



**CMEAA**  
COMMISSION ON MIDDLE EASTERN  
AMERICAN AFFAIRS  
M I C H I G A N

## Meeting Minutes

September 21, 2021 | Noon EST

363 W. Big Beaver Road, Ste. 300, Troy, MI 48084

### ATTENDANCE:

#### Commissioners Present:

Manal Saab- Chair

John Daoud- 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair

Lina Hourani-Harajli- Treasurer

Suzanne Sukkar- Secretary

Dave Abdallah

Adel Mozip

Susan Dabaja

Nabeleh Ghareeb

Martin Manna

Nadine Kalasho

Officials and Staff: Assistant AG Tonya Jeter, Civil Rights Office; Interim Director of Appointments Danielle McCann; Zach Hayward, Appointments Specialist; Emily, Intern; Director of New American Integration, Karen Phillippi; Alexander Sahouri (CMEAA Administrator)

### I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Saab at 12:08 PM ET declaring quorum of the Commission. Chair Saab thanked Arab American and Chaldean Council and Commissioner Daoud for hosting CMEAA. Afterwards, Commissioner Daoud introduced ACC COO, Odie Fakhouri, who welcomed the Commission.

Chair Saab declared she would entertain a motion to adopt the agenda:

### II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**On Motion made by Commissioner Abdallah and seconded by Commissioner Mozip, the Commission approved the meeting agenda of September 21<sup>st</sup> as presented. *Motion carries unanimously***

Chair Saab welcomed Commissioner Ghareeb for the first time in person, followed by welcoming the new Interim Director of Appointments, Danielle McCann, and her staff. Chair Saab then welcomed Assistant AG Tonya Jeter for the first time in person,

Afterwards, Chair Saab recognized Secretary Sukkar to introduce the June meeting minutes for approval:

### **III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

**On Motion made by Secretary Sukkar and seconded by Commissioner Manna, the Commission approved the meeting minutes of June 2<sup>nd</sup> as presented. *Motion carries unanimously.***

Chair Saab recognizes Treasurer Hourani-Harajli for the Treasurer's Report:

### **IV. TREASURER'S REPORT**

Treasurer Hourani-Harajli presented the FY21 August Budget to Actual. She informed the Commission that nothing was out of the ordinary and that she has been working with Alexander to make sure that the expenditures matched what our expectations are. She added that we are on track to spend the entirety of our budget by the September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, noting that the largest line items are the Contractual, Grants, and LEO Cost allocations.

Chair Saab followed by noting that since the Commission now has an Administrator who can put in an average of 30 hours a week, the Commission will be looking to work more through our Administrator and other State resources and less through collaborative grants moving forward.

**On Motion made by Commissioner Ghareeb and Seconded by Commissioner Mozip, the Commission approved the Treasurer's report as presented for FY21 August Budget to Actual. *Motion carries unanimously.***

Chair Saab recognized Interim Director McCann for the State Update:

### **V. STATE UPDATE**

Interim Director McCann updated the Commission on the Governor signing the School Aid Budget that eliminates the funding gap between schools without raising taxes raising the baseline funding per child to \$8,700. Interim Director McCann continued by highlighting the FY2022 budget that was agreed upon earlier this week:

Governor Whitmer and the Michigan Legislature came together to deliver a bipartisan budget that puts Michiganders first.

The bipartisan FY2022 budget builds on the kitchen-table fundamental issues that matter most to Michiganders. A few highlights:

- The budget fully funds three effective programs—Michigan Reconnect, Futures for Frontliners, and Going Pro—that help workers get the skills they need to earn a good-paying, in-demand job.
- It includes funds to repair crumbling bridges across Michigan, including the iconic Miller Road Bridge next to the Ford factory in Dearborn.
- The budget makes 105,000 more kids eligible for low or no-cost childcare.

- It also contains dollars to replace lead services lines in Benton Harbor, repair aging dams, make buildings more energy efficient, and clean up our drinking water, Great Lakes, and contaminated sites.
- Finally, the budget puts \$500 million into Michigan's rainy-day fund, which is the largest one-time deposit in state history. This fiscally responsible investment ensures that Michigan is prepared for any future crises—public health or otherwise.

