



Annual Internal Review

This report covers the time period of 7/1/2019 to 6/30/2020

Asian American Quality of Life (AAQoL) Advisory Commission



The Board/Commission mission statement (per the City Code) **is:**

The Commission shall advise the City Council on issues related to the Asian American Resource Center and will provide on-going guidance and support for the City's Asian American quality of life initiatives.

Describe the board's actions supporting their mission during the previous calendar year. Address all elements of the board's mission statement as provided in the relevant sections of the City Code.

2019-20 Accomplishments

Long-Term Accomplishments

- Expanded progress of language access with departmental training, Equity Toolkit, and iSpeak Austin system, which has been implemented at Austin Public Health (APH), Parks and Recreation Department (PARC), and the Austin Police Department (APD)
- Completed a City Public Information Office (CPIO)-facilitated strategic planning process

- Realigned work groups; identified and advanced Commission projects such as mental health and human resources
- Established budget codes to track interpretation and translation services, which can be reviewed by the Commission to monitor utilization of these services by department
- Worked with City staff to evaluate and pursue alternative strategies for the Asian American Resource Center (AARC) new performing arts center facility and bridge projects
- Developed and submitted budget recommendations to City Council that did not request additional funding in light of financial impacts of COVID-19

Work Groups

The AAQoL Advisory Commission accomplishes a large portion of its work through its work groups. The following section highlights work group activity over the past year.

AARC Oversight Work Group

Commission members: Debasree DasGupta (Lead), Vince Cobalis, Kirk Yoshida

Other members: Sona Shah (AARC Manager), Sonya Alexander-Harris (HR Rep), Thuy Nguyen, Schiller Liao (NAAO rep), Phil Hoang (VACAT)

The AARC Oversight Work Group reviews and provides advice on AARC programming, strategic plans, staffing, information gathering, and cultural events. A major function of the work group is to assess budget needs at the AARC and make recommendations to the Commission and City Council.

Key 2019-20 Accomplishments

- The work group has been working closely with the NAAO representative and PARD in developing the Master Plan for the next phase of additional buildings to be constructed at the AARC, using the \$7 million allocated for this purpose as part of the 2018 bond that was approved by the citizens of Austin. The work group provided input on the surveys conducted by the NAAO, and the community forums seeking input from the citizens that were hosted by the PARD. The need for a better and larger performance hall has been established, although there is still ongoing debate regarding its size and criteria. There are also plans on building additional classrooms and office space for the center.
- As PARD begins the process to work on Phase 2 of the AARC facility, the work group receives regular updates from members of PARD involved with the project and the Public Works Project Manager so that they can

provide the advice and support needed for a smooth and timely project execution.

- The work group also makes an effort to ensure that the bond money is expended efficiently, and so directed PARD to look for other sources of funding for a pedestrian bridge to connect the Rutherford campus overflow parking area to the Center. PARD looked into U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants as a possible source of funding, but it was later determined that the project did not qualify. The work group is now considering making a budget request to City Council to fund the bridge.
- The work group is also collaborating with Councilmember Jimmy Flannigan on a proposal to examine a public/private partnership that could fund a more robust Phase 2 construction project by combining it with the proposed redevelopment of the City's adjacent Rutherford campus property
- The work group tries to ensure that the Center has the budget to hire the staff that is needed and any other needs it might have. The Center has been doing well as far as their budget is concerned and is able to use some money towards necessary purchases, such as a front desk to improve accessibility
- The work group has also assisted in making a change in the Senior Meals program. After the program director left, AARC decided to work with Meals on Wheels and More to manage what used to be referred to as the RICE program. Members of the work group and Commission met with Sarah McKenna of Meals and Wheels and More to discuss the program to ensure that the menu would cater to the needs of Asian seniors. At present, this program is on hold as the AARC facility is closed due to COVID-19.
- The work group was involved in discussions regarding transportation services, which were migrated from the AARC to PARD Transportation
- Since COVID-19 forced the City to go into lockdown, the work group has continued to virtually meet with AARC Facility Manager Sona Shah so that support and advocacy can be offered with some of the online programs and other business the center continues to undertake. These include virtual discussions on racism and the Black Lives Matter movement as well as a letter writing workshop on the issue.

