



Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs

Virtual ZOOM
Thursday, July 24, 2025
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:

Ammar Abdulhamid, Member
Dr. Amal K. Ali, Member
Athar Bayoumi, Member
Alissa Deaver, Member
Gunay Evinch, Member
Rabbi Dr. Susan Grossman, Member
Dr. Ayesha A. Gulistan, Member
Mohammad Khalil, Member
Mona Kishore, Chair
Dr. Aharona (Roni) Rosenthal, Member
Ala'a Wafa, Vice Chair

Commissioners Absent:

Dr. Majd AlGhatrif, Member
Shivaani Arya, Member
Anthony Browder, Member
Rafi Rone, Member

GOCI Staff:

- ❖ Lawrence Walker, Executive Director for GOCI
- ❖ Dr. Antwan Brown, Administrative Director for GOCI
- ❖ Cheryl Madigan – Executive Assistant for GOCI

I. Call to Order:

Mona Kishore, Chair – Meeting called to order at 6:04 p.m.

II. Commission Roll Call:

Chair Mona Kishore called on each commissioner and they introduced themselves and informed everyone when they are from.

III. GOCI Remarks:

Director Larry Walker thanked the commission for all the work that they have done so far. He wants the commissioners to reach out to their communities and asked them to partner with them in their work on the commission.



IV. Adoption of Agenda:

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
To adopt the agenda	Ala'a Wafa	Roni Rosenthal	10Y-0N-0A

V. Approval of Postpone the Approval of the Minutes:

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
Postponement of the Approval of 04/07/25 & 5/15/25 Minutes	Susan Grossman	Ammar Abdulhamid	10Y-0N-0A

VI. Chair's Report:

Chair Mona Kishore talked about everyone's commitment to the commission. She would like to showcase the commission's successes more prominently. There are three things that she wants the commission to concentrate on. The first is raising issues, the second is events, and the third is infrastructure. She mentioned meeting protocols (stay on camera). Commissioners to follow Robert's Rules of Order and recommended that commissioners use a separate email address for commission work. She would like the commissioners to use the Google platform for correspondence.

VII. Standing Committees:

❖ Education & Health Committee:

Commissioner Ayesha Gulistan reported that there are nine members on the committee, and she provided a brief overview of the committee. She also spoke on the work that the committee has been doing with the Howard County Public School System (HCPS). **Commissioner Susan Grossman** talked about the demo of the model that they did with HCPS. This model will concentrate on teachers at middle and high schools.

❖ Local Engagement & Inclusion:

Vice Chair Ala'a Wafa stated that she and **Commissioner Ammar Abdulhamid** are co-leading this initiative. This committee consists of eight members. They are focusing on three priorities of the governor, which are creating safer communities, desirable state for all residents and connecting Marylanders to opportunities and each other. They want to start focus groups with each county. She requested Dr. Antwan Brown to have GOCI create a slide deck that introduces the commission/commissioners.



VIII. Working Groups:

Chair Mona Kishore called for a motion to create a working group for the Howard County Public School Pilot Project.

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote
Approval of creating a working group for the Howard County Public School Plot Project.	Mona Kishore	Susan Grossman	11Y-0N-0A

- ❖ Event Planning – **Commissioner Alissa Deavers** needs more direction and **Chair Mona Kishore** postponed this conversation and **Dr. Antwan Brown** confirmed the date of October 26th for the fall event.
- ❖ Interfaith Programs – **Commissioner Amal Ali** stated their goals are to have peaceful communication, peaceful communities and more understanding of each other. They want to organize public events and focus on shared values among Islam, Christianity, and Judaism religions. They would like to do this throughout all counties in Maryland. **Commissioner Susan Grossman** would like GOCI’s help on how to get communities to support legislation on the bill of having Jewish American Heritage Month in May, which didn’t pass last year.
- ❖ Partnerships/Focus Groups – **Commissioner Rafi Rone** is absent, and no report provided.
- ❖ Strategic Communication/Legislation – **Commissioner Mohammad Khalil** stated that they haven’t met, therefore, nothing to report.
- ❖ Strategy Planning – **Chair Mona Kishore** stated that they haven’t met. They are around 50% on the plan.
- ❖ **Cheryl Madigan** provided a Working Folder for the commission to work out of.

IX. New Business / Old Business:

- ❖ **NEW - October Celebration** – **Chair Mona Kishore** mentioned three ideas for the event. The first one would consist of a celebration, which would include the communities. The second one would focus on bringing stakeholders, influential individuals within faith leaders and nonprofits, and even the administration to talk about a particular topic or showcase something. The third one would be internal, like a retreat for the commission. This would not consist of official business, but for the commissioners to get to know one another. There was a lot of discussion. The Event Planning Working Group will take charge of this task. **Commissioner Gunay Evinch** would like to be part of this working group.
- ❖ **OLD - Annapolis Symphony Orchestra** – **Commissioner Ammar Abdulhamid** still would like to have an event with the ASO. This would be great to start right now to have this event next year. This might be planned around the Maryland 250 celebration.



X. Open Discussion:

- ❖ **HR1 – Big Beautiful Bill - Commissioner Ammar Abdulhamid** would like to know what can be done to offset the rising costs of health insurance. **Commissioner Susan Grossman** stated there are other issues, such as for people being out of work, education budgets and issues with AI data searches on inclusion, diversity and equity. **Chair Mona Kishore** asked Dr. Brown for information on workforce development and employment resources that were shared by the Governor’s administration.

XI. Motion for Adjournment:

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote
Adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m.	Ammar Abdulhamid	Gunay Evinch	8Y-0N-0A