**ECONOMY:** Michigan's families deserve an economy that works for them, where every community can succeed.

- Expands low- or no-cost childcare to 105,000 more kids, helping thousands of working parents go back to work knowing that their kids are safe and cared for.
- Increases rates for childcare providers and boosts slots available for infants and toddlers, ensuring more Michiganders have the early supports they need to succeed.
- Puts \$500 million, the largest one-time deposit ever, into the rainy-day fund.
- Ensures small businesses can take advantage of more federal tax benefits, empowering them to grow and prosper.
- Delivers a one-time, \$1,000 bonus to childcare staff who served on the frontlines during the pandemic and kept our economy going.
- Provides a permanent \$2 per hour raise for direct care workers who take care of our most vulnerable in nursing homes and beyond.
- Funds state police to hire more officers, enhance training, and purchase equipment to keep communities safe and reduce crime.

**INFRASTRUCTURE:** Every Michigander deserves safe, smooth roads to drive on as they drop their kids off at school, go to work, or run errands.

- Invests \$196 million to repair or replace nearly 100 bridges in serious or critical condition.
- Backs grants to improve childcare facilities, giving every kid a safe, high-quality environment to continue to learn and grow.
- Delivers resources for dam repairs, storm water management, contaminant cleanup, and drinking water emergencies.
- Creates a pilot program to bring down utility bills for families by improving home weatherization and energy efficiency.

**HEALTHCARE:** Every Michigander deserves access to safe, affordable, and accessible healthcare in their community.

- Provides alternatives to nursing home care for 1,000 more seniors, allowing them to stay in their homes.
- Covers the cost of treatment for sickle cell disease for all Michiganders, helping those struck by this inherited disease get the care they deserve.
- Invests in new, innovative mental health services to help those who need it most.
- Hires healthcare navigators to tackle racial health disparities and increase coverage.
- Grows the Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies in-home visitation program for infants born with substance exposure.

**EDUCATION & SKILLS:** Every Michigander deserves a path to a good-paying, high-skill, and in-demand job.

- Fully funds Michigan Reconnect and Futures for Frontliners, putting thousands of Michiganders on a tuition-free path to higher education or skills training.
- Expands Going Pro to help businesses upscale their workers and get them the skills they need to succeed.
- Bolsters apprenticeships and youth development programs to empower more Michiganders to pursue their potential.

**CLEAN WATER & ENVIRONMENT:** We must protect our natural resources and ensure that every parent can give their kid a glass of drinking water knowing that its safe.

- Sends additional funds to replace 100% of lead service lines in Benton Harbor and establishes an emergency fund to deal with any future drinking water crises.
- Delivers resources to tackle PFAS in drinking water supply.
- Expands the Green Revolving Fund to reduce the state's carbon footprint and save taxpayer dollars.
- Invests resources to reduce pollution in the Great Lakes.

The Governor looks forward to further collaboration with the legislature to spend the billions in federal dollars Michigan has received from the American Rescue Plan and the billions more the state is expected to get from the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

Commissioner Ghareeb was recognized and asked some clarification questions about the Futures for Frontliners Program

Commissioner Daoud was recognized and commended the State for funding replacement of the lead pipes in Benton Harbor.

Commissioner Mozip was recognized and applauded the State and the Governor for increasing education funding and putting the safety of children and educators first but wanted to note that the budget falls short on fixing education infrastructure particularly in schools with old buildings. Additionally, he noted his excitement that the Miller Road Bridge will be repaired, and that the State should pressure corporations that use these infrastructures to contribute to these projects. Commissioner Mozip further applauded the State for their Future for Frontliners program, noting that it caused the enrollment at Henry Ford College to increase this Fall semester. Finally, Commissioner Mozip asked about how woman led business owners could apply for new grants being offered by the State and asked Alexander to follow up with Interim Director McCann to get that information to the Commission.

Chair Saab thanked Interim Director McCann and recognized Director Phillippi for a LEO/Office of Global Michigan Update:

## **VI. LEO/OGM UPDATE**

Director Phillippi expanded on the Reconnect and Frontliner programs, noting that there were informational materials in Arabic for both programs. Regarding the woman's business grant

program, the Office of Global Michigan is working with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to hold stakeholder meetings with ethnic chambers of commerce, non-profit service providers, and the State Ethnic Commissions. Once the dates for those meetings are set the information will be sent to the Commissioners through the Administrator.

Director Phillippi then updated the Commission on the Office of Global Michigan's efforts involving Afghan resettlement. Currently it's unclear how many Afghans will be arriving in the United States but what we do know is that a vast majority of those who will be arriving here will be doing so under humanitarian parole and not the refugee resettlement program, meaning they are eligible for very few benefits. Humanitarian parolees only qualify for emergency Medicare, pregnant persons and parents of young children will be eligible for the State's Mom program, SNAP, and WIC, and they are eligible for relocation assistance in the form of case management for 90 days.

