



Power of culture

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

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

MONDAY, MAY 23, 2022

ONLINE MEETING

Council Members Present were

Nina Fialkow, Chair
Marc Carroll, Vice Chair
Che Anderson
Barbara Schaffer Bacon
Karen Barry
Cecil Barron Jensen
Kathleen Castro
Jo-Ann Davis
Simone Early
Ann Murphy
Allyce Najjimy
Troy Siebels

Also Present were Mass Cultural Council Staff Members Michael J. Bobbitt, David Slatery, Catherine Cheng-Anderson, Jen Lawless, Bethann Steiner, Kelly Bennett, Dan Blask, Cheyenne Cohn-Postell, Sara Glidden, Erik Holmgren, Maggie Holtzberg, Tom Luongo, Ann Petruccelli Moon, and Carmen Plazas.

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order at 10:03am 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 times when this body has voted to go into closed executive session under the Open Meeting Law.

Prepared on 8/11/22

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- 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.
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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, Poetry Out Loud was in the spotlight. Program Manager Erik Holmgren was on hand to tell Council Members a bit about the program and play a recording of a recitation by Massachusetts Poetry Out Loud champion Ava Berringer. At the conclusion of the video, it was requested that the link to it be shared via email with the Council and Public Affairs Bethann Steiner shared it.

Nina then asked Council Members if they'd had a chance to review the Minutes from their last meeting on March 22nd and, if so, she would look for a motion to approve them. Troy Siebels moved to approve the minutes, and Barbara Schaffer Bacon seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Matthew Keator, Sherry Dong, Karen Hurvitz, and Lillian Do were absent it was

RESOLVED: that the Council approves the minutes of the March 22, 2022 Council Meeting in the form presented to the Council.

Nina acknowledged that the Council was looking at a full agenda and kept her update brief. She let Council Members know that the Grants Committee met earlier in the month and had a robust discussion about the Agency's proposed pandemic relief programs which the Council would hear more about today. She thanked Grants Committee Chair Jo-Ann Davis for her work along with the entire committee and Agency staff. She then asked Michael for his Executive Director's report.

Michael let Council Members know it had been a very busy May thus far filled with advocacy work around the Agency's FY23 line item which Bethann would explain in detail during her report. Michael has made numerous public appearances as of late and was happy to report that he'd met Council Member Barbara Schaffer Bacon in person at one of them and Timothea Pham, a member of the Community Initiative team, at another. The Agency has been busy filling vacancies and open positions. The RFP for the strategic plan has been posted and staff would love help from Council Members to spread the word, especially to BIPOC candidates. Additionally, staff has been busy reviewing all grant programs from a racial equity point of view and working on operationalizing outreach efforts in partnership with the BIPOC outreach coordinators.

That concluded Michael's report, and Nina asked Bethann Steiner for her Advocacy update.

Bethann stated that the FY23 senate budget debate begins tomorrow. Today the senate is in caucuses discussing priorities. The Senate Ways & Means proposal funds the Agency at \$22M. The Agency is grateful to Senator Kennedy for filing amendment no. 135 to increase the appropriation to \$27.4M. Staff is very pleased to have 45% of the chamber signed on as co-sponsors of the amendment – a great, bi-partisan show of support. Bethann noted that today would be the last day for Council Members to send an email to their senators if they'd like to do one last push. Bethann will update the Council later this week nothing that even if the Agency stays at \$22M, it is still a \$2M increase and very good news. Bethann concluded by letting Council Members know that the Local Cultural Council (LCC) membership bill, which includes a technical correction that broadens who is eligible to serve on an LCC, is moving. It has passed the House and is currently with the Senate Rules Committee which will hold it until it is ready for the full chamber. Staff is working with Senator Hinds and Senator Lovely and anticipates seeing movement on this before the end of the session.

Michael asked to add one more item to his update noting that he'd asked Program Officer Kelly Bennett to serve on the Special Commission on the Official

Seal and Motto of the Commonwealth. Kelly let Council Members know that the commission met last week and unanimously approved a recommendation to change the state seal and motto. There will be a good deal of work to accomplish these tasks and three sub-committees have been formed. Each one will meet in June. The full commission meets monthly for an hour and a half. The Council will be kept informed as this work progresses.

