

Nebraska Commission on Asian American Affairs
Commissioners' Meeting Minutes
August 04, 2025
Barb Weitz Community Engagement Center

Meeting was called to order at 3:05pm by Chairman Suzuki.

Roll Call with a quorum of Commissioners present: Ryo Suzuki, Weysan Dun, Maureen Brase, Tram Kieu, Carol Wang, Hiep Vu, Carolina Mapes, Dr. Maorong Jiang, Dr. Deepak Gangahar, Arunkumar Pondicherry, Vickie Schaepler, Rebecca Reinhardt, Dr. Yunwoo Nam.

Absent - Dr. Joanne Li

Open Meeting Act read into the record

No public comment

Motion to approve minutes from the May meeting made by Commissioner Gangahar and seconded by Commissioner Schaepler

Roll Call with all 13 present in favor: Ryo Suzuki, Weysan Dun, Maureen Brase, Tram Kieu, Carol Wang, Hiep Vu, Carolina Mapes, Dr. Maorong Jiang, Dr. Deepak Gangahar, Arunkumar Pondicherry, Vickie Schaepler, Rebecca Reinhardt, Dr. Yunwoo Nam.

Motion to approve June special meeting via Zoom to ratify and approve Kate made by Commissioner Pondicherry and seconded by Commissioner Wang.

Roll Call with all 13 present in favor: Ryo Suzuki, Weysan Dun, Maureen Brase, Tram Kieu, Carol Wang, Hiep Vu, Carolina Mapes, Dr. Maorong Jiang, Dr. Deepak Gangahar, Arunkumar Pondicherry, Vickie Schaepler, Rebecca Reinhardt, Dr. Yunwoo Nam.

Chairman Suzuki introduced the new Executive Director, Kate Gotsdiner, to the Commissioners

Ms Gotsdiner introduced herself to the Commissioners and discussed the progress that had been made since her hiring back in July. Updates on the location of the new office in Lincoln as well as the various steps taken working with the Nebraska Department of Administrative Services to get the necessary equipment. Explanation that the office is across the street from the Capitol as the Capitol building is still undergoing construction for the HVAC renovations and will not be able to move into the Capitol until at least 2027. However, the building in which the new office resides is just across 13th street and less than a block from both the Capitol and the Governor's mansion. Ms Gotsdiner also provided her professional background and what led her to the Nebraska Commission on Asian American Affairs. Each Commissioner present also introduced themselves to Ms Gotsdiner and provided a bit of their background and what drew them to apply to be a Commissioner.

Concern was voiced by one of the Commissioners regarding the safety of the building as it is a non-secured and non-state building. Potential to add in a video doorbell or other such security measure proposed but no motion made.

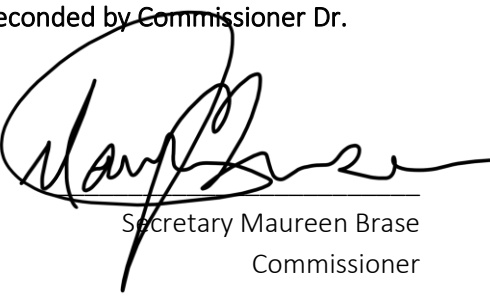
There was discussion about the next steps to be taken now that the Commission has dedicated staff and a consensus that some type of collection of data needs to happen. The intent with the data collection is to know what the landscape of the Asian American population looks like across Nebraska as well as which organizations or groups are in existence. The ability to connect with the different organizations and to better understand the needs of the Asian American community is not feasible until the Commission is able to understand the layout. This led to further discussion on the best way to gather said data and Ms Gotsdiner proposed that the individual Commissioners look at their connections and contacts and asked them to help facilitate introductions so she can begin to meet with the different groups.

Discussion was had about different Asian American events that will be happening around the state and Commissioner Reinhardt mentioned both the Harvest Moon Festival in Lincoln, which is upcoming on Saturday, October 4th and the AAPI festival happening at a yet to be determined date in May during AAPI heritage month. Commissioner Schaepler noted the Omaha Sister Cities Association Japanese Festival that is also happening the same weekend, Saturday, October 4 and Sunday, October 5 at Lauritzen Gardens in Omaha. Commissioner Jiang mentioned the dinner event at Happy Hollow Country Club recognizing various AAPI communities and which has a speaker.

The topic of future Commissioner meetings and locations was broached next and Chairman Suzuki asked if the Mondays from 3-5pm were still acceptable. Unfortunately, this meeting time is not convenient for many so it was proposed that a Doodle will be sent out to determine the best dates (Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays) for the following year of Commissioner meetings. Confirmed that the time block of 3pm-5pm does work.

Discussion about the importance of having at least one Commissioner meeting west of Lincoln in 2026 was had and determined that it will likely not be further than Grand Island or possibly Kearney for that Commissioner meeting. Concern about the driving distance for a two hour meeting was noted and it was decided that it is necessary to see what the best option is regarding possibly utilizing state vehicles or going out for an event prior to the meeting to utilize the amount of time taken to get to the meeting location in the most beneficial way to the Commissioners.

Adjournment at 4:52 PM. Motion made by Commissioner Wang and seconded by Commissioner Dr. Gangahar.



Secretary Maureen Brase
Commissioner