Goals for 2020-21

- Continue to monitor progress of the design and construction of the 2nd phase of buildings at the site
- Continue to explore ways for better utilization of the kitchen
- Continue to provide help with budget and staffing needs that arise in the future

- Provide advocacy and guidance on the development of online programs in response to the closure of the facility due to COVID-19

Arts and Culture Work Group

Commission Members: Pramod Patil (Lead), Shubhada Saxena, Peter Chao, Hanna Huang

The mission of the Arts and Culture Work Group is to work together with folks from various ethnic backgrounds by sharing and celebrating different cultures. High-level goals include:

- Encouraging Asian Americans in the expression of their culture
- Promoting cultural sharing activities within the Asian American community and the larger Austin community
- Increasing awareness of opportunities for the City to participate in Asian American cultural activities
- Work towards ensuring that the City's arts funding is equitable for the Asian community

Key 2019-20 Accomplishments

- Establishment of Austin Pune Sister City relationship
 - We worked with members of the Indian American community and City of Austin's economic development team and the mayor's office to officially establish/sign the Austin Pune Sister City relationship. The sister city relationship agreement was signed on July 25, 2019 at the Austin City Hall.
 - As a part of this process, we hosted 12 delegates from Pune. The establishment of Austin Pune Sister City relationship enabled further exchanges in the business, education, health care, and environment.
- Diversity Band
 - We started a new band on the day Austin Pune Sister City International was established. The purpose of the Diversity Band is to promote diversity and multicultural integration through the medium of music.
 - The drums we use (Dhol) are an integral part of the Pune culture. The band plays different traditional Indian folk music and will also be creating fusion by integrating music from different parts of the world/cultures including mainstream American. The team is made up of musicians from different ethnic backgrounds. The Diversity Band also provides participation opportunities to folks from different

- age groups (from elementary schoolers to adults). Band performances also showcase diversity in gender and costumes.
- The band consists of the members from different communities
- The Diversity Band was invited to perform of the Fox7's Music in the Morning show
- We participated in the Passport to the World event in October 2019 and helped to bring the members of different communities together through music
- Signed Austin-Pune Friendship City agreement: An official sister city agreement signed between Pune and Austin on September 27, 2018. This was a great team effort from the work group, citizen groups, and the City of Austin. This agreement enabled collaboration and exchanges between these two cities.
- Arts and Culture outreach effort at UT Asian/Asian American Faculty Staff Association (AAAFSA): We explored opportunities to share the commission work and engage Asian American community with the work we are doing. UT Asian/Asian American Faculty Staff Association (AAAFSA) arranged a virtual session on May 14, 2020, with Pramod Patil to learn about efforts of AAQLC, how to engage with commission, accomplishments by arts and cultural workgroup, and more.
- 'We are in this together' art project
 - We recently completed an art project with Austin Sister Cities International (ASCI). This initiative was our idea to help spread the message of togetherness and sense of one world while dealing with COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Each sister city was requested to create a poster to in line with the theme of togetherness. We received amazing response and support. This created an incredibly good opportunity to see art/expressions from different sister cultures.

Goals for 2020-21

- Focus on opportunities towards making arts funding equitable for the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community
- Possible organization of an 'Asian Festival' for all of Austin and its surrounding areas with the idea of organizing such event by working with different organizations.
- Explore opportunities to work with the AARC and the Greater Asian Chamber of Commerce (GAACC) on possible ways they can assist AAPI artists with event hosting etc. during current difficult COVID-19 times
- Help build database of AAPI artists in Austin

- Explore opportunities for possible representation of Asian architecture in each district area
- Develop with art projects involving different communities of color and mainstream to celebrate togetherness. Such projects can be executed by working with members of the community and/or organizations.

Community Engagement Work Group

Commission Members: Catherina Conte (lead), Kirk Yoshida, Shubhada Saxena, Pooja Sethi, Molly Wang, Kavita Radhakrishnan

Mission: The Community Engagement Work Group is dedicated to fostering the enhancement and involvement of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Community within the social fabric of City of Austin services and programs. The work group is guided by the following core principles:

- Diversity: Demonstrating respect for all individuals and valuing the unique perspectives and experiences of the AAPI community
- Community Engagement: Working collaboratively with community members and organizations to achieve positive social change
- Inclusion: Breaking down barriers to meaningful participation and fostering a sense of belonging and access to city services
- Social Justice: Challenging injustice and working toward an equitable society
- Healthy Communities: Work with Austin Public Health to further develop the capacity of community health organizations serving the AAPI community