Nina then asked People & Culture Director Catherine Cheng-Anderson for her Cultural Equity & Access Report. Catherine began by asking Program Officer for Equity & Inclusion Cheyenne Cohn-Postell to give her Racial Equity report. Cheyenne let Council Members know that the equity audit of all Agency programs was ongoing. Staff is focusing a good deal on customer service and simplification. Customer service is a deep and rich topic and will feed into the Agency's outreach plans. Staff is also continuing to update the Racial Equity plan based on FY23 planning, there are 13 or so steps that have been completed or started. Cheyenne reminded Council Members about the teaser clip the Public Affairs team had produced and added that radio spots produced via the radio partnership program were underway on five different public radio stations. Erin Genia, one of the Agency's BIPOC Outreach Coordinators whose focus is on Indigenous communities is working with the Public Affairs team to produce a pop-up event in Mashpee in the fall in collaboration with the Wampanoag Tribe and the Commission on Indian Affairs. The Cultural Equity Learning Community is working on a base level anti-racism training for the cultural sector – this is one of the steps in the Racial Equity plan. Lastly, the Cultural Equity & Access team is working on a nomination packet for the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies' (NASAA) DEI award, talking about translation services and the Agency's work around access. There is a monetary prize associated with this and it is a very new award for NASAA. That concluded Cheyenne's update and she turned it back to Catherine.

Catherine gave Council Members an update on the Agency's anti-racism harassment policy:

- Mass Cultural Council's new Anti-Racism Policy for Employees is intended to create organizational accountability around racism. This policy for employees is a solid step forward towards cultivating an anti-racist workplace and meets one of our agency's racial equity goals.
- As you may know, unlike unlawful "harassment" or "discrimination," there is no legal definition of racism-- so the definitions in this policy instead reflect our own internal standards of what is not appropriate workplace conduct for our employees is.
- Also, like that of the commonwealth's or the union's code of conduct, the new employee policy reflects our commitment to fostering an

inclusive environment and ensure that our workplace models respect, civility, and common decency for others.

- Additionally, it places ownership of Mass Cultural Council managers and employees to be held accountable to take periodic cultural competency education.
- To maintain alignment with the Commonwealth; the Anti Racism policy mirrors the procedures of the complaint and monitoring process of the Commonwealth's Sexual Harassment, Workplace Violence, and Workplace discrimination policies. Maintaining alignment with these policies is important as racist conduct is often compounded by other forms of discrimination.
- Additionally, we have included a link to our confidential incident intake form. That internal employees and external parties may file a complaint.
- To date we have rolled this policy out to Mass Cultural Council employees, consultants, and contractors; and have placed it on our website for all current staff and prospective staff to review.

Catherine concluded by asking if Council Members had any questions. Nina asked if there would be a similar policy for Council Members.

David stated that, as Council Members may remember, in 2017 greater attention was paid to issues of sexual harassment and the Agency developed an internal policy. There is no mechanism for monitoring a policy applicable to Council members, but if the Council desired to adopt a policy on sexual harassment and anti-racism staff would make themselves available to support the Council in doing so. David noted that it should be made clear that Council Members are gubernatorial appointees, and that any policy would just be a statement by the Council on how they would handle matters under such a policy should any arise. Decisions would be made by the Council independently and outside counsel would most likely be sought. David clarified that this is a subject about which there has been some interest raised and currently only a theoretical discussion and there is no vote today. Staff is only seeking input on the idea.

