

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MONDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2023
10:00 AM**

BROADCAST MEETING

MEETING WILL BE LIVESTREAMED AT

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=YQFNNDMCA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQFNNDMCA)

ANY MEETING MATERIALS WILL BE POSTED ONLINE

[@HTTPS://MASSCULTURALCOUNCIL.ORG/ABOUT/BOARD/](https://massculturalcouncil.org/about/board/)

UNDER “OCTOBER 12, 2023 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING”

AGENDA

	VOTE
1. Call to Order & Open Meeting Law	
2. Minutes August 4 and September 18 meetings	X
3. Upcoming Out of State Travel	X
4. Updates to Travel Policy	X
5. Upcoming Council Meetings	
6. Adjourn	



Power of culture

MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 12, 2023

ON-LINE MEETING

RESOLUTIONS

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approves the minutes of the August 4, 2023 and September 18, 2023 Executive Committee Meetings in the form presented to the Executive Committee.

RESOLVED: to acknowledge and consent to the staff-recommended out-of-state travel request subject to the Council's "Out of State Travel Policy" as presented to the October 12, 2023 Meeting.

RESOLVED: to adopt and recommend to the full Council the modifications to the Out of State Travel Approval Policy as presented to the October 12, 2023 Meeting.

OPEN MEETING LAW STATEMENT

Please note that this meeting is an open meeting of a public body subject to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. A notice of this meeting together with the agenda was posted on Mass Cultural Council's website 48 or more hours ago (excluding weekends and holidays).

This meeting shall be open and accessible to all members of the public except at such times when this body has voted to go into closed executive session under the Open Meeting Law.

This meeting is a virtual meeting held under the Open Meeting Law as modified under current law to permit online meetings. This meeting is being broadcast to the public on a publicly available YouTube channel as described in the posted meeting notice.

Instructions on how to contact the Council with questions or problems accessing the broadcast are also included in such notice. Only Council members, staff and invited guests will be provided access to the Zoom platform hosting the meeting. As a safety measure, in order to prevent disruption of the meeting or non-public communications among the participants, the Chair, Vice Chair and Executive Committee of Mass Cultural Council has asked staff to implement the following protocols for participants in on-line meetings of Mass Cultural Council or its committees:

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- All participants in the Zoom platform may be required to enter a waiting room and digitally sign-in before being admitted.

- Any attendee in the Zoom platform who nonetheless causes a disruption will be summarily removed from the meeting at the discretion of the Chair.

This meeting is not a public hearing and public testimony will not be taken. Individuals may not address the meeting without permission of the Chair.

Any member of the public may record this meeting provided that they do not interfere with the meeting.

Draft minutes of the open session of this meeting shall be kept and shall be posted on Mass Cultural Council's website no later than 30 days after the meeting provided that such minutes shall not be considered official until they have been approved by this body in open session. Individuals asserting a violation of the Open Meeting Law may file a complaint with this body within 30 days or with the Attorney General's office thereafter.

**TIPS FOR PARTICIPATING IN A VIRTUAL OPEN MEETING USING ZOOM OR OTHER
VIDEOCONFERENCING PLATFORMS WHEN THERE ARE SEVERAL PARTICIPANTS**

(adapted from several sources)

- In order to minimize background noise, please mute microphone when not speaking.
- Please raise hand in order to be recognized by the chair.
- In order for all members to have an opportunity to speak and be heard, please wait to speak until specifically recognized by the chair.
- If there are questions, please direct them to the chair and the chair will then recognize the appropriate person to respond.
- Please limit statements to three minutes.
- The chair will reserve the right to limit discussion in order to allow sufficient time for every member to be heard who wishes to speak.
- Modify Video Settings to “Hide all non-video participants”- this will make it easier to follow who is speaking and participating
- In the event of a service interruption during a Zoom call due to hackers, so-called “zoom bombing” or other technical difficulties, staff will indicate the call is to be terminated. Please exit the call and staff will circulate instructions by email for a new Zoom call to continue the meeting.

