

Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs Meeting
November 19, 2008

In attendance: Wylie Chen, Interim Chair, Commissioners Richard Tagle, Matt Finucane, David Chung, Martha Watanabe, Ellen Fatah-Young (via phone)
Staff: Soohyun Julie Koo, Neel Saxena

Executive Director Koo reviewed the Report to the Commission on API Affairs, November 2008. (See attached). Below are additional comments and discussion on various items from the report.

OAPIA assists families of victims of a fatal car accident – Staff informed the Commissioners that funding has not been secured to assist the victims. There are ongoing discussions with various CBO's as well as the Vietnamese Embassy. Further information will be sent out as details become available.

South Asian leaders meeting – This new initiative which is partially funded by one of the OAPIA grants brings together South Asian leaders to assess the needs of the community including access to government services and to develop a needs assessment tool.

FY08 Work Plan for OAPIA – Director Koo went through the staff Work Plan for FY08. She reported that the office had or surpassed all of the target goals for the past year. Some of the accomplishments include allocation of a “community computer” with language capabilities in the office so that the community can access information through the web. The Office facilitated a link between the Census Bureau and the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center to help distribute information and solicit volunteers. An assessment was done for front-line centers. Scholarship information is posted on the website. Workshops were held on loans from SBA and 7(A) as part of the Mayor's Initiative on Revitalization geared for District business owners. Other workshops were conducted on safety, emergency preparedness, and housing. Assessments are on-going with the current OAPIA grantees. OAPIA is participating in the Mayor's Walk-thrus to assess “hot spots” and to have dialogue on how to improve services.

Emergency preparedness – discussions have been on-going on how to best reach the API community in the event of an emergency. All acknowledged the unique difficulties in reaching the community. Some suggestions have been through language newspapers, language radio and tv stations, community leaders, designated “messengers”.

English language learners compliance agreement – Neel Saxena reported that discussions were held with the General Counsel regarding the dissolving of the Office of Civil Rights and Multicultural Affairs and where should concerns/problems be directed. Also, discussed was the ELL compliance agreement and the ten year report due out next year.

Other business: Commissioners discussed further appointments to the Commission. There are two slots open. Several names were discussed and follow-up will be done.

It was decided that since the Commission has been without a Chair for the past year, that a letter would be drafted to the Mayor asking for the appointment of a Chair.

Wylie Chen will send a note to Commissioners asking them to state a preference for holding Commission meetings on the 4th Tuesday or 4th Wednesday of every month. Majority responses will decide the permanent date for the meetings. Also, discussed was the importance of having Commissioners attend the monthly meetings in person. Call-ins for the meetings will be discouraged and call-ins will only be used if a Commission vote is needed for a particular issue.