



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

Meeting Minutes

December 7th, 2022 | Noon EST
350 S Main St #300, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners Present:

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Suzanne Sukkar, Chair | Jaleelah Ahmed |
| Nadine Kalasho, First Vice Chair | John Daoud |
| Lina Hourani-Harajli, Treasurer (arrived at 12:16) | Adhid Miri |
| Amal Berry, Secretary (arrived at 12:26) | Najib Hourani |
| Nabeleh Ghareeb | Zane Hatahet |
| Haley Jonna | Alexandra Nassar |

Officials and Staff: Assistant AG, Civil Rights Office, Tonya Jeter (virtual attendance); Executive Director, Office of Global Michigan, Poppy Sais-Hernandez (attended virtually until arrival at 1:40 PM); Director, Office of New American Integration, Karen Phillippi (left at 12:45), Civil Rights Specialist, Michigan Department of Civil Rights, Charles Schoder; MITS Program Analyst, Sharif Krabti (attended virtually); Administrator, CMEAA, Alexander Sahouri.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Sukkar at 12:13 PM ET, roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared.

Chair Sukkar requested a motion for Commissioner Ghareeb to act as interim secretary for the purpose of this meeting.

On Motion made by Commissioner John Daoud and seconded by Commissioner Zane Hatahet, the Commission approved Commissioner Nabeleh Ghareeb to act as interim Secretary until Secretary Berry arrives. *Motion carries unanimously*

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Sukkar requested a motion to adopt the December 7th agenda as presented.

On Motion made by Vice Chair Nadine Kalasho and seconded by Commissioner Alexandra Nassar, the Commission approved the meeting agenda of December, 7th as presented. *Motion carries unanimously*

Chair Sukkar recognized Interim Secretary Ghareeb to introduce the September meeting minutes for approval:

III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

On Motion made by Commissioner Haley Jonna, and seconded by Treasurer Lina Hourani-Harajli, the Commission approved the meeting minutes of September 8th as presented. *Motion carries unanimously.*

Chair Sukkar recognized Treasurer Hourani-Harajli to introduce the Treasurers report:

IV. TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Hourani-Harajli reminded the commission that CMEAA's budget has been increased to \$210,000 and that increase will allow the commission to hire a full-time employee.

She also reminded the commission that CMEAA had closed out its FY22 budget with two sponsorships but that we wouldn't be able to review the final budget to actual for a week or so until the LEO budget has it prepared for us.

Treasurer Hourani Harajli invited a motion to accept the FY23 October Budget to Actual as presented.

On Motion made by Commissioner Nabeleh Ghareeb and Commissioner Zane Hatahet the Commission approved the Treasurer's report as presented for FY23 October Budget to Actual. *Motion carries unanimously.*

Chair Sukkar recognized Director of the Office for New American Integration, Karen Phillippi for the OGM update:

V. OGM UPDATE

Attached is a copy of the OGM Update.

Dr. Miri Asked if OGM knew where the foreign arrivals were settled. Director Phillippi explained that OGM can track how many foreign arrivals were resettled by where the resettlement agencies are located and how many foreign arrivals they resettled. Resettlement agencies located in Macomb County resettled zero, but that doesn't mean no foreign arrivals were resettled there, Director Phillippi noted. Resettlement agencies in Oakland County resettled 274, in Washtenaw 171, Wayne 162, and Ingham 120.

Commissioner Nassar asked why there weren't any resettled in Genesee County; Director Phillippi explained that there isn't a resettlement agency in Genesee County and that there are resettlement agencies in Calhoun, Ingham, Kalamazoo, Kent, Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties

Commissioner Hatahet requested that the information shared about the foreign arrival resettlement be shared with the commission in the form of an executive summary.

Alexander noted that all the information would be recorded in the meeting minutes with Treasurer Hourani-Harajli affirming that a document clearly presenting the information would be helpful.

Chair Sukkar recognized Alexander to give the Administrative Report.

VI. ADMINISTRATORS REPORT

Attached below is the Administrator's Report.