UNOFFICIAL DRAFT SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE AT ITS NEXT MEETING

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

FRIDAY, AUGUST 4, 2023

ONLINE MEETING

Committee Members Present were

Marc Carroll, Acting Chair
Ché Anderson
Jo-Ann Davis
Troy Siebels

Staff Members Present were

Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director
David Slatery, Deputy Executive Director
Jen Lawless, Senior Director of Operations
Catherine Cheng-Anderson, Senior Director of Business Operations and Chief Financial Officer
Bethann Steiner, Senior Director of Public Affairs
Kate McDougall, Controller
Ann Petruccelli Moon, Manager of Executive Affairs
Carmen Plazas, Communications & Community Engagement Manager

Acting Chair Marc Carroll called the meeting to order at 9:33am and asked Deputy Director David Slatery to read the Open Meeting Law statement:

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Marc thanked Dave and asked for a vote on the minutes from the Committee's last meeting held on May 3, 2023. Troy Siebels moved to approve the minutes and Jo-Ann Davis seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Ché Anderson and Sherry Dong were absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approves the minutes of the May 3, 2023 Executive Committee Meeting in the form presented to the Executive Committee.

Marc let Committee Members know that the discussion of the Executive Director's salary adjustment would move to item #6 on the agenda and be considered as part of the spending plan. He then asked Michael Bobbitt for his Executive Director's report.

Michael let Committee Members know that the Agency its staff are quite busy with the process of implementing elements of the new Strategic Plan into daily operations. Michael and Dave have been on the road quite a bit this summer working hard to get into important rooms across the Commonwealth with an eye toward advancing the Agency and the cultural and creative sector. Events, gatherings, and meetings have brought Michael and Dave into contact with colleagues from fields such as health and human services, transportation, economic development, and others; these efforts are proving to be positive for the Agency. Michael has scheduled meetings with Massachusetts Secretary of Economic Development Yvonne Hao and Massachusetts Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler for later this summer and a meeting with Massachusetts Secretary of Health & Human Services Kate Walsh is in the process of being scheduled. The biggest lift has been working to finalize the spending plan while awaiting news on the final state budget. Michael recently attended the NAACP National Convention in Boston. That concluded his report.

Marc noted that he was happy to see Michael at the NAACP National Convention; he then asked Senior Director of Public Affairs Bethann Steiner for her Legislative report.

Bethann let Committee Members know that there is wonderful news regarding the budget. She reminded them that the Agency had enjoyed a very positive budget process this year with the Governor, House, and Senate all recommending \$25 million for Mass Cultural Council – which is what the Agency requested. The FY24 Budget Conference Committee sent a final budget to Governor Healey earlier this week. She now has 10 days to review and act on it. The budget recommends \$25,895,000 for Mass Cultural Council - \$25 million for Agency programs and services and \$895,000 to support 16 earmarks – legislatively mandated spending that supports local arts and culture organizations, events, and initiatives prioritized by members of the House. The budget also adopts the Agency's suggestion to update the text of its line item to reflect the goals of the new Strategic Plan. This is an 11% operating increase over last year's budget and the second highest appropriation in the Agency's history. Until the budget is signed into law by Governor Healey, state government continues to operate on a 1/12 budget. Bethann also let Committee Members know that the Agency's Public Affairs team recently welcomed a new staff member. Christian Kelly is Mass Cultural Council's new Public Affairs & Events Manager. The team is working hard to create FY24 materials and plan fall events – there will be two big convenings, details about the convenings will be shared soon.

Marc thanked Bethann for her report and congratulated her and Michael on a successful budget process. He then moved to the next item on the agenda – a review and discussion of the FY24 budget and program allocation plan, including the salary adjustment for Executive Director Michael Bobbitt. Marc let Committee Members know that earlier this year Michael expressed his wish for a salary review for the new fiscal year and adjustment to align with executive compensation benchmarks at other quasi-public state agencies in the Commonwealth. Marc asked Catherine Cheng-Anderson, Senior Director of Business Operations and Chief Financial Officer to conduct research comparing salaries of these leaders. He then asked Cathy to explain her findings.

Cathy let Committee Members know that per the Chair's request she had looked up and recorded the annual salaries of the leaders of independent and quasi-public state agencies and benchmarked Michael's salary against them. The research supported a finding that Michael's current salary of \$170,625 was below the average of what is paid to his counterparts in other independent and quasi-public state agencies. Cathy reflected her findings in a memo to the Committee. Cathy said she understood that the Committee was considering a salary level of \$185,000 for the current fiscal year and expressed her opinion that the research could support such an increase.

Marc thanked Cathy for her research and analysis; he added that efforts to review and adjust the Executive Director's compensation are in keeping with the Agency's commitment to pay equity and this commitment was a catalyst for his recommending this salary adjustment.

