



Meeting Minutes

September 15, 2020, 12:00 P.M

Meeting held online via Microsoft Teams

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners Present:

Manal Saab- Chair

Michael Romaya- Vice Chair

Lina Hourani-Harajli- Treasurer

Suzanne Sukkar- Secretary

Nabeel Obeid- Trustee at Large

John Daoud

Adel Mozip

Susan Dabaja

Dave Abdullah

Martin Manna

Nadine Kalasho

Commissioners Absent:

Chief Ron Haddad, Fay Beydoun

Staff: Fayrouz Saad (Executive Director of Office of Global Michigan), Karen Phillippi (Director at Office of Global Michigan), Maan Abou Khzam (CMEAA Administrator).

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Saab at 12:02 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was present.

I welcome you all to our September 15th Meeting of the Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs. Our world has screeched to a halt since March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many have suffered tremendously and lost loved ones to this virus, while others struggle with adapting to an entirely new virtual reality. Technology spared the world from a complete and total shutdown, from zoom meetings to e-commerce, technology kept us connected and kept businesses running. I want to take this opportunity to welcome you all to our first virtual meeting of CMEAA in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order to conduct state business. Moreover, I ask you to join me in extending our heartfelt appreciation to the front liners sustaining our economy as we transitioned into our current state. And recognizing the dedication and sacrifice of the millions of the healthcare workforce sacrificing themselves by being at the forefront of this Covid-19 pandemic. You are the heroes of this pandemic.



II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On Motion duly made and supported, the Commission approved the meeting agenda of September 15th. Motion carries unanimously

III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

On Motion duly made and supported, the Commission approved the meeting minutes of September 15th as presented. Motion carries unanimously.

IV. LEO UPDATE

Director Saad introduced the launch of futures for Front liners program. Enrollment in local community colleges in winter/spring and summer semester in 2021. Eligibility- high school diploma or equivalent. Anyone that qualifies as a Front liner, grocery store worker, driver... There's a lot going on and Futures for Front liners program is one of the biggest initiatives that LEO is focused on at the moment.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Lina Hourani-Harajli presented the budget report for Full year 2020 in detail.

On Motion duly made and supported, the Commission approved the Treasurer's report as presented for FY 2020. Motion carried unanimously.

VI. AAHC Grant Proposal

Devin Bathish, the executive director for The Arab American Heritage Council (AAHC), addressed the commissioners requesting a \$20,000 grant from the Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs (CMEAA) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Arab American Heritage Council was established in 1980 in Flint as a non-partisan, non-sectarian, non-profit organization with a mission of preserving and celebrating Arab heritage as well as supporting and uniting the estimated 20,000 Arab Americans in the Greater Flint area. Through a wide range of services and programs that serve not only Arab Americans, but also the greater Flint community, the Council helps to broaden understanding and appreciation of Arab culture. At the AAHC, we provide educational services, immigration & language services, and encourage Arab American participation in civic affairs.

The AAHC is a small organization with an annual operating budget of \$120,000. It employs 2 full time and 2 part time paid staff members who are responsible for carrying out the day-to-day



operations of the organizations and its programs. The staff is as follows: a full-time Executive Director, a full-time Immigration Director, a part-time Civic Engagement Coordinator, and a part-time IT Coordinator. Our staff are well educated and professionally qualified to administer tasks assigned to them. In addition, the AAHC's governing board includes prominent and committed local Arab American professionals who are dedicated to community service.

The pandemic has brought our globe to a standstill, infected millions, and killed hundreds of thousands of people. Poor people and people of color have been hit incredibly hard, including the Arab American population. In response to the pandemic, the AAHC has continued offering our low-cost/no cost immigration services digitally for our clients. We have seen an uptick in immigration clients during this time and fully serviced them despite closing our office on March 13, 2020. Additionally, the AAHC has participated in mask distribution to different Arab American centers throughout the city of Flint. The AAHC has also functioned as a resource hub notifying our community on updates regarding immigration, COVID, public charge, and Census 2020.

The AAHC has shifted to entirely digital outreach during this time and it remains the primary way we service our clients and the Greater Flint population. However, while our immigration program and civic engagement work have received funding, we are still in desperate need of funding for our technological capabilities in providing services. It is of direct benefit to our community that we are able to continue maintaining optimum use of our technology resources to service them and provide them with the updates they desperately need. Our IT Coordinator assures that our database can run properly for our immigration clients, that our phones work to coordinate mask distributions, and that our website and social media is updated so that we can inform our community about major changes in policies that directly affect their lives. Therefore, in order to continue providing vital services to our community during the COVID pandemic, it is crucial that we receive funding to ensure our technology resources can meet their needs.

