

**Nebraska Commission on Asian American Affairs
Commissioners' Meeting Minutes
February 03, 2026
State Office Building – Buffalo Room**

Meeting was called to order at 3:08pm by Chairman Ryo Suzuki.

Roll Call for attendance: Quorum

Present – Dr. Maorong Jiang, Tram Kieu, Carolina Mapes, Dr. Yunwoo Nam, Arunkumar Pondicherry, Rebecca Reinhardt, Vickie Schaepler, Ryo Suzuko, Hiep Vu

Excused Absent – Maureen Brase (-Houchin), Weysan Dun, Dr. Deepak Gangahar, Dr. Joanne Li, Carol Wang

Open Meeting Act read into the record

Chairman Suzuki opened the floor to public comment. No public comment.

Motion to approve minutes from the November meeting made by Commissioner Schaepler and seconded by Commissioner Pondicherry

Motion passed with unanimous consent

Voting in favor: Dr. Maorong Jiang, Tram Kieu, Carolina Mapes, Dr. Yunwoo Nam, Arunkumar Pondicherry, Rebecca Reinhardt, Vickie Schaepler, Ryo Suzuko, Hiep Vu

Executive Director updated the Commissioners on Appropriations bill LB1071 with Section 9 that was introduced by Speaker Arch on behalf of the Governor. Executive meeting has been called to discuss the possible ramifications and the process going forward regarding legislation and how the Commission will or should respond. A few Commissioners voiced their concerns about the language in Section 9 and Chairman Suzuki told the Commission that they could reach out as individuals to their State Senator, but they could not speak as a Commissioner. Ms. Gotsdiner also explained that they could contact the members of the Appropriations Committee as well and provided the list of those who sit on the Committee.

Following the legislative update, an update was provided regarding the status of the county map and database being created. While the map is finished and the bulk of the organizations have been identified, the Commissioners were asked to help contribute to the county organizations as many of the counties with small percentages do not appear to have any Asian organizations that Ms. Gotsdiner was able to identify. As of now the list is incomplete and for internal use only.

The fully published website was provided to the Commissioners with the explanation that the acronym was able to be changed to CAAAN for Commission on Asian American Affairs of Nebraska and this also required the web development team to change all the coding folders to reflect the change. The next step with the website is to finalize the logo. The logo design as decided on by the Executive Board was

presented to the full Commission but the motion was made to table the vote and allow the full Commission to provide feedback and to vote later. Commissioners will email their feedback or design ideas to Ms. Gotsdiner who will work with the graphic designer from the web development team at OCIO to generate new logo ideas to provide to the Commission.

Motion to table the logo vote made by Commissioner Mapes

Seconded by Commissioner Kieu

Motion to table passed by unanimous vote

Voting in favor: Dr. Maorong Jiang, Tram Kieu, Carolina Mapes, Dr. Yunwoo Nam, Arunkumar Pondicherry, Rebecca Reinhardt, Vickie Schaepler, Ryo Suzuko, Hiep Vu

The final Executive Director update was about hiring a temporary Administrative Assistant through the Secretary of State's temp pool and working with Department of Administrative Services to contract. The intent is to hire a temporary Administrative Assistant who can maintain the website as well as handle the day-to-day administrative duties in the office. Commissioner Schaepler voiced her strong support and explained why she believed this should be a priority item as it would allow Ms. Gotsdiner to focus on the duties of the Executive Director such as community and relationship building and mentorship while still having staff presence in office, daily. The goal is to have one hired by end of March.

Motion to approve the hiring of an Administrative Assistant made by Commissioner Schaepler

Seconded by Commissioner Vu

Motion to approve passed with eight voting in favor and one abstaining

Voting in favor: Tram Kieu, Carolina Mapes, Dr. Yunwoo Nam, Arunkumar Pondicherry, Rebecca Reinhardt, Vickie Schaepler, Ryo Suzuko, Hiep Vu; Abstaining: Dr. Maorong Jiang

Following the Executive Director update, announcements and Commissioner updates were given. Chairman Suzuki announced University of Nebraska – Kearney's annual Japanese Festival happening Sunday, February 15th at UNK. The Blue Barn Theatre production of "The Heart Sellers" now through March 1st and they have invited the Commissioners to attend. April 20th – 24th the 21st Annual Asian Cultural Week at Creighton which is organized and run by Commissioner Jiang. Several of the Commissioners are presenting during the week from their professional capacity and not as Commissioners. May 2nd Asian Community & Cultural Center has their AAPI festival at the Sandhill Event Center. There were no updates from Commissioners about any meetings or business they conducted on behalf of the Commission. Commissioner Kieu spoke about the grant through the Community Health Endowment and the Community Health Ideas Challenge. While the grant application is too soon to be submitted, she used this as an opportunity for us to look at different grants or ways to partner with the community and open the discussion on how certain social aspects like community health, impact the Asian communities and we can be a voice.

Next Commissioner meeting will be held on Friday, April 24th from 3pm – 5pm at Creighton University with the exact room location to be determined.

Motion to adjourn made at 5:01pm by Commissioner Schaepler and seconded by Commissioner Mapes.
All present approved.

Secretary Maureen Brase
Commissioner