Jo-Ann asked if the policies already exist for all gubernatorial appointees noting that each Council Member had taken an oath of office and that if the policies do already exist perhaps the Council could simply reaffirm their commitment. Troy agreed that while it is very important to have the policies in place it would be best not to reinvent the wheel but rather assert that they'd be complied

with. David explained that clarity would need to be sought from the appointments office, and that the Agency may be somewhat ahead of the curve on the anti-racism policy. Vice Chair Marc Carroll agreed the Agency is ahead of the curve regarding an anti-racism policy and it would be good to advance any existing policy the Commonwealth might have in place for gubernatorial appointees rather than fall behind. Barbara Schaffer Bacon agreed stating that not only is the Agency ahead of the curve, but it is also on the radio talking about it – harkening back to Cheyenne's note about the radio spots that are currently airing. Barbara is very much in favor of developing and/or supplementing an anti-racism policy for Council Members. Karen Barry was also very much in favor of having a policy in place and encouraged her fellow Council Members to consider following protocol as set forth by the Executive branch. She noted that a first step could be for the Chair and Vice Chair to obtain any existing policy from the appointments office or the Governor's office so that the ensuing work could be supplementary and not redundant.

Michael suggested that the appointments office be contacted so there can be clarity around what Council Members have already signed, then staff can make a recommendation and share a template of what was created for staff. Michael asked Nina if she'd like to appoint a task force to work on this and Nina responded that she'd speak with Marc and the Executive Committee to determine next steps. Nina agrees with Karen that the first step is to determine what already exists and follow protocol.

There was no further discussion. Nina asked Jen Lawless for her Operations report.

Jen began by stating that this meeting marks the final approval for FY22 grantmaking. After this meeting – if the Council votes to approve the proposed grants – all decisions on FY22 grants will have been made. Jen asked Council Members to please note that at this point no analysis on FY22 grantmaking had been done; that was to come in June. At a high level in FY22 there were 4,000 applicants for direct grants and 10,000 to Local Cultural Councils. The new grants management system contains 27,000 contacts – half of them are grant seeking individuals; there are also 8400 organizations registered. Everything is in the same place for the first time, staff has received positive feedback from applicants and are continuing to gather feedback and make improvements. The Grants team is working with Cheyenne on the equity review of programs and will need to make some updates based on that process. The team will also work on building out the two forthcoming pandemic relief programs.

That concluded Jen's Operations report and Nina asked David for his Financial report.

David let Council Members know that Fiscal Information & Compliance Officer Tom Luongo was also in attendance if Council Members had any questions. The Agency is 10 months into the fiscal year and is on target or below in most accounts. As in past years, any leftover funds will go towards the Mass Humanities payment as they were technically pre-paid their FY22 allocation. David reported in January that the Agency was subject to a state audit and had a preliminary exit interview in December. The report from the auditors has arrived and accurately covers all four points that were discussed in the exit interview which David summarized for the Council in January. Once the final report is prepared, all Council Members will receive a copy directly from the auditors. David continued and told Council Members they may recall when staff participates in out-of-state travel the Council or the Executive Committee needs to approve it. The Executive Committee met on May 3 and made two approvals: one for Charles Baldwin and Cheyenne Cohn-Postell to attend the Kennedy Center's LEAD (Leadership Exchange in Arts & Disability) Conference in Raleigh, NC in August, the other for Michael Bobbitt to attend the National Association of State Arts Agencies' Board meeting in Washington, DC – this meeting had already taken place in late April. David reiterated that these trips were already approved by the Executive Committee at their May 3 meeting. Since that meeting there have been two more out-of-state travel requests, both are at no cost to the Agency, and both are for Michael Bobbitt – one to speak at a conference presented by a planning and research firm in Connecticut, the other to speak at a Theater Communications Group conference in Pittsburgh. These two trips the Council will need to vote on, and Council Members can read about both trips on page 35 of their materials. There were no questions and no discussion. Barbara Schaffer Bacon moved to approve the two instances of out-of-state travel and Karen Barry seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Matthew Keator, Sherry Dong, and Karen Hurvitz were absent it was

RESOLVED: To approve the staff-recommended out-of-state travel requests presented to the May 23, 2022 Meeting.

Nina then asked Grants Committee Chair Jo-Ann Davis for her report nothing that there were many exciting things to discuss.

Jo-Ann let Council Members know they'd be voting on FY22 artist fellowships recommendations and FY23 traditional arts apprenticeships. The Grants Committee met on May 3rd and voted to recommend the proposed grants to the full Council. Jo-Ann thanked the Artists team for their diligent work and then handed the presentation over to Program Manager Dan Blask and Program Officer Kelly Bennett.

