



Governor's Commission on South Asian American Affairs

*Wednesday, July 2, 2024
6:00 p.m. to 7:30 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, Vice Chair

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:

Lawrence Walker – Executive Director, GOCI

Christina Poy – Administrative Director of SAA Affairs Commission, GOCI

Cheryl Madigan – Project Coordinator for the Ethnic Commissions, GOCI

Guest: N/A

I. Call to Order at 6:07 p.m.

Gurpreet (Preet) Takhar, Chair - Governor's Commission on South Asian American Affairs called the meeting to order and went over meeting procedures.

II. Roll Call – Cheryl Madigan did roll call.

III. GOCI Welcoming Remarks:

- ◆ Administrative Director, Christina Poy welcomed everyone. She thanked everyone that submitted their pic and bio for GOCI's website. She also provided a reminder for the Commissioner Leadership Development Day that is scheduled for July 26th. and acknowledge GOCI staff and special guest Madam Chair Yang Yu from the Governor's Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs.
- ◆ Executive Director, Lawrence Walker spoke of the Maryland 250 Commission. He suggested that each region members of the commissions come together to come up with some kind of celebration (fair) for this event in 2026. These fairs could take place at a college campus, local city or county government location. This would be to celebrate the diversity of the commissions. This stated that this is volunteer project. Need to hold regional meetings to plan for this. Christina Poy will be the commission contact for this event. Need to create a group of people for the planning of this. Bringing support structure from others would be great to include in the planning.

IV. Subcommittees:

- i. Business/Economic Development Subcommittee:
Commissioner Obaid Ahmad said that there have been no meetings held as of now. He would like to have a business conference/symposium in the fall. Would like to attract new businesses from Delaware, Virginia, Pennsylvania and maybe New York into Maryland. **Chair Takhar** asked him to take the lead on this and connect with Chair Yang Yu with the APAA commission.
- ii. Community (including arts, culture and interfaith) Subcommittee:
Chair Preet Takhar spoke for this subcommittee, since **Commissioner Arti Bhatt** was unable to attend this meeting and there was report provided. There was a spreadsheet sent out to the commission to ask what events the commission would like to host.
 - a. 07-07-24 - Islamic New Year
 - b. 08-15-24 - India Independence Day
 - c. 08-15-24 - Parsi New Year
 - d. 08-19-24 - Raksha Bandhan
 - e. 08-26-24 - Janmashtami
 - f. 09-07-24 - Jain Samvatsari and Ganesh Chaturthi
 - g. 09-15-24 - Onam (6-17)
 - h. 10-12-24 - Dusheera/Dashain
 - i. 10-31-24 - Diwali
 - j. 11-15-24 - Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Founder of Sikh Faith
 - k. 02-28-24 – 03-30-25 - Ramadan at Government House
 - l. 03-14-25 - Chet (Sikh New Year)
 - m. 04-14-25 - Vaisakhi
 - n. May 2025 - Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Vice Chair Ahmed Nawaz state that all commissioners should be involved in the planning and attendance of all these events. **Chair Takhar** agree, no matter what faith they are. **Christina Poy** informed the commission that the Governor's Interfaith Council has the lead on the Ramadan event. The Lt. Governor and GOCI's Interfaith Director has roles in the planning of it. **Vice Chair Nawaz** suggested the commission work with the Council to plan this event. **Commissioner Fahim Rafiq** said from past experiences that the community had a lot of the input in the planning of this event. **Commissioner Archana Thakker** will get with **Commissioner Arti Bhatt** to discuss how the commission can have input with the guest list for the event.

- iii. Education/Social Workforce Development Subcommittee:
Commissioner Raza Khan stated the members of the subcommittee, which are **himself, Commissioner Raj Borsellino, Commissioner Dr. Kausik Das, Commissioner Preeti Emrick, Commissioner Preeti Menon** and **Commissioner Faisal Quader**. The committee decided to have Listening Sessions, which the community will be invited, and the committee will listen to their concerns. This will be launched in the fall. Then they want to have Resource Sessions. This will bring in experts to address the concerns from the

community. They want to address the top four to five issues that the community are having. Lastly, they want to have a celebration to showcase students, maybe around next May or June. It was discussed by many commissioners to create a common platform for commissioners to reach out to their communities and to provide resources in different languages and suggested having their own website. Also, they want to find out if the State has any vocational programs for the younger generation. It was asked of this subcommittee to come up with resources.

iv. **Health and Mental Health Subcommittee:**

Commissioner Bishal Bhandari was not present to report, but there wasn't a meeting held yet. **Vice Chair Ahmed Nawaz** provided information on two agendas. First one is in reference to the Supervised Medical Graduates. They want to submit this to the State Legislature. The second one is the ER Congestion. They are also planning to submit ideas to the State Legislature to help with this issue.

V. Strategic plan:

Chair Takhar never received any feedback on the vision, mission and goals.

VI. By-Laws Review: NO Quorum

VII. Old Business: Discussed in the beginning of the meeting.

Chair Preet Takhar stated that they he was informed that the APAHM event went well, but we need to plan earlier for events. Discussed in the beginning of the meeting.

VIII. New Business: Discussed in the beginning of the meeting.

Chair Preet Takhar and Christina Poy, and Dr. Ahmed Nawaz attended the U.S. Department of State reception to celebrate the Men's T20 World Cup and Cricket in the USA. They introduced Lt. Governor Aruna Miller to the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources, Richard Verma, as well as several business leaders (including the Washington Freedom Major League Cricket Team). They might be interested in investing in a stadium and creating a cricket sports program in Maryland. Many are suggesting holding this event in September.

IX: Events: Discussed in the beginning of the meeting.

Chair Takhar and **Christina Poy** attended the opening of the ISKCON Temple of Potomac, which they presented a citation.

He thanked everyone that was able to attend the Legislative Night gathering.

Vice Chair Ahmed Nawaz attended an event at the SBA Temple and attended an AARP event in Frederick.

Commissioner Raza Khan attended the White House virtual event in Annapolis, which was an AAPI event.

Commissioner Archana Thakker asked if there was a form that could be filled out for events that commissioners attended. **Christina Poy** will share a form and folder for commissioners to upload these completed forms and pictures of the events.

X: Adjournment: No Quorum – No Motion - Meeting ended at 7:30 p.m.