



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

## **Meeting Minutes**

March 2nd, 2022 | Noon EST

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

### **ATTENDANCE:**

#### Commissioners Present:

Suzanne Sukkar, Chair  
Susan Dabaja, Vice Chair  
Dave Abdallah  
Michael Romaya  
Jaleelah Ahmed

Nadine Kalasho  
Nabeleh Ghareeb  
John Daoud

Officials and Staff: Assistant AG, Civil Rights Office, Tonya Jeter; Executive Director, Office of Global Michigan, Poppy Hernandez; Executive Director, Michigan Department of Civil Rights, John Johnson Jr.; Civil Rights Specialist, Michigan Department of Civil Rights, Charles Schoder; Administrator, CMEAA, Alexander Sahouri

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Sukkar at 12:24 PM ET, roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared. Under the advisement of commission counsel Tonya Jeter, Chair Sukkar requested someone be nominated at the floor to be interim-secretary due to the Secretary's absence from the meeting. Commissioner Ghareeb volunteered.

**On Motion made by Commissioner Abdallah, and Seconded by Vice Chair Dabaja, the Commission voted to name Commissioner Ghareeb as interim-Secretary. *Motion carries unanimously.***

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

### **II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**On Motion made by Vice Chair Dabaja and seconded by Commissioner Abdallah, the Commission approved the meeting agenda of March, 2<sup>nd</sup> as presented. *Motion carries unanimously***

Chair Sukkar recognized interim-Secretary Ghareeb to introduce the December meeting minutes for approval:

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

**On Motion made by Commissioner Abdallah and seconded by Vice Chair Dabaja, the Commission approved the meeting minutes of December, 8<sup>st</sup> as presented. *Motion carries unanimously.***

Chair Sukkar recognizes Alexander CMEAA administrator, to give the Treasurer's report at the request of Treasurer Hourani-Harajli who was unable to attend the meeting

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

Alexander informed the Commission that spending was on track and that the awarded funds to UMS and EHRA were paid out. The RMS charges continue to be low and that the commission is on track to spend the budget.

**On Motion made by Commissioner Ghareeb and Seconded Commissioner Daoud, the Commission approved the Treasurer's report as presented for FY22 December Budget to Actual. *Motion carries unanimously.***

Chair Sukkar introduced Executive Director of the Office of Global Michigan and Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer Poppy Hernandez for the LEO update:

### **V. OGM UPDATE**

Attached is the OGM update prepared by Executive Director Hernandez

Highlights discussed in more detail: RMS charges will no longer be charged to CMEAA but to the Office of Global Michigan instead

Chair Sukkar recognized Alexander to give the Administrative Report.

### **VI. ADMINISTRATORS REPORT**

Attached is the Administrator's Report.

### **VII. SMALL GROUP MEETING REPORT**

Alexander went through the attached report on survey and focus group data and Executive Director Hernandez explained while OGM and the Ethnic Commission staff doesn't yet have recommendations, she did have some observations to highlight:

First is that commissioners from all ethnic commissions agree that the most important work is being a bridge between local communities and state government. Second is that across all the commissions, there was an inability to express impact metrics. And lastly, there was an inability to articulate intersecting priorities across the commissions.

## **VIII. DISCUSSION AND COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

What followed from the presentation of the report was a discussion on the direction that the commission would like to move toward. Chair Sukkar identified removing barriers to licensing for foreign trained professionals and that she wanted to begin working in a committee format, with committees working on community engagement, legislative advocacy, and operations. Commissioner Ghareeb suggested that there be a short description of each committee shared to the Commission via email for those who are not in attendance to the meeting. Alexander reminded the commission that it's the Chairpersons prerogative to appoint chairs to each committee also. Vice Chair Dabaja stressed that the staff for the commission is paramount to it's success and that the Commission needs the budget for the Administrator to work full time; Commissioner Abdallah echoed these sentiments.

## **IX. OLD BUSINESS**

Chair Sukkar lead the commission in discussion to reschedule the June meeting due to conflict with the Mackinac Policy Conference. It was settled that the commission would meet on June 8<sup>th</sup> at the Arab American National Museum Annex and that the September and December locations be considered on a later date.

