



COMMISSION ON DECOLONIZATION
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
December 9, 2025 | 3:00 p.m.

- I. Call to Order: 3:05 p.m.**
- II. Roll Call**
 1. **Hon. Lourdes Leon Guerrero**
 2. **Hon. Frank Blas Jr. (Excused, represented by staff)**
 3. **Hon. Sabrina Salas Matanane (Absent)**
 4. **Hon. Pedro Suzuki Blas**
 5. **Hon. Eddie Duenas (Absent)**
 6. **Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper**
 7. **Dr. Michael Bevacqua**
 8. **Victoria “Lola” Leon Guerrero**
 9. **Dr. Mary Cruz**
 10. **Natasha Suba**
 11. **Anthony Charfauros**
 12. **Other**
 - a. Andrew Leon Guerrero - Office of Speaker Frank Blas Jr.
 - b. Walter Ulloa - Guam Daily Post
 - c. Joe Taitano - Pacific Daily News
- III. Approval of Minutes - Regular Monthly Board Meeting - September 2, 2025**
 - a. **Motion made by Governor Leon Guerrero.**
 - b. **Seconded by Dr. Mary Cruz.**
 - c. **Motion approved by consensus.**
- IV. Financial Report**
 - a. Account balances
 - i. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported the account balances for the political status taskforces as of December 9, 2025. The Free Association Task Force has \$50,632.00. Explained that the COD team is pending the establishment of its Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 rollover account. As a result, the office lacks sufficient funding to purchase advertisement services for its FY 2026 board meeting notices. To resolve this issue, COD asked to temporarily use the Free Association Task Force’s funding to cover the cost of the notices. Once the rollover account is

established, the funding used from the Task Force will be put back into their account. The Statehood Task Force has \$55,000 and the Independence Task Force has \$55,000 in its account. Last month, the Independence Task Force shared its budget plans for FY 2026. COD is working with the Task Force to send out a Request for Quote (RFQ) for project management services. Requested that once the task forces are set with their plans and have items for procurement, to notify COD so that they may assist with the educational campaigns.

- ii. **Governor Leon Guerrero:** Asked if account balances include lapses from FY 2025.
- iii. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Explained that the language within COD's law allows for unspent lapses from the task forces to roll over to the COD office instead of lapsing into the General Fund. These funds are used for COD's Public Information Program (PIP).

V. Old Business

a. Plebiscite Update & Strategy Discussion

1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that COD attended all six of Senator Wil Parkinson's town hall meetings regarding the political status plebiscite and participated in five of the six panels. During these events, COD engaged with community members who expressed their views on Guam's political status plebiscite. Notably, Senator Parkinson suggested having the community vote to authorize a plebiscite. A member of the Guam Youth Congress (GYC) also presented Bill No. 15-35, which calls for a similar vote by 2028. COD has asserted and maintains the stance that the people of Guam should not hold an authorization vote due to the passage of Public Law 23-147, which was an act to authorize a political status plebiscite. Explained that the law went through a public process and therefore, having a vote to authorize a plebiscite is redundant and unnecessary. Suggested that it is more appropriate to find a path that defends the rights of the colonized people of Guam to determine their political destiny. Reported Senator Parkinson's announcement and his introduction of a bill to amend the current law by changing voter eligibility to open the plebiscite to every registered eligible voter. Senator Parkinson has yet to announce a public hearing date. COD will engage in the public process and hold the line on the existing mandate. Invited board members to decide subsequent actions to task COD with. Noted that COD has had extensive conversations with Senator Parkinson on the issue of the plebiscite.
2. **Governor Leon Guerrero:** Asked if the passage of Senator Parkinson's bill would allow GovGuam to facilitate the plebiscite.
3. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Affirmed that the bill would allow GovGuam to facilitate a plebiscite. Noted that COD believes strongly in the principles and the integrity of the current mandate. Explained that if the mandate changes, COD will still be responsible to facilitate the plebiscite under the new framework. In principle, this bill questions the integrity of the will of our people that has been expressed through the legislative process which is reflected in Public Law 23-147.