There was a discussion about the use of State of Michigan email accounts after Alexander explained that commissioners could not have emails sent to their state email auto-forwarded to their personal emails, Commissioner Hatahet asked if that had to do with a no replication policy, following up with the question of if they could print files sent to their state email accounts. Alexander confirmed that yes that was part of the State of Michigan policy and no you can not print files sent to your state email accounts.

Alexander also noted that only using your state emails would protect commissioners from their personal email being FOIA'd.

There were a few troubleshooting issues discussed, Chair Sukkar asked CMEAA Counsel Tonya Jeter if there could be a WhatsApp group chat. The Assistant AG explained that there might be OMA complications involved with that and its best to have all state business be conducted on via State of Michigan email.

Alexander informed the commission that he would no longer send state business to your personal emails after December 12th.

VII. Strategic Priorities Deliberation and Vote

Chair Sukkar began the discussion on the strategic priorities summarizing how the commission had gotten to this point, outlining how the (attached below) draft was worked on by the Operations, Community Engagement, and Legislative Advocacy committees lead by Commissioners Ghareeb, Ahmed, and Beydoun respectively. Chair Sukkar handed the conversation to Nabeleh to go over the Operations section.

Nabeleh celebrated the contributions of the Operations Committee, noting how two out of the three were brand new and offered a fresh perspective to the conversation. Commissioner Ghareeb continued by explaining how they arrived to the final product by going through the OGM strategic recommendations has a platform or framework and then summarized the notes from those conversations in a streamlined way. She went on to say how a focus of the discussion was the desire to develop relationships and connections with different state departments and

agencies that are important to our communities, engaging in all aspect's avenues of improvement such as, employment, education, and all avenues of improvement in our community. Commissioner Ghareeb added that although some of what was discussed by the operations committee was not included in the operations section, it was included in another section of the strategic priorities draft.

Commissioner Hatahet, also of the Operations Committee, speaking of the "bridge" bullet point in the operations section, noted that there was discussion about refugees or foreign arrivals and how there are several issues such as language and professional certification and how the commission should connect these sorts of individuals to the available resources.

Alexander suggested that, using the notes he collected in the individual meetings with the commissioners on the priorities draft, the commission begin amending the Operations section of the draft with Chair Sukkar suggesting they go point by point so its ready to vote on.

Executive Director Poppy Hernandez, who at this point was joining the conversation virtually, wanted to state for the commission that the strategic priorities can be amended at any point after they have been voted on also. She also noted that the comments in relation to refugee resettlement are exactly the types of comments that she hopes get relayed as CMEAA works with OGM's Refugee Services.

Commissioner Ghareeb began to read through the Operations section. Commissioners Dr. Hourani, Nassar, Hourani-Harajli, and Hatahet each made a point about amending the first and third bullets, possibly combining them, but mainly to make the third bullet point to be broader, such as adding language such as "including but not limited to" or "e.g."

Alexander suggested that in the third sub-bullet point of the third bullet, the language "/foreign arrival resettlement" should be added after "Language Access" and that it would address many of the issues that Commissioner Hatahet was raising.

Dr. Miri raised the issue again of certification and employment opportunities. Alexander suggested adding "/employment/certification" after "Educational" in the fourth sub-bullet point under the third bullet.

Moving on to the Community Engagement section, Commissioner Ahmed thanked all the members of the community engagement committee the objective of the community engagement was derived by the strategic recommendations framework, to maintain an annual calendar of events, to hold Arab American Heritage Month and Chaldean American Month celebrations, and supporting small businesses. Commissioner Ahmed then read through the Community engagement section point by point.

Commissioner Hatahet asked if the commission ever held a job fair. Alexander answered that the commission hasn't, but that they certainly could in the future. Alexander and Commissioner Ahmed also suggested that, as it was expressed in a pervious meeting with Dr. Hourani, that in the Community Engagement section's strategy statement, that the language "education associations/institutions," be added after "media resources,"

Commissioner Hatahet suggested that the language “and other events” be added after “Chaldean American Month” in the first bullet of the Community Engagement section. Commissioner Ghareeb was confused by the word “uplift” in the third bullet, with Commissioner Ahmed and Secretary Berry suggesting that “uplift” be replaced with the word “advance”

Dr. Hourani pointed out that hosting town halls was a topic of discussion in relation to community engagement and that he was not seeing it in the priorities draft; Alexander explained that although it is not explicitly listed, town halls and events of that sort are implied in the calendar bullet.

