



Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs

Virtual ZOOM
Monday, February 2, 2026
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:

Dr. Amal K. Ali, Member
Athar Bayoumi, Member
Alissa Deaver, 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:

Ammar Abdulhamid, Member
Shivaani Arya, Member
Anthony Browder, Member
Dr. Majd AlGhatrif, Member
Gunay Evinch Member

GOCI Staff:

- ❖ Greg Yancey, Chief of Staff 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. 9 were present

III. Adoption of Agenda: It was approved by Chair Mona Kishore.

IV. Chair & GOCI Remarks:

Chair Mona Kishore provided welcoming remarks and wishes everyone a Happy New Year.
Administrative Director, Dr. Antwan Brown provided no remarks.



V. Mission and Vision Statements:

Chair Kishore asked the commissioners to view the commission's SPS's chart and recommend any changes they might want for the mission and vision statements. It was decided that Vice Chair Ala'a Wafa, Commissioner Rabbi Susan Grossman, and Commissioner Alissa Deavers to work on the suggestions for the mission and vision statements.

VI. Committees, Subcommittees, and Working Groups:

Chair Kishore went over the structure and definitions of committees, subcommittees, and working groups.

❖ Education & Health Committee:

Commissioner Ayesha Gulistan stated the other members of this committee are Vice Chair of the committee is Commissioner Arthar Bayomi, Commissioner Rabbi Susan Grossman, Commissioner Amal Ali, and Commissioner Roni Rosenthal. The committee has been with the leadership of Howard County Public School System (HCPS). They are working on an initiative called the Reflective Structure Dialogue Pilot Program, which is designed to foster a school culture rooted curiosity, empathy, and mutual respect. It is to train an initial cohort of educators and administrators in reflection structured dialogue. The last meeting with HCPS was in October.

❖ Local Engagement & Inclusion:

Vice Chair Ala'a Wafa spoke about creating Roundtables and mentioned about the documents that she emailed everyone concerning this event/task. **Commission Rabbi Susan Grossman** mentioned the partnership with the Islamic Christian and Jewish Studies,

VII. Working Groups:

❖ Event Planning – **Commissioner Alissa Deavers** plans to set up a meeting to discuss what they want to do this year. **Chair Kishore** spoke about the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra. ASO will meet with Maryland Hall to see if they'd be interested in sponsoring an event. **Vice Chair Wafa** suggested to partner with the counties' events.

❖ Interfaith Programs – **Commissioner Susan Grossman** mentioned the partnership with the Institute of Islamic Christian and Jewish Studies; she has been representing the commission on the interfaith conversations that are being held across the state in small groups. **Commissioner Amal Ali** is working with religious groups on the Eastern Shore area to work with the Chesapeake Bay Interface Groups. These groups are involved with the state to protect the environment and work with related issues concerning climate change. The groups hope to plant 5 million trees by 2030. She was able to get scientists from different religious groups to participate with Semenly Science and Defense Dialogue at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center. She was able to locate the WIC (Women-Infant-Children) program and provide community member the information to apply for this assistance. The religious groups would like to know if there are any resources to hold public events in the eastern shore area.



- ❖ Strategic Communication/Legislation – **Commissioner Mohammad Kahlil** wanted to remind everyone that it is legislative session time. He encourages everyone to reach out to their representatives to see how they can support any topic that might come up in legislation. **Commissioner Rabbi Susan Grossman** stated that the bills for Muslim American Heritage Month and Jewish American Heritage Month was resubmitted this year. The bill numbers are HB661 and SB308. She asked about the statement that the commission created last year and wanted to know if it could be used this year for the support of the bills.
- ❖ Strategy Planning – **Chair Mona Kishore** provided information on the following three topics.
 - Focus groups to meet with leaders, speak with community members, and attend events. This will allow us to get feedback on the community’s needs.
 - MD 250 Celebration – To show the unity across the 16 countries MEAA represent and the unity across all the commissions.
 - Ways to support legislation, celebrate faith groups within their ethnicities, collaborate and help organize events in the counties where their ethnicity is already recognized.
- ❖ Roundtables – **Vice Chair Wafa** discuss the process on the roundtables. **Commissioner Rabbi Grossman** suggested to insert the topic of immigrant status and harassment.
- ❖ MD250 – **Chair Kishore** spoke on the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra, which they have still been talking with them. Their calendar runs from September through April of 2027. Hopefully, everyone can plan or co-host a customized small event and partner with Maryland Hall at no cost for the venue and everything else would be very minimal cost. There is an idea that Lt. Governor Aruna Miller provided, is to collaborate a peace walk with some of the other commissions of GOCI. South Asian American, Asian Pacific American, and the Hispanic & Latin American Community commissions. The last idea is to work alongside an event that’s already being planned at the Washington Folk Festival of Greater Washington. Find resources to obtain a \$3,000.00 sponsor for a stage. This could also be a joint event with other commissions. Another idea is stories of community members or people immigrating to Maryland.

VIII. Motions for new and continuing events:

#1 Motion for a Peace Walk

Motion	1st	2nd	Vote
Peace Walk – participate as commissioners.	Rabbi Dr. Susan Grossman	Dr. Roni Rosenthal	8Y-0N-0A by hands



#2 Motion for the Folk Festival

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
Folk Festival – to participate and/or with other commissions.	Ala’a Wafa	Ayesha Gulistan	8Y-0N-0A by hands

#3 Motion to continue conversations with the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
Continuing planning with the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra for 2026 or 2027	Rabbi Dr. Susan Grossman	Mohammad Khalil	8Y-0N-0A by hands

- X. **Open Discussion:**
Chair Mona Kishore will share a google form for commissioners to sign up for these events. Need to follow up with the mission and vision statements. Commissioner to view the roundtable data from **Vice Chair Wafa**. Spoke about creating a google calendar of events by counties and the link will be provided in the WhatsApp group.

XI. **#4 Motion for Adjournment:**

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
Adjourn the meeting at 7:48 p.m.	Ala’a Wafa	Athar Bayoumi	8Y-0N-0A by hands