The initial estimate of Afghan arrivals to Michigan is 1,300 but we expect that number to increase. There will be about 320 in Wayne and Oakland County, about 300 in Washtenaw County, about 300 in Ingham County, and about 300 in Kent and Ottawa County. Educational demographics and English skills are unknown with those assessments being made when they arrive. Director Phillippi is asking the Commissioners for assistance identifying organizations who can distribute Halal meals to Afghan arrivals as they do not qualify for food assistance.

Commissioner Abdallah was recognized and asked why the Afghan arrivals aren't being treated as refugees, particularly considering those individuals who worked with US forces, and Director Phillippi explained that because of the rapid nature of the exit out of Afghanistan and arrival in the United States of these individuals, they necessarily don't have the time to go through the process of obtaining refugee status. Commissioner Abdallah followed up asking if the Federal Government was only relying on non-profit service providers and the States in benefiting Afghan arrivals and Director Phillippi confirmed that as of now that's all the support there is for these individuals.

Treasurer Hourani-Harajli was recognized and asked if we had an age breakdown of the arrivals followed by Director Phillippi stating that we will know two to three weeks before they are to arrive most of the information about those arriving.

Secretary Sukkar was recognized and asked if the hospitality industry would get involved; Director Phillippi noted that they are working with the Michigan Community Service Commission, and the State Emergency Operations Center to tap into their connections in providing housing. Additionally, Director Phillippi informed the Commission that they will have a stand-alone site from the Michigan Community Service Commission to get volunteers and donations after Secretary Sukkar asked about how they could spread the word about supporting the Afghan arrivals.

Commissioner Ghareeb was recognized and asked how it is determined who is resettled where and Director Phillippi responded saying that the state has no say in it and that the states resettlement agencies work with national resettlement agencies who choose who goes where. And a follow up from Commissioner Ghareeb is who is advocating for Afghan going to school

children to school with Director Phillippi assuring that they are working on the Department of Education on that.

Commissioner Dabaja was recognized and asked what support will be offered to the counties and individual communities to welcome Afghan arrivals with Director Phillippi responding by clarifying that it's the resettlement agencies in Michigan working with the counties.

Commissioner Kalasho was recognized and asked if we expect these individuals to apply for asylum and Director Phillippi confirmed that yes that is what we expect. Commissioner Kalasho followed up asking about people who are currently in the United States on Student Visa for instance who can't go back to Afghanistan and what are we doing for them to which Director Phillippi responded saying she would report back on that question. Chair Saab noted how this is the same situation many Lebanese students here on visa are experiencing now to which Director Phillippi noted that the Federal Government would have to grant Temporary Protected Status in these cases.

Commissioner Mozip was recognized and recommended that we reach out to the Michigan Muslim Community Council which acts as an umbrella organization for Muslim organizations and Mosques

Chair Saab recognized the Administrator for his report:

## **VII. CMEAA ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

Attached is the Administrator's Report. In the interest of time Chair Saab opened the floor for the Commissioners to ask the Administrator any questions they had after reading the report ahead of time. There were no questions only expressions satisfaction with the job of the Administrator. Particularly Commissioner Abdallah noted how Alexander is proactive instead of reactive in his administrative role.

## **VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Bylaws**

**On Motion made by Commissioner Mozip and Seconded by Commissioner Ghareeb, the Commission adopted the amended bylaws to take effect immediately upon approval.**

*Motion carries unanimously*

### **B. UMS**

**On Motion made by Commissioner Mozip and Seconded by Commissioner Dabaja, the Commission approved an expenditure of \$10,000 to UMS to be distributed in October to support Spring 2022 MEA programming. *Motion carries unanimously***

**C. EHRA**

Commissioner Mozip introduced Dr. Natalie Sampson who reported to the Commission on how its funds were used in its Summer 2021 programing. Attached is a hard copy of that report.

**On Motion made by Commissioner Mozip and Seconded by Commissioner Dabaja, the Commission approved an expenditure of \$10,000 to EHRA to be distributed in October to support its Summer 2022 internship program as presented. *Motion carries unanimously***

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

Chair Saab informed the Commission that she will be stepping down as Chair but will still serve the rest of her term on the Commission until April 2022.

**X. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 1:28 p.m.

X

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Suzanne Sukkar  
Secretary

X

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Manal B. Saab  
Chair