**On Motion made by Commissioner Ghareeb and Seconded by Commissioner Ahmed the Commission moved to hold the June meeting on June 8<sup>th</sup> at the Arab American National Museum Annex. *Motion carries unanimously.***

Chair Sukkar recognized Commissioner Ghareeb to speak on National Arab American Heritage Month

## **X. NEW BUSINESS**

Commissioner Ghareeb began by thanking the Chair for the time to address the commission. She then followed with a brief historical summary of National Arab American Heritage Month being in April, stating that it was began by the Arab America Foundation in 2017. Many of the states across the country have recognized Arab American Heritage Month in April including President Joe Biden in 2021. Commissioner Ghareeb also noted that many states across the country are trying to recognize Arab American Heritage Month permanently via statute, including Michigan.

Commissioner Ghareeb expressed the desire for all the Ethnic Commissions to recognize Arab American Heritage Month this April

Commissioner Ahmed Asked if there is an effort to make the proclamation permanent via the state legislature. Commissioner Ghareeb informed her that there has been a bill introduced to the state legislature by Representative Aiyash.

**On Motion made by Vice Chair Dabaja and Seconded Commissioner Abdallah, the Commission moved to Proclaim April as Arab American Heritage Month and Chaldean American Heritage Month. *Motion carries unanimously.***

**XI. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

Before the Meeting Adjourned, Chair Sukkar welcomed Executive Director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, John Johnson Jr. who thanked the Commission for a welcoming invitation.

Meeting adjourned at 2:03

X

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Amal M. Berry  
Secretary

X

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Suzanne K. Sukkar  
Chair

**Ethnic Commissions- Commission of Middle Eastern Affairs (36660)**  
**FY22 January Budget to Actual**

<b>Available Funds:</b>	
Carry In	-
New	125,000
<b>Admin - Total</b>	<b>125,000</b>

% of Year Elapsed		33%
<b>Projections Based On:</b>		
	12 Mth	Payroll
Remaining	8	18
Completed	4	8

Categories	FY21 ACT YTD	FY22 Spending Plan			Actual Expenditures YTD Thru 1/31/2022			Balance/Projections		
		Plan	Adj	Adjusted Plan	Expenses	Encumbrances	Total Expenses	Current Balance	Projected Balance/Lapse	% of Budget
Salaries & Benefits	-						-	0	0	0%
Office Operations	68	100		100			-	100	33	0%
Travel	-	200		200			-	200	67	0%
Training	-	-		-			-	0	0	0%
Advertising	-	-		-			-	0	0	0%
Contractual, Professional Fees & Dues	43,994	70,000	-	70,000	20,187	49,813	70,000	0	(46,667)	100%
Information Technology	2,448	2,400	-	2,400	182		182	2,218	618	8%
Telecommunications	1,081	1,100	-	1,100	324		324	776	42	29%
Grants	50,000	27,600	-	27,600	-	20,000	20,000	7,600	(10,800)	72%
LEO Cost Allocation	16,477	23,600	-	23,600	2,567		2,567	21,033	5,299	11%
<b>Budgeted Expenditures:</b>	<b>114,069</b>	<b>125,000</b>		<b>125,000</b>	<b>23,260</b>	<b>69,813</b>	<b>93,073</b>	<b>31,927</b>	<b>(51,407)</b>	<b>74%</b>

Remaining Available Funds	-
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**ETHNIC COMMISSIONS (PA 56 of 2019)**  
**Commission for Middle Eastern American Affairs (36660)**  
*FY22 CMEA January Budget to Actual*

