
Meeting of the Board

February 12, 2025
5:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.

Location: 658 Cedar Street – Centennial Office Building (Ladyslipper Room)

OR

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Or call in (audio only)

651-395-7448

Phone Conference ID: 921419130#

AGENDA

Time	Item	Information/Discussion/Action
5:00 P.M.	Public Comments (2 mins max per person)	Information/Discussion
5:10 P.M.	Board Business – Roll Call – Approval of November 20, 2024 Minutes – Approval of February 12, 2025 Agenda	Information/Discussion/Action
5:20 P.M.	February Financial Report	Information/Discussion
5:25 P.M.	FY26-27 Change Item Proposal	Information/Discussion
5:35 P.M.	50 th Anniversary Legislative Requests* – S.F. 873/H.F. ___ (Pappas; Pratt/Nash) – S.F. 874/H.F. ___ (Pappas/Nash)	Information/Discussion/Action
5:50 P.M.	Executive Director Report	Information/Discussion
6:00 P.M.	Executive Committee Report	Information/Discussion
6:10 P.M.	Community Updates	Information/Discussion

Next Meeting of the Board: May 14, 2025

An agenda item with an * is an item the Council Board will take public comments on during the Public Comments time pursuant to the Council’s Policy on Community Input at Council Meetings.

A quorum exists when forty percent of voting members are present.

Minutes

Council Board Meeting

November 20, 2024

5:00 – 6:30 P.M.

Location: Lady Slipper Room – Centennial Office Building
658 Cedar Street – Saint Paul, MN 55155

OR

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Chair Thao Worra called the meeting to order at 5:03 P.M.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were made.

II. ROLL CALL

Present:

Ajeet Yadav – Virtual

Bryan Thao Worra – Virtual

Chang Wang – Virtual (late arrival)

Daisy Zan – Virtual

Pia Puentespina – In person

Touachongka Vue Xiong – In person

Ngawang Dolker – Virtual (late arrival)

Yixiu Chen – Virtual (late arrival)

Senator Eric Pratt – In person (late arrival)

Senator Susan Pha – In person

Representative Jim Nash – In person (late arrival)

Staff: Sia Her, Andrew Morris, Mai Tong Vang, Jessi Evjen

Absent: Representative Liz Lee, Shwetha Vijayakumar, Elizabeth Eckman, Khendum Gyabak

With 6 out of 15 voting members present at the time of roll call, a quorum was present.

Meeting came to quorum at 5:05 P.M.

III. APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 19, 2024, MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the minutes from the September 19 Board meeting

BY: Senator Susan Pha

SECOND: Pia Puentespina

The motion was approved unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 20, 2024, AGENDA

Chair Thao Worra moved to amend the agenda to move up the election of executive committee officers before November financial report.

MOTION: To approve the November 20 Board meeting agenda as amended

BY: Chair Bryan Thao Worra

SECOND: Senator Susan Pha

The motion was approved unanimously.

V. NOVEMBER FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. Dolker reported no changes to the financial report and opened the topic for questions from the Board. Ms. Her added that she also did not have anything to report.

VI. ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OFFICERS (Minn. Stat. § 15.0145, subd. 4)

Chair Thao Worra identified the open seats on the Executive Committee: Vice Chair, the Treasurer, and the legislative member. He then nominated Senator Eric Pratt as legislative member and highlighted the importance of the work done by Senator Pratt at the Legislature on the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War. Ms. Dolker also stated her support for Senator Pratt and expressed that with so many new Board members, the Council needs someone with experience. Senator Pha nominated herself, stating that while she respects the experience of Senator Pratt and Representative Nash, as they have both already served on the Executive Committee for several years, she would like the opportunity to serve in this capacity.

MOTION: To elect the position of Legislative Board Member to the 2025 Executive Committee

Voting for Senator Pratt:

Bryan Thao Worra

Daisy Zan

Pia Puentespin

Ngawang Dolker

Yixiu Chen

Senator Eric Pratt

Voting for Senator Pha:

Ajeet Yadav

Touachongka Vue Xiong

Senator Susan Pha

Abstaining:

N/A

With 6 votes for Senator Pratt and 3 votes for Senator Pha at the time of roll call vote, Senator Pratt was elected to the Executive Committee as the legislative member for 2025.

Senator Pha congratulated Senator Pratt on his election and shared with the Board that she is disappointed with this decision. She encouraged everyone to think about electing new members for the next two open seats so that new members could gain experience in serving on the Executive Committee. Senator Pratt thanked the Board and expressed his agreement with Senator Pha and stated that he would be happy to work with Senator Pha on future opportunities.

Senator Pha nominated Mr. Touchongka Vue Xiong for the position of Treasurer, stating that he would be serve well in that role. Chair Thao Worra nominated Ms. Ngawang Dolker for the role of Treasurer and shared that she has done a remarkable job previously in this role. Both nominees offered brief remarks. Mr. Xiong shared that he is a business owner and does not have experience as a Treasurer, but he does handle financial materials and looks forward to the opportunity to learn. Ms. Dolker said that while she has served only one year as Treasurer, the responsibilities are simple as the position primarily involves being prepared to answer the questions of other Board members. She added that she enjoyed learning in this role and would be happy to serve for another year.