Key 2019-20 Accomplishments

- Planned and held a Community Dialogue event on the Land Development Code and the FY 2020-21 budget recommendations in conjunction with the Commission on Immigrant Affairs
 - Facilitated a discussion on the Land Development Code and received input on awareness in the community and the need for translated documents in languages other than English and Spanish
 - Discussed updates for the FY 2019-20 budget recommendations, shared the FY 2020-21 budget timeline, and received feedback on budget priorities, including health/mental health funding
- Advanced the Mental Health project that received funding in the FY 2019-20 budget to the Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) phase
 - Communicated regularly with APH staff on project status
 - Developed and submitted to APH a set of parameters for APH to consider to meet the Commission's goals for the project

- Assisted the North Austin Universal Health Clinic work through reporting requirements and contract issues related to its contract with APH

Goals for 2020-21

- Engage the community
 - Host additional tables at community events
 - Plan a video conference community engagement event, such as a moderated discussion, for the fall or winter of 2020
 - Continue to develop and implement a strategy for Commission social media outreach with guidance from CPIO and Equity Office staff
 - Continue sending out AAQoL e-news to community connections
 - Compile a comprehensive list of AAPI organizations and community leader contacts, including a process to keep the list updated
 - Identify media and creatives that have been effective in communicating with various AAPI community groups from the list above
 - Continue to develop brochures and FAQs to promote the Commission and its work at community events
- Bridge the engagement gap with City departments
 - Provide input to key City departments in engaging with Austin's AAPI community, prioritizing APH, APD, Economic Development Department (EDD), and Austin Public Library (APL)
 - Document examples of best practices and/or examples of good engagement for each of the four target City departments
- Advance projects and initiatives that improve the health outcomes of the AAPI community
 - Continue to advocate for the collection of disaggregated data from APH service providers
 - Continue efforts to break down systemic barriers for smaller organizations to apply for APH funding opportunities
 - Work to hold mainstream service providers accountable for serving the AAPI community and set baseline goals in their contracts for outreach to underserved communities

Business Planning Work Group

Members: Kirk Yoshida (lead), Nguyen Stanton, Shubhada Saxena, Kavita Radhakrishnan, Vince Cobalis, Sarah Chen, Ketan Patel

The Business Planning Work Group is tasked with coordinating the Commission's budget recommendation process and other Commission business not covered by the other work groups. The work group meets with City department staff, City Council members, and community organizations to prioritize areas of interest and initiatives and develops budget recommendations for full Commission approval. Throughout the year, the work group meets with City department staff to ensure that funded initiatives progress in a manner that meets the Commission's intent.

Key 2019-20 Accomplishments

- Attended quarterly Joint Quality of Life Budget Recommendations Task Force meetings to collaborate and advance equitable outcomes through the budget process
- Developed budget recommendations in conjunction with staff and other stakeholders, matched to the AAQoL Initiative recommendations and City Council strategic priorities
- Complied with City guidelines in developing budget recommendations for FY 2020-21
- Submitted budget recommendations through the Equity Office
- Oversaw production of the Annual Internal Review
- Held follow-up discussions with City staff and other stakeholders regarding funded budget items to get updates on how funds are being spent
- Provided a FY 2019-20 budget update to the full Commission, including the status of our funding requests and other budget items of interest
- Assigned projects out of the FY 2019-20 budget process to different work groups and leads
- Coordinated a two-part Commission strategic planning session facilitated by CPIO and took the lead on analyzing the results to develop Commission projects and set priorities
- Adjusted the work group's budget recommendation development process to match the City's new budget calendar
- Followed up on an issue related to the Asian Contractor Association and their loss of office space due to the Small and Minority Business Resources (SMBR) moving to a new location
- Received input from the Greater Austin Asian Chamber of Commerce on the new funding formula developed through a City consultant, who was then asked to present to the full Commission at the January 2020 meeting
- Advised City Council on policy issues related to policing and COVID-19 spending framework

- Shared planning strategies through membership in the Joint Inclusion Committee (JIC) – with Commissioner Stanton elected as the Vice Chair of the Committee
- Participated in the Equity Office's 'mini-grant' process, including providing advice on structure and scoring applications
- Met with Fire Department Chief Joel Baker and management regarding strategies to improve Asian American representation at Austin Fire

