



Asian Affairs Commission

Regular Meeting | August 4, 2026 | 12:00 – 1:00 pm
City Hall at One Technology Center | Room 411

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Meg Chang, Masood Kasim, Hieu Lê, Yasamin Nawabi, Cecilia Nguyễn, Parisa Pilehvar

Commissioners Absent: Sarah Gilpin, Cing Nuam, Bee Paredes, Anna Thao, Vivian Wang

I. Call to Order

- a. Chairwoman Pilehvar called the meeting to order at 12:06 pm. The commission was not yet at quorum.

II. Guest Speaker: Drew France, Human Rights Commission Chair

- a. Commissioners Chang and Nawabi arrived at 12:08. The commission was now at quorum.
- b. Chairwoman Pilehvar invited Human Rights Commission Chairman France to share his presentation from the Title V and Beyond Apology Commissions Retreat to ground AAC as they move into the next phase of commission work.
- c. All issues the commissions face are immense, and a commission's role is advisory, so it's important to consider how to create movement and progress within our capacity. Progress is incremental and can still be tangible.
- d. Don't fall into the all or nothing trap. Choosing one priority to focus on can feel like a statement that others aren't important, but that's not the case.
- e. Commissions can advance underlying conditions that make change possible. The impact can be indirect but can raise awareness (lived experience, data, relationship building, visible record of issues, start conversations).
- f. Focus is not indifference; it's a commitment to make real progress somewhere.
 - i. Time and attention are finite.
 - ii. Small wins build confidence and trust.
- g. Questions to ask: Is it important? Can conditions be altered? What is the next visible step?
- h. Commission Discussion:
 - i. Commissioner Kasim reflected that when you start something, you don't always know the end result.
 - ii. Vice Chair Nguyễn noted this was a great reminder of the focus of our work, as it's easy to fall into the all or nothing trap.
 - iii. Commissioner France looks forward to working in partnership with AAC.

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes



- a. Chairwoman Pilehvar entertained a motion to approve June meeting minutes.
 - i. Vice Chair Nguyễn made a motion, Commissioner Kasim seconded.
 - 1. Aye: 6, Nay: 0
 - ii. Motion carried, June minutes approved.

IV. Chair / Vice Chair Report

- a. Chairwoman Pilehvar enjoyed meeting with commissioners throughout the summer. Distributed a handout with baseline survey results (Appendix 1). Feel comfortable sharing ideas, and there is opportunity for more connection for collective work and understanding diverse community needs.
 - i. Trend of interest in small business support, tied to Tulsa Equality Indicator 2.
 - ii. Anchor every meeting in learning, experience, and data.
 - iii. Share visible markers of impact of AAC's work
- b. Chairwoman Pilehvar proposed building confidence, capacity, and energy by focusing on one topic: small business supports. AAC has a clear pathway to advise on why AANHPI business ownership has declined so dramatically since 2018, per Equality Indicator 2.
- c. Commission Discussion:
 - i. Commissioner Kasim appreciated the focus on small businesses, which bring economic growth for families and community building. Small businesses are part of the fabric of our city and a place to build relationships.
 - ii. Commissioner Chang asked for clarity on information in the Equality Indicators chart, Chairwoman Pilehvar and Lexi provided information on how to read and interpret the chart.
 - iii. Commissioner Lê noted the benefit of focusing on one specific topic. He is curious about the root causes of business ownership declining and how AAC can support the community. Language access is an important consideration. How can we support equitable access to the AANHPI community so they can thrive, not just survive?
 - iv. Chairwoman Pilehvar hopes that by focusing on one topic, AAC can learn about other issues impacting the community.
 - v. Commissioner Nawabi asked how AAC connects with business owners who need support, such as with permitting?
 - 1. Chairwoman Pilehvar answered that AAC has to meet businesses owners in the community and share that support is available.
 - vi. Commissioner Lê suggested creating a resource guide in different languages and distribute through libraries.
- d. Chairwoman Pilehvar will have a more complete proposal in September.

V. Committee Reports



- a. Cultural Hubs and Community Advocacy
 - i. Vice Chair Nguyễn: August Upcoming Events
 - 1. AAC Tabling at India Fest – opportunity to meet with community members and business owners. Distributed signup sheet.
 - ii. Leadership Round Table session two focused on data and research included presentations from Chairwoman Pilehvar and Tulsa Asian Collective.
 - 1. Next Session: Thursday, September 24 focused on community interviews and strategies to build trust through conversation
- b. Workforce and Education
 - i. Commissioner Kasim: Asian Affairs Luminary Awards will be November 9 at City Hall.
 - ii. Pausing scholarship to align capacity and responsibilities.
 - iii. Committee meets 3rd Wednesday of the month at 6pm, will add meetings to plan Luminary Awards.
- c. Data and Research – no additional report
- d. Cultural Event – no additional report

VI. Old Business

- a. Will vote to recommend AAC's Human Rights Commission liaison in September.

VII. New Business – no new business

VIII. Announcements / Public Comments

- a. Commissioner Kasim shared a reflection about recent developments with the Islamic Society of Tulsa's proposed mosque in Broken Arrow.
- b. Public Comments
 - i. India Fest will be at Rhema: family friendly, free
 - ii. Tulsa Asian Collective is officially a 501(c)(3)!
- c. Open seats on AAC

IX. Adjournment

- a. Chairwoman Pilehvar entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.
 - i. Vice Chair Nguyễn made a motion, Commissioner Kasim seconded.
 - 1. Aye: 6
 - ii. Motion carried, meeting adjourned at 1:02 pm.