4. **Governor Leon Guerrero:** Reaffirmed that the Board holds the position that the vote should be for native inhabitants. Suggested that this position should be reaffirmed and members should testify when a public hearing is scheduled.
5. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Confirmed that COD will be prepared to engage through the public hearing process. Encouraged board members to also engage. Noted that COD is working to communicate with the community on this issue. When the notice for the public hearing is announced, COD will inform the Board.
6. **Governor Leon Guerrero:** Requested that COD prepare information for the Board and their position to support a native inhabitant-led vote. Expressed that the native inhabitants of Guam, the CHamoru people, have not exercised the right of Self-determination. When a decision is reached, all residents will have a part to play to achieve Guam's political status.
7. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** COD will draft a white paper for the Board to help them prepare for engagement.
8. **Governor Leon Guerrero:** Confirmed that the Board will inform Senator Parkinson of the Board's position.
9. **Dr. Michael Bevacqua:** Explained that one thing Senator Parkinson is relying on is the idea that if you get rid of CHamoru Self-determination, then the vote can move forward and that this is what has been holding a vote from happening. However, this is not true. If a vote were to allow every eligible voter to participate, we must still engage with the federal government, which has difficulties in passing legislation on a number of issues that are critical for the U.S., much less the territories. Asserted that what is holding this issue back is that most people in the U.S. don't know or care about Guam. Encouraged the Board to be strong in our principles. Asserted that we should not try to distort what this cause of justice is to try to match the always shifting and impossible to understand ideological positions of the U.S. federal government. Noted that the U.S. Congress can still ignore Guam's decision. Questioned what the value would be to erase the rights of the CHamoru people and to have a vote whose results would sit in Congress.
10. **Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper:** Suggested that this would be a good opportunity for the Board to be reminded of the principles of Self-determination.

b. COD Decolonization Exhibit

1. Artifact call out

- a) **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that the Decolonization Exhibit will open in the Guam Museum's rotating gallery in mid-March of 2026. COD is currently working with the museum's curator, Dr. Michael Lujan Bevacqua, to prepare for the exhibit. Since August 2025, Ha'ani San Nicolas has taken the lead on the exhibit. Additionally, Dr. Tabitha Espina was selected as a vendor for research consultation services in support of the exhibit. She assisted Ha'ani with archival research, narrative development, and reaching

out to potential leads for artifact donations or loans. Services ended at the close of FY 2025. COD is continuing to develop the exhibit narrative and will be moving forward with the procurement of additional services in preparation for the exhibit. COD has put out a public call for donations and loans of artifacts for the exhibit. They are accepting artifacts such as letters, images, signage, apparel, etc., linked to Guam's decolonization movement. One of the featured items will be the ifit walking stick that BJ Bordallo and FB Leon Guerrero gifted President Roosevelt when they were petitioning for U.S. citizenship for CHamorus in Guam. The cane will be featured for the first time in the Decolonization exhibit. Another notable artifact are donated letters addressed to Bobbie Benevante from Fmr. Senator Angel Santos while he was incarcerated in federal prison. Petitioned board members to donate items to COD to be utilized for the exhibit.

- b) **Governor Leon Guerrero:** Asked if COD reached out to Linda Taitano. Items may include the pen which was used to sign the Organic Act.
- c) **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Confirmed that COD reached out to Linda Taitano and her son. COD is in contact with various individuals and organizations who are working to support the exhibit.
- d) **Vice Mayor Blas:** Confirmed that he will petition the members of the Mayor's Council for items they or their families may have.
- e) **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Explained that items will serve to create personal connections. Recalled how the Independence Task Force held a series of community workshops to personalize and honor figures for Guam's Self-determination effort through the Maga'taotao series. These events brought families and community members together. The more connections we can make with individuals and families will serve to make the exhibit successful.
- f) **Governor Leon Guerrero:** Suggested items from Fmr. Senator Hope Cristobal and Fmr. Congressman Underwood.
- g) **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Confirmed that these individuals have been contacted and are being worked with to curate items. Dr. Bevacqua and the museum team will execute loan agreements with individuals in order to initialize a condition report and a report for when loaned items are returned. Items donated will be accommodated within the museum's collection. COD's strategy is to utilize the exhibit as an opportunity for public outreach. Space will be made within the exhibit for people to learn about Guam's history and efforts for decolonization and Self-determination.
- h) **Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper:** Asked if COD has gone to UOG MARC.
- i) **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Confirmed that COD will ask to feature the original copy of the Organic Act. COD will formulate a list of items to request from the MARC.

- j) **Victoria “Lola” Leon Guerrero:** Suggested various items from UOG MARC, i.e. collections of documents from the Governors of Guam.
- k) **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Confirmed that COD will formulate a list of items that will be sent to UOG MARC for potential loan for the Decolonization Exhibit.