	<b>Appropriation</b>	<b>YTD Expenditures &amp; Encumbrances</b>	<b>Projected Full Year</b>
Communications	\$ 1,100	\$ 324	\$ <b>1,100</b>
Contractual	\$ 70,000	\$ -	\$ 70,000
- Alexander Sahouri		\$ 70,000	\$ 70,000
Total Contractual	\$ -	\$ -	\$ <b>70,000</b>
Travel	\$ 200	\$ -	\$ <b>200</b>
Supplies & Materials	\$ 100	\$ -	\$ 100
Total Supp & Mat	\$ -	\$ -	\$ <b>100</b>
Grants	\$ 27,600	\$ -	
- University Musical Society		\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
- EHRA		\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
- Misc		\$ -	\$ 7,600
Total Grants		\$ 20,000	\$ <b>27,600</b>
Advertising	\$ -	\$ -	
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Cost Allocations	\$ 23,600	\$ 2,567	\$ <b>23,600</b>
IT Costs Allocations	\$ 2,400	\$ 182	\$ <b>2,400</b>
Total Projected Budget	\$ 125,000	\$ 93,073	\$ <b>125,000</b>
Actual Appropriated Amount	\$ 125,000	\$ 125,000	\$ 125,000
Difference	\$ -	\$ 31,927	\$ -

Department: 186 - Labor and Economic Opportunity

Unit: 2923

Doc Code	Document ID	Version Number	Vendor Number	Vendor Name	Record Date	Commodity Line Number	Commodity Code	Commodity Code Description	Open Amount	Commodity Accounting Line Amount	Commodity Accounting Line Number	Accounting Payment Line Amount	Accounting Payment Request ID	Payment Request Line Number	Scheduled Payment Date	Payment Request Line Amount
GG	220000000618	1	CV0020267	UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY	11/3/2021	1	G15GMGRSS	2022	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	1	\$ 10,000.00				0.00
PO	220000000754	1	VS0196785	Alexander Sahouri	10/17/2021	3	91806	Administrative Consulting FY22	\$ 47,113.06	\$ 70,000.00	1	\$ 70,000.00	PRM,186,220000 007076	1	10/28/2021	\$ 2,997.00
<b>Grand Total</b>									<b>\$ 57,113.06</b>	<b>\$ 80,000.00</b>		<b>\$ 80,000.00</b>				<b>\$ 2,997.00</b>

Report ID:	SIGMA Exp Detail - FIN GEN ACC	SIGMA	Thru APD - 4
Run Date:	02/09/2022	Appn Summary - Exp Detail - YTD	FY - 2022
Run Time:	4:47:36 PM	Appropriation - 36660: Commission on Middle Eastern American affairs	