Troy Siebels asked how often in the past the Agency had revised the Executive Director's salary.

Dave responded that under the Agency's statute, the Council must approve on the Executive Director's salary and has always done so as part of its vote on the annual spending plan which included the salary expense. He noted that the previous Executive Director received a special salary increase approved by the Council early in her tenure. Following that, she only received the standard annual percentage increase that all managers received, which was consistent with the executive branch's pay increases for managers.

Jo-Ann Davis noted that there may be questions from the full Council at its upcoming meeting. She feels that the benchmarking research as it is presented illustrates that a salary increase is justifiable. However, she questioned whether the staff took into account the size of the other agencies when making this comparison.

In response to Jo-Ann's query, Cathy elaborated, our research was primarily oriented towards comparing roles based on executive job functions. The size of the agency was not a consideration in our assessment.

Troy noted that this type of adjustment may garner press and recommended that staff prepare talking points to respond to any such inquiries. Jo-Ann agreed that this could get attention and scrutiny especially since the accompanying research is comparing the salary of Mass Cultural Council's Executive Director to the salaries of the leaders of other larger agencies.

Marc noted that the MBTA just appointed a new General Manager, and he believes the salary is significantly higher than what was listed in the memo and if so, bolsters the case for recommending an increase for Michael. Cathy let Marc know that she had looked the information up on Open Checkbook, but that she'd check with the MBTA and report back. (NOTE- Cathy reviewed more current information and updated the memo to contain the most recent salary information on the MBTA General Manager, which was \$470,000 and such information was subsequently communicated to the Council Members at the August 24 meeting, copies of which are available upon request.)

Marc added that more questions will come up from the full Council and possibly others and that it's important to make sure all research and talking points are complete for the

Council Meeting on August 24th.

Troy asked for clarification on next steps and Dave explained that the Executive Committee would today review and vote on whether to recommend this adjustment to the Executive Director's FY24 salary as part of its recommendation of the FY24 spending plan.

At this point, Committee Member Ché Anderson joined the meeting and Marc let Ché know the Committee was considering a salary adjustment for Executive Director, Michael Bobbitt. He asked Ché if he had any comment.

Ché stated that he does not think the Committee can understate the impact Michael has had thus far in his tenure. From Ché's perspective, the staff is invigorated, and the Council is energized. He believes Michael has a deep understanding of the needs of the sector and would support if Michael had asked for an even larger salary increase.

There was no further discussion. Marc asked Michael to move ahead with the staff's presentation on the FY24 budget and program allocation plan.

Michael explained that the creation of the FY24 spending plan occurred concurrently with the strategic planning process, adoption, and launch and that Committee Members will see a strong reflection of the new Strategic Plan within the program allocations and new functions of the Agency. Thanks to the work of Cathy and Kate McDougall, Controller the information is presented within a new easy to read format. Committee Members will also see equity work is a major component of the Agency's work. Michael believes this plan will set a strong foundation for the sector this year and in subsequent years. He then asked Cathy to present the plan.

Cathy let Committee Members know staff is eager to kick off a thrilling year with \$44 million in collective funding. She took a moment to recognize Michael, Bethann, and the Council for their work advocating for the Agency's line item. Cathy explained the spending plan goes beyond the agency's legislative mandate of allocating 75% of the Agency's budget to grants by designating this fiscal year 87%, which amounts to \$38.16M, for grantmaking. The administrative/program related costs are efficiently maintained at a modest 13%.

Catherine noted that \$11.03 million in Pandemic Recovery Funds will be carried over into FY24 with the requirement that the funds are spent by the end of the year. This carryover will allow Business Operations staff to continue making grant payments that were awarded in FY23. Catherine projects that an additional \$1 million will be allocated for new grantmaking due to FY23 grants that were cancelled because of no response from grantees and a small allocation of uncommitted funding. In addition, the plan dedicates approximately \$5.3 million to the FY24 Gaming Mitigation Grant Program. Non-grant spending highlights included the creation of a Native and Indigenous Culture Equity Plan, scaling up the Agency's access and disability equity learning hub, and a Disability Equity Plan. Also included are resources to assist individual grantees, especially those with disabilities and/or limited income, in obtaining grant funding and services – this work will see the Agency contract with Work Without Limits (a UMass Medical-affiliated agency which helps with issues around how Council grants can impact other public benefit programs). Finally, Senior Director of Programs Jen Lawless and Michael will undertake a comprehensive cultural asset mapping project.