V. COD Office Updates

a. COD Outreach

i. FY 2025 Metrics

- 1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that in September, COD finished the FY25 PIP. COD conducted 48 presentations equivalent to 66 hours of direct engagement, 13 outreach tables at various events, 29 shows of COD’s community radio show “Challenge the Status Quo” equivalent to 58 hours of engagement, 3 T-Shirt collaborations, and distribution of educational material - 3,410 units of *Giha Mo’na: At a Glance* (AAG), 3,364 units of *Guam: A Territory Like No Other* (Insert). Stock of educational resources for AAG and Insert has been replenished for distribution. COD will be working on a future run for more distribution.

ii. FY 2026 Quarter 1 Outreach Updates

- 1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported metrics for COD outreach from October 1 - November 30, 2025. COD conducted 13 presentations - 12 at the collegiate level and 1 at the high school level. The office also conducted 3 panels, 6 outreach tables, and 6 radio shows. COD facilitated its first presentation with St. John’s School and is hoping to establish continued engagement. COD also facilitated a presentation at George Washington High School Youth for Decolonization and Close Up clubs. COD held outreach tables with Right to Democracy, Prutehi Guahan, and at the Teen Expo. Notably, the Teen Expo hosted over 1,000 students and was an avenue for COD to engage with several hundred high school students. The COD team were also guests on the Fanachu podcast, where the office promoted the upcoming Decolonization Exhibit and the call out for donations and loans. COD also restocked educational material at 11 mayors offices. Prior to distribution, COD contacted all mayoral offices to inquire about needing additional educational material for community distribution. Asked that Vice Mayor Blas notify COD of potential opportunities for COD to conduct outreach. Noted that the Department of CHamoru Affairs (DCA) recently conducted a planning meeting for Mes CHamoru next year. DCA is committed to ensure that COD has space and opportunity to participate in Mes CHamoru engagements to conduct outreach and provide public information.

b. External Engagement Updates

- i. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that on October 7 - 10, he and Ha'ani San Nicolas participated in the 80th Annual Session of the United Nations (UN) 4th Committee. The delegation provided testimony to advocate for Guam's Self-determination and decolonization and conducted several meetings with UN delegations and fellow Non-Self-Governing Territories (NSGTs). Notably, the delegation met with the Permanent Mission of Tuvalu where they received commitment to help the Governor and Lt. Governor attend an upcoming Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) meeting. Noted that PSIDS is composed of all UN members who are small nations in the Pacific. Reported that the amendments requested to be made to the Resolution on Guam passed through the UN 4th Committee. There were only two UN members that objected and voted against Guam's resolution, the United States and Israel. Nonetheless, there was an overwhelming majority of members that voted to approve and pass Guam's resolution. One of the major amendments to Guam's resolution was to reinstate the language on the militarization of Guam by the U.S. and its impacts to Guam's efforts to decolonize. Also noted that the delegation engaged with the British Virgin Islands (BVI), a fellow NSGT. The Lt. Governor recently traveled to the U.S. Virgin Islands to attend a Lieutenant Governor's Association meeting. He was able to spend a day in BVI and meet with their Premier and their Special Envoy to the UN. COD is working closely with BVI since they are the last NSGT to have a UN visiting mission. Asserted that Guam is next on the list for a UN visiting mission, but this depends on the approval of the United States.

VI. Task Force Updates

a. Statehood

1. No updates.

b. Independence

1. **Dr. Michael Bevacqua:** Reported that the Task Force is working with Thrive Media to make a series of Maga'taotao videos for social media. The Task Force is preparing a number of workshops in the coming year about issues that are important to the community, such as water safety, water issues, housing, and the cost of living. The Task Force is looking to hire an event manager to organize these workshops. The last workshop will focus on housing and affordability with a competition element for the youth, for high school and college students, where they can develop proposals to help bring down the cost of living.
2. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Confirmed that the COD office will be happy to assist and is already tracking the Task Force's procurement plans.
3. **Dr. Bevacqua:** The Task Force will provide an updated RFQ to COD.

c. Free Association

1. **Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper:** Reported that the Task Force participated in all of Senator Parkinson's town halls. The Task Force is working with their hired graphic designer for their logos and outreach. The Task Force is working on procuring an event manager for a conference to be held later in the fiscal year.
2. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Expressed thanks to all of the task forces and their members who participated in Senator Parkinson's town halls.

VII. Open Floor

- a. **Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper:** Expressed congratulations to Ha'ani San Nicolas for completing her doctoral program.

VIII. Adjournment

- a. Motion to adjourn made by Vice Mayor Blas.
- b. Seconded by Anthony Charfauros.
- c. Motion approved by consensus.
- d. Adjourned at 3:56 p.m.