OBJECT GROUP	OBJECT	Department Object Label	VCUST	Vendor Legal Name	APD	Jrnl Doc (Code,Dept,ID)	Jrnl Vendor Invoice No	Jrnl Doc Ref (Code,Dept,ID)	Jrnl Doc Accounting Line Desc	YTD EXP
6100 - Telecommunications and Utilities	6102 - Other Phone Expenses (At&T, Sprint, Etc)	6102 - Other Phone Expenses (At&T, Sprint, Etc)	CV0007142	CELLCO PARTNERSHIP	2	PRC,186,220000013652	9889576528			\$81.12
	6102 - Other Phone Expenses (At&T, Sprint, Etc)	6102 - Other Phone Expenses (At&T, Sprint, Etc)	CV0007142	CELLCO PARTNERSHIP	2	PRC,186,220000020072	9891775842			\$81.15
	6102 - Other Phone Expenses (At&T, Sprint, Etc)	6102 - Other Phone Expenses (At&T, Sprint, Etc)	CV0007142	CELLCO PARTNERSHIP	3	PRC,186,220000032983	9893995963			\$81.10
	6102 - Other Phone Expenses (At&T, Sprint, Etc)	6102 - Other Phone Expenses (At&T, Sprint, Etc)	CV0007142	CELLCO PARTNERSHIP	4	PRC,186,220000040708	9896238368			\$81.04
<b>6100 - Telecommunications and Utilities</b>									<b>SUM:</b>	<b>\$324.41</b>
6112 - Internal Purchased Services	6736 - DTMB IT - Monthly Invoice	6736 - DTMB IT - Monthly Invoice		NOT ENTERED	3	JV1,186,220000007472			DTMB IT billing-Oct 2021	\$53.84
	6736 - DTMB IT - Monthly Invoice	6736 - DTMB IT - Monthly Invoice		NOT ENTERED	4	JV1,186,220000007787			DTMB IT billing-Nov 2021	\$53.84
	6736 - DTMB IT - Monthly Invoice	6736 - DTMB IT - Monthly Invoice		NOT ENTERED	4	JV1,186,220000008945			DTMB IT billing-Dec 2021	\$73.84
<b>6112 - Internal Purchased Services</b>									<b>SUM:</b>	<b>\$181.52</b>
6120 - External Purchased Services	7020 - Other Purchases Services 1099 Report	7020 - Other Purchases Services 1099 Report	VS0196785	Alexander Sahouri	2	PRM,186,220000007076	10/4/2021	PO,186,220000000754		\$2,997.00
	7020 - Other Purchases Services 1099 Report	7020 - Other Purchases Services 1099 Report	VS0196785	Alexander Sahouri	2	PRM,186,220000008040	10/18/21	PO,186,220000000754		\$2,025.00
	7020 - Other Purchases Services 1099 Report	7020 - Other Purchases Services 1099 Report	VS0196785	Alexander Sahouri	2	PRM,186,220000011601	11/1/21	PO,186,220000000754		\$3,878.94
	7020 - Other Purchases Services 1099 Report	7020 - Other Purchases Services 1099 Report	VS0196785	Alexander Sahouri	3	PRM,186,220000017222	11/15/2021	PO,186,220000000754		\$3,780.00
	7020 - Other Purchases Services 1099 Report	7020 - Other Purchases Services 1099 Report	VS0196785	Alexander Sahouri	3	PRM,186,220000020059	12/6/2021	PO,186,220000000754		\$3,672.00
	6032 - LEO Exec Alloc	6032 - LEO Exec Alloc		NOT ENTERED	4	JV1,186,220000009500			LEO CSS&M Allocation Q1 FY22	\$165.88
	7020 - Other Purchases Services 1099 Report	7020 - Other Purchases Services 1099 Report	VS0196785	Alexander Sahouri	4	PRM,186,220000028571	12/20/2021	PO,186,220000000754		\$3,834.00
<b>6120 - External Purchased Services</b>									<b>SUM:</b>	<b>\$20,352.82</b>
		<b>Sum:</b>								<b>\$20,858.75</b>



### Michigan International Talent Solutions

- In progress with providing technical assistance for foreign born job seekers and the MI Echo Scholarship Program.
- Continuing efforts with LARA, MDE and LEO's Employment & Training division to reduce barriers for licensing.
- DHHS COVID Vaccine Initiative for Immigrant and Refugee communities.
- Language Access Planning in EOG budget proposal.

### Refugee Coordination Services

- The state of Michigan has welcomed just over 1,700 Afghan refugees.
- The SOM continues to be actively engaged in resettlement efforts supporting access to affordable housing and healthcare.

### Ethnic Commissions

- Community Engagement
  - ACCESS Visit
  - State of Michigan Equity & Inclusion Officers collaborating with CMEAA on Arab American Heritage Month celebrations.
- Legislative Advocacy
  - Executive Office releases budget proposal prioritizing support for small businesses, access to childcare, investing in education and infrastructure.
  - Poverty Task Force report includes recommendations for increased access to DHHS benefits for immigrants and language access planning.
- Operations
  - RMS charges update
  - Strengthening collaboration across commissions
  - Extensive data and assessment project underway, recommendations forthcoming. Initial observations across commissions:
    - Most important work is to be a bridge between local communities and state government.
    - Inability to articulate impact metrics.
    - Inability to articulate intersecting priorities across commissions.



**CMEAA**  
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## Administrator's Report

**Alexander Sahouri**

*CMEAA Administrator*

[SahouriA1@michigan.gov](mailto:SahouriA1@michigan.gov)

(810) 265-9557

Good afternoon Commissioners,

In the last quarter, the Ethnic Commissions staff and the Office of Global Michigan team has been working hard to provide Commissioners with data and recommendations on how to improve the operations and make a larger impact in our communities and the State of Michigan more broadly. Through the surveys conducted in December and the small group meetings done in January, we have prepared a brief that Commissioners may use in their future strategic planning.

