. Ahmed Nawaz, Member

Nivea Ohri, Member

Vacancy

Sushma Pakalapati Potluri, Member

Dr. Faisal Quader, Member

Fahim Rafiq, Member

Dr. Shahid Rafiq, Member

Amarjeet Sandhu, Member

Devang Shah, Member

Harshid Shad, Member

Aman Shergill, Member

Gurpreet (Preet) Takhar, **Chair**

Archana Thakker, Member

GOCI Staff:

Gregory Yancey – Chief of Staff, GOCI

Christina Poy – Administrative Director of SAA Affairs Commission, GOCI

Cheryl Madigan – Project Coordinator for the Ethnic Commissions, GOCI

I. Call to Order at 6:06 p.m.

Gurpreet (Preet) Takhar, Chair - Governor's Commission on South Asian American Affairs called the meeting to order and went over meeting procedures. He called on each commissioner and they introduced themselves. He also introduced **Christina Poy**, Administrative Director for the South Asian American Affairs Commission, with GOCI and **Gregory Yancey**, Chief of Staff, with GOCI.

II. State Ethics – Preet Takhar informed everyone that there will be a representative from the State Ethics Commission to present the rules and regulations as a commissioner at a later date.

III. Subcommittees –Preet Takhar went over the process of the subcommittees. There will be a google form sent by Christina Poy, that will list different subcommittees. Commissioners will complete the form by choosing which subcommittee(s) they would like to serve on. This will probably be done in the next week to ten days. Each committee has a chair and consists of a minimum of three members. He encourages everyone to participate in at least one of the subcommittees. The part of the goal is to take the governor's voice and forward it to our communities.

The four subcommittees are:

- 1) Business/Economic Development - To ensure that the South Asian communities and the businesspeople in these communities get the resources and understanding of what is available to them to succeed in the State of Maryland. To organize a conference or function to help them successfully set up businesses.
- 2) Community (including arts, culture and interfaith) - This committee brings all our cultures from different parts of the South Asian communities. Integrating all the communities through culture and art. Being able to send the message of integration as one social society and sharing our views and thoughts of our different cultures and learning from each other and coming together as one community in the state of Maryland.
- 3) Education (social workforce development) - We need to empower and mentor our young South Asian communities through social work. To help them through their issues, possibly through pro bono work and help get them settled in.
- 4) Health - To make sure the communities can get affordable health benefits. He asked members to think about different programs and agendas and present this information to the Secretary of Health and other organizations, to empower our communities.

IV. Christina Poy, Administrative Director - GOCI - Governor's Commission on South Asian American Affairs - She gave welcoming remarks to the commissioners and introduced GOCI's Chief of Staff, Gregory Yancey.

V. Gregory Yancey, Chief of Staff - GOCI - He spoke about three things that The Governor's Office of Community Initiatives advocates: issues, events, and infrastructure.

- 1) Issues - things that you think are important in the community. Issues you can advocate for. You can advocate as commissioners, proposals for legislation and events.
- 2) Events - GOCI is here to support the commission with their events.
- 3) Infrastructure - Establish things that you can build on, so that the next commission can continue. Databases, we're talking about ways that we can store information. GOCI has a partnership with the 211 Maryland system.

He stated to the commission that they have a brilliant and talented Administrative Director with Christina! Poy!

VI. Open Meetings Act Discussion – Preet Takhar went over information on the OMA. The Chair and Vice Chair are required to attend this training. It is recommended that all commissioners take this training; this isn't just for the participation in meetings for the Commission on South Asian American Affairs, this will carry through in other boards, commissions, and organizations that you serve on. This information can be found in your commissioner binder behind tab four. If you were unable to attend the on-boarding training and didn't receive a binder, please contact Cheryl Madigan. See the following link for the training.

https://www.igsr.umd.edu/VLC/OMA/class_oma_title.php

- ❖ WhatsApp – **Preet Takhar** and **Christina Poy** informed that these apps are only to be used for unofficial commission business. Official business should be sent via email or phone calls.
- ❖ Public Meetings – **Ethnics Project Coordinator, Cheryl Madigan** informed everyone that the meetings are posted to GOCI's website, when the agenda has been approved, it is posted to the website, which the agenda includes the ZOOM link to the meeting for anyone to register.
- ❖ Minutes should be completed within two weeks and voted on at the next public meeting, once approved they will be posted to the website.
- ❖ There was concern about how long it takes to get the minutes posted to the website. The chair of each subcommittee will schedule their own meetings. Cheryl Madigan doesn't need to be present for these meetings. These meetings should be recorded. The chair of each subcommittee should provide a report/minutes to GOCI and it will be discussed at the next public meeting.

