



Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs

2nd Quarterly Meeting

Virtual ZOOM
Thursday, May 7, 2026
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

GOCI Staff:

Gregory Yancey, Chief of Staff
Cheryl Madigan – Executive Assistant

I. Call to Order, Roll Call and Procedural Reminders:

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

II. Open Remarks:

Mona Kishore, Chair – She stated for commissioners to coordinate with Cheryl Madigan to schedule all meetings pertaining to Committees and Working Groups. Commissioners should forward information pertaining to their communities, such as events, new restaurants, etc. to COS Greg Yancey at GOCI.

Gregory Yancey, COS – He went over the new [GOCI website](#), which we now fall under the Governor's website. There are plans to start having in-person commission meetings. Security is a concern with in-person meetings. He mentioned that the Annual Report is due on July 1st. The MD250 Celebration meetings will be on Wednesday from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Possible dates for the event will be August 8th, 9th, or 16th. We are still waiting for approval for the grant for funding on this celebration. He asked the commission to reach out to their contacts to see if they would like to [Apply for a Seat](#) on the commission.



III. Adoption of the Agenda:

#1 Motion to adopt the agenda.

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
To adopt the agenda.	Ala'a Wafa	Mohammad Khalil	10Y-0N-0A by hands

IV. Approval of the Minutes:

#2 Motion to approve the minutes for 02/12/26 SPS II and 03/09/26 SCM

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
Approval of the minutes for 02/12/26 SPS II and 03/09/26 SCM.	Gunay Evinch	Rabbi Dr. Susan Grossman	10Y-0N-0A by hands

V. Committees:

- a) **Education and Heath** – Commissioner Ayesha Gulistan spoke on the RSD Methodology (Reflective Structure Dialogue Programming). They met with Howard County Public Schools, and they decided to move forward with the program during their summer programs (Student Leadership-Teacher Training-Curriculum). Commissioner Gulistan, Commissioner Grossman and COS Yancey also connected with MD State Department of Education to check on funding for this program for Howard County. Commissioner Rabbi Susan Grossman stated that this will be the beginning of building a relationship with MSDE. They want to learn more about RSD. They are still waiting for a report on Hate Bias.
- b) **Local Engagement & Inclusion** – Vice Chair Ala'a Wafa spoke on collecting information from the commissioners on possible contacts for three counties to have Focus Groups.

VI. Working Groups:

- a) **Partnership & Focus Groups** – Update provided above in the Local Engagement & Inclusion Committee by Vice Chair Ala'a Wafa.
- b) **Event Planning**
 - I. **Maryland 250 Planning - Annapolis Orchestra** – Chair Mona Kishore stated that this will not be a part of the Maryland 250 planning and will be something in 2027.
 - II. **Maryland 250 Planning – Peace Walk** – Chair Kishore stated that they will work with the Multiculture Celebration, therefore a motion went through to disband this working group.

#3 Motion to disband the Maryland 250 Peace Walk Working Group.

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
Disband the Maryland 250 Peace Walk Working Group	Ala'a Wafa	Mohammad Khalil	10Y-0N-0A by hands



- III. **Maryland 250 Planning – International Music Festival** – Commissioner Grossman stated that this event will be at Glen Echo Park. We will have a stage and table. Performers will not get paid and commissioners will provide the Music Festival with their suggestions on performers. Chair Kishore stated to save the date of August 23rd for this event. If the grant is approved, we will need to get a banner made. She would like to have representations of all ethnicities. We will need to market this event.
- IV. **Maryland 250 Planning – Multicultural Celebration with Commissions** – Chair Kishore will touch base offline to appoint two commissioners to work on this.
- c) **Strategic Planning** – Chair Kishore stated that everything was covered under the SPS meetings.
- d) **Communication & Legislation**
 - I. **Updates on the bill signing for HB661 & SB308** – Commissioner Grossman stated that both bills have passed and they are State Heritage Months. Commissioner Khalil provided updates on the other bills in legislation. COS Yancey stated the signing of the bill will be on May 12, 2026. Cheryl Madigan to send out calendar invite.
 - II. **Creating working groups for celebrations for Muslim & Jewish American Heritage Months**

#4 Motion to amend the agenda under Section VI – d. – II. to add - Creating working groups for celebration for Muslim & Jewish American Heritage Months

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
To amend the agenda to add the creation of a working group for celebrations for Muslim American Heritage Month and Jewish American Heritage Month for 2027	Rabbi Dr. Susan Grossman	Ala’a Wafa	11Y-0N-0A by hands

#5 Motion to create working groups for Muslim and Jewish American Heritage Months celebrations for 2027.

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
Creation of working group for the Muslim & Jewish American Heritage Months celebrations for 2027	Rabbi Dr. Susan Grossman	Gunay Evinch	11Y-0N-0A by hands

- e) **Interfaith Program** – Commissioner Grossman informed everyone that Howard County established an official Interfaith Advisory Commission. Commissioner Amal Ali spoke on the topic of the interface groups that are planting trees and their concern about climate change.

VII. New Business:

- a) **Diyanet Turkish Mosque Commission Gathering** – Commissioner Gunay Evinch spoke on the event he is hosting for the commission. June 1st is a possible date.

VIII. #4 Motion for Adjournment:

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
Adjourn the meeting at 7:31 p.m.	Gunay Evinch	Ala’a Wafa	9Y-0N-0A by hands