



*Power of culture*

**UNOFFICIAL DRAFT SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE COUNCIL AT ITS NEXT MEETING**

**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED-FIFTY SEVENTH MEETING  
OF  
MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL**

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2023**

**ONLINE MEETING**

**Council Members Present** were

Nina Fialkow, Chair  
Marc Carroll, Vice Chair  
Che Anderson  
Barbara Schaffer Bacon  
Karen Barry  
Kathleen Castro  
Jo-Ann Davis  
Matthew Keator  
Barbara Krauthamer  
Allyce Najimy  
Troy Siebels

**Also Present** were Mass Cultural Council Staff Members Michael J. Bobbitt, David Slatery, Catherine Cheng-Anderson, Jen Lawless, Bethann Steiner, Charles Baldwin, Dan Blask, Cheyenne Cohn-Postell, Kelly Bennett, Lani Asuncion, Maggie Holtzberg, Ann Petruccelli Moon, Carmen Plazas, Carolyn Cole, Sara Glidden, Kalyn King, and Kate McDougall; artists Sandeep Das, Veerane Pratap, and Bailey O'Donnell; MASSCreative Executive Director Emily Ruddock; and Kara Mewhinney and Joe Powers from the Town of Harwich.

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order at 10:02am and asked Deputy Director David Slatery to read the 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

**Prepared on 2/27/23**

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 open meetings. This meeting is being broadcast to the public on a publicly available YouTube or other channel as described in the publicly posted meeting notice. Only Council members, staff and invited participants and guests will be provided access to the Zoom or other videoconferencing platform hosting the meeting. As a safety measure, 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:

- Any "chat" or similar function on the Zoom platform hosting the meeting shall be disabled.
- Other than Council members or participants specifically recognized by the Chair of the meeting, all Zoom platform participants will be muted and have no ability to share media or documents or project or type images or text.
- All participants in the Zoom platform must 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 they do not interfere with the meeting. The Chair will then inform the members of the meeting that they are being recorded.

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.

Executive Director Michael Bobbitt then reminded Council Members that there would be a Mission Moment at the beginning of all Council Meetings to spotlight a Massachusetts artist, program, or organization. Today, Indian tabla player and composer Sandeep Das who is recipient of a Traditional Arts fellowship from Mass Cultural Council was in attendance joined by two of his apprentices: Veerane Pratap and Bailey O'Donnell. Program Officer Maggie Holtzberg introduced Sandeep to the Council and then he along with Veerane and Bailey gave a brief musical demonstration and spoke about their work.

Nina then asked Council Members if they'd had a chance to review the Minutes from their last meeting on August 25, 2022 and, if so, she would look for a motion to approve them. Jo-Ann Davis moved to approve the minutes, and Che Anderson seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Karen Barry abstained from the vote as she had not attended the August meeting and that

Karen Hurvitz, Simone Early, Ann Murphy, Cecil Barron Jensen, and Sherry Dong, were absent it was

RESOLVED: that the Council approves the minutes of the August 25, 2022 Council Meeting in the form presented to the Council.

Nina took a moment to welcome newly appointed Council Member Barbara Krauthamer who was appointed by Governor Baker in November. Dr. Krauthamer is Dean of the UMass Amherst College of Humanities and Fine Arts and a notable historian of slavery and emancipation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century American South.

Nina then asked Michael Bobbitt for his Executive Director's report.

Michael let Council Members know it had been a very busy summer and fall. Staff is continuing to operationalize the Agency's human resources and fiscal work and integrate into the state's Microsoft 365 system. Racial equity work is expanding as the Agency has entered year two of its Racial Equity Plan. Work on the new strategic plan with Strategy Matters continues, a more thorough update will come later in the meeting. At this point all FY22 grant programs have opened and all have seen an increase in the number of applicants. The biggest cross-Agency project is the two Cultural Sector Recovery grant programs (to be discussed later in the meeting) – the programs had to be designed, launched, marketed; a tremendous amount of customer service and outreach took place. Michael is very proud of how the team operationalized outreach as a priority. This focus on outreach will continue. In December Michael met with tribal leaders of indigenous residents to begin the conversation about what their communities need. The meetings were organized by scholar and activist Erin Genia, a member of the Agency's BIPOC Outreach Coordinator team. Michael, David, and Cathy Cheng-Anderson attended the NASAA conference and what they learned has inspired some of the work pertaining to the strategic plan.