The commission then took a ten minute break; during this break Alexander asked CMEAA counsel Tonya Jeter if the commission would need to make a separate motion for each amendment, or list all amendments in one motion, the Assistant AG responded that all the amendments could be voted via one motion.

Coming back from the break, Chair Sukkar announced to the rest of the commission that there was a sidebar during the break relating to the first sub-bullet in the third bullet (or the “SBA bullet”) of the Operations section. Alexander then read language derived from that sidebar between Chair Sukkar and Treasurer Hourani-Harajli, that the original language should be struck, and replaced with “Business management resources for entrepreneurs i.e. SBA loans” Treasurer Hourani Harajli, wanting to inform the others of the conversation during the break, noted how during ACCESS’s last entrepreneur fair, she learned that what entrepreneurs needed most are resources teaching them how to budget, pricing, forming an LCC, and other business management skills.

Commissioner Hatahet, commenting on the “SBA bullet”, then suggested that the commission adopt the language “helping people achieve economic independence, including through business resource management, higher education, etc.” Secretary Berry endorsed including the language “economic independence”

Treasurer Hourani Harajli suggested that the “economic independence” language be added to the strategy statement at the beginning of the Operations section. Commissioner Daoud disagreed because he thought that was too narrow language to include in that area. Chair Sukkar then suggested that the “economic independence” language should be in bullet point three. Executive Director of Global Michigan, Poppy Hernandez then arrived as Commissioner Ghareeb then suggested the language “The Commission would like to be a bridge to the community by facilitating the achievement of economic independence” for the third bullet of the operations section. Executive Director Hernandez then suggested the word “prosperity” instead of “independence”. Chair Sukkar asked what commissioners preferred between “prosperity” and “independence” with most commissioners preferring “prosperity”

Treasurer Hourani-Harajli then read through the Legislative Advocacy section. There was a brief conversation about the importance of the MENA classification issue, with Commissioners Jonna and Berry suggesting that language relating to certification should be added to the second bullet. Treasurer Hourani-Harajli suggested that instead of adding language, that the language “for research and public health purposes” should be struck; the commissioners agreed.

Then Commissioner Hatahet expressed concern about the first bullet, being that if CMEAA is codified into statute with the current name, it would obstruct the commission from changing the name in the future. Executive Director Hernandez responded that the commission could use the opportunity of writing the “boiler plate” draft legislation to not only change the name but set all the expectations and mandates of the commission.

Dr. Hourani then inquired if the issue of establishing CMEAA into statute would be also worked on by the other committees, to which he was assured that they would by Alexander.

Commissioner Hatahet also requested that the “economic prosperity” language to be amended to “facilitating the achievement of health and economic prosperity”

Alexander then listed all the proposed amendments:

The third bullet of the operations section will read “The Commission would like to be a bridge to the community by facilitating the achievement of health and economic prosperity”

The first sub-bullet point of the third bullet point in the Operations section will read “Business management resources for entrepreneurs i.e. SBA loans”

The third sub-bullet point of the third bullet point in the Operations section will read “Language access/foreign arrival resettlement”

The fourth sub-bullet point of the third bullet point in the Operations section will read “Educational/employment/certification opportunities”

The strategy statement in the Community Engagement section will read “While uplifting the contributions of MEAs to Michigan, CMEAA will leverage MEA businesses/professionals, chambers of commerce, media resources, education associations/institutions and an annual Calendar to build a coalition in support of our priorities”

The first bullet of the of the Community Engagement section will read “CMEAA will hold celebrations for Arab American Heritage Month and Chaldean American Month and other events that will be advertised on a public event calendar”

The third bullet of the Community Engagement section will read “CMEAA will advance the contributions of MEAs to Michigan’s commerce, arts, sciences, athletics, and cuisine by scheduling visits from government officials, including the EOG”

The second bullet of the Legislative Advocacy section will read “We will advocate for the State of Michigan to create a MENA classification.