MOTION: To elect the position of Treasurer to the 2025 Executive Committee

Voting for Ngawang Dolker:

Bryan Thao Worra
Daisy Zan
Pia Puentespina
Ngawang Dolker
Yixiu Chen
Senator Eric Pratt

Voting for Touachongka Vue Xiong:

Ajeet Yadav
Touachongka Vue Xiong
Senator Susan Pha

Abstaining:

N/A

With 6 votes for Ngawang Dolker and 3 votes for Touachongka Vue Xiong at the time of the roll call vote, Ngawang Dolker was elected to the Executive Committee as the Treasurer for 2025.

Next, Chair Thao Worra opened the floor for nominations for the position of Vice Chair to the Executive Committee. Ms. Her reminded everyone that Vice Chair Wang is joining virtually as he is attending an important event at the University of Minnesota. Chair Thao Worra nominated Mr. Chang Wang for the seat of Vice Chair. Mr. Xiong nominated Mr. Ajeet Yadav for Vice Chair. Mr. Yadav thanked Mr. Xiong and declined the nomination.

MOTION: To elect Chang Wang for the position of Vice Chair to the 2025 Executive Committee

In favor:

Ajeet Yadav
Bryan Thao Worra
Daisy Zan
Pia Puentespina
Touachongka Vue Xiong
Ngawang Dolker
Yixiu Chen
Senator Eric Pratt
Senator Susan Pha

Opposed:

N/A

Abstained:

N/A

With 9 voting members voting in favor of the motion at the time of roll call vote, Chang Wang was elected to the Executive Committee as the Vice Chair for 2025.

VII. FY26-27 CHANGE ITEM PROPOSAL

Chair Thao Worra stated that in previous biennia the Council's change item request has not been brought before the Board, however, he would like the Board to vote on this item so there is a clear understanding of what the Council is requesting for its base budget. Ms. Her apologized for sending the meeting materials later than expected and proceeded to explain that the change item request for the 2026-2027 biennium is for a total increase of \$370,000 to the Council's base budget, consisting of \$175,000 in the first year and \$195,000 in the second year of the biennium. This will allow the Council to add one additional full-time equivalent staff to the current team of four. The new position would be a Special Projects Coordinator who would lead projects such as those related to the 50th Anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War and the 250th anniversary of the independence of the United States. This budget increase would also cover increased costs for administrative items such as rent, office supplies, and MNIT services, as well as staff travel expenses to meet with communities in greater Minnesota.

Senator Pha asked if the request for \$370,000 this year is an addition over last biennium's increase. Ms. Her answered that the request last biennium was to maintain current capacity and this biennium's request would be for a 29% increase over the biennium to our current base budget of \$1.286 million. She added that this request would also bring the Asian Pacific Council into closer staff and budget parity with the other ethnic councils. Senator Pratt asked how comparable the Asian Pacific population is with the constituencies of the other two ethnic councils. Ms. Her explained that Minnesota's Asian Pacific population is comparable in percentage to the communities represented by the other two ethnic councils. Additionally, the Asian Pacific community is the most linguistically and culturally diverse community and our current capacity level does not allow staff to dedicate as much time to newer and less established communities such as the Afghan.

Senator Pratt expressed support for the request in principle but recognizes that the state is projecting a structural imbalance of \$1.5 billion by the end of the 2026 – 2027 biennium. With this in mind, he finds it challenging to support this request. Representative Nash expressed his agreement with Senator Pratt and stated that there will be no promises due to the uncertainties at the Legislature. Chair Thao Worra thanked Senator Pratt for his words of caution and expressed that he believes the Council should request this increase to its budget now so that the Council might have greater capacity to support our emerging communities in Minnesota. Ms. Her reminded the Board that – in the last change item request – the Council submitted what it considered to be a reasonable increase of 14% while the other ethnic councils submitted requests of over 40% over their base. By the end of that session, our Council's budget fell significantly behind that of the other two.

MOTION: To approve the change item request

BY: Chair Bryan Thao Worra

SECOND: Senator Pratt

In favor:

Bryan Thao Worra

Pia Puentespina

Touachongka Vue Xiong

Ngawang Dolker

Yixiu Chen

Senator Susan Pha

Opposed:

NA

Abstaining:

Representative Jim Nash

Senator Eric Pratt

With 6 out of 8 voting members voting in favor of the motion at the time of roll call vote, the motion prevailed.

VIII. 2025-2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Chair Thao Worra invited Ms. Evjen to present on the proposed legislative agenda. Ms. Evjen reminded the Board that in preparation before each new biennium, staff disseminate a survey to gather input from community members. The 2024 survey was disseminated via social media, emails, tabling efforts at community events, and the Council's Leadership Awards Dinner. She added that the survey was deployed in July and closed on October 31st.