Nina then asked Bethann Steiner for her legislative update. Bethann is joined today by MASSCreative Executive Director Emily Ruddock.

Bethann is happy to report that things have gotten quite busy at the State House. The new House and Senate have been sworn in along with the new Governor and Lieutenant Governor. Bethann and Michael have reached out to see how the Agency can work with the new legislature and the Healy-Driscoll administration. About a dozen conversations have already been started and staff is receiving lots of positive feedback about the work of the Agency. Governor Healy's first budget, H.1 is due to be released on March 1; budget negotiations will begin then. Members of the House and Senate have had a busy two weeks filing bills – 6,276 bills were filed. There are a number of bills that are of interest to the cultural sector. It's an exciting time with lots of work to come. MASSCreative is an important partner as the Agency's budget

advocacy work ramps up. Bethann then introduced MASSCreative's Executive Director, Emily Ruddock.

Emily thanked the Chair and Michael for inviting her to the meeting. She then shared her screen and gave a PowerPoint presentation focused on setting policy priorities based on input from the creative sector gathered through regional meetings, virtual sessions, and a survey. Emily outlined the top challenges facing the sector and four key priorities: increasing public funding, growing the creative economy and workforce, keeping artists and cultural groups in their communities, and developing the next generation through creativity. The full presentation is available upon request.

Nina thanked Emily and then moved to the next agenda item, an update on the Agency's outreach efforts. Program Officer for Equity & Inclusion Cheyenne Cohn-Postell and Communications & Community Engagement Manager Carmen Plazas provided an update.

Cheyenne explained that this presentation (a copy of which is available upon request) would focus on outreach efforts but not give outcomes as that information would come later in the meeting. She then shared her screen and explained the Agency's recruitment goals and strategy. Staff worked to find new contacts for the Agency and connect with existing contacts, especially those who had applied and not received a grant previously. Staff created materials to promote applicant success, sample applications, FAQs, and held info sessions; they also made space for applicants to ask questions and give feedback.

Carmen told Council Members about the Agency's outreach communication efforts. A digital campaign was launched that included motion graphics, a very engaging video of Michael encouraging the sector to apply, and a communications toolkit for the Agency's partners. Carmen also hosted Mass Cultural Council's first Instagram Live – which staff is now using for other grant programs, as well – and joined the Instagram Lives of other organizations in both English and Spanish. Staff also sent more than 1,100 introductory emails to new contacts, spent more than 130 hours delivering information sessions, office hours, and one-on-one meetings, and hosted three outreach events.

Cheyenne added that as part of our outreach efforts, we focused on simplification- for example the application for the Individual Recovery program was designed to only 10 minutes to complete, decisions were not based on any evaluation of any the artistic work but upon basic eligibility, the program prioritized equity, and was deliberately designed to fund at least 3000 artists and cultural workers. Staff will continue the internal work of making programs accessible, equitable and simple.

Nina thanked Cheyenne and Carmen for their report and then asked Grants

Committee Chair Jo-Ann Davis for her report.

Jo-Ann began her report by commenting on the astonishing work the staff team as done with regard to grantmaking. The Grants Committee met on January 11<sup>th</sup> and voted to recommend approval of the process and recommendation for Cultural Sector Recovery Grants for Organizations and Individuals. She then asked Michael and Operations Director Jen Lawless to lead the discussion on the programs, but before doing so thanked the staff team again for their efforts; the work is like nothing she has ever seen before, and the results are impressive.

Jen gave a quick high-level overview. In FY22 the Agency received 3,655 applications and made 1,847 grants. In FY23 for the two Cultural Sector Recovery programs alone the Agency received 8,592 applications and will make 5,219 grants. Staff is also in the process of making roughly 1,700 to 1,800 of Mass Cultural Council's typical FY23 grants. This puts the Agency's total FY23 grants in the range of nearly 7,000 grants.