Appendix 1

Asian Affairs Commission of Tulsa

2026–2027 Baseline Survey

Where the Commission Is Strong

Two statements averaged 4.0 or above on the 1–5 scale, indicating a solid foundation of engagement and voice within the group:

Survey Statement	Average (1–5)
I feel comfortable sharing ideas and perspectives during commission meetings.	4.13
I feel connected to the work of the Asian Affairs Commission.	4.00

Where the Commission Might Focus

The lowest-scoring statement, and the only one to average below 3.5, centers on issue knowledge:

Survey Statement	Average (1–5)
I understand the key issues currently impacting Tulsa's AANHPI communities.	3.25

A cluster of four statements tied at 3.5 — connection to fellow commissioners, belief in the Commission's community impact, leadership growth, and having the knowledge/information to contribute — form a secondary tier. Together, these suggest commissioners are engaged and comfortable speaking up, but many don't yet feel fully equipped with the issue-level knowledge, relational depth, or evidence of impact to feel fully invested.

All Scaled Results, Ranked

Survey Statement	Average (1–5)
I feel comfortable sharing ideas and perspectives during commission meetings.	4.13
I feel connected to the work of the Asian Affairs Commission.	4.00
I feel a sense of ownership in the commission's success.	3.88
I am motivated to continue serving on the commission.	3.88
I can clearly explain the purpose of the Asian Affairs Commission to someone unfamiliar with it.	3.75
I feel connected to my fellow commissioners.	3.50
I believe the commission is making a meaningful impact in Tulsa's AANHPI community.	3.50
I am growing as a leader as a result of my service on the commission.	3.50
I have the knowledge and information needed to effectively contribute to the Commission's initiatives and projects.	3.50
I understand the key issues currently impacting Tulsa's AANHPI communities.	3.25

What Commissioners Hope to Gain

- Making a lasting, measurable impact on the AANHPI community, including stronger partnerships across local government, schools, nonprofits, and businesses.
- Feeling more personally connected to their own Asian heritage and to fellow AAPI Tulsans
- A clearer picture of the issues facing the AAPI community and concrete ways to address them.
- Continued growth as a community leader and visible, tangible signs of progress.

Barriers to Engagement

- Competing time commitments: work schedules, graduate school, and (for several respondents) heavy involvement in outside community and political organizations.
- Limited clarity on city policies, procedures, and the boundaries of a commissioner's role.
- Inconsistent attendance and participation across the group, which several respondents linked to difficulty sustaining momentum on initiatives.
- General capacity constraints

Where Commissioners Want More Energy Focused

- Workforce development, education pathways, and youth leadership, built through stronger partnerships with schools, universities, and businesses.
- Mental health and wellness
- Direct community outreach and meeting people where they are (e.g., places of worship, community events) rather than expecting them to come to the commission.
- Small business support and a clear channel for community members to submit issues to the Commission.

Our Next Steps

- Re-administer this survey on a consistent cadence to track our growth
- Prioritize a short refresher on city policies, procedures, and commissioner role/boundaries, particularly given our changing programming—the most concrete, fixable barrier named.
- Build in recurring "issue learning" at meetings, since issue knowledge is the lowest-scoring item and directly supports commissioners' stated goal of understanding the scope of AAPI community needs.
- Share visible markers of impact we see from our work: "signs of tangible progress" was named directly as something commissioners want to see.

Asian Affairs Commission of Tulsa

Proposal for 2026-2027 Focus

A Focus on Small Business

Whereas:

- Business ownership among AANHPI Tulsans has dropped to less than half of its 2018 percentage
- Asian restaurants, markets, and business are significant as places for belonging, gathering, and cultural ambassadorship with our broader community
- There are not currently culturally-relevant or bilingual events catered to AANHPI business owners
- It is our role to act in an advisory capacity to the Mayor, City Council, and City Officials on matters of Asian American communities
 - The Tulsa Authority for Economic Opportunity (TAEO) / PartnerTulsa is a city entity that exists, in part, “to promote, stimulate, encourage and finance economic growth and development, and promote racial equity and resolve disparities in economic outcomes of the general public”

Indicator 2: Business ownership by race

Business ownership: Asian, Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander (Asian/NHOPI) compared to Black workers

Report Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Equality Score	52	55	35	39	33	62	100	100
<i>Comparison Group A: % of Asian/NHOPI workers who own businesses</i>	10.3%	10.0%	13.1%	13.4%	12.5%	10.6%	7.3%	4.5%
<i>Comparison Group B: % of Black workers who own businesses</i>	6.0%	6.1%	4.7%	6.1%	4.0%	7.2%	9.9%	5.7%
Ratio of Comparison Group A to Comparison Group B	1.722	1.636	2.798	2.208	3.104	1.477	0.739	0.798

The equality score for this indicator **increased by 48** since 2018.



Black workers own businesses in Tulsa at a rate that exceeds that of Asian, Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander workers.

Right Sizing Our Capacity

Exploring:

- A community entity to whom we can “hand-off” Tulsa Asia Fest name and event ownership, to be hosted with support of the Asian Affairs Commission
- A community entity to whom we can “hand-off” the Luminary Award Student Scholarship, to be awarded with support of the Asian Affairs Commission