



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

Meeting Minutes

March 2, 2021 | Noon EST

Meeting held online via Microsoft Teams

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners Present:

Manal Saab- Chair

Michael Romaya- Vice Chair

John Daoud- 2nd Vice Chair

Lina Hourani-Harajli- Treasurer

Suzanne Sukkar- Secretary

Dr. Nabeel Obeid- Trustee at Large

Dave Abdallah

Abdulahkem Alsadah

Fay Beydoun

Susan Dabaja

Nabeleh Ghareeb

Chief Ron Haddad

Nadine Kalasho

Martin Manna

Officials and Staff: Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Director Fayrouz Saad (Office of Global Michigan), Karen Phillippi (Office of Global Michigan), Director Ghida Dagher (State Appointments) and Maan Abou Khzam (CMEAA Administrator).

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Saab at noon eastern declaring 100% attendance by the commissioners. Chair Saab welcomes two new appointed commissioners to CMEAA:

1. Commissioner Nabeleh Ghareeb, succeeding Rihan Issa, with term ending on April 19, 2022.
2. Commissioner Abdulhakem Alsadah, succeeding Sharif Hussein, with term ending on April 19, 2021.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On Motion duly made and supported, the Commission approved the meeting agenda of March 2. Motion carries unanimously

Chair Saab welcomed Governor Gretchen Whitmer by thanking her for her leadership and service to our beloved state during very difficult and challenging times further reaffirming the commission's commitment to aligning our actions with her goals and the stature of CMEAA for the betterment and advancement of all Michiganders. She encouraged all to listen to the Governor and consider we may collaborate to assist through these tragic times. We know first-hand we have the leadership at this table to make an impact, individually and collectively.

The Governor provided an update on her 2022 budget proposal and ongoing efforts to ramp up vaccinations so we can build back better from this pandemic. Her 2022 budget and recovery plan are laser-focused on putting Michigan back to work and sending kids back to school.

- It calls for the largest investment in k-12 schools in our state's history.
 - This includes money to stabilize schools and school districts and mitigate the impact of the pandemic on students' learning and development. It also has an increase of \$14.1 million to continue implementing a weighted foundation model that ensures students in special education programs, facing poverty, in rural and isolated districts, and English language learners have the resources they need to succeed in our public schools.
- Investing \$370 million in childcare to give working parents a much-needed boost and significantly lower costs, in some cases down to zero. This game-changing investment in early learning will provide access to quality, affordable childcare for 150,000 additional families.
- \$300 million towards fixing bridges in counties spanning the state.
- To continue pursuing 60 by 30 goal of having 60% of adults achieve a post-secondary degree or certificate program by 2030, the budget puts nearly \$200 million towards key programs for Michigan workforce.
 - \$120 million for the reconnect program, created with bipartisan support, which provides Michiganders 25 or older a tuition-free path to attend in-demand industry certificate programs or attain an associate degree.
 - \$60 million for Futures for Frontliners, which offers college tuition to essential workers who have been working tirelessly through the pandemic.
 - \$15 million for the going pro program, which expands employer-based training grants for new and current employees in high-demand, skilled trades.
- The plan allocates over \$5 billion in federal funds already appropriated to Michigan in a bipartisan bill signed in December by president trump.
- It includes \$225 million in relief directly to small businesses, \$575 million to expand covid testing, tracing, and lab capacity, extends unemployment, food, and rental assistance, and gives our schools \$1.7 billion so they can open for in-person learning without compromising the health of students, teachers, or parents.

The governor's budget makes investments in people, funds key projects, and unlocks potential. Both the MI Covid Recovery Plan and the Governor's proposed budget are crucial to jumpstarting Michigan's economy and getting back normal sooner.

Governor thanked the Middle Eastern Michigander community for their heroic efforts over the past year to help neighbors, friends, and families. Donations of PPE, food, and relief funds went a long way in helping families survive over the past year including the Kingdom of Jordan's donations of PPE, made possible by Haifa Fakhouri. Lastly, Governor wished everyone happy Arab American Heritage Month in advance, a Ramadan Mubarak, and Happy Easter holiday season to all commissioners.

III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

On Motion duly made and supported, the Commission approved the meeting minutes of December 9th as presented. *Motion carries unanimously.*

IV. 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.*

V. LEO UPDATE

Executive Director Saad gave a brief and general update on LEO and the Office of Global Michigan; particularly about the Governor’s Reconnect Program that offers tuition reimbursement for community college. As part of the Governor’s *Sixty By 30* initiative the Commission is encouraged to raise awareness of the Reconnect Program in their communities and networks.

VI. CMEAA ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Implementation Plan

Administrator Maan Abou Khzam reviewed the attached implementation plan (Appendix A) revised in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

None.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

None.

IX. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.