On Motion made by Treasurer Lina Hourani-Harajli, Seconded by Commissioner Nabeleh Ghareeb, the Commission approved the listed amendments to the Strategic Priorities.
Motion carries unanimously.

On Motion made by Commissioner Zane Hatahet, Seconded by Dr. Najib Hourani, the Commission approved the Strategic Priorities as amended. *Motion carries unanimously.*

VIII. Old Business

None.

IX. New Business

A. Select New Meeting Dates and Locations

Chair Sukkar began the discussion on meeting dates and locations by asking Alexander about the proposition of doing a joint-commission meeting with the other Ethnic Commissions. Alexander informed the commission that an issue had come up with the original date due to HLCOM's banquet being rescheduled. Executive Hernandez suggested that if the commission just voted on a schedule slate today, that it could still be changed in compliance with the OMA. Chair Sukkar suggested that the commission meet the first Wednesday of March, June, September, and December as had been done in the past. Secretary Berry offered Ford to host the March meeting, particularly if it will be a joint commission meeting. Alexander reminded the commission that they had to reach as many regions of Michigan as possible. Dr. Hourani suggested that the commission could go to Lansing in the fall. Chair Sukkar then made the following suggestion for a slate: March 1st at Ford, June 7th at ACCESS, September 6th at the Capitol Building, and December 6th at ACC.

On Motion made by Secretary Amal Berry and Seconded by Treasurer Lina Hourani-Harajli, the Commission approved the meeting dates and locations for 2023 to be March 1st at Ford, June 7th at ACCESS, September 6th at the Capitol Building, and December 6th at ACC. *Motion carries unanimously.*

X. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None


XI. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Sukkar requested a motion to adjourn:

On Motion made by Treasurer Lina Hourani-Harajli and seconded by Commissioner John Daoud, the Commission Adjourned. *Motion carries unanimously*

Meeting adjourned at 2:10

X 
Anjal M. Berry
Secretary

X 
Suzanne K. Sukkar
Chair

FY 2023 Budget to Actual Report CMEAA

October 2022

Reporting Period: 10/1/22-10/31/22
FTEs thru Pay Period Ending: 10/23/22
% of FY Elapsed: 8%

Expenditures & Encumbrances

| Appn | Fund | Grant/Source (if applicable) | Accounting Template | Actual | Budget | Remaining | Actual % |
|--------------|------|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| 36660 | 1000 | State General Fund/General Purpose | 1862923T001 | 70,000 | 183,074 | 113,074 | 38% |
| | | | | | | - | 0% |
| Total | | | | 70,000 | 183,074 | 113,074 | 38% |

FTEs

| Appn | Actual | Authorized | Remaining |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 36660 | 0.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Total | 0.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |

Cost Category Details
Appropriation 36660

| Appn | Fund | Grant/Source (if applicable) | Cost Category | Expenditures | Encumbrances | Actual | Budget | Remaining | % Actual |
|--------------|------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| 36660 | 1000 | State General Fu | Salaries & Benefits | | | - | | - | 0% |
| | | | Office Operations | | | - | 1,000 | 1,000 | 0% |
| | | | Travel | | | - | 1,000 | 1,000 | 0% |
| | | | Training | | | - | | - | 0% |
| | | | Advertising | | | - | | - | 0% |
| | | | Contractual, Professional Fees & Dues | 5,562 | 64,438 | 70,000 | 70,000 | - | 100% |
| | | | Information Technology | - | - | - | 4,007 | 4,007 | 0% |
| | | | Telecommunications | | | - | 11,100 | 11,100 | 0% |
| | | | Buildings | | | - | | - | 0% |
| | | | Grants | | | - | 90,000 | 90,000 | 0% |
| | | | MI Admin Hearings (MOAHR) | | | - | | - | 0% |
| | | | Attorney General | | | - | | - | 0% |
| | | | DTMB Indirect | | | - | | - | 0% |
| | | | LEO Executive | | | - | 5,967 | 5,967 | 0% |
| Total | | | | 5,562 | 64,438 | 70,000 | 183,074 | 113,074 | 38% |