In community engagement news, The Commission is thrilled to report that on February 12<sup>th</sup> at the Power Center in Ann Arbor, for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, UMS hosted a live event sponsored by CMEAA: *Layl (Night)* a dance performance by Ali Chahrour.

The performance was attended by 505 people. The largely Caucasian crowd was very attentive, and there was an extended period of applause afterward. Rachel, an Ann Arbor resident and audience member, described the performance as “breathtaking,” citing a desire to learn Arabic and the cultural context that the art derives from. Eva, another Ann Arbor resident, echoed these comments while describing the performance as “meditative” and that it would stay with her.

The Commission and OGM staff want to thank you all for your input and collaboration in our data collection survey and small group meetings. Please turn to the Brief of Survey and Focus Group Results in your meeting packets.

Sincerely,

Alexander

**2022 Letter and Proclamation Kit  
for School Districts, Municipal, County, State Officials,  
and Non-Profit Organizations**

**Sample Letter:**



Date:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

As a member of the National Arab American Heritage Month Committee, I would like to invite you to recognize April 2022 as National Arab American Heritage Month.

During the month of April, the Arab America Foundation formally recognizes the achievements of Arab Americans through the celebration of National Arab American Heritage Month. Across the country, cultural institutions, school districts, municipalities, state legislatures, public servants, and non-profit organizations issue proclamations and engage in special events that celebrate our community's rich heritage and numerous contributions to society.

Arab America and the Arab America Foundation launched the National Arab American Heritage Month initiative in 2017, with just a handful of states recognizing the initiative. Last year, our grass-roots network of over 250 Arab American volunteers in 26 states gathered 130 [proclamations](#) from their states, counties, municipalities, and local school districts.

In fact, the President of the United States recognized the month of April as National Arab American Heritage Month with a [special letter](#) to our organization. Additionally, [Congress](#), the [U.S. Department of State](#), and 37 state governors issued proclamations commemorating the initiative.

We would be honored to receive a proclamation from you. I have provided sample language, including whereas clauses for the proclamation if that would be helpful.

The Arab America Foundation ([www.arabamericafoundation.org](http://www.arabamericafoundation.org)) is a non-profit educational and cultural organization that promotes the Arab heritage in the U.S., educates Americans about the Arab heritage and identity, and connects and empowers Arab Americans.

Again, we look forward to hearing from you soon and thank you in advance for supporting us as we commemorate National Arab American Heritage Month in April 2022.

With best wishes,

**(Your Name)**

Member,

National Arab American Heritage Month Committee

Arab America Foundation

## **2022 Sample Proclamation National Arab American Heritage Month**

**WHEREAS**, for over a century, Arab Americans have been making valuable contributions to virtually every aspect of American society: in medicine, law, business, education, technology, government, military service, culture; and

**WHEREAS**, since migrating to America, men and women of Arab descent have shared their rich culture and traditions with neighbors and friends, while also setting fine examples of model citizens and public servants; and

**WHEREAS**, they brought with them to America their resilient family values, strong work ethic, dedication to education, and diversity in faith and creed that have added strength to our great democracy; and

**WHEREAS**, Arab Americans have also enriched our society by sharing in the entrepreneurial American spirit that makes our nation free and prosperous; and

**WHEREAS**, the history of Arab Americans in the US. remains neglected or defaced by misconceptions, bigotry, and anti-Arab hate in the forms of crimes and speech; and

**WHEREAS**, Arab American issues, such as civil rights abuses, harmful stereotyping, and bullying must be combated in the forms of education and awareness; and

**WHEREAS**, they join all Americans in the desire to see a peaceful and diverse society, where every individual is treated equally and feels safe; and

**WHEREAS**, the incredible contributions and heritage of Arab Americans have helped us build a better nation; and

**NOW, THEREFORE**, we announce that the Arab America Foundation celebrates the contributions Arab Americans have made to society, and does hereby declare April 2022 to be National Arab American Heritage Month by (state, city, county, school district, organization, public servant) \_\_\_\_\_. We encourage our citizens to join us in this special observance