Community Priorities Survey Questions to Respondents:

- Place of residence
- Ethnic background
- How they heard about the survey
- Role in the community
- Top priority issues
- Detailed written response on chosen priority issues and perspective on how state government should address these issues

Asian Pacific Minnesotan Population:

- Total Asian Pacific Minnesotan Population: 365,658 people
- Top ethnic groups are the Hmong, Asian Indian, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean

Survey Sample:

- Includes ethnic breakdown and geographic location
- High response rate from Lao and Filipino community

- The highest response rates for “role in the community” were community member, nonprofit staff, educator, and government official/employee

The following issues were identified as the top 5 priorities:

1. Access to healthcare
 - a. Cost – Difficult to find affordable healthcare
 - b. Equity – Difficult for underrepresented groups to access healthcare
 - c. Navigation – Healthcare system is complex and not user friendly
 - d. Education – More education to clarify services
2. Arts, culture, and heritage
 - a. Preserving Culture – Elders have a fear of losing language/culture, and youth feel disconnected from their own culture
 - b. Representation – Important to share one’s own culture with other ethnic groups
 - c. Connection – Art brings different cultures together
 - d. Identity – Identity can be achieved through art creation and cultural learning
3. Income and wages
 - a. Cost of living – Current incomes cannot keep up with cost of living
 - b. Equity – There should be equitable pay
 - c. Safety – Poverty may affect education, mental health, violence, etc.
4. Home ownership
 - a. Cost – Middle class can’t afford home ownership
 - b. Access to Assistance – Government should provide downpayment assistance programs for those historically excluded
 - c. Safety – Home ownership provides safety and stability for families and communities
5. Employment
 - a. Ability to Thrive/Cost of living – Better employment opportunities for growth
 - b. Job Opportunities – Fewer job opportunities due to high standards and limited vacancies
 - c. Equity – More job opportunities for those age 40 and above

On-going Positions:

The Council will actively advocate for legislation that achieves the following:

- Programs and services that are respectful or and responsive to the linguistically and culturally diverse communities of Minnesota, including Asian Pacific Minnesotans.
- Collection of disaggregated data to better inform policymaking on issues of importance to Asian Pacific Minnesotans.
- Increase understanding of violence against Minnesota’s Asian Pacific women and children.

Representative Nash asked Ms. Evjen to elaborate on the topic of homeownership. Ms. Evjen explained that there were three main response options under the topic of housing, which included homeownership, renting, and homelessness. The written responses to the survey often indicated that these are viewed as interrelated issues, and that access to secure, stable housing and cost of homeownership are the primary areas of concern. Representative Nash stated that in his view current high costs are not due to lack of inventory, but over-regulation that makes it difficult to build new housing. Representative Nash also shared that he worked with Representative Hodan

Hassan on a bill to ensure that contracts in Minnesota are translated to the native language of the buyer. He asked if the Council has been approached to assist with translation related to this bill, to which Ms. Her answered no. Ms. Her added that even when these materials are translated, the concept(s) may still be difficult to understand for reasons such as illiteracy in the native language and limited to no direct translation from one language to another.

Senator Pha asked how the Council executes its legislative priorities and engages with the Legislature and the governor's office. Mr. Morris explained that the Council requests meetings over the course of the year with executive branch agencies and legislators alike, tracks committee work, and participates in the legislative process during the session. Mr. Morris is expecting to have fellows/interns this session to assist him with the Council's legislative efforts. The Council will assist with identifying, preparing, and navigating the legislative process as part of its ongoing work to help community members and organizations build their own capacity to engage. Senator Pha recommended that staff reach out to community members, gather bills introduced that match up to priority issues, and connect them to the chief authors and encourage them to testify in committees. Senator Pha added that she does not see many API community members in her committee hearings and would like to see more testimony on the API experience. She thanked the Council for pushing these priority issues and commended the staff for their work.

Ms. Chen asked if there are more specific examples provided by survey respondents under each priority issue as the range of issues seems broad. Ms. Evjen explained that she tried to identify themes within each issue to arrive at more specific examples. Representative Nash asked if it's possible to produce an assessment of these issues and how they relate to the communities that the Council serves. Ms. Her explained that staff does pull specific data points, such as homeownership versus rental rates, access to health care, access to high-speed internet, divorce rates, and other indicators. These data points are taken into consideration when making recommendations to policy makers. Ms. Her added that priority issues within each community may not be reflected in the priority survey due to communities' unique situations. Representative Nash expressed his interest in access to and utilization of capital and added that certain communities, such as the Afghan, have little interest in taking on debt. He asked that staff consider how the Council can be helpful in this area.

Chair Thao Worra noted that the less popular topics mentioned in the community survey should stay on the Council's radar. He asked what support, and services might be possible for individuals in the Lao and Cambodian ancestry communities on the matter of deportation. Senator Pratt asked if the 2022 survey also saw shifts in priority issues as much as in the 2024 survey, given that COVID-19 happened during those years. Ms. Evjen answered that past reports have shown that it is normal for there to be large shifts in priority issues from one biennium to the next. Senator Pha suggested that priority issues could have shifted due to perceived progress in previous priority areas since the last survey.