Dan introduced himself and explained that Artist Fellowships provide unrestricted grants to individual artists in Massachusetts doing exceptional work.

Dan explained that this is a particularly exciting year as, due to Michael's support, funding for individual artists was a key priority and the program has reached a high point recommending funding more artists than ever before. Last year the program funded 75 artists, this year staff is recommending 150 and funding them at the highest level the Agency ever has. Fellowships are \$15K and finalist awards have increased from \$1500 to \$5000. Dan then shared a slideshow of work by recommended artists and he and Kelly walked Council Members through it. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes.

Jo-Ann thanked Dan and Kelly for their presentation and asked if Council Members had questions or comments. Karen Barry commented that the work was amazing, and the presentation was a wonderful few minutes out of the day to look at incredible work by talented artists. Barbara Schaffer Bacon agreed.

Kelly Bennett added that one of the jurors in painting had commented on how impressed they were with the breadth of work represented and that it was meaningful to see that such incredible work had been created during the pandemic.

Kathy Castro asked if work by fiction and nonfiction writers could be shared during future presentations or in the online gallery, and Dan responded that all awardees will be invited to the gallery. Jo-Ann asked if there might ever be a time where the Agency might gather work by all grantees together in an exhibition. Dan responded that the Agency has been approached in the past about doing this and has curated a few exhibitions here and there but has put most resources towards funding more artists. Barbara added that staff has done a great job sharing work by funded artists digitally on the Agency's website.

There was no further discussion and Jo-Ann asked for a motion to approve the grant recommendations. Karen moved to approve the grant recommendations and Troy seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Karen Hurvitz, Matthew Keator, Sherry Dong, and Lillian Do were absent it was

RESOLVED: To approve the FY22 Artist Fellowship grant awards in the disciplines of Drawing & Printmaking, Fiction/Creative Nonfiction and Painting as presented to the Council at the May 23, 2022 meeting.

Jo-Ann then asked Maggie Holtzberg for her report on Traditional Arts Apprenticeships. Maggie began by reminding Council Members that in 2021 the program switched to a two-year timeline. The panel met on April 27th and recommended 18 of the 23 applicants in the pool receive funding. Maggie explained that this funding would actually come from the Agency's FY23 allocation along with NEA funds, and that moving forward efforts might be made to remedy this slight misalignment of timing. Today, staff is asking for the

Council's approval on the panel's recommendations. If approved, staff will send notifications to applicant that will not yet include the dollar amount their grant will represent. Then, once the FY23 allocation is known and the budget is voted on at the August Council Meeting, staff will be able to inform grantees as to the size of their grant. The reason for this is to allow work to take place over the summer. The program is focused on mentorship between a skilled practitioner and an apprentice, this work is done one-on-one and the feeling is that there is more time for this during the summer months. The program is designed to strengthen and sustain a broad range of traditional art forms. Maggie stated that she was happy to answer any questions Council Members had based on the information included in their materials and reiterated that they are voting to approve grant recipients, but not yet the dollar amount.

There were no questions for Maggie and Jo-Ann asked for a motion to approve the recommendations. Kathy Castro moved to approve the recommended grants and Troy seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Karen Hurvitz, Sherry Dong, Lillian Do, and Matthew Keator were absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: To approve the selection of the participants in the FY23 Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program as presented to the Council at the May 23, 2022 meeting.

Jo-Ann moved to the next agenda item: Pandemic Recovery Programs. She let Council Members know that the Grants Committee reviewed draft guidelines for the two relief programs at its May 3rd meeting and now the full Council will have an opportunity to review, comment, and ask questions before a vote. Jo-Ann thanked the staff team for the remarkable work that went into crafting the guidelines and then turned the meeting over to Jen Lawless.