Goals for 2020-21

- Analyze and clean up the results of the strategic planning session to develop additional Commission projects and set priorities; develop a tracking system to show progress on items
- Continue to work with the Joint Quality of Life Budget Recommendations Task Force to collaborate and advance equitable outcomes through the budget process
- Onboard a new Commissioner to the Joint Quality of Life Budget Recommendations Task Force
- Provide input/recommendations, in conjunction with GAACC, to EDD on the new funding formula for the minority chambers of commerce
- Provide support to the Asian American Employee Network (AAEN) in alignment with their goals
- Provide input on the direction of the new created Housing and Planning Department to include the needs of the AAPI community
- Broaden the Commission's focus beyond the AARC to include cultural arts and services for AAPI community members in other community centers
- Work with AFD on innovative Asian American recruitment efforts

Commission Actions Summary

- Support for property tax exemption for seniors
- Recommended \$50,000 in funding to encourage and facilitate 2020 Census participation by Asian Americans and immigrants
- Approved adoption of the AARC master plan
- Approved the following FY 2019-20 Budget recommendations:
 - \$200,000 for mental health outreach, education, and services
 - \$6,500 for a transportation pilot for seniors
 - AARC Ballroom room dividers (not funded)
 - Immigrant Affairs staff position
 - Object codes for translation and interpretation services

- Appointment of Commissioner Stanton and Commissioner Cobalis (alternate) to the Joint Inclusion Committee (JIC)
- Recommended that the Land Development Code be translated into five languages, in addition to English and Spanish, and that the code and mobility plan represent the needs of the AAPI and other diverse communities
- Recommended that PARD identify a timeline to complete the AARC bridge and find an alternate funding source to using 2018 general obligation bonds allocated to the AARC Master Plan, Phase 2 project
- Approved a community engagement event, conducted as a Special Called Meeting, in February 2020 at the AARC, in conjunction with the Commission in Immigrant Affairs, to determine community priorities for the FY 2020-21 budget
- Provided a letter of support for the utilization of the Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) delivery method for the next phase of AARC construction
- Provided support for an amendment to the PARD contract with Meals on Wheels and More to serve the AARC Senior Meals program
- Approved the following FY 2020-21 Budget recommendations:
 - Maintain cultural arts funding for African, LatinX, Asian American, and Native American (ALAANA) contractors at the FY 2019-20 level
 - Maintain the current funding level for the GAACC
 - Allocate, in the current and FY 2020-21 budget, to the extent possible, federal COVID-19 response and recovery funds and funds created from the reduction in the APD budget to programs that support African American, LatinX, and other communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic
- Approved a City proclamation declaring May as Asian-Pacific American Cultural Heritage Month
- Approved a resolution in support of APD policy changes to align with City Council and community values, the reallocation of \$100 million from the APD budget to provide community resources, and that any APD leadership changes be done in consultation with the City advisory commissions, Equity Office, and the Office of Police Oversight (OPO)
- Provided monthly reports from work groups on an ongoing basis

Briefings/Presentations to the Commission

- Introduction of Fire Chief Joel Baker

- Briefing on Neighborhood Liaison Program, Mei Fung, APD Community Liaison
- Council Resolution by Jimmy Flannigan to link the AARC Master Plan and Rutherford Campus development plan, which was approved by the City Council
- PARD Long Range Plan for Land, Facilities, and Programs
- Presentation on First Responder Mental Health Calls for Service
- Update by Melissa Ayala on the Waterloo Greenway Project
- Briefing by Travis County Census Program Manager Josh Lawler on national and local efforts to prepare communities for the 2020 Census
- Briefing on the FY 2020-21 Budget process and timeline
- Briefing by CPIO on the Commission's strategic planning process and results
- Introduction by new Assistant City Manager Chris Shorter and discussion of the *Health and Environment* and *Culture and Life-Long Learning* strategic directions, which he leads for the City
- Briefing by APH on the FY 2019-20 Mental Health Initiative and an update on FY 2018-19 funding results
- Update by PARD on the AARC Senior Program, including changes to the transportation program and the proposal to transition the Senior Congregate Meals Program contract to Meals on Wheels and More
- Presentation by EDD on the "equitable funding model" for the minority chambers of commerce
- Update by the Transportation Department Assistant Director on the proposed Land Development Code revisions
- Discussion with PARD representatives regarding Commission concerns over limiting the scope of the AARC Master Plan, Phase 2 and the proposed funding of the pedestrian bridge with limited bond funds available
- CPIO staff briefing on the strategic planning process and results tracking system
- Presentation by Cathy McHorse on the Early Childhood Council Strategic Plan
- Overview of the Tatum Report and draft implementation plan
- Presentation by Equity Office staff on the results of the previous Equity Mini-Grant awards and the upcoming new application round

- Briefing on NAAO and the Austin Asian American COVID-19 pandemic response
- Briefing on the APD system for providing language support when interacting with the community
- Briefing by the Budget Office on the COVID-19 framework
- Briefing on the *Count Us In* Census 2020 initiative

Determine if the board’s actions throughout the year comply with the mission statement.

