



**ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER (AAPI) WORKGROUP  
APPROVED MINUTES  
Thursday, January 13, 2022**

**Meeting occurred via WebEx Teleconferencing**

Meeting called to order at 6:09 p.m.

**Work Group Members Present:** Richard Li, Soo Park, Devang Shah, Sanjay Srivastava, Bob Zhang, Senator Clarence Lam, Young Smith, Samiyah Hira, Michael Zhao and William lee

**Staff Present:** Angela Cabellon, Safa Hira, Yolanda Sonnier and Wanda Cao

**Public Attendees Present:** Chief Gregory Der, Sameer Sidh, Madoka Kono, Adeline Wu and Aaron Greenfield

**I. Welcome by Co-Chair: Ning Richard Li**

- Richard thanked everyone for attending this meeting.

**II. Approval of October 14, 2021, Minutes**

- Richard motioned to approve the October 14 minutes, however, a quorum was not met at this current time. Richard moved minutes to be approved via email and Young seconds this motion. After the meeting, Wanda sent out an email to the whole AAPI workgroup for approval of the minutes. She received 14 approved votes and Richard approved the October 14<sup>th</sup> minutes via email.

**III. Remarks from Honorary Chair, Senator Clarence Lam**

- Honorary Lam thanked the workgroup for all of their activities that they have undertaken.
- He stated that while they thought the reduction of Covid cases with the Delta variant in November was going to be the end of it, that unfortunately there's a new wave coming. Because Covid is in the forefront of the news, it is difficult for our community because people had blamed the community wrongly for this pandemic. Senator Lam encourages everyone to reach out to those that they care about in the community to make sure everyone is okay. If there are any concerns from these community members, please reach out to the county

and state governments as they are here to certainly help and to make sure the Asian American community feels safe despite this pandemic.

- Senator Lam stated the second piece that he wanted to convey was that there are a few of them in the General Assembly that are actually working on some legislative issues to help with a greater Asian American awareness.
- They are working on a bill that Senator Lam is sponsoring in the Senate as well as Delegate Kris Valderrama in the House to encourage local school systems to incorporate Asian American history, culture, history, and heritage in their curriculums in elementary, middle and high schools. This similar legislation has been passed in states like Illinois, California and has given the number of Asian Americans that we have here in the state.
- Senator Lam believes this bill is appropriate because there's a lot of misunderstanding of our community and having a broader awareness and understanding amongst the broader community, he believes it would help everyone as well.
- We've been working with Chinese schools and some other Chinese schools around the state to try to garner support for this bill that we are going to pass this year.
- One other thing is that the Asian American Cultural Center came up in prior meetings and there is state funding for this. It's being designated to the county to help spearhead this effort. There's going to be ongoing discussions regarding this. Senator Lam states that Sam Sidh and Angela Cabellon and Dr. Ball has been really paying attention to this issue. And they'll be more to come on this.
- And the last thing is Senator Lam serves as the current chair of the Asian American legislative caucus in Annapolis also has a legislative intern in his office, Adeline Lou, who is on this WebEx as well, who is spearhead and organize our legislative caucus here in Annapolis and wanted to thank her for our efforts. She's a constituent, county resident, and is now a senior at the University of Maryland, College Park, majoring in Public Policy. Senator Lam

thanked everyone for their efforts and hope that later on this year we'll all be able to meet in person.

- Richard thanked Senator Lam and Senator Lam also congratulate Greg Der, the new chief.

#### **IV. Executive Liaison Report**

- Angela thanks Senator Lam for bringing up the AAPI Cultural Center. She states to stay tuned to get more information. She wanted to say Happy Korean American Day and thank you to all those who joined today's celebration and also kick off to Restaurant Week.
- Angela mentioned that Wanda has recently been promoted to an Investigator in the Office of Human Rights and Equity and wanted to say congratulations. Wanda responded Thank you to everyone. Richard also stated congratulations.
- Richard introduced two new participants, Sameer Sidh, and Chief Greg Der and welcomed the both of them.

#### **V. Sameer Sidh (Chief of Staff) Introduction and Presentation**

- Sameer thanked everyone for inviting him to be here tonight. For background, he is a 1<sup>st</sup> generation Indian American. His parents both came here in 1973 and still live in the area, they are in Carroll County. They're both doctors, semi-retired, but still very active. His brother and him went in different industries compared to his parents who are in medicine. They work in government and government relations. Sameer is an attorney by trade, and worked in a private practice as an immigration attorney, and have been in government ever since. He started with the Martin O'Malley administration and since been a variety of different positions in state and city transportation.
- As the current Chief of Staff, his responsibilities focus on a couple of core things: 1<sup>st</sup> of which is all things relating to budget and funding. 2<sup>nd</sup> is legislation and policy. 3<sup>rd</sup> is education and working closely with our school system. 4<sup>th</sup> are things related to land use and then beyond that, other duties as assigned.
- As a result of the pandemic, the other area Sam had to pick up is management of federal funding that started with the Cares Act, now the American Rescue

Plan, that they are now currently working on the budget. They still have acute health, economic and work force issues that they have been working to address those, as well as dealing with budgeting. They had to focus on retention and addressing immediate staffing issues. Sam is hopeful that they're doing an effective job and will continue to work and do the best they can for the residents in our county.