Michael added that staff is hoping to hire a firm to assist with the cultural asset mapping project to find out who is out there in the sector and in need of support from the Agency. This will help the Agency more effectively refine its spending decisions in the future.

Jo-Ann asked Catherine to remind her if the 11.03 million carryover of pandemic funds has already been spent or if it's a true carryover. Catherine explained that only \$1 million will be considered new funding. About \$10 million has already been committed, just not actually spent yet.

Jo-Ann asked staff for an update on the Agency's office space and rent payments.

Dave explained that the Agency is nearing the end of its 10-year lease which expires in January 2026. Cathy added that Mass Cultural Council works with the Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) who handles all negotiations and helps the Agency search for and secure space. She and Dave will manage the process with DCAM and potentially secure a new lease.

There were no further questions about the proposed FY24 spending plan and Marc said he would look for a motion to recommend the plan as presented. Ché moved to recommend the plan to the full Council at its next meeting and Troy seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Sherry Dong was absent it was

RESOLVED: that, dependent upon a Massachusetts State Budget for Fiscal Year 2024 being signed into law containing an allocation of \$25,000,000 plus any earmarks for the Mass Cultural Council (the "FY24 State Budget"), the Executive Committee recommends that the Council approve for recommendation to the Grants Committee and full Council the FY24 Budget and Program Allocation Plan presented to the Executive Committee.

Marc then asked staff to briefly explain the out-of-state travel requests the Committee would consider today. Cathy reported that staff is requesting \$5,426 for out-of-state travel expenses. A portion of this is for Program Manager Maggie Holtzberg to attend the American Folklore Society's annual meeting and another portion is for Michael and Dave to attend the National Assembly of State Arts Agency's Executive Director's Forum in New Mexico.

There were no questions and Marc asked for a motion to approve the request. Troy moved to approve the out-of-state travel request, and Ché seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Sherry Dong was absent it was

RESOLVED: to approve the staff-recommended out-of-state travel requests presented to the August 4, 2023 Meeting.

Marc moved to the final item on the agenda: a review of the draft agenda for the August 24th Council Meeting.

Jo-Ann asked if staff could share an annotated agenda in advance of the meeting and Dave responded that he would share one.

There were no further questions or discussion. Troy moved to approve the agenda and Jo-Ann seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Sherry Dong was absent it was

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approve the draft August 24, 2023 Mass Cultural Council Agenda presented to the Executive Committee.

There was no further discussion and the end of the meeting agenda had been reached. Marc, as Acting Chair, adjourned the meeting at 10:19am.

UNOFFICIAL DRAFT SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE AT ITS NEXT MEETING

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2023

ONLINE MEETING

Committee Members Present were

Marc Carroll, Acting Chair
Ché Anderson
Jo-Ann Davis
Troy Siebels

Staff Members Present were

Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director
David Slatery, Deputy Executive Director
Jen Lawless, Senior Director of Operations
Bethann Steiner, Senior Director of Public Affairs
Ann Petruccelli Moon, Manager of Executive Affairs
Carmen Plazas, Communications & Community Engagement Manager

Acting Chair Marc Carroll called the meeting to order at 9:33am and asked Deputy Director David Slatery to read the Open Meeting Law statement:

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Marc let Committee Members know that following the August 24th Council Meeting he received questions from Council Members concerning Executive Director Michael Bobbitt's new salary. He clarified that no Council Member took issue with the salary itself. The questions pertained to the process through which approval of the new salary was reached. Marc reminded Committee Members that a discussion pertaining to the salary took place during the Executive Committee Meeting preceding the Council Meeting in August, but the full Council was not present for that. Marc wanted to ensure transparency and asked if Committee Members had any further questions or comments pertaining to Michael's new salary. There were no questions from the Committee. Marc added that one question he received was as to whether Michael would receive the approved salary adjusting and the state approved 4% across the board raise; the answer is no. Michael will decline the state approved raise. Marc will send a letter to Council Members letting them know about today's discussion and confirming that Michael will not be taking the state approved raise. *(A copy of such letter which was*

sent by staff to the Council Members as meeting materials on the Chair's behalf following the meeting is available upon request).

Jo-Ann Davis expressed that later in the meeting she would like the Committee to gain more clarity around which items can be discussed in closed executive session and which items must be discussed in an open meeting, especially pertaining to executive salaries.

Marc moved to the next item on the agenda, out-of-state travel, and asked Michael to explain the two items to be considered.