Additionally, the immigration grant we received from a separate foundation finishes at the end of February 2021. The AAHC will ensure there is future funding by obtaining a 2021 grant from that foundation for the immigration program. However, there is a dead period in which there is no funding for the immigration program while the foundation takes time to issue the new grant. To ensure that the AAHC can continue providing immigration services during the dead period, funding must be provided by CMEAA.

On Motion duly made and supported, the Commission approved to grant AAHC 20,000 USD. Motion carried unanimously.

VII. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Implementation Plan



CMEAA Administrator, Maan Abou Khzam, updated the Commission on carrying a full time job in parallel to CMEAA since February 2020. Maan highlighted to the Commission that due to the nature of his work, he is constantly at risk of not allocating enough time and focus to CMEAA in order to accelerate the work on implementation coming into 2020. Maan has submitted his resignation back in February 2020. Maan kindly requested the Commission to speed up the process of appointing his successor, Hussein Dabaja, that was identified and interviewed by the Executive Council in order to execute the fullest potential of the mission of this Commission.

Maan carried on to discuss the implementation of the first strategic priority under the strategic framework for CMEAA. The first initiative is an online series focused on Mental Health. The webinar will host a prominent Psychologist in the field of Mental health and the objective is to raise awareness on the stigma that is currently existing in the Middle Eastern American Community on this subject, specially during the times of COVID, where increasing cases of substance use, domestic violence were seen in the State of Michigan according to ACCESS and the CCF.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

None.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

None.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m. by Chair Saab.



2020 AAHC Proposal to CMEAA on COVID-19 Response

I. Proposal Summary The Arab American Heritage Council (AAHC) is requesting a \$15,000 grant from the Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs (CMEAA) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic from October 1, 2020 - April 30, 2021.

II. Organizational Background The Arab American Heritage Council was established in 1980 in Flint as a non-partisan, non-sectarian, non-profit organization with a mission of preserving and celebrating Arab heritage as well as supporting and uniting the estimated 20,000 Arab Americans in the Greater Flint area. Through a wide range of services and programs that serve not only Arab Americans, but also the greater Flint community, the Council helps to broaden understanding and appreciation of Arab culture. At the AAHC, we provide educational services, immigration & language services, and encourage Arab American participation in civic affairs.

Currently, the AAHC employs 2 full time and 2 part time paid staff members who are responsible for carrying out the day-to-day operations of the organizations and its programs. The staff is as follows: a full-time Executive Director, a full-time Immigration Director, a part-time Civic Engagement Coordinator, and a part-time IT Coordinator. Our staff are well educated and professionally qualified to administer tasks assigned to them. In addition, the AAHC's governing board includes prominent and committed local Arab American professionals who are dedicated to community service.

III. Statement of Need The COVID-19 pandemic has brought our globe to a stand still, infected millions, and killed hundreds of thousands of people. Poor people and people of color have been hit incredibly hard, including the Arab American population. In response to the pandemic, the AAHC has continued offering our low-cost/no cost immigration services digitally for our clients. We have seen an uptick in immigration clients during this time and fully serviced them despite closing our office on March 13, 2020. Additionally, the AAHC has participated in mask distribution to different Arab American centers throughout the city of Flint. The AAHC has also functioned as a resource hub notifying our community on updates regarding immigration, COVID, public charge, and Census 2020.

The AAHC has shifted to entirely digital outreach during this time and it remains the primary way we service our clients and the Greater Flint population. However, while our immigration program and civic engagement work have received funding, we are still in desperate need of funding for our technological capabilities in providing services. It is of direct benefit to our community that we are able to continue maintaining optimum use of our technology resources to service them and provide them with the updates they desperately need. Our IT Coordinator assures that our database can run properly for our immigration clients, that our phones work to coordinate mask distributions, and that our website and social media is updated so that we can inform our community about major changes in policies that directly affect their lives. Therefore, in order to continue providing vital services to our community during the COVID pandemic, it is crucial that we receive funding to ensure our technology resources can meet their needs.



Additionally, the immigration grant we received from a separate foundation finishes at the end of February 2021. To ensure that there is financial support for our immigration program in the time that we apply for another grant from that foundation, the AAHC is asking for financial support for the Immigration Director for March and April 2021.

IV. Proposed Budget

Expenses

IT Coordinator Wages (20 hours a week, October 2020 - April 2021) **\$9,000**

Outreach & Communications **\$1,000**

Immigration Director Wages (March & April 2021) **\$5,000**

Total: **\$15,000**