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

Administrator's Report

Alexander Sahouri

CMEAA Administrator

SahouriA1@michigan.gov

Good afternoon,

This fall has been a pivotal moment for CMEAA. In the culmination of a change-management process that began a year ago last December, the commission will put forward new strategic priorities for a vote. I personally would like to recognize the value of the work each of you put into this document over the past year, including filling out surveys, attending meetings, the reviewing and amending of notes, etc. Now, before we turn our attention to next year, it's time to review our accomplishments the past quarter in our community engagement, operations, and advocacy.

This past quarter CMEAA was represented by yours truly at the Arab and Chaldean Council Gala, ACCESS's 50th Anniversary Gala, and the Arab American Heritage Council's Ensure the Legacy Banquet. As we will confer in our strategic priorities discussion, leveraging these events such as these will be important to our community engagement work going forward.

Regarding our operations, you all have been given new State of Michigan email accounts. By the Governor's Executive Directive No. 2019-5, you are all mandated to do state business with your SOM email accounts. Also, the CMEAA has coordinated with the new MIHI office on housing equity coordinators across the state. Thank you to commissioners Hourani-Harajli, Daoud, and Dr. Miri for your assistance in that effort. I also completed a language access training and a "5D" consulting training.

Finally, CMEAA business cards were printed for you to distribute while you advocate on behalf of the commission. You can pick them up from me after the meeting.

As always, thank you all for your continued service.

Sincerely,

Alexander



CMEAA
COMMISSION ON MIDDLE EASTERN
AMERICAN AFFAIRS
MICHIGAN

Strategic Priorities

Operational:

CMEAA will work with State of Michigan departments, agencies, and offices to address the issues and concerns of the MEA community in Michigan.

- CMEAA will work with state departments (i.e., DTMB, MEDC, MIHI) to provide quality stakeholder engagement for more equitable distribution of state resources
- CMEAA will work with the Diversity and Inclusion Office on cultural education
- The Commission would like to be a bridge to the community by facilitating the following:
 - Small businesses getting SBA loans
 - MEA appointments to State of Michigan Boards and Commissions
 - Language Access
 - Educational Opportunities

Community Engagement:

While uplifting the contributions of MEAs to Michigan, CMEAA will leverage MEA businesses/professionals, chambers of commerce, media resources, and an annual Calendar to build a coalition in support of our priorities.

- CMEAA will hold celebrations for Arab American Heritage Month and Chaldean American Month that will be advertised on a public event calendar
 - Community partners may request for their events to be included in the 2024 calendar while the 2023 calendar will be limited to CMEAA events and the large annual events from ACCESS, ACC, CCF, AAHC, the chambers, the museum, etc.
- CMEAA will work with the business community to help level the playing field for MEA businesses (lack of minority owned business certification is a barrier)
- CMEAA will uplift the contributions of MEAs to Michigan's commerce, arts, sciences, athletics, and cuisine by scheduling visits from government officials, including the EOG

Legislative Advocacy:

CMEAA will advocate for our priorities via the budget process, meeting with the EOG and LEO's legislative offices and legislators to advocate for legislation that will have a positive impact on the MEA community in Michigan.

- CMEAA must be codified by statute
- We will advocate for the State of Michigan to create a MENA classification for research and public health purposes
- CMEAA will work with the other Ethnic Commissions on legislative issues that intersect the MEA, Hispanic/Latino, and APA populations such as DRIVE SAFE



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- The Commission would like to be a bridge to the community facilitating the achievement of health and economic prosperity:
 - Business management resources for entrepreneurs i.e. SBA loans
 - MEA appointments to State of Michigan Boards and Commissions
 - Language access/foreign arrival resettlement
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