Jen provided the Council with some background on how the Agency worked towards developing the two programs: in January a public input forum was hosted via Zoom, written comments were collected through February, and staff conducted a sixth COVID impact survey of the field. Having previously run multiple COVID relief programs, staff is building off that experience and combining it with what they've learned from artists and organizations to craft programs that respond to the need within the field; this was done via a cross-Agency working group and with a strong focus on the Racial Equity Plan. Based on what staff learned from the forum, written comments, and surveys the field needs unrestricted funds via programs that are easy to apply for and this is what they have tried to create. After the Grants Committee met, staff created a Q&A document based on questions raised during that discussion. Both programs are inclusive and adhere to the legislative mandate attached to the funding. Jen then asked Program Manager Dan Blask to give an overview on the proposed program for individuals.

Dan explained that the goal of the program is to award \$5K grants to 3,000 individuals. There is a desire with this program to move away from mitigating loss and rather look towards the future. The Agency would like to accept applications from individual artists; teaching artists, scientists, and humanists; and independent cultural workers – those working in the arts, humanities, and sciences in non-artistic roles. Staff is assuming that, as with previous relief programs, they will receive more applications than they can fund. Knowing this, the plan is to distribute the funds to all regions of the Commonwealth via a randomized selection within regions. Staff is adding funding priorities to the guidelines. These priorities include first-time applicants; previously unfunded applicants; applicants who have historically been underfunded: BIPOC applicants, applicants who identify as Deaf, applicants who identify as having a disability; and applicants who reside in under-resourced communities: Gateway Cities and communities where the population falls below the state's income and education median.

Jen then asked Program Manager Sara Glidden for an overview of the relief program for organizations. Staff is proposing grants ranging from \$5K to \$75K for organizations. Eligibility will extend to nonprofit and for-profit organizations, fiscally sponsored organizations, and programs presented by municipalities, LCCs, Cultural Districts, and federal or state-recognized indigenous tribes. The goal is to fund all eligible applications and funding prioritization will be used to determine the amount of the grants, not whether to fund an applicant or not. Prioritizations include organizations that are focused on historically underfunded communities: BIPOC organizations, organizations in communities where the population falls below the state's median for income and education attainment, organizations that have not yet received federal or state aid through pandemic relief programs, organizations that demonstrate economic need, and organizations that have an impact on tourism and job creation. The program is contemplated to open around August 1 with an application deadline of about September 23. A good deal of staff time will be dedicated to supporting applicants as many first-time applicants are expected.

Jen added that timelines are included in the Council Book materials along with milestones staff is hoping to meet, this first is to have guidelines finalized by May 31st so that they can be posted to the Agency's website and shared with the legislature by June 3rd. Applications for organizations are planned to open August 1st and for individuals on August 15th. The programs will have a longer open period to allow for outreach and recruitment efforts.

Jo-Ann asked if the intention is for staff to manage these programs internally and Jen responded that staff would manage the programs and that temporary contract staff would be hired as well to help review applications, support applications in using the grants management system, and support the fiscal team.

Barbara Schaffer Bacon stated that she and her fellow Grants Committee members asked many questions during their May 3rd meeting and that she appreciated the clarity of the Q&A document that resulted from that discussion. She also supports the idea of hiring temporary staff to support the programs. She flagged that on the final page of the draft guidelines that better language was needed to explain that some funds were being deployed to the Cultural Facilities Fund.

Nina asked if it would be possible to share the Q&A on the Agency's website and Jen responded that it would be posted there.

David clarified that at this point the Council was voting on the guidelines only, and that when they meet again in August staff will have proposed allocations for both programs. Michael added that this longer open period will make space for recruitment and for accomplishing more of the goals and work included in the Racial Equity plan.

There were no further questions and Jo-Ann asked for a motion to recommend that staff move forward in finalizing work on the program guidelines and posting them. Kathy Castro moved to approve the recommendation and Allyce Najimy seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Karen Hurvitz, Matthew Keator, Lillian Do, and Sherry Dong were absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: To instruct staff to proceed with developing, submitting and posting guidelines for and proceeding to implement the Pandemic Recovery Program for Organizations and Pandemic Recovery Program for Individuals as described in the memorandum presented to this meeting

Nina thanked her fellow Council Members and Agency staff for their presence and their work and asked if there were any final questions.

Allyce asked if individual artist grants in music would be available next year and Jen let her know that the Artists team was working on a program review and that elements of the program may shift.

There were no further questions and Nina as Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:43am.