Ms. Her directed the Board's attention to the backside of the proposed 2025-2026 Biennial Legislative Agenda and explained that the additional data points and response rates included this year were not included in previous presentations to the Board. Ms. Dolker suggested that the priority survey be prolonged during presidential election years as the outcome of the election can impact the community's opinions. Ms. Evjen agreed with Ms. Dolker that the results of an election

could shape community priorities and explained that staff had already extended this year's closing date to allow for surveys to also be disseminated at larger events in October.

MOTION: To approve the 2025-2026 Legislative Agenda.

BY: Ngawang Dolker

SECOND: Pia Puentespina

In favor:

Bryan Thao Worra

Pia Puentespina

Touachongka Vue Xiong

Ngawang Dolker

Senator Susan Pha

Representative Jim Nash

Opposed:

NA

Abstained:

Senator Eric Pratt

Did not vote (*member was not available during the vote*):

Chang Wang

With 6 out of 8 voting members voting in favor of the motion at the time of roll call vote, the motion prevailed.

IX. APPROVAL OF THE 2025 COUNCIL BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

Next, Chair Thao Worra proposed that the meetings of the Board in 2025 be moved to a quarterly schedule instead of once every other month. He explained that the year 2025 will be a busy year for the Southeast Asian communities as they commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War. Council staff will be assisting these communities as necessary and appropriate, so a quarterly schedule would allow for this. Even on a quarterly basis, the Board and Executive Committee would still be able to carry out their respective duties. He added that the Latino Council has been meeting quarterly and this has appeared to work for them. Senator Pha agreed that quarterly meetings are acceptable and requested that any cancelled meetings be rescheduled to take place before the next scheduled meeting. Ms. Her agreed that staff will reschedule any cancelled meetings in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. Representative Nash asked if there were any statutes that would prevent the Council from moving to quarterly meetings. Ms. Yurich explained that the ethnic councils decide how frequently they meet and that there are no statutes in place to dictate meeting frequencies.

Mr. Vue Xiong asked what kind of work the Council has accomplished in previous years and why the Chair recommended a quarterly schedule. As a new member, he would like to gain experience and believes that he would accomplish this goal with more meetings instead of fewer meetings. Chair Thao Worra answered that he would like to explore opportunities in 2025 for a Board retreat so

that members can learn the history of the Council and anticipate the next 12 months to accommodate more community events. Ms. Puentespina expressed her support to move to quarterly meetings as legislators are busy during the session. She recommended that the Executive Committee send regular emails to the Board to update members on key projects, who is the lead staff, and other information that might help keep the Board informed in between meetings. Senator Pha requested that the Executive Director continues to provide an Executive Director Report and the Executive Committee Report to the Board every other month, and that these reports be included in the meeting materials further in advance of scheduled Board meetings. Ms. Her and Chair Thao Worra agreed and accepted Senator Pha's suggestion to amend the motion on the 2025 Board meeting schedule to include these commitments.

Senator Pratt asked if there will be working committees and opportunities to serve on such committees related to the 50th Anniversary and the 250th anniversary projects. Ms. Her explained that staff is putting together a calendar dedicated to events surrounding the 50th Anniversary and that staff will make this calendar available to the public and the Board. This will help the Board to stay informed and engaged as appropriate. She encouraged Board members to read the Executive Director Reports to remain informed about these projects.

MOTION: To approve the 2025 Council meeting of the Board as quarterly meetings, and to call on the Executive Director to provide reports to the Board in between Council meetings, in which opportunities for engagement are identified, and Executive Director and Executive Committee reports to be included with full agenda and meeting materials as amended.

BY: Pia Puentespina

SECOND: Senator Susan Pha

In favor:

Chair Bryan Thao Worra
Pia Puentespina
Ngawang Dolker
Senator Susan Pha
Representative Jim Nash
Senator Eric Pratt

Opposed:

N/A

Abstained:

Touachongka Vue Xiong

Did not vote (*member was not available during the vote*):

Chang Wang

With 6 out of 8 voting members voting in favor of the motion at the time of roll call vote, the motion prevailed.

X. COMMUNITY UPDATES

Ms. Puentespina shared that the Filipino community is very busy around the holidays as Christmas is an important event for their community. There is an event that features Filipino street food at the cultural society on the first Sunday of every month. The community is also preparing for the Debutante's Ball in January and invites everyone to join these events.

Mr. Vue Xiong invited everyone to Hmong New Year on November 30th at the River Center in Saint Paul. Ms. Her added to this by asking members to inform the office of their attendance as staff is coordinating with the Hmong New Year planning committee to organize a program.

Ms. Dolker shared that December 10th is the 35th anniversary of the Dalai Llama receiving the Nobel Peace prize. She invited the Council to join the Tibetan community at the celebration scheduled for the 14th at the TAFM Center in Isanti.

Chair Thoa Worra shared that December 2nd is the 49th Anniversary of Lao National Day.

Representative Nash shared that Senator Pratt joined him at the recent Diwali event in Burnsville and it was a good event.

Chair Thao Worra adjourned the meeting at 6:46 P.M.

