



Asian Affairs Commission

Regular Meeting | June 3, 2025 | 12:00 – 1:00 pm

City Hall at One Technology Center | Room 411

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Meg Chang, Sarah Gilpin, Ha Huynh, Masood Kasim, Athan Lau, Hieu Lê, Bee Paredes, Parisa Pilehvar, Anna Thao, Yi Zhang

Commissioners Absent: Cecilia Nguyen, Vivian Wang

I. Call to Order and Introductions

- a. Chairwoman Gilpin called the meeting to order at 12:03 pm.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- a. Chairwoman Gilpin entertained a motion to approve May meeting minutes.
 - i. Vice Chair Pilehvar made a motion, Commissioner Huynh seconded.
 - 1. Aye: 7, Nay: 0
 - a. Commissioners Chang, Thao, and Paredes were not yet present in the meeting.
 - ii. Motion carried, May meeting minutes approved.

III. Vote on Slate of 2025 – 2026 Committee Chairs

- a. Chairwoman Gilpin amended the order of agenda to have enough time for the Islamic Society of Tulsa's presentation.
- b. Reminder of slate of 2025 – 2026 Committee Chairs:
 - i. Cultural Event: Commissioner Lau
 - ii. Data and Research: Vice Chair Pilehvar
 - iii. Workforce and Education: Commissioner Kasim
 - iv. Cultural Hubs and Community Advocacy: Commissioner Nguyen
- c. Chairwoman Gilpin entertained a motion to vote on the chairs as a bloc.
 - i. Commissioner Lau made a motion, Vice Chair Pilehvar seconded.
 - 1. Aye: 8
 - a. Commissioners Chang and Paredes were not yet present in the meeting.
 - ii. Motion carried, commission will vote on chairs as a bloc.
- d. Chairwoman Gilpin entertained a motion to approve the full slate of 2025 – 2026 Committee Chairs.
 - i. Commissioner Lau made a motion, Vice Chair Pilehvar seconded.
 - 1. Aye: 8
 - a. Commissioners Chang and Paredes were not yet present in the meeting.
 - ii. Motion carried, slate of 2025 – 2026 Committee Chairs approved.

IV. Guest Speaker: Br. Shihab from Islamic Society of Tulsa

- a. Commissioner Kasim introduced Brother Shihab from the Islamic Society of Tulsa (IST) as today's guest speaker. Br. Shihab is the Youth Director at IST.

- b. IST is the only mosque in Tulsa, very diverse and welcoming. Tulsa's Muslim community is comprised of people from many different backgrounds. There are at least 10,000 Muslims in Tulsa. There are many families and children from several different countries that come to the mosque.
- c. Addressing challenges that youth face as immigrants and children of immigrants.
- d. As a religious community, IST doesn't seek to be involved in politics. Recognize that AAC is not a political body, but being connected to the City of Tulsa there is a perception that it is connected to politics.
- e. Commission Discussion:
 - i. Vice Chair Pilehvar: Religious institutions are a third place for many people (outside of their home, school). What can we learn from you of how to support the range of needs in the Asian community?
 - 1. Br. Shihab: Much of the Muslim community keeps to themselves. Families who are struggling often don't tell people outside their close circle. More comfortable accessing support/services through the mosque or from a trusted person than from a government entity.
 - 2. Commissioner Kasim: Agrees with Br. Shihab. Many community members are uncertain about interfacing with government. Br. Shihab will be a great resource to take information about AAC back to IST. Can help be a bridge with the youth.
 - ii. Chairwoman Gilpin: AAC can bring education to the community and help dispel misinformation about the Muslim religion. Would love for IST to be part of the 2026 cultural event to highlight how the Muslim community celebrates each other and their families.
 - 1. Br. Shihab will bring the opportunity to participate in the 2026 Cultural Event back to IST's board.
 - 2. Commissioner Lau: One of the best ways to educate and introduce culture to people is through food, decoration, clothing. IST can contribute to that immersive experience.
 - 3. Vice Chair Pilehvar stressed the importance of trust and relationships. You are on the ground every day, look to you to elevate needs that are not being met. IST represents many Asians and Tulsans. Would like to help get the word out about 211 Eastern Oklahoma, a private, confidential help line.
 - iii. Chairwoman Gilpin: Want IST to know they will always have a seat at the table regardless of what level of partnership they are able to commit to at any given point.
 - iv. Br. Shihab: Older generations have deep seated fear in trusting government. Will take time to build trust. Long term goal is to be involved as much as possible. Having education programs in the mosque (such as 211) is likely feasible if someone is available to come to IST.
 - v. Commissioner Chang: How much do you interface with school counselors? There are likely services that are available, and those individuals know which students need help.
 - 1. Br. Shihab was not aware of any partnerships with school counselors.
 - 2. Commissioner Chang: Counseling encompasses things like getting into college as well as mental health.
 - 3. Br. Shihab highlighted the cultural stigma against therapy.



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4. Vice Chair Pilehvar: There is a cultural element to therapy, working with City's mental health leadership to see how culturally responsive practices can be integrated. Would like to be in communication about this in the future.
5. Br. Shihab agreed that the community needs someone who understands cultural and religious context.
6. Commissioner Chang mentioned the mental health first aid training for Asian Americans she attended. Something anyone can benefit from.
7. Br. Shihab: Sometimes terminology alone can steer people away. Could develop programming that doesn't use some of the buzzwords. People in the community struggle with these issues (depression, suicide), but there is so much stigma. Don't want outside people coming in and changing their culture.
8. Chairwoman Gilpin: The way that we talk about mental health within Asian community is different, though many folks experience trauma. Can't approach it the same as western culture.
9. Commissioner Chang noted the 988 free mental health hotline, Chairwoman Gilpin added that finding someone who understands culture is important.
10. Br. Shihab: Very diverse cultural context is layered on top of religious context.
- vi. Commission thanked Brother Shihab for speaking in today's meeting.

