

## MINUTES

### GOVERNOR'S ETHNIC AMERICAN ADVISORY COUNCIL

May 19, 2006 – 3:00 P.M.

Oklahoma History Center  
Dr. LeRoy H. Fischer Board Room, Third Floor  
2401 North Laird Avenue  
(Northeast 23rd & Lincoln Boulevard)  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105

Advance written notice of regular scheduled meetings was filed with the Secretary of State on December 14, 2005. The agenda for this meeting was posted with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). This meeting was conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Open Meeting Act, Section 301 through 314 of Title 25.

#### MEMBERS PRESENT

Dr. Sandra Kaye Rana, Chair  
Marjaneh Seirafi-Pour, Vice-Chair/Secretary  
Malaka A. Elyazgi  
Mohammad Farzaneh  
Dr. Basel S. Hassoun  
Dr. Mohammad Karami

#### MEMBERS ABSENT

Dr. Riaz Ahmad  
Dr. Fayyaz H. Hashmi

#### OPM STAFF PRESENT

Brenda C. Thornton  
Linda Williamson

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#### VISITORS PRESENT

Dr. Bob Blackburn – Executive Director, Oklahoma Historical Society  
Judy Gibbs Robinson – Reporter, The Oklahoman  
Emily R. Smith – Retiree, NYS DOT Land Agent  
Omar Rana – Special guest

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#### **A. CALL TO ORDER.**

Dr. Sandra K. Rana, Chair of the Governor's Ethnic American Advisory Council, called the meeting to order at 3:17 p.m.

#### **B. INTRODUCTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS, STAFF AND GUESTS.**

Council members provided self-introductions and Chair Rana introduced staff and guests. Chair Rana welcomed everyone and thanked each for attending. She acknowledged Dr. Bob Blackburn and thanked him for hosting their council meeting at the new Oklahoma History Center.

### **C. REVIEW OF MINUTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 17, 2006, MEETING.**

Dr. Basel Hassoun's motion to approve the minutes of the February 17, 2006, meeting as presented was seconded by Ms. Malaka Elyazgi. The motion carried unanimously.

### **D. ANNOUNCEMENT: RESIGNATION OF KAREN BAK.**

Chair Rana announced that Ms. Karen Bak had submitted her letter of resignation. Mr. Mohammad Farzaneh's motion to accept Ms. Bak's resignation was seconded by Dr. Hassoun. The motion carried unanimously. Chair Rana asked members of the council to begin thinking of names that could be submitted to the Governor for his consideration as a possible replacement.

### **E. DISCUSSION: RECOGNITION OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS.**

Vice-Chair Marjan Seirafi-Pour has been working on the project of identifying the two main Eid holidays and getting the public schools to recognize them as excused absences. She reported that during a recent conversation with Mr. Art Schofield, Accreditation Officer with the Department of Education, she learned that the schools were currently dealing with religious holidays in accordance with Title 70 Section 10-105(C). During their conversation, Mr. Schofield read to her that section of law entitled "Religious Holidays." She formalized her notes into a written document and provided copies to the council members so they could distribute this information to their communities as a useable reference when notifying the schools of their child's absence to observe religious holidays. She also informed them that it would be the responsibility of the parent or guardian to notify the schools of the dates of the specific religious holidays on which their child would be absent since the schools do not track all religious holidays. It was agreed that it would be best if the council only provide community members with the written information and leave the responsibility of notifying the schools with the individual parent or guardian.

### **F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS.**

No items were presented at this time.

### **G. NEW BUSINESS.**

It was suggested that when the council selects their meeting dates for 2007, they consider an alternative date for their May meeting because of graduations and other activities that occur in the later part of May.

Chair Rana announced that Mr. Brad Yarbrough had recently resigned as Director of the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Chair Rana stated that she felt this was a key position that greatly impacted the state and was in hopes that Governor Henry would look to his councils, as well as other community groups, for input and recommendations when considering a possible replacement.

### **H. COMMENTS FROM VISITORS.**

Judy Gibbs Robinson stated that The Oklahoman was doing a story around the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday about what freedom means to various people. In view of the fact that there has been a lot written about economic immigration, her assignment for this story was to write specifically about new immigrants that came here for personal or religious (reasons) and freedoms other than

economic. She asked the council for their help in putting her in touch with individuals whom she could interview.

## **I. ADJOURNMENT.**

Chair Rana adjourned the meeting at 3:45 p.m. on a motion by Dr. Hassoun; seconded by Ms. Elyazgi. Dr. Blackburn presented everyone in attendance with a special pin, shared the “story” of the table around which they conducted their meeting, and then personally conducted a tour of the galleries and other parts of the Oklahoma History Center.