The AAQoL Advisory Commission did not conduct any actions during the year that did not comply with its mission statement.

List the board’s goals and objectives for the new calendar year.

2020-21 Goals and Objectives

Equity

The AAQoL Advisory Commission will work to address structural inequities that are reflected in City staffing and budget allocation.

- Identifying strategies to improve equity of AAPI employment and promotion at the City of Austin
 - Working with individual departments, such as our initial work with the Austin Fire Department (AFD)
 - Supporting the Asian American Employee Network (AAEN) initiatives
- Continuing to monitor progress for implementation of Equity Office Equity Tool at individual departments
- Expanding progress on language access. Limited English speaking populations need translated documents and language interpretation to fully participate in government
 - Advocating for continuing support, fiscal and otherwise, of the CPIO’s translation/interpretation of Asian American languages, and obtain periodic reports on their progress, outcomes and sustainability, including how public departments will be funded to meet language access needs in the future
 - Collaborating with the Community Action Network (CAN) to make language support (translation / interpretation) available to mainstream City-funded nonprofits

AAQoL Initiative

AAQoL Advisory Commission will continue to expand awareness of the Quality of Life Initiative and advance community participation through:

- Conducting ongoing Community Dialogue events
- Developing ongoing policy and budget initiatives based on the AAQoL Initiative and City Council Strategic Priorities
- Develop promotional materials, both physical and electronic, to educate the community about the Commission

Health

The Commission will continue to support safety net services that address the needs of Asian Americans by:

- Advocating and increasing awareness on unmet mental health needs of Asian Americans, sensitizing available mental health resources in the City such as Integral Care and its Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT) to the unique mental health needs of the AAPI community in Austin
- Assuring that existing agencies serving Asian Americans, refugees, and immigrants, such as Asian Family Support Services of Austin (AFSSA), Austin Asian Community Health Initiative (AACHI), American Gateways, and GAACC, receive funding to serve our expanding population and improve their access to Integral Care, MCOT, and EMS to address unmet mental health needs
- Advocating for social services for Asian Americans proportional to the population through the current provider network or through redistribution of funding
- Providing advocacy for continuing support, fiscal and otherwise, of the AACHI Community Health Navigator program, and obtaining periodic reports on their progress, outcomes, and sustainability
- Identifying and consolidating information and resources on free and low-cost health clinics, such as the Northwest Austin Universal Health Clinic (NAUHC), and fairs relevant to Asian Americans and identifying ways to disseminate that information in the public domain

Collaboration

The AAQoL Advisory Commission will seek to strengthen its ties with other City and community organizations by:

- Increasing participation in joint committees and collaboration with other Quality of Life Commissions
- Continued collaboration with APH on mental health and health equity issues
- Human Resources, including HR Department, AAEN and non-City HR advisor

- Working with the City HR Department to increase effective outreach
- Working with AAEN and HR to identify ways to help increase the number of City of Austin executives
- Community outreach, including community leaders, especially those from ethnic groups not currently represented on the Commission
 - Identify strategies to standardize and improve Community Outreach
 - Continuing to develop community dialogue opportunities
 - Attending additional events and meetings to promote interest in the Commission and its efforts
- Increasing collaboration and coordination with NAOO and the GAACC to reach the broader AAPI Community
- Seeking relationships with new community organizations that can broaden the Commission network

Our Communities

In addition to the goal and objectives presented above, the AAQoL Advisory Commission will work to support our communities and increase community dialogue by:

- Developing a network of contacts to better understand and support refugee, new Asian immigrants, and other underserved populations
- Continuing to support the AARC facility, including advocating for combining the adjacent Rutherford Campus development and the AARC Master Plan, Phase 2 to improve funding opportunities and reduce the overall parking footprint
- Actively seeking opportunities to support Austin's LatinX and African American Communities and contributing to the Black Lives Matter dialog, recognizing that both the "modern minority myth" and current anti-Asian racism incidents are intended to separate the minority communities facing common struggles. *Individually, we are one drop. Together we are an ocean. – Ryunosuke Satoro, Asian philosopher*