**SENATE
STATE OF MINNESOTA
NINETY-FOURTH SESSION**

S.F. No. 873

(SENATE AUTHORS: PAPPAS and Pratt)

DATE	D-PG	OFFICIAL STATUS
02/03/2025	245	Introduction and first reading Referred to Environment, Climate, and Legacy

1.1 A bill for an act

1.2 relating to arts and cultural heritage; appropriating money for commemorative

1.3 program.

1.4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

1.5 Section 1. **APPROPRIATION; 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF VIETNAM WAR AND**

1.6 **SOUTHEAST ASIAN CONFLICT.**

1.7 \$150,000 in fiscal year 2026 is appropriated from the arts and cultural heritage fund to

1.8 the Board of Directors of the Minnesota Humanities Center for the joint commemoration

1.9 program for the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War/Secret War in Laos/Southeast Asian

1.10 Conflict, as provided in Laws 2024, chapter 106, article 4, section 2, subdivision 5, paragraph

1.11 (k).

Selection Criteria: Budget Period - 2025, Fund - 1000 to 6000, DeptID - G9N30000 to G9N3ZZZZ, AppropID - G9N0000 to G9NZZZZ

Break On: Budget Period, Fund, DeptID, AppropID

Budget Period: 2025	Fund: 1000 General	DeptID: G9N31000 Asian-Pacific Council	AppropID: G9N1100 Council on Asian Pacific MN
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Remaining Payroll Projection	Full-Time (41000): \$236,749.80	Part-Time (41030): \$0.00	Total: \$236,749.80
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Account Class and Description	Current Budget	Pre-Encumbered	Encumbered/Committed	Expended	Unobligated	Unexpended
41000 Full Time - Salary	447,116.00	0.00	234,663.71	212,452.29	0.00	234,663.71
41050 Overtime and Premium Pay	14,000.00	0.00	8,966.15	5,033.85	0.00	8,966.15
41070 Other Employee Cost	2,500.00	0.00	2,500.00	0.00	0.00	2,500.00
41100 Space Rental And Utilities	23,000.00	0.00	13,053.14	9,935.86	11.00	13,064.14
41110 Printing And Advertising	9,500.00	0.00	164.81	5,023.74	4,311.45	4,476.26
41130 Prof-Tech Serv-Outside Vend	55,000.00	0.00	28,754.00	15,995.00	10,251.00	39,005.00
41155 Communications	1,000.00	0.00	745.89	154.11	100.00	845.89
41160 Trav-Sub-InState-Border Comm	3,500.00	0.00	1,550.00	1,003.83	946.17	2,496.17
41170 Trav/Sub-OutOfState-BorderComm	4,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00	4,000.00
41180 Employee Development	2,000.00	0.00	600.00	1,258.65	141.35	741.35
41190 State Agcy-Prov Prof-Tech Serv	500.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	500.00
41196 Rate-Based MNIT Services	19,000.00	0.00	12,815.41	5,684.59	500.00	13,315.41
41197 Agency-Specific MNIT Services	4,000.00	0.00	2,096.36	1,903.64	0.00	2,096.36
41300 Supplies	7,000.00	0.00	446.20	2,293.18	4,260.62	4,706.82
41400 Equipment	4,700.00	0.00	3,421.22	973.78	305.00	3,726.22
41500 Repairs To Equip and Furn	3,000.00	0.00	1,871.47	326.03	802.50	2,673.97
43000 Other Operating Costs	195,268.93	0.00	5,505.88	31,827.00	157,936.05	163,441.93
47160 Equipment-Non Capital	1,000.00	0.00	0.00	700.32	299.68	299.68
Total	796,084.93	0.00	317,154.24	294,565.87	184,364.82	501,519.06

**SENATE
STATE OF MINNESOTA
NINETY-FOURTH SESSION**

S.F. No. 874

(SENATE AUTHORS: PAPPAS)

DATE
02/03/2025

D-PG
245

Introduction and first reading
Referred to Environment, Climate, and Legacy

OFFICIAL STATUS

1.1 A bill for an act
1.2 relating to arts and cultural heritage; appropriating money to commemorate
1.3 anniversary of fall of Saigon; requiring a report.

1.4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

1.5 Section 1. **APPROPRIATION; EQUITABLE COMMEMORATION OF**
1.6 **ANNIVERSARY OF FALL OF SAIGON.**

1.7 (a) \$500,000 in fiscal year 2026 is appropriated from the arts and cultural heritage fund
1.8 to the Board of Directors of the Minnesota Humanities Center to support programming
1.9 commemorating the 50th anniversary of the fall of Saigon. Programming must recognize
1.10 the cultural and historical contributions of Cambodian-, Lao-, and Vietnamese-Minnesotans.

1.11 (b) The appropriation under this section is intended to address historical funding inequities
1.12 and underrepresentation of Cambodian-, Lao-, and Vietnamese-Minnesotan communities
1.13 in previous commemorative initiatives.