- Richard asked if Sam and Chief Der will return for future meetings. Both Sam and Chief Der stated they are interested in coming back for future meetings.

## **VI. Chief Gregory Der Introduction and Presentation**

- Chief Der stated he is the new chief of the Howard County Police Department and is now officially 8 days in. A little background of himself, he is a Howard County native and had grown up in this area.
- Chief Der is 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. His father is Chinese, and his mother is Italian. He started at the police department on the Eastern Shore for 2 years and came back and joined the Howard County Police Department. He worked as a School Resource Officer. He was a detective for many years, was in the Arson Unit, and towards the end of his career, he was in the Fraternal Order Police and had ran the Union. In Howard County of 2017, Chief Der took a job with the Maryland State Police as the Chief Deputy for the Maryland State Fire Marshalls Office, where he had Bomb Squad fire investigations, inspections, and so forth. He stated he was fortunate enough to apply and receive the job here as the Chief of Police in Howard County.
- Chief Der stated that he is a firefighter but is more of a police officer. Some of the things he is looking to focus on in the county is recruitment. Recruitment in law enforcement across the nation is difficult, but he looks forward to recruiting more of a diverse workforce here.
- The other thing Chief Der is looking at is staffing. During the pandemic and the last surge, they had staff that is getting sick—officers, dispatchers, and so forth. He is looking to staff to make sure that they can cover the county if things get even worse.

- Chief Der stated that he knows we have an Asian Liaison that works with the Asian Community, and that we have different liaisons throughout the county and if anyone has questions for him, he will answer anything he can. And if he does not know the answer, he will get back to us with the answer.

## **VII. Committees Discussion & Reports**

- **Business & Economic Development Committee**

- Soo stated that they actually got in touch with the Office of Procurement and Contract Administration and have started pushing out the local business initiatives. They want to outreach to as many Asian American business owners to be registered, that way Howard County can actually prioritize local businesses when they are purchasing goods or services under 10,000 dollars. They have reached out to local meetings to spread the word about this program.
- Soo believes that the only dilemma would be the pandemic but hopes they will get more AAPI businesses registered throughout the rest of the year.
- Soo wanted Angela to clarify the Executive Order Initiative that was signed by Dr. Ball in August. Safa brought up the initiative and shared that in August they did announce the local business initiative to essentially increase local dollars into our community. In 2018, they had about 100 businesses that were certified with the program, as of August we had 237, which is a 137 % increase. This is something the administration is completely looking forward to increasing and expanding. It is important for our Asian community to get involved more and to sign up for this. It is encouraged that if you know or if you are a local Asian American business, then to please sign up for this program so that your dollars can come back to our community, and it will just help each other.
- Richard asked what the eligibility of this program is, regarding the business or the owner must be in Howard County. Safa and Soo

replied that the business would have to be in Howard County in order to be eligible for the program.

- **Government Access and Community Engagement**

- Young thanked Angela for acknowledging and celebrating and hosting the Korean American Day.
- Young stated originally, they wanted to have the Lunar New Year celebration at Columbia Mall, however with the new omicron variant around, it has been decided that the celebration will be virtual. It will be a similar format as last year with different communities. They will share videos, cultural performances, such as lion dancing, and all sorts of things.
- Young stated that Safa had sent the program to different communities in order to gather different video clips for the lunar celebration.
- Young is working on communities regarding careers, and Richard is working with the Chinese communities.
- Safa reiterated what Young stated regarding the Lunar New Year festivities being virtual. She stated that it'll be airing on Lunar New Year. If anyone has a video clip that is no longer than 2 minutes that you'd like to include in the program, please email it over to her. Safa stated we are ready to celebrate the year of the black tiger.
- Young spoke about the AAPI Heritage Month and brought up the last meeting in October that everyone agreed that AAPI Heritage Month should be done in May of this year. She stated they discussed dates and also how the County Executive would help them.
- Angela reported that they have 2 dates that they can hold right now, which is May 7<sup>th</sup> and May 14<sup>th</sup>. Right now Centennial Park is tentatively held where we'll be able to have the larger area, with some pavilions, as well as the covered stage. Angela stated they are looking into the Chrysalis as an alternate location as well. She personally has a call with Nina Basu and she'll be able to give the group an update because that will drive the other details as the location.