Jen and Program Manager Sara Glidden then reviewed the Organizations program more specifically and shared a PowerPoint presentation, which is available upon request. The Agency received 1,359 applications and determined that 1,219 were eligible and will be recommended to receive a grant. Staff verified the financial information of all 1,219 eligible organizations and then worked to determine grant amounts, ranging from \$5,000 to \$75,000.

At this point, David interjected mentioned that due to attendance and availability of Council members for today's meeting and quorum issues, it was going to be necessary to take things out of order from the Agenda in order to ensure all present members were able to vote. Council Member Kathy Castro had indicated previously she needed to leave early, and he enquired if she could record her vote on the Cultural Sector Recovery Programs and Cultural Districts now before departing. Kathy stated that she has complete confidence in the recommendations of the staff and upon later submission of a motion therefor, duly seconded, is pleased to vote YES on all votes approving funding for and processes concerning the Cultural Sector Recovery Grant programs for Individuals and Organizations and also the designation of the Cultural Districts in the form set forth in the meeting materials.

At this point, Jo-Ann asked staff to proceed with a discussion of the next program.

Program Manager Dan Blask provided addressed the Cultural Sector Recovery Grants for Individuals program. He outlined the process for grant applications and eligibility and prioritization points scoring and said that the grant review team brought compassion to every step. Staff has identified 4,000 individuals to receive a grant. Dan acknowledged that Lani Asuncion had joined the team as a temporary program officer and worked on reviewing the applications;

reaching out to many applicants individually to fix issues. Dan is pleased to report that grants are being recommended for an incredibly broad range of artists and creatives: a woodwind conservator, an African headwrap artist, DJs, drag artists, American Sign Language interpreters working in the arts, and a historic gravestone conservator to name just a few.

Jo-Ann thanked Jen, Sara, and Dan for their presentations and asked David to explain the voting process today.

David then explained that in addition to the votes on the programs, staff is also seeking a vote on the reallocation of \$5 million in pandemic recovery funds from the program for Organizations (as originally set forth in FY23 Spending Plan approved last August) to the program for Individuals. All eligible organizations are proposed to be funded and there remains \$5 million left over which can be transferred to the Individuals program, and this re-allocation allows the Agency to fund an additional 1,000 individuals.

He also explained that Council Members will be voting on the approval of the Cultural Sector Recovery Grants program as described in the meeting materials and not be voting on 5,218 names, rather they will be voting on the process staff used to arrive at this list of recommended organizational and individual grantees circulated with the meeting materials. Those grantees were selected by staff as described in the grant memoranda. David further explained that while staff did ask Council Members to disclose any connections and potential conflicts with cultural organizations and such disclosures are contained in the meeting materials, that, as Council Members will not be voting specifically on any particular grantees, the members will not need to recuse or abstain from any vote due to a connection to any listed grantee.

David then suggested that the Council vote on items 9c, 9d, and 9e as listed on the meeting agenda – which pertained, respectively, to the reallocation of pandemic recovery funds, the Individuals grants program, and the Organizational grant program – as one vote if Council Members are agreeable and no objections were heard.

Nina, as Chair, called for a vote and asked David to read the roll. During the roll, it was noted that the motion had not been made and seconded but the Council members elected to proceed as if it had. With the following members voting in approval- Nina Fialkow, Marc Carroll, Jo-Ann Davis, Karen Barry, Che Anderson, Barbara Schaffer Bacon, Troy Siebels, Barbara Krauthamer, Kathy Castro (as noted earlier) and Matthew Keator (indicating by chat comment due to microphone problems) and the following members absent- Ann Murphy, Simone Early, Cecil Barron Jensen, Sherry Dong, Karen Hurvitz, and Allyce Najimy (who had to leave early), it was

RESOLVED: that the Council approve a \$5,000,000 reallocation of Pandemic Recovery Funds from the Cultural Sector Recovery Grants program for Organizations the Cultural Sector Recovery Grants program for Individuals (as set forth in the FY 23 Budget and Program Allocation Plan) so that now \$31,080,000 is allocated to the Cultural Sector Recovery Grants program for Organizations and \$20,000,000 is allocated to the Cultural Sector Recovery Grants program for Individuals.

RESOLVED: To approve the award of grants under the Cultural Sector Recovery Grants program for Organizations as described in the memo presented to the Council on January 26, 2023.