1.14 (c) The Minnesota Humanities Center, in collaboration with the Council on Asian Pacific
1.15 Minnesotans, must administer and implement an equitable process to allocate money directly
1.16 to nonprofit organizations and initiatives representing Cambodian-, Lao-, and
1.17 Vietnamese-Minnesotans. The process must incorporate input from and reflect the priorities
1.18 of these communities and must ensure:

1.19 (1) a minimum allocation of money to each community to guarantee fair representation
1.20 and participation;

1.21 (2) outreach to increase awareness of funding opportunities; and

2.1 (3) technical assistance and capacity-building support for nonprofit organizations with
2.2 limited resources or experience accessing funding.

2.3 (d) The Minnesota Humanities Center, in collaboration with the Council on Asian Pacific
2.4 Minnesotans, may establish methods of distribution that ensure equity and
2.5 community-informed decision-making. Potential methods include but are not limited to:

2.6 (1) a grant-making process;

2.7 (2) direct allocations to nonprofit organizations for programming specific to their
2.8 communities; and

2.9 (3) collaborative partnerships between the Minnesota Humanities Center and nonprofit
2.10 organizations to codevelop and implement programming.

2.11 (e) Programming decisions must be determined by the respective Cambodian, Lao, and
2.12 Vietnamese communities, ensuring alignment with their unique cultural and historical
2.13 priorities.

2.14 (f) Of the amount appropriated under paragraph (a), the Board of Directors of the
2.15 Minnesota Humanities Center may retain up to \$..... to reimburse the center and other
2.16 entities for costs incurred to provide technical assistance, capacity-building support, and
2.17 other administrative support to nonprofit organizations seeking to access funding under this
2.18 section.

2.19 (g) As part of the report required under Minnesota Statutes, section 138.911, subdivision
2.20 2, the Board of Directors of the Minnesota Humanities Center must outline:

2.21 (1) the allocation of money appropriated under this section, including a breakdown by
2.22 community;

2.23 (2) a description of funded organizations and projects;

2.24 (3) the methods used to distribute money and ensure equity; and

2.25 (4) recommendations for future funding to support equitable programming for the
2.26 Cambodian, Lao, and Vietnamese communities.

2.27 (h) Any money remaining after the initial programming is completed must be reallocated
2.28 equitably among Cambodian, Lao, and Vietnamese communities for additional programming
2.29 consistent with the purposes of this appropriation. This appropriation is available until
2.30 expended.

Executive Director's Report
February 12, 2025

I. Administrative/Projects

- A. Financial Report: The February 2025 Manager's Financial Report is included in the meeting materials for this meeting of the Board. – *Strategic Plan, Goal #3*
- B. Board Appointments: The Governor intends to appoint to as many of the currently vacant seats by the end of February. The open seats are: the Chinese and three broadly representative seats.

All current Board members should have completed the mandatory training provided by the Department of Administration. The most recent training took place on November 14, 2025.

No legislative seat is vacant; the current members are Sen. Eric Pratt, Rep. Jim Nash, Rep. Liz Lee, and Sen. Susan Pha.

- C. 2024 Report: Pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 15.0145, subd. 8, we must submit a report by January 15 of each year to the chairs of the committees in the House and the Senate with primary jurisdiction over state government finance and operations. Due to unexpected happenings, we will submit our report by the end of this month. – *Strategic Plan, Goal #3*
- D. Change Item Request: As recommended to and approved by the Board at the November 2024 meeting, our change item request for the 26-27 biennium is a \$370,000 increase over the base. If approved, this increase would allow us to add one additional FTE—a *Special Projects Coordinator*—to our current staff team of 4 FTE. Also, this increase would bring our budget into greater parity with those of the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs and the Council on Minnesotans of African Heritage.

The Governor, however, recommended only a 2% increase over the our base for the coming biennium, which is an increase of \$28,000, to account for operating cost increases. Staff will continue to dialogue with legislators as necessary.

Andy and I testified in the Senate State and Local Government and Veterans Committee on January 28. Our testimony consisted of an overview of our agency and a brief mentioning of our change item request. – *Strategic Plan, Goal #1-#4*

- E. API Day 2025: This is one of our annual signature events. This year, we were planning to hold API Day on March 7, in the Capitol. However, conversations with community leaders and other variables have greatly influenced how we see API Day 2025 playing out. We'll keep the Board informed on the status of this event in the coming days.
- F. 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War: This year marks the 50th anniversary of the fall of Saigon/the end of the Southeast Asian conflict known as the Vietnam War. The fall of Saigon

can be seen as the impetus for the movement of four of our communities out of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Recall that at the end of the 2024 session, \$150,000.00 was appropriated to the Minnesota Humanities Center for the joint commemoration program in 2025. Since the last meeting of the Board in 2024, we have continued to convene meetings with our SEA partners, together as a larger group, and at times with just one ancestry group at a time.

This year will be very busy, to say the least. We're providing support on several fronts to the Cambodian, Lao, and Vietnamese communities, and to a lesser degree the Hmong.

