



MEETING MINUTES
June 12, 2019 -- Noon
AMERICAN ARAB AND CHALDEAN COUNCIL
363 W. BIG BEAVER RD. SUITE 300
TROY, MI 48084

Commissioners Present:

Manal Saab Chair
Michael Romaya Vice-Chair
Lina Hourani-Harajli, Treasurer
Suzanne Sukkar, Secretary
Nabeel Obeid, M.D., Trustee at Large
Chief Ron Haddad
Adel Mozip

Susan Dabaja
Dave Abdullah
Fay Beydoun
Martin Manna
Nadine Kalasho
John Daoud

Commissioners Absent:

Rihan Issa, Sharif Hussein

Staff: Ghida Dagher (Director of Appointments), Ron Robinson (Assistant Attorney General), Charles Schoder (Civil Rights Specialist), Karen Phillippi (Director, MONA), Maan Abou Khzam (CMEAA Administrator)

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Saab at 12:07 P.M. Chair Saab provided welcoming remarks and polled commissioners for roll call.

Chair Saab welcomed Commissioners Nadine Kalasho and John Daoud. Commissioner Kalasho is replacing Fadwa Hammoud and Commissioner Daoud replaces Dr. Haifa Fakhouri. The Chair also welcomed the new Director of Appointments for the State of Michigan, Ghida Dagher and the new CMEAA Administrator, Maan Abou Khzam. Chair Saab offered sincere congratulations to Commissioner Kalasho and Commissioner Daoud on their appointments to CMEAA and to Director Dagher on her appointment to the Governor's office. "I believe I speak on behalf of the commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs in pledging our support to you all for a productive cooperation for the benefit of all Michiganders."



CMEAA's executive council now consists of Vice Chairs Michael Romaya and Sharif Hussein, Secretary Suzanne Sukkar, Treasurer Lina Harajli. Dr. Nabeel Obeid as a Trustee at Large replacing Susan Dabaja on the executive council.

II. APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA

On Motion duly made and supported, the Meeting Agenda was approved.
Motion carried unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

On Motion duly made and supported, the Commission approved the meeting minutes of March 1, 2019 as presented. *Motion carried unanimously.*

IV. REVIEW OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 2019-13

Director Ghida Dagher described her role within the Governor's administration and the process of appointments highlighting the governor's vision of bringing diversity into all appointments. Her office processes 200 to 400 appointments per quarter and welcomes recommendations from commissioners to such vacancies. A quarterly listing of vacancies on various boards and commissions will be made available to the commission for consideration and nominations.

The May 6th Executive Order 2019-13 moves CMEAA from LARA to LEO (The department of Labor and Economic Opportunity). LEO will be headed by Director Jeff Donofrio. Moreover, a new Office of Global Michigan is created under the EO. The Director of Global Michigan along with the Director of MDCR become *ex officio* of CMEAA. The Director of the Office of Global Michigan will be a member of the Governor's Cabinet directly voicing the commission's concerns or requests to the governor. Executive Order 2019-13 is expected approvals from both the House and the Senate and takes effect within 60 days.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT

Chair Saab took the commission through this year's budget in detail. The remaining budget the Commission can spend before September 30, 2019 is USD 43,187. As per our knowledge our budget will remain at USD 125,000 in 2019.

On Motion duly made and supported, the Commission approved the Treasurer's Report through YTD May 2019. *Motion carried unanimously.*

VI. CMEAA Administrator Report

Administrator Maan presented CMEAA's update, attached herewith as Exhibit A.



A lengthy discussion followed on Commissioner Manna's recommendation of convening a working group to explore raising awareness on the contributions of the MEA community for the state of Michigan that will correct the false perceptions and ideologies still facing our community. Commissioners Suzanne Sukkar, Fay Beydoun and Lina Harajli volunteered to join the group and will report back at the September meeting.

On Motion duly made and supported, the Commission approved the Administrator's report as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

VII. Legislative Committee

MONA Director Karen Phillippi provided an update on House bill 483 and 490. We will be dealing with a new legislative team under the new EO. Director Karen further clarified the move of MONA upon execution of the Executive order 2019 – 13. MONA office staff remains the same, the only change is moving offices from LARA to Office of Global Michigan.