Michael stated that he will attend the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) Board retreat as he is a member of the Board. The retreat is in New Haven, CT and he will be driving there. Senior Director of Business Operations and Chief Financial Officer Catherine Cheng-Anderson will attend a conference in New Hampshire, to which she will also drive. Although both requests are within driving distance, the staff is following the existing policy and seeking approval from the Executive Committee as the engagements are outside of Massachusetts.

Jo-Ann asked what the Agency's overall travel budget is.

Dave explained that there isn't a specific line item for travel designated at the beginning of the year, but rather staff adds up any travel-related dollars and reports this to the legislature in January. It is typically quite modest. The Agency spends more on in-state travel as staff members are out visiting constituents across the state. Dave can ask Cathy to pull together the numbers for in-state and out-of-state travel and have them available for the next meeting.

Jo-Ann asked if there is a line item for conferences and education; she thinks this is important. Michael let Jo-Ann know staff can also report on professional development spending at the next meeting.

Marc asked staff to further explain the current travel policy.

Dave explained that the policy was written in response to a state budget requirement in the FY20 state budget line for the Council and states that out-of-state travel must be approved by the Council. In response to this, staff developed and the Council approved the current travel policy in August 2019 and that per the Council's enabling act, the approval responsibility was delegated by the Council to the Executive Committee. Dave indicated that as the Council had fully implemented the requirements for the earlier law, it could certainly revisit the policy based upon experience and potentially adjust it – for example so that only instances where air travel or lodging expenses are involved would warrant Council approval. Any new policy would need to be amended and approved by the Council.

Michael and Dave will work on a revised policy for consideration.

There was no further discussion and Marc said he would look for a motion to approve the out-of-state travel requests. Ché Anderson moved to approve the requests, and Jo-Ann seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Sherry Dong was absent, all were in favor and it was unanimously

RESOLVED: to acknowledge and consent to the staff-recommended out-of-state travel requests subject to the Council's "Out of State Travel Policy" as presented to the September 18, 2023 Meeting.

Marc moved to the next and final item on the agenda: a discussion of executive session procedures noting that this came up after the August Council Meeting. The question is how the Council can use executive session and what items can be brought into executive session that won't violate the open meeting law.

Dave explained that, when she was still Attorney General, Governor Healey had drafted an Open Meeting Law Guide which included a list of items, per the law, that could be discussed in closed executive session. This list had been provided to the members as part of the meeting materials. While there is no broad exception to the Open Meeting Law for discussion of salaries or HR matters in executive session, there are certain employment-related- matters which may occur in executive session such as a discussion of someone's personal qualifications as those qualifications pertain to hiring or preparing for salary negotiations where disclosure of a negotiating position in open session might harm the Council's bargaining position. Decisions around salary and professional qualifications are to occur in an open meeting session. Also, Dave reminded the members that any deliberations are not supposed to occur via private email or phone calls but must occur in an open meeting.

Michael asked Dave to explain the difference between discussions and deliberations.

Dave explained that a deliberation is whenever the Council comes together to talk about something within their jurisdiction (that is how it is defined by the Attorney General's Guide). If one or two Council Members discuss something but no decision is sought or made, that is a discussion. Deliberations should only occur in a public meeting. Jo-Ann thanked Dave for the memo and explanation and agreed the exceptions are quite narrow and the Council should be careful to discuss executive compensation in an open meeting.

Marc thought it would be helpful to share the memo and explanation with the full Council and Ché agreed. Staff will share the memo with the full Council and add language about never using email for deliberations; that if Council Members wish to communicate with the full Council through email to go through staff who can reshare the message as upcoming meeting materials.

There were no further questions or discussion and the end of the meeting agenda had been reached. Marc, as Acting Chair, adjourned the meeting at 9:57am.



Power of culture

To: Mass Cultural Council Executive Committee
Fr: Michael Bobbitt and David Slatery
Dt: October 12, 2023
Re: Travel Approval memo

Under Mass Cultural Council's Financial Policies, the Executive Committee reviews and consents to out of state travel by Mass Cultural Council staff.

Since the last Executive Committee meeting on September 18, there has been an additional need for staff to travel and we are presenting the following request for the Committee's approval.

Senior Staff of the Mass Cultural Council has reviewed the following travel request and finds it to constitute a direct benefit to the Council and its constituents, to be in alignment with the strategic plan and the cost to be in line with the value the travel would provide. We have Travel Authorization Form on file. We request the Committee acknowledge and consent the following.

