

Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs Meeting
January 27, 2009

In attendance: Commissioners Tina Ang, Tejpal Chawla, Wylie Chen, Matthew Finucane, Veronica Jung, John Tinpe, Martha Watanabe
Staff: Soohyun Koo, Neel Saxena
Guests: Tracy Sandler, Florence Pan

Ms. Tracy Sandler, newly appointed Director of the Office of Boards and Commissions gave a brief overview of the office. She stressed the importance of open lines of communication between her office and the Commissions. She was asked several questions and will get back to Ms. Koo later this week with answers.

The Commission has been without a Chair for over a year and she was asked about the process of naming a chair as well as what steps the Commission can take to help expedite the process. Specifically, the Commission inquired if it was appropriate for the Commission as a whole and/or as individual Commissioners to write letters to the Mayor with recommendations.

She was asked if there was a breakdown by ethnicity of the different Boards and Commissions. She will find out if such information is available. Commissioners felt that it would be helpful as we try to solicit other community members to serve on Boards and Commissions to ensure adequate diversity. It was also suggested that there should be an opportunity for all Boards and Commissions to gather to meet each other. No such event is planned but it was offered as a suggestion to help facilitate communication between different Boards and Commissions. Names of Commissioners are not released but can be obtained through each Board or Commission. This came into question since all nomination hearings and confirmations are a part of regular DC Council business.

Also, staff raised the question of Board/Commission review for oversight by City Council; are there specific regulations and/or requirements on oversight and review? Ms. Sandler thought that this question should be referred back to the Council.

The Commission is seeking guidance on several matters:
Can the Commissioners testify before Council at hearings as an individual?
Can Commissioners contact City Council members as an individual?
Can the Commission testify before Council?
Can the Commission contact City Council members?

Annual reports are being compiled by the Office on Board and Commissions. OAPIA already submitted one for last year. Question was asked if there was any type of template for annual reports.

The second guest at the meeting was Florence Pan, who is one of three final candidates for a judgeship in the Superior Court in DC. There has never been an APIA judge in DC. She and the Commissioners talked about ways to promote her candidacy. She agreed to

provide further information for dissemination to the community. Upon answers to some of the questions posed to Ms. Sandler earlier, the Commission may take further action.

Ms. Koo went through her report on activities by the OAPIA in the past month. She highlighted the FY 2008 report where the office exceeded all the goals set. OAPIA is co-organizing a book launch on January 28 with Washington DC Economic Partnership for the Asian language translated versions of "Doing Business in DC."

The Office on Human Rights will be issuing a grant to provide training to community members, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations and public service entities on the District's Language Access Act of 2004. The OAPIA will serve as the pass-through for the grant which will train at least 200 community members. Announcement of the grant will be made at the end of January or early February.

The Bi-monthly Community meeting was held on November 20 where the community and OAPIA provided updates. Patricia Pasqual, Executive Director of The Foundation Center and Gretchen Greiner-Lott, Deputy Director, Office of Partnerships and Grant Services provide an overview of their specific organizations.

OAPIA conducted a walk-through on December 9 in District 4D after reports of increased robberies targeting Asian business owners. OAPIA and MPD handed out safety tips and encouraged merchants to be more cautious of their surroundings.

The 3rd Chinatown Cultural Development Strategy Community meeting was held on December 10. Progress is being made and taskforces have been formed to continue to find ways to strategize and find ways to revitalize DC's Chinatown.

OAPIA met with Deepa Iyer of SAALT and Francey Youngberg to discuss the upcoming Cultural Dialogues for the Mayor's Office of Community Relations and Service. The project will serve to educate District frontline employees on how to best interact with the serve the interests of the community. This is one of OAPIA's 2009 initiatives and the program will hold six sessions to reach as many District employees as possible.

Staff members Ngoc Tran and Elliott Lee have been working with ethnic media to publicize the work and resources of the OAPIA.

Mr. Saxena recently met with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to exchange ideas on building partnerships around the issue of language access. OAPIA will work with the Foundation to gain information on evaluation tools from other Language Access programs across the country.

OAPIA presented their FY 2009 annual plan at the quarterly meeting hosted by the Office on Human Rights.

Upon answers to some of the questions raised to Ms. Sandler regarding the role of the Commission and Commissioners, there may be a conference call on Tuesday at noon to discuss the nomination of Florence Pan.

Discussion was held to determine when to hold the monthly Commission meetings to ensure the best turnout. It was decided to hold the meetings on the 4th Wednesday of the month.

Meeting was adjourned.