



Power of culture

To: Mass Cultural Council Members
From: Nina Fialkow, Chair and Marc Carroll, Vice Chair
Date: March 13, 2020
Re: Executive Committee Meeting- March 16, 2020-2:00-3:30 PM

Dear Council Members:

After we all learned of Executive Director Anita Walker's retirement announcement last week, we intended to address the topic with the Council during our meeting today and then hold an additional meeting where we would have more time to focus on issues related to the transition and search for a new executive director. As we know the Coronavirus upset those plans and our Council meeting was cancelled. Therefore, we are now scheduling an input and listening session for Council members so we can collect any questions and thoughts you may have about the transition and search process. Council member participation is crucial to the success of this process. The Council will ultimately vote on the selection of the next Executive Director.

We have called a **meeting of the Executive Committee next Monday, March 16 from 2:00-3:30 PM in the Mass Cultural Council offices** to which all Council members are invited to attend. Due to the Governor's modification of the Open Meeting Law during the state of emergency, members will be able to participate virtually via a ZOOM video conference call (as was used at the recent Grants Committee meeting).

This meeting will be purely an informational meeting conducted by the Executive Committee and we will use this time to outline the anticipated search process and gather input and questions from Council members.

In preparation, we have prepared this memorandum as a document for discussion at the meeting.

Prepared on 3/13/20

Timeline of Events

Last Tuesday, March 3, prior to the scheduled Executive Committee meeting, Anita informed us of her decision to retire (effective June 30, 2020). We then informed the Executive Committee at the meeting which followed.

We decided to wait until after CultureRx briefing at the State House scheduled for the next morning on Wednesday, March 4th before any further announcements. On Wednesday afternoon, Anita sent an email to the Council announcing her plans and updated the agency. A notice to the public was issued Thursday morning via press release and social media.

During Executive Committee meeting on the 3rd, we, as Chair and Vice Chair, appointed the Executive Committee to serve as a Search Task Force to oversee the process for the new Executive Director. This is consistent with the practice in 2006 (the last time the Council hired a new Executive Director).

The Executive Committee was unanimous in agreeing that the Council needed to conduct an open and transparent search process and determined that the services of a professional search firm is required to accomplish this. This is also consistent with past practice - a search firm was immediately retained in 2006-07 for the search process that resulted in the hiring of Anita.

We believe that a professional search firm would not only source resumes and candidates from throughout the nation but also help us create and implement a fair and open process. A search firm would also provide independent expertise to the Council to handle the large number resumes and recommendations we expect to receive. A credible and transparent selection process will be essential to the successful launch of a new Executive Director's tenure.

The search firm will also be instrumental in guiding us through a process that establishes Council priorities for the future direction of the agency and the qualifications the Executive Director will need to achieve those priorities. It will ensure that this process provides ample opportunity for all Council members to participate.

A search firm will be selected through an open Request for Proposals (RFP) process. If you know anyone to whom such an RFP should be sent, please notify David Slatery. We anticipate that the process to select a search firm will take 6-8 weeks based upon what other Massachusetts state agencies have undertaken.

The Search Task Force will lead the process to select the search firm and will work closely with the firm to design the search for the new Executive Director. Staff will provide administrative support for the process and will be interviewed and offer viewpoints, but staff will not be leading the process. Frequent updates to the Council will be part of this process.

We are developing a timeline and a search firm will help us refine this. We are informally aiming for a candidate to be hired by no later than the start of 2021.

From Anita's departure in June until the new Executive Director starts, the Council will be left in the able hands of the senior leadership team of David Slatery, Jen Lawless and Bethann Steiner with David as Deputy Director serving as Acting Executive Director. We wish to voice our strong support for both the Agency's senior leadership team and full staff.

At our meeting Monday, we can discuss the process by which the search firm will bring forth candidates to the Task Force and ultimately to the full Council.

All Council members are encouraged and welcome to send us any questions they may have on the search process via email, whether or not they can attend the March 16th meeting. We will make every effort to address them all.

We appreciate your support and patience during this state of emergency and also your service to the Council and the Commonwealth.

With Thanks,

Nina and Marc