V. Chair / Vice Chair Report

- a. Chairwoman Gilpin shared good news about the Asian Cultural Event, will take place in the Arvest Convention Center. The venue has a very large capacity, about 50,000 square feet. Will still be a free event to the public with a small fee for food vendors.
- b. Will send out a poll to find a time for a July commission retreat, then have social time at a restaurant.
- c. Vice Chair Pilehvar has started reading City Council agendas and minutes to look for items relevant to the Asian community. Nothing to highlight this month.

VI. Committee Reports

- a. Data and Research
 - i. On June 11, Vice Chair Pilehvar, Chairwoman Gilpin, and Commissioner Paredes will meet with Tulsa Area United Way (TAUW) to discuss 211 Eastern Oklahoma's marketing to the Asian Community.
 - ii. June 18 at 5:15 on Zoom is next committee meeting, will recap TAUW meeting and determine next steps. Will also try out group intake process.
 1. Asks out to Healthy Minds Policy Initiative and Family & Children's Services.
 2. Tell Vice Chair Pilehvar if you want to attend the meeting.
- b. Cultural Hubs and Community Advocacy
 - i. Commissioner Lau reported on behalf of Commissioner Nguyen. Read a note from Commissioner Nguyen that expresses gratitude for being voted in as chair of this committee.
 - ii. Attended Asian Night Market in May.
 1. Resulted in 25 new people signing up for newsletter.
 2. Community appreciates commission attending public events.
 3. There is a desire for more social events.
 - iii. Working to identify a potential commissioner for the Burmese seat.

- iv. Friday, August 29 participating in Tulsa Drillers Game Night will highlight Asian Affairs Commission.
- v. Monday, June 23 at 6 pm is next committee meeting, no meeting in July but will have a committee social for members to get to know each other.
- c. Workforce and Education
 - i. Commissioner Kasim shared the award nomination form has been drafted, will open on June 15. Final edits are in progress. Identified stakeholders to help get the word out thanks to Vice Chair Pilehvar's help.
 - ii. Next working to determining event date, sponsors and donations, and other logistics such as scheduling the Mayor. Need to determine how to draw people into the event.
 - iii. Next meeting on June 18 at 5:30 pm in-person or virtual.
 - 1. Chairwoman Gilpin asked to discuss student awards during this event.
 - iv. Last year gave three awards, planning to add awards to be more inclusive and highlight more community leaders.
 - v. Called the event Asian Affairs Luminary Awards last year, want to finalize for this year. This name encompasses the full scope of the event.
 - 1. There was no dissent regarding this name from commissioners, so the event will keep this name moving forward.
 - vi. Commissioner Lê asked for more information about the scholarships. Chairwoman Gilpin said there are still details to be worked out—many possibilities. She encouraged Commissioner Lê to join the committee to help determine these logistics. Commissioner Lê offered to share resources from Empower-Ed.
- d. Cultural Event
 - i. Commissioner Lau thanked the City for facilitating the donation of the space at Arvest Convention Center.
 - ii. Each commissioner will contribute to the event, invite to be part of committee, provide connections, or secure sponsorships. Will work to determine a meeting time that works for everyone.
 - iii. Working to finalize the event name. This past year, focused on Lunar New Year. Can be a good anchor to encourage people to attend but could also seem exclusionary to other cultures. Open to commissioners' input on the event name. Want the event to be celebratory of all Asian cultures. Reach out to Commissioner Lau with your ideas.

VII. Old Business

- a. Lexi gave an update on vacant commission seats. Two seats (at large and Immigration Policy/Law) will be filled soon, still do not have a lead for the Burmese seat.

VIII. New Business

- a. Commissioner Lau read an email from APIDA on behalf of Commissioner Nguyen about a community engagement event.
 - i. Posed the questions: What could the AAC's role be? Would AAC like to formally collaborate or be present?
 - ii. Chairwoman Gilpin encouraged chairs for each committee to be present and talk about their purpose. Also share about overarching goal for AAC. Be there to listen to community.
 - iii. Commissioner Chang: What would happen to turn the planning over to the community?
Commissioner Lau: APIDA would like to focus more on the Asian community.



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- iv. Commissioner Paredes: Would be good for the Data and Research Committee to develop a questionnaire to administer at the event to gather information on the community (basic demographics, anonymous) and ask what resources they need to be more successful.
- v. Lexi offered to connect with the City's trained Equity Dialogue facilitators to help at the event.
- vi. Commissioner Paredes: Important to emphasize that this event will be safe and inclusive.

IX. Announcements / Public Comments

- a. Public Comments:
 - i. A TYPROS Lead Forward Program participant shared about cohort.
- b. Commissioner Kasim extended an invite to the June MPACC meeting.
- c. Commissioner Le shared that Empower-Ed is hosting first Step Into Your Future Festival celebrating graduating seniors, passed around a flyer.

X. Adjournment

- a. Chairwoman Gilpin entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.
 - i. Commissioner Lau made a motion, Commissioner Paredes seconded.
 - 1. Aye: 8
 - a. Commissioner Huynh and Vice Chair Pilehvar left the meeting prior to the motion.
- b. Motion carried, meeting adjourned at 1:03 pm.