



## Meeting Minutes

December 9, 2020, 12:00 P.M

Meeting held online via Microsoft Teams

### **ATTENDANCE:**

#### Commissioners Present:

Manal Saab- Chair  
Lina Hourani-Harajli- Treasurer  
Suzanne Sukkar- Secretary  
Fay Beydoun  
John Daoud  
Adel Mozip

Susan Dabaja  
Martin Manna  
Dave Abdullah

#### Commissioners Absent:

Michael Romaya, Vice Chair, Nabeel Obeid – Trustee at Large, Chief Ron Haddad, Nadine Kalasho

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 12:03 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was present.

“I want to welcome you to today’s meeting of the Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs. This meeting is being conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams in accordance with the Governor’s Executive Order due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I sincerely hope you and your families are as good as can be under the circumstances and during these trying times as we await an end to this global pandemic. This engagement is good for us; it helps us better understand the community we serve and work closely to facilitate its needs. Needs that have been greater than ever in a virtual world inflicting economical and health challenges on us all.

We have embarked on a new 2021 state fiscal year. The hiring freeze has prevented us from replacing our Administrator Maen, with his successor candidate Hussein Dabaja. Thus, I extend my appreciation and respect to Maen for agreeing to continue in his role until we ultimately replace him. Impressively keeping CMEAA on target with its strategic plan, thanks also to many state employees in Lansing engaged with Maen and the commission, to accomplish our activities.



Today's agenda is important, and I encourage my fellow commissioners to actively participate. We are anticipating an action item from UMS for funding and another for adopting the 2021 meeting schedule. We still have two open seats on this commission with few Commissioners' terms expiring in the spring. However, Governor Whitmer is not making any appointments at this time, but we foresee that changing in the next few months as we turn the corner to resume normalcy."

With that said, I will entertain a motion to adopt the proposed agenda.

## **II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**On Motion duly made and supported, the Commission approved the meeting agenda of December 9<sup>th</sup>. Motion carries unanimously**

Motion: Commissioner Sukkar moved to accept the approval of the minutes. Motion Supported by Commissioner Hourani-Harajli. Motion passed unanimously. (12:06pm)

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

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

Motion: Commissioner Daoud moved to accept the approval of the minutes. Motion Supported by Commissioner Mozip. Motion passed unanimously. (12:07pm)

## **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.**

Motion: No adoption made. (12:08pm)

## **V. UMS PROPOSAL**

Matthew VanBesien, President of the University Musical Society of the University of Michigan, addressed the commissioners requesting a \$20,000 grant from the Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs (CMEAA).

The University Musical Society is a 142 year old program and has won the National Medal of Arts award in 2014. The award was presented by President Obama.



In a normal season the University Musical Society performs over 60 main stage events and 400 other events, performing in places such as the Abu Dhabi Festival but together by the Abu Dhabi Music & arts Foundation as well as in the Barbican Center in London. Due to COVID-19 UMS has had to pivot their program to 6 main stage programs so far this year with over 30,000 viewers.

The University Musical Society has a rich history of working with the Middle Eastern Community.

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

Motion: Commissioner Sukkar moved to accept the approval of the grant. Motion Supported by Commissioner Abdallah. Motion passed unanimously.

## **VI. ADMINISTRATORS REPORT**

CMEAA Administrator, Maan Abou Khzam, updated the Commission on The CMEAA priorities. Maan briefed the Commission on the “Substance Use During COVID-19” webinar that took place on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Guest speaker for the webinar was Dr. Sara A. Hosn, who volunteered her time for the webinar. The webinar focused on substance use and this was the first of a series of webinars that will be taking place.

Maan stated that the second webinar will focus on mental health and is currently being planned out. The second webinar may include Director Saad and may bring in Global Michigan to bring in panels to talk about resources for small businesses in the community. Commissioners will be updated on the exact date as soon as its set.

## **VII. FUTURE FOR FRONT LINERS**

Director Saad gave a briefing on 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. Director Saad encouraged Commissioners to ask folks to apply for the program.

Director Saad talked about a parallel program that the administration is currently working on that will focus on non-citizens that are currently ineligible for the Future for Front Liners program such as DACA. (12:44pm)



## **VIII. CENSUS UPDATE**

Director Phillippi gave a briefing on the Census counts in the State of Michigan. Michigan had a 71% self-response rate in the 2020 Census and was the first State to exceed its 2010 numbers. Overall Michigan finished in 8<sup>th</sup> place when it came to self-response rates by residents and had its highest self-response rate since 1980.