Suzanne Sukkar, Secretary



Manal B. Saab, Chair

Appendix A

Strategic Priorities - 1 -



“CMEAA Series” to advocate for MEA platform through facilitating Webinars around relevant topics to COVID-19

Mental Health

- Mental Health Concerns on the rise (Substance Use disorder, Domestic Violence, victims of crime)
- Look for hosting or cohosting Webinar hosted by leading Non-profits focused on Mental Health
- Facilitate Webinar for MEA participation including CMEAA Representative and Commissioners
- Utilize the state of MI for resources on speakers in the subject matter

Interfaith Dialogues

- CMEAA to lead interfaith dialogues online
- Experts to share how is the church and Mosque dealing with COVID-19

Cyber Bullying

- How do we create an online safe space with the heavy migration to online including industries across the board (?)

5

Strategic Priorities - 2 -



Align Objectives with state government and Governor

- Start the conversation with the governor and understand their wants and align on strategic plan
- How can CMEAA help during COVID times? MEA community to support Governor's EO's
- During COVID- Is there still a need for translated material? Are folks getting the information they need?
- How is funding impacted?
- Futures for front liners, New Skills now (objective to get people back to work, back to school)

6

Strategic Priorities -3-



Improve relations among Arab Americans and Chaldean Community (Find Goals between established organizations)

- Find a common link through education/history to change mindset/perception
- Start the conversation between Chaldean Museum director and AANM director
- Lead interfaith dialogues through the museums
- Work with other members of the community/organizations to fight common challenges
- Pull resources together where applicable

7

Strategic Priorities -4-



Education (Diversity and Inclusion) at Corporate level- **ON HOLD COVID-19**

- Education (Diversity and Inclusion) at Corporate level
- Leading MEA organizations to provide diversity trainings (MEA culture)
- Explain the MEA culture to the mainstream
- List the potential corporates that benefit from diversity and inclusion and can impact mainstream
- Define an outline for presentation on diversity and inclusion trainings
- Identify potential problems to perform the trainings
- Agree on a timeline to execute (Fall 2020?)
- Lack of representation in corporate boards leads to further divide within the community
- Refugee phobia, more education, joint progress
- Encourage joined work with MEA organizations

8

Strategic Priorities -5-



Lead Interfaith dialogues and community educational forums

- Start the conversation and connect both communities (fundraiser, dinners). Starts with us
- Reach out to other ethnic communities and understand/share their vision/strategy/goals to create a common advocacy goal
- Reach out to communities (MEA boards and understand their goals)

9

CMEAA Strategy Framework Workshop- Findings

Group 1, 2, 3 consolidated results

Challenges/Issues

- Mental Health, Opioid Epidemic, Domestic Violence: Lack of awareness
- Geographic Awareness- Racism/Unify communities
- Level of Representation- Public Service, Boards, Government
- Lack of Collaboration, Education, Understanding internally and externally
- Immigration Policies and Support
- Identify challenges to election participation

High Level Recommendations

- Align Objectives with strategic plan and Governor
- Improve relations among Arab Americans and Chaldean Community (Find Goals between established organizations)
- Education (Diversity and Inclusion) at Corporate level
- Provide leadership opportunities/training/identification of potential candidates
- Lead Interfaith dialogues and community educational forums
- Collaborate with other communities/allies/legislative leaders to create a common advocacy goal
- Facilitate and elevate economic opportunities in the community
- Identify programs in state that are currently successful Ways to address and find solutions on national best practices



10

CMEAA Strategy Framework Workshop- Findings

Group 1, 2, 3 consolidated results



Goal Setting

- Short Term Goal 1: Commission Branding. Visibility on Public Policy
- Long Term Goal 1: Improve Perception of MEA Community
- Short Term Goal 2: Collect and share educational material on the history, culture, contributions of MEA
- Long Term Goal 2: CMEAA to be the lead voice on issues relevant to MEA communities to and from government
- Short Term Goal 3: Monitor/keep track of bills/policies affecting MEA community and be proactive in combating them
- Long Term Goal 3: Better representation in government and building channels of communication with stakeholders where all voices can be heard and addressed

Areas of Focus:

- A, B, C, D, F

Critical Success Factors

- State Resources
- Communities People/Funding
- Finalize and Implement a strategic plan
- Create subcommittees that will focus time and effort specific to areas of priority /strategic plan
- Funding
- Collaboration and communication

11

Reference- Charges to the Commission



A) i. Review and advise the Governor and the Director on the state's policies concerning the Middle-Eastern American community.

ii. Review and advise the Governor and the Director on the nature, magnitude, and priorities of the issues facing the Middle Eastern American community.

v. Make recommendations to the Governor and the Director regarding changes in state programs, statutes, regulations and policies, including, but not limited to, the coordination of state programs serving Middle Eastern Americans.

vi. Recommend policy and action plans to serve the needs of Middle Eastern Americans in Michigan.

B) iii. Monitor, evaluate, investigate, and recommend programs for the betterment of the Middle Eastern American community.

C) iv. Analyze and recommend policies and programs to advance economic development within the Middle-Eastern American community

D) vii. Recognize the history, accomplishments, and contributions of Michigan's Middle-Eastern American community.

ix. Promote public awareness of Middle-Eastern American culture

E) viii. Make recommendations to the Governor and the Director regarding methods of overcoming discrimination against Middle-Eastern Americans.

F) xi. Promote the involvement of Middle-Eastern Americans in government at all levels.

12