- G. 2025 Policy Fellows Program: We had intended to launch our policy fellowship program last winter and in time for the 2025 legislative session. The fellows would be classified as PT permanent staff. The ideal candidates for this policy fellowship would be individuals with demonstrated interest in the intersection between communities, public policy, and good governance. The plan is still for Andy to supervise this team during the legislative session as we advocate on legislative initiatives aligned with the priorities identified in our biennial legislative agenda. Due to unforeseen circumstances, we have decided to defer launching this program but we continue to hold conversations with key organizations that would be strategic partners in his endeavor.
- H. Communications: We continue to implement and edit our communications plan by paying attention to how we communicate with our diverse communities. In a coordinated effort between staff and our communications contractor, we continue to create original content that is shared via GovDelivery, our website, and social media. Since the last meeting of the Board, staff has made significant changes to our Council website, such as sunsetting the Afghanistan Evacuees landing page and unpublishing information on the Special Projects Committee. – *Strategic Plan, Goals #1-#4.*

II. Community Concerns/Issues

- A. Teachers from the Phillipines: Across the country and in our state, teacher shortage is a problem. As a response, school districts are bringing in highly qualified teachers from countries such as the Phillipines to help fill these vacancies. Currently, we know of five school districts and several charter schools that are now home to an estimated 200 or so teachers from the Phillipines. We are actively working with the five districts and to no one's surprise, affordable housing, transportation, and cultural differences are some of the key challenges. As expected, our office continues to convene conversations and facilitate the sharing of critical information between different stakeholder groups. Our role in this matter is consistent with our duties as they are spelled out in our enabling statute and consistent with our policy work via the Teachers of Color Act. Based on community leaders observations, we expect to convene several meetings in the near future. – *Strategic Plan, Goal #1-#4*
- B. Immigration/DEI: As President Trump begins his current administration, images coming in from across the country are causing community members reasons to be concerned. Many have questions about the intentions of the federal government, as well as those of state and local governments. Questions and concerns we've picked up on indicate that there is a lot of misinformation being shared, and that community members want and need clarification. In

response, the staff have been in conversations with key government officials and community leaders to ascertain a course of action that makes sense given our statutory role and responsibilities. – *Strategic Plan, Goal #1-#4*

III. Staff – Our current staff roster is as follows:

- Sia Her – Executive Director (FTE)
- Jessi Evjen – Research Director (FTE)
- Mai Tong Vang – Office Manager (FTE)
- Andrew Morris – Legislative and Public Affairs Liaison (FTE)

In addition to our FTE staff team, we also have three contractors:

- Kim Jackson – Our graphic designer; she’s been with us since I started at the Council.
- Liz Star – Our communications expert; she’s been with us since 2019.
- Chou Moua – Our data expert; he’s been with us off and on over the years, but joined us again in 2022 to help us out during Anjuli’s absence. Since then, he’s joined us when we have needed extra support. This time around, he’s mostly dedicated to supporting Andy on the legislative front by providing data and other necessary information.

IV. Our work with the legislative branch – During the interim, the nature and frequency of our work with legislators varies depending on the needs of legislators and our communities. In the last few months, we have assisted legislators when community leaders have requested their support for on specific endeavors or their presence at events. Also, due to our ongoing effort to support Minnesota’s Cambodian, Lao, and Vietnamese ancestry communities with their 50th anniversary commemorations, we have maintained ongoing conversations with key legislators about opportunities during the 2025 session.

V. Our work with the executive branch – To deliver on our statutory duties, we have developed strong partnerships with cabinet agencies. Depending on the nature of the work at hand, our partnerships with each of the cabinet agencies vary in breadth and depth. We provide input on grant-making processes, participate as members of task forces/working groups/etc., and facilitate relationships between representatives of the cabinet agencies and our communities. Below, I provide an update on key initiatives we are assisting the cabinet agencies with. This is not an exhaustive list, but it provides the Board with an understanding of the work we are doing as we strive to assist state government with its responsibilities on behalf of Minnesotans.

A. Department of Public Safety (DPS): We have a robust relationship with this department because of our long standing shared effort to end gender-based violence and because of ongoing community concerns about Asian hate. We remain in active communication with Commissioner Jacobson and his staff because of some dynamics unique to our communities and some current events that require our Council’s presence in conversations. At the moment, our work with the department is focused on the following issues:

- **Office of Justice Program/Gender-based Violence**: Having taken on gender-based violence as a priority issue in the last seven years, we have consistently followed developments on

this issue in our communities. We communicate often with the DPS to ensure that we are sharing our knowledge and understanding of this issue as it is playing in our communities. In the last few months, staff have met with key staff from the department to discuss how we can support each other in this work to minimize gender-based violence. Andy and I expect that DPS will introduce legislative proposals this coming session and we will weigh in on them. – *Strategic Plan, Goals #1 and #2*

- **Introducing Commissioner Jacobson to Communities:** Since coming into office, Commissioner Jacobson has sought our advice and support on issues such as the Saint Paul Police-involved killing of a Hmong elder and translation of DPS materials in order to foster greater understanding of the work of DPS. Commissioner Jacobson has also spoken at several events in our community, including Songkran at the Capitol, Cambodian Heritage Day Celebration, and MinnesoThai. When tragedies involving our communities have occurred, Commissioner Jacobson has made it his priority to inform me and when appropriate, sought my advice on how we might engage with relevant stakeholders. – *Strategic Plan, Goals #1-#4*

- B. Minnesota National Guard: The NG is our most active and consistent partner in the work we do to advance the interests of Minnesota’s Asian Pacific ancestry communities. The adjutant general, General Manke has been actively engaged with us in communities. Asian ancestry members of the Guard – Major Nacionales and Technical Staff Sargeant Daisy Johnson – are the members assigned to work with our office. The NG – as expected in many ways – is experiencing changes, but we’re confident this relationship will remain strong, especially because the NG is one of our key partners in the 50th anniversary project.