Director Phillippi mentioned that she was doubtful that the Trump administration would be successful in keeping undocumented residents off of the 2020 Census. The 2020 Census date may not be ready until the spring of 2021.

## **IX. PROPOSED 2021 CMEAA DATES**

Chair Saab led the conversation on picking dates for the 2021 CMEAA meetings. Proposing that the first meeting of the year be held virtually while the following three meetings be held in person as long as it is safe to meet with the current COVID-19 situation.

The proposed dates were as follows:

March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021 – Virtually

June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021 – Arab American National Museum

September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – Arab American Chaldean Council

December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce

Motion: Commissioner Daoud moved to accept the approval of the meeting dates. Motion Supported by Commissioner Abdallah and Commissioner Sukkar. Motion passed unanimously. (12:50pm)

## **X. OLD BUSINESS**

None.

## **XI. NEW BUSINESS**

None.

## **XII. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

**Meeting adjourned at 12:51 pm by Chair Saab**



## UMS Proposal 2021

November 11, 2020

Dear members of the Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs:

Thank you very much for the support you have provided to UMS (University Musical Society) for our programs that celebrate Arab/Middle Eastern American artists. Though our plans have had to change significantly since last year due to the pandemic, our commitment to the presentation of Arab/Middle Eastern American artists remains strong, and we are excited by the new directions we are taking with our programs:

- November 2020: Jazz pianist **Tarek Yamani**, originally slated for a UMS performance in March 2020 that then had to be postponed, is now participating in a **UMS Digital Artist Residency** in 2020/21. One of six lead artists in the program, Tarek is collaborating with the Chicago-based Spektral Quartet to create a new work that will fuse traditional Middle Eastern music with Western jazz and classical influences. To celebrate the launch of their year-long collaboration, UMS is offering three upcoming virtual events:
  - **Two ‘happy-hour listening parties,’ at 5:30pm on both Weds. 11/18/20 and Thurs. 11/19/20**, where Tarek and the Quartet will share music with each other that has shaped their musical backgrounds and artistic identities. Both events are free and open to the public.
  - **A private, invitation-only ‘Virtual Backstage Pass’ event from 6:40-7:40pm on Thurs. 11/19/20**, for select donors and friends of our Arab/Middle Eastern American programs, where Tarek and his collaborators will have a virtual meet-and-greet and informal conversation with the group. (Two spaces in this event are being held for CMEAA members.)
- March 20, 2021: the **National Arab Orchestra** (NAO), with noted singer **Abeer Nehme**, is currently slated for a UMS performance; however, with a pandemic-related cancellation a strong possibility, UMS is already in discussions with the NAO to offer alternate, digital presentations featuring the ensemble.
- April 10, 2021: *Sahra*, an evening of contemporary performance in Detroit, is also still on the UMS performance roster, with artists to include **Tawil & Khoury** (theater and music), **Tammy Lakkis** (composer and visual artist), and **Kabareh Cheikhats** (all-male Moroccan music ensemble). Again, UMS is exploring digital presentations by the artists in case the in-person performance gets postponed.
- We convened a 15-member **UMS Arab American Advisory Council** last year to help guide UMS’s plans with Arab- and Middle-Eastern-focused performing arts over the next several seasons. While the Council has not been able to meet since March, members have been invited to the 11/19 Tarek Yamani event (above).
- UMS staff members have been continuing to seek out and strengthen **partnerships with regional Arab- and Middle Eastern American-focused organizations** and individuals, even during the pandemic, to help raise awareness of related UMS programs. Our longstanding relationship with the Arab American National Museum is one example; we hope to make connections with additional partners over the coming months.
- Finally, while plans for 2021/22 are very tentative at this point, one of our highest priorities at UMS is to re-schedule as many artists as possible from our original 2020/21 Arab Series, including



Lebanese theater artist **Ali Chahrour** and Iraqi maqam singer **Farida and the Iraqi Maqam Ensemble**.

In addition to showcasing the incredible artistry that exists among Arab- and Middle Eastern-American artists, we also hope our programs will help to promote more inter-cultural understanding across Michigan and a greater appreciation of diverse cultural expressions. We respectfully request a grant of \$20,000 from the Commission to support the programs listed above. Thank you very much for your consideration of our request. We would be happy to provide any additional information as needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Matthew VanBesien'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Matthew VanBesien  
President



## **Proposed CMEAA Meeting Dates 2021**

March 2, 2021

June 2, 2021

Sep 9, 2021

December 8, 2021