- Young asked Richard to share his information regarding what the Chinese School and Chinese community is planning for Heritage Month. Richard stated they have a 1<sup>st</sup> meeting and started assigning taskforces, such as those in charge of art performance, stage performance, government connections, and cultural showcase, such as Asian American sports cultural events. Richard recommends this structure for other AAPI communities; where we can start taskforces in planning, for the manpower, the budget for space, and other needed detailed planning, as well as collaborating with the community.
- Young stated that we should come back together again and talk about taskforces, and how we want the structure to be etc., so that all of us are on the same page. Young reiterated to please get the word out to your community for the events.
- **Health, Wellness and Community Engagement**
  - Mabrooka is absent for this meeting, but Safa is going to update the group. Safa stated that Officer Kyu Lee and her met with the Health and Wellness committee to discuss mental health and how they can expand on the survey that the committee had done within the community. What the survey showed was that a lot of those in the Asian American community didn't know of the resources available. They were thinking about doing an even to train trainers about the resources available from the different offices in the county. Safa stated they should have something concrete soon.
- **AAPI Cultural Center**
  - Angela stated they have been working with the departments to get a sense of where the potential location could be. She stated the Department of Public Works (DPW) has to go broader than just currently owned buildings because county owned are just too narrow of a scope. After discussing this with DPW, it was determined that that the will be hosting a plan or an engagement where there can be a larger

understanding of what the capital project will be. DPW would hear from everyone that is a part of that.

- Angela stated they initially had a tentative date, but due to the omicron variant, the date has been pushed back just to be safe.
- Angela said that this meeting may have to turn virtual, or they will try and do it in Spring. Regardless, the planning dollars are there for the cultural center.
- She explains that Real Estate Services, under DPW, looks at available real estate that may be fitting for something like this. Parallel to this, we still need a planning process because of the variety of diversity of our groups and ethnicities, that each group also has different needs. Angela stated there are needs for evening and weekend spaces, have a building or not, have a satellite location or not, or some would like an intersectional programming space and a multipurpose space. So, getting more specificity of that from the community would be key in the DPW being able to identify better potential spaces.
- Angela reiterated that the direction is to go beyond current county owned facilities and buildings because that would most likely meet the needs across the board of our different communities.
- Young asked that there is no fixed allocated budget for the cultural center depending on county owned buildings versus using private buildings? Angela answered it is whether a renovation is sufficient to meet the needs of what the community desires. She stated that Senator Lam stated the money will be available for the next 2 years, however the question is how we will balance out to determine sustainability regarding the out years and ensuring there's agreement across all of our organizations of how it's being used and how we can map how we can maximize benefits.

## **VIII. New Business**

- Bob asked if there is a centralized website or page that we can forward this information to other people.
- Wanda stated that we do have a page on the OHRE webpage for AAPI. She stated if there is anything that they wanted to post on the website, to let them know and they'll be able to post if on the site.
- Young wanted to share that the community engagement fund for the grant for the project that ended on November 31<sup>st</sup>. Because of the demand of the community, they have decided to continue offering Covid tests and booster shots on January 29<sup>th</sup>, at Lotte. We have the support from the Department of Health and the pharmacy. We'll try to do this twice a month since there is shortage of the test kits.
- Richard thanked Young for her efforts for providing vaccination that had started in June.

## **IX. Announcements**

- Yolanda stated that the MLK Celebration is now virtual and it is prerecorded. It will be made available on Sunday at 2 pm if anyone is interested in watching that. There are a number of virtual offerings and workshops on Monday. The information can be found on the Martin Luther King Holiday Commission website. The commissioners are doing a virtual food drive for the Howard County Food Pantry, and you can either purchase from Amazon and it'll go directly to the Food Pantry. They are also collecting canned goods to bring to the Food Bank as well. Yolanda stated if you want to make a monetary donation, there is a link that is on the website that the commission will make sure it serves the community.

## **X. Closing Remarks**

- Angela stated that on behalf of the County Executive, he is really appreciative of the work that this workgroup has done so far. We are looking forward Heritage Month, especially coming from a pandemic. It is something for all of us to really band together and look forward to. Angela adds that the reminder that focusing on boosters and vaccines and helping the community get back on their feet is something they are appreciative of. Angela thanked everyone for all their hard work.

- Young added that hopefully next meeting we'll be able to meet in person and have a session with the County Executive. Angela stated if we all are able to meet in person in a safe manner than that would be great.
- Yolanda echoes Angela and asked to make sure everyone take care of yourselves and thanked everyone for the work that this group is doing.
- Richard thanked everyone for their time and concluded this meeting.

**The meeting concluded at 7:12 p.m.**

**WORKGROUP MEETINGS: (2<sup>nd</sup> Thursdays Quarterly)**

*All meetings will be virtual until further notice.*

<b>2022 Meeting Dates</b>
Thursday, April 14, 2022 at 6 pm (TBA)
Thursday, July 14, 2022 at 6 pm (TBA) – Final workgroup meeting

**COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS**

<b>Business &amp; Economic Development</b>	<b>Health, Wellness &amp; Safety</b>	<b>Government Access &amp; Community Engagement</b>
Soo Park, Co-Chair	Mabrooka Chaudhry, Chair	Young Smith, Chair
Jodie Wang, Co-Chair	Pravin Ponnuri	Ashley Hou
Answer Hasan	Sue Song	Richard Li
Bob Zhang	Richard Li	Cpl. Kyu Lee
Devang Shah		Samiyah Hira
Matthew Lee		Sanjay Srivastava
Michael Zhao		Marianne Brackney
Charley Sung		