In March, the NG will host its 3rd annual “Breakfast with the Adjutant General” for Minnesota’s Southeast Asian veterans (of the Vietnam War). We are providing some assistance to ensure that the targeted communities’ veterans are able to join us.

- C. Department of Education (MDE): Commissioner Jett has made it a priority to meet with our office on a quarterly basis to discuss his department’s legislative and community-engagement priorities. Since the last meeting of the Board, Andy and I have met several times with Commissioner Jett for ongoing conversations about MDE’s community engagement work, what we know about the education-related challenges facing Asian Pacific Minnesotan youth, and MDE’s 2025 legislative priorities. Commissioner Jett has also been accessible to our communities and made it his priority to be present, especially in our communities whose children may be the most vulnerable to falling behind in their education. Our most recent meeting with the Commissioner was January 27. – *Strategic Plan, Goals #1 and #2*
- D. Department of Employment & Economic Development (DEED): Council staff continue to communicate with the Office of New Americans. Since the last meeting of the Board, we have not had an opportunity to meet with this office; however, we have extended invitations to Assistant Commissioner Mohamed to join us at community events so that he may gain a more comprehensive understanding of the diversity of our communities. – *Strategic Plan, Goals #3 and #4*

- E. Department of Health (MDH): We have not been as active with MDH since our last meeting of the Board. As necessary, Andy does follow up with MDH staff on the issue of gender-based violence. – *Strategic Plan, Goals #1- #4*
- F. Governor’s Office: Since the end of the 2024 legislative session, we have communicated with the Governor’s office on issues such as our 26-27 budget request, community requests for the Governor’s presence, and the Governor’s appointees to our Board. Aside from this, we attend other meetings hosted by the Governor’s office as we are requested to do so. – *Strategic Plan, Goals #1- #4*
- G. Department of Human Services (DHS): We continue to engage with the department as it relates to our statutory role on the CECL and the resettlement of Afghan refugees in Minnesota. – *Strategic Plan, Goals #1 and #2*

In addition to the commitments identified under this section of the report, we also provide support to or we are mandated to serve on several statewide taskforces, advisory boards, and councils.

VI. Community Outreach/Engagement

- A. Newly established organizations: The work of our office inspires our community leaders to imagine what could and should be possible. To this end, I’m excited to share that recently, several organizations have been established. Their founders have just finished registering them with the Attorney General’s office, but I have sat down with these leaders to discuss the vision they intend to bring to fruition. At this time, these new organizations are:
- Asian Indian Chamber of Commerce
 - Lanka Association of Minnesota
 - Southeast Asian Leaders (SEAL) USA
- B. Speaking Events: Speaking engagements are important for several reasons, one of which is that they contribute to building awareness and understanding of the Council, and allow us to either begin to establish, or continue to reaffirm our Council’s credibility as a government agency with its unique role and responsibilities. Since the Council meeting in September, 2024:
- Taste of Asia Sneak Peek – October 16, 2024
- C. Community Events: Community events during which our Council is just another participant are some of the most informative and effective community/relationship building spaces to be in. It is during these times that we have more personalized conversations, meet, and get to know new people, build awareness of our Council, and learn from community members on their own turf. I thank our legislative members, Sen. Pratt, Speaker Hortman, and Rep. Nash for their strong commitment to building relationships with and learning from our diverse Asian Pacific Minnesotan communities. Since the meeting of the Board in May, we have attended the following community events:
- SEWA Gala – October 5, 2024
 - Lao Women’s Friendship Club of MN Gala – October 12, 2024
 - Navratri Puja & Celebrations at Milan Mandir with Navratri – October 12, 2024
 - Diwali (Hindu Society of MN) – October 19, 2024

- Taste of Asia – October 19 & 20, 2024
- Khantina Ceremony (MN Meditation Center) – October 20, 2024
- MN Asian Peace Officers Association 15th Anniversary Gala – November 1, 2024
- Hindu New Year Celebration (Diwali @ BSP Temple) – November 2, 2024
- SEAD Gala – November 2, 2024
- Hmong New Year – November 21, 2024
- Hmong American Partnership Holiday Party – December 11, 2024
- The Urban Village Open House – December 12, 2024
- Tet Vietnamese New Year – January 11 & 12, 2025
- Wat Lao East Bethel Gala – January 18, 2025
- Lunar New Year @ Asia Mall – January 25, 2025
- Phillipine Nurses Association Induction Ceremony – January 25, 2025
- Hmong Chamber Gala – January 31, 2025

Speaking at key gatherings and attending community events/meetings address all four goals of the Council's Strategic Plan.