VII. Commission Support, Procurement and Affirmation of Sub-Committees – Cheryl Madigan discussed the budget and informed that the commission can seek sponsorships and in-kind donations for events. They should contact GOCI for direction concerning these sponsorships, to make sure there are no ethical restrictions. Any payments must be mailed directly to her. These funds will go into the SAAA Commission budget account. **Christina Poy** informed that events/venue will be organized between the commission and GOCI. The commissioners should gather information from the sponsor that can be used for their recognition. Sponsorships have levels with the amounts determined by the GOCI. The Asian Pacific American Heritage Month is our signature joint commission event, with the Asian Pacific American Affairs commission.

VIII. Governor's Commission on South Asian American Affairs 2024 Agenda Discussion – Preet Takhar would like the commission to develop goals on a quarterly basis. He would like to have a meeting with county legislators. He suggested maybe having a private event. Christina Poy mentioned in the past, there was a Legislative Night reception where commissioners, senators, and delegates would come together to share with the communities the Governor's legislative priorities. This event will require funding. **Faisal Quader, PhD**, wants to know about the top ten things that the commission will be doing and what would be the needed items that we should collectively be looking at to take our state and the Governor's office to the next level. He

also wanted to know if the commission could meet the Governor in person. **Greg Yancey** informed him that those requests for the Governor, Lt. Governor, or First Lady, you need to go through the portal on the Governor's website:

<https://md.accessgov.com/governor/Forms/Page/so/schedule/0>. **Ahmad "Raza" Khan** suggested putting together a Mission or Vision statement. **Obaid Ahmad** suggested holding a business fair. He would like to know how the commission gets the governor's priorities out to the communities, how do the communities learn about the governor's or state's programs about business or health, and they receive the benefits from them. Christina Poy said, "You the commissioners should share information to your contacts and communities; and ask them to share it with other contacts. Preet Takhar asked if a South Asian Community website or information place that the communities could easily access this information. Christina Poy mentioned the AARP, which is the largest organization of volunteers, has an AARP AAPI Consortium that is trying to put together a database. She wants the commission to meet with them to provide them with the commissioners' organizations that they are involved with, also their resources and concerns.

Ideas for goals:

Dr. Faisal Quader – make Maryland more optimized.

Archana Thakker – making a list of events that we want to celebrate.

Harshid Shah - would like to see the communication for the events and other opportunities to be more effective.

Preeti Menon – cultural education for children.

Sushma Potluri - Keep the main goal of each subcommittee a part of the top ten and she would like diversity in our educational systems and bringing community and arts into it.

Fahim Rafiq - would like more shorter meetings, willing to help with events (food), Ramadan, but would like the commission to concentrate on more ideas, rather than events.

Dr. Bishal Bhandari – he wants to get out to the community leaders and see what their issues or concerns are and then bring those ideas back to the commission. To figure out a way to get the community leaders together to discuss their issues.

Preeti Emrick – mental health issues concerning youths, which fits into one of the subcommittees.

Raj Bonsellino – focusing on vulnerable communities-workforce development is culturally sensitive with the South Asian communities, to look at the language access in state materials that are out there to see what other language are available, to see what state funding is out there for immigrant legal services, especially for the South Asian

communities. To find out if there are any services for the Afghan refugees. Food insecurities-predominately South Asian serving grocery stores have the ability to take EBT-Snap from their clients.

Arti Bhatt – would like to know how the subcommittees are formed. Christina informed everyone that she would be sending out a google form for them to choose which subcommittee that they are interested in. She said that they can serve on more than one subcommittee, but that must serve on at least one. Each subcommittee must have at least three members. There will also be a choice on the form that you can enter if you are interested in becoming a chair for that subcommittee. Preet Takhar, Chair will be the one that designates the chair. Preet Takhar stated that the subcommittees should be formed within 15 to 30 days.

Dr. Kausik Das – Education: qualified teacher shortage, student safety, how can we bring the quality education to public schools, how can we support the Governor's agenda to bring innovation back to Maryland or grow intellectually and support innovative culture.

Amarjeet Sandhu – Not enough police presence. Businesses all over are feeling unsafe.

Dr. Ahmed “Raza” Khan – Cultural events (public awareness and partnership with elected officials), Education (diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and justice), Service Year Option, Economic Workforce Benefit (profits and non-profits organizations), Mental Health, Language Access (Google vs Microsoft), House of Worship security.

VIII. Executive Order Discussion – Not discussed

IV. By-laws Discussion – Not discussed

X. Closing: Preet Takhar thanked everyone and asked for a motion to close.

XI: Adjournment:

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote	Adjourn: 8:03 pm
Adjourned	Dr. Ahmad “Raza” Khan	Arti Bhatt	12 Y – 0 N – 0 A	