RESOLVED: To approve the award of grants under the Cultural Sector Recovery Grants program for Individuals as described in the memo presented to the Council on January 26, 2023.

Nina then moved to the next agenda item asking Program Officer Carolyn Cole for her presentation on the two recommended Cultural Districts in Harwich.

Carolyn thanked Nina and gave a presentation on the districts. The Harwich Center Cultural District includes numerous historic facilities, important historical assets, small and unique retail and restaurants, pocket parks, and the 204/Harwich Cultural Center – a repurposed elementary school that is now home to more than 40 artists and creators. The Harwich Port Cultural District is a main street with a mix of commercial uses including retail, restaurants, and galleries. It also offers Art in the Park, Port Nights, and sea shanties that are the summer homes of visiting artists.

Karen Barry asked how many other communities have two Cultural Districts and what it is that qualified Harwich to have two.

Carolyn explained that there are three different municipalities that have two Cultural Districts. With respect to Harwich, each proposed district has a distinct identity. One district area has a historic feel and is full of economic drivers that are attractive to tourists, the other district area is a bustling main street. The team did a deep dive on Harwich and in experiencing the town felt a strong difference between the two districts as two different cultural identities. Having two districts will foster a collaborative mindset and bring double the dollars to the local community.

The Chair recognized Joe Powers, Town of Harwich Administrator and Kara Mewhinney, the Town's Director of Cultural Affairs who both thanked the Council for their consideration and expressed that they were honored to attend the Meeting.

At this time, Nina called for a vote on the two recommended Districts. Barbara Schaffer Bacon moved to approve the recommendations; Jo-Ann Davis seconded the motion. With the following members voting in approval- Nina Fialkow, Marc Carroll, Jo-Ann Davis, Karen Barry, Che Anderson, Barbara Schaffer Bacon, Troy Siebels, Barbara Krauthamer, Kathy Castro (as noted earlier) and Matthew Keator (indicating by chat comment due to microphone problems) and the following members absent- Ann Murphy, Simone Early, Cecil Barron Jensen, Sherry Dong, Karen Hurvitz, and Allyce Najimy (who had to leave early), it was

RESOLVED: To approve the designation of a cultural districts in Harwich Port and Harwich Center, Massachusetts in accordance with the memoranda presented to the Council Meeting.

Nina then asked staff for a Financial report. David explained that the Agency is at the midpoint in the fiscal year and introduced Budget & Fiscal Operations Manager Kate McDougall who shared her screen and provided the Council with an update on items that have changed since their August meeting. A copy of the presentation is available upon request.

To conclude the meeting, Vice Chair Marc Carroll gave an update on the strategic planning process assisted by David who shared a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which is available upon request. Marc explained that the process began in September and is scheduled to conclude in April. The Strategic Planning Task Force is working with Strategy Matters. Council Members were shown a list of tasks the Task Force and the leadership team has accomplished thus far, with more work to take place in the coming months. The Task Force worked on the Agency's values statement – what is most important to us as an Agency in the realm of the work we do for the creative and cultural sector. The values statement was crafted with input from Council Members and staff, and from there the Strategy Matters team drafted statements which the leadership team worked to revise. The vision statement speaks to the world we hope to create. The Agency wants to have a broad vision that allows it to identify allies and non-allies, wants to work with organizations who share in our vision. The vision statement was created with input by Council Members and staff at the October retreat. Finally, the mission statement was developed and designed to explain the role we will play as we build a more perfect world. The Task Force also worked with Strategy Matters to help draft Mass Cultural Council's Theory of Change and clarify the pathways the Agency can take to achieve a more perfect world. The Task Force also worked to create more ideas for the Mission Statement using the SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) analysis (which had previously been distributed to the Council Members and is available upon request. The next step in the process is the goal planning retreat on March 1<sup>st</sup>. All Council Members are invited to the retreat and all staff members will attend. Marc expressed his thanks to his fellow Task



Force members and the leadership and Strategy Matters teams.

Nina added that Strategy Matters has been wonderful to work with and that she is looking forward very much to the planning retreat in March. That concluded the meeting agenda and Nina, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 12:04pm.