VIII. National Arab Orchestra

Director of the Arab Orchestra, Sherri Richards and Board President, Usama Baalbaki updated the commission on their progress showcasing the "Building Bridges through Music" program and offering sincere thanks to the Commission for their support.

IX. University Musical Society

Commissioner Suzanne Sukkar presented a collaboration and a \$20,000 funding opportunity from the University Musical Society whereby UMS will be collaborating with CMEAA in introducing and highlighting Middle Eastern cultural performances within their seasonal programs. UMS would like to be part of the conversation with CMEAA and work in collaboration to bring Middle Eastern acts to Michigan highlighting the MEA culture. Please reference Exhibit B for the detailed proposal.

On Motion duly made and supported, the Commission approved the motion to accept UMS Proposal funding \$20,000 for the upcoming 2019/2020 season. Motion carried unanimously

Commissioner Beydoun suggested CMEAA receives all requests for proposals 60 days prior to meetings whenever possible to allow for proper vetting and review. All are in agreement.



X. OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Mozip briefly updated the commission on the environmental taskforce progress – more to follow at the September meeting due to our time constraints at this meeting.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

None.

XII. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Saab at 2:09 P.M.

Suzanne Sukkar, Secretary

Manal B. Saab, Chair

Exhibit A

CMEAA Administrator's Report

Welcoming Interactive Convening in PA (May 16-17, 2019)

This year, the Welcoming Interactive partnered with the Welcoming Economies Convening, an annual conference for the exchange of ideas and practices that welcome, retain, and empower immigrants as valued contributors to our economies. Met with many NGOs/For Profit/social Entrepreneurship/Other ethnic commissions.

Connect.

To Highlight

- Impactful Panel of Muslim activist/Rabbi/Student Elected. Questions on challenges in their own communities' The Rabbi spoke about the increase of anti-Semitic incidents. The Muslim spoke about the bigotry and hate



rhetoric against Muslims. The high school student elect spoke about taking action through education/and setting an example...

- Connected to other ethnic commission based in PA and were interested in knowing more about our commission structure being under the state.
- Building Resilience in welcoming communities session: Interesting Fact: If we freeze the wealth of white Folk in the United States today, under equal laws, it will take black folk 227 years to reach the same level of wealth. This is due to discriminating policy before the civil rights act 1964-This highlights the magnitude of our role as a commission in fighting bills discriminating against MEA community as they come up. (Carry conversation to Lansing visit)

Lansing Visit (June 4, 2019)

- Connected with Jason Wentworth, Speaker of the House.
- Many legislators are not aware of the magnitude and gravity of our economic contribution and we need to raise awareness to both representatives in the house and the senate.
- We're happy and pleased to know that Speaker Jason will personally host for us (reception/lunch) during a 3 days period while in session which will make it easier for the commissioners to join us in his sessions and allow for the house of session to attend. More to come as we work on this.
- There have been budget cuts across the board in the state but our commission should not be affected. In our meetings, from LARA, to Governor's office, to finance team; across all departments in Lansing. Budget conversations will be continuous hoping we don't have budget cuts that are effective. We will engage the Finance team in our new house (LEO) and our goal is to be proactive and increase funding or at a minimum maintain funding for CMEAA.
- Arranging a tour of the capitol for orientation purposes over the next 2 weeks (If anyone is interested to joining, please inform me)
- Office for USAID Admin for MEA reached out from Washington DC. They're interested in a visit to MI and collaborating the visit with CMEA. No timeline yet. We welcomed the visit.

Meeting the Commissioners

- Met most of the commissioners and saw a similar approach of moving the commission forward through raising awareness with education and outreach to correct the false perceptions and ideologies about the MEA community.
- Martin Manna / ACC partnered with someone academically to do a study and have a consistent message. Martin willing to talk more about this for CMEAA and take the lead for a potential committee to be created/other ideas.