Communities First New England Regional Convening, October 16-18th in Providence, Rhode Island.

[Communities First](#) is a national coalition focused on "transforming how federal, state, and local governments invest public dollars in Black, Indigenous, People of Color and low-wealth communities by implementing a relationships-first approach to community-driven solutions that centers frontline communities' leadership, innovation, and priorities." The organization contacted Mass Cultural Council in furtherance of the "power of the arts and artists to advance equitable planning, policymaking, and systems change" and desire "to bring that creative energy and perspective to bear on local planning and implementation at this critical moment as an important component of the work in local communities to unlock the federal resources available and actualize ...climate & racial justice commitments" contained in recently-passed federal legislation.

To that end, Communities First is hosting a regional New England convening to foster greater coordination among community partners, state/local leaders, philanthropic funders, capacity builders, technical assistance providers, and practitioners in order to support communities' ability to access federal resources available and ensure federal programs deliver on their transformative promises.

Proposed is that Cathy Cheng-Anderson, Senior Director of Business Operation and Chief Financial officer, attend to learn more and join in discussion on the the allocation and implementation of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and how it might apply to the Agency. Costs to Agency are approximately \$584 for lodging, mileage, parking and meals not otherwise provided at the event.

To: Mass Cultural Council Executive Committee
Fr: Michael Bobbitt and David Slatery
Dt: October 12, 2023
Re: Suggested Travel Approval Policy Updates

Under Mass Cultural Council's Financial Policies, the Executive Committee reviews and consents to out of state travel by Mass Cultural Council staff. Mass Cultural Council's line item in the FY20 Massachusetts State Budget (Chapter 41 of 2019) required the Council adopt provisions requiring pre-approval of out-of-state travel by council staff. The Council adopted and implemented such new policies in August 2019 and delegated, per the Council's enabling act, approval responsibilities to the Executive Committee.

The pandemic started roughly six months after adoption of this policy and travel has been restricted over the past 3 years, meaning that, until recently, the provisions were not required to be used that often. However, as state continues to emerge from the pandemic, there has been more need for travel recently and we anticipate there will be more (especially short trips within the region). Several of the recent requests have been routine, involving relatively small costs and mileage (i.e. no airfare) and have often come up on short notice. While Committee members have helpfully assembled when asked to approve these items, frequent meetings for routine requests are not a very efficient use of members' time and also not really in keeping with the original intention of the travel preapproval policies. Although not a huge burden, there are difficulties involved in organizing, holding and obtaining a quorum for Executive Committee meetings- especially on short notice. Therefore we are recommending updates to the policy to remove more routine requests from its purview while retaining the policy's intention of ensuring Council member review of out of state travel involving air fare or lodging.

We recommend that the provisions of the existing travel preapproval policy be modified so as to:

- Define, for purposes of the policy, "Out of State Travel" to not include expenses related to travel from Massachusetts to the other New England states (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut) as long as such expenses do not include any airfare or overnight lodging.
- Treat travel which is fully subsidized by another party (and has been disclosed and approved in accordance with the ethics law) and does not require expenditure of agency funds as not requiring pre-approval of the Executive

Committee or Council but rather to be reported to the Executive Committee at the next occurring meeting.

- In the rare case of any out of state travel requests arising at a time when the Chair, after attempts to convene a meeting, determines it is not possible to assemble a quorum to consider a request prior to the date of travel, the Chair may decide on such approval request individually provided that the Council and Committee is informed at the next occurring meeting.

Staff will of course continue to abide by all of the other provisions of the existing travel policy, ensuring that any request for out of state travel submitted for approval, has been internally approved (first by an immediate supervisor and then by Senior Staff) and including finding that will consider:

- Whether the proposed trip provides a direct benefit to the agency and constituents.
- Whether the proposed trip aligns with the strategic plan.
- Whether the staff making the request has been invited to speak/present and/or will receive scholarships/discounts/outside funding to offset the cost of the trip.
- Whether the total cost of the proposed trip outlined in the travel authorization form is in line with the value the trip would provide.

Please note the Council's Financial Policies exist in a number of different documents, some of which are out of date and Cathy Cheng-Anderson is looking at updating them all and bringing them together in one document over the course of the next year. In the meantime, we are asking the Executive Committee to adopt the changes suggested above and recommend them to the full Council at the next meeting.