

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

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

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2021**

**ONLINE MEETING**

**Council Members Present** were

Nina Fialkow, Chair  
Marc Carroll, Vice Chair  
Che Anderson  
Barbara Schaffer Bacon  
Karen Barry (joined after vote on minutes)  
Kathleen Castro  
Jo-Ann Davis  
Simone Early  
Karen Hurvitz  
Matthew Keator  
Susan Leff  
Ann Murphy  
Allyce Najjimy  
Rob Price

**Also Present** were Mass Cultural Council Staff Members Michael J. Bobbitt, David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Bethann Steiner, Ann Petruccelli Moon, Charles Baldwin, Dan Blask, Luis Cotto, Erik Holmgren, Sara Glidden, Michael Ibrahim, Lisa Simmons, Käthe Swaback, Beth Mullins, Carmen Plazas, and Cheyenne Cohn-Postell; and guests Kristyn Anderson, Brian Boyles, Emily Ruddock, Kara Elliott-Ortega, Tyler Cotta, Derek Dunlea, Rachael Katz, Maureen Hennessey, and Erin Williams.

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order at 10:07am and extended a welcome to her fellow Council Members, staff and guests. She then asked Deputy Director David Slatery to read the Open Meeting Law notice. David read the Open Meeting Law notice contained in the meeting materials (available online) into record.

**Administrative Matters.** Nina then let Council Members know that later in the meeting there would be a pause to take a “zoom photograph” as one had not yet been taken

**Prepared on 9/21/21**

of the current group of Council Members. Nina then called for a vote on the minutes from the Council's 151<sup>st</sup> meeting which was held on May 18<sup>th</sup>. Kathleen Castro moved to approve the minutes. Karen Hurvitz seconded the motion. David did a roll call and, noting that Council Members Troy Siebels, Sherry Dong, Cecil Barron Jensen, Karen Barry, and Susan Leff were not present, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED:** To approve the minutes of the One Hundred Fifty-First Meeting of the Mass Cultural Council

Nina let Council Members know that in their meeting materials they would find a list of upcoming meeting dates and times along with updated Council Committee membership lists. She then asked Michael Bobbitt for his Executive Director's report.

**Executive Director Report.** Before giving his report Michael extended a welcome to Mass Humanities Executive Director Brian Boyles and City of Boston Chief of Arts & Culture Kara Elliott-Ortega. Michael told Council Members that the last few months have been very busy with building the Racial Equity Plan and Recruitment Plan, working on FY22 budget advocacy, and crafting the Agency's FY22 spending plan. Michael has enjoyed visiting many regions in the Commonwealth and is learning that many organizations are undertaking capital projects. It has been wonderful to visit organizations across the state and see what the Agency can do to elevate the cultural sector. That concluded Michael's Executive Director's report.

**Racial Equity Plan.** Nina then introduced the Agency's draft Racial Equity Plan. Nina explained that the Plan was created by the Racial Equity Task force, which is comprised of Council Members and staff, and in consultation with agency racial equity consultant, Multicultural BRIDGE and a number of other advisors.

Michael provided Council Members with details about the process through which the Plan was developed:

- The Racial Equity Task Force was formed and had its first meetings in May to discuss why creating a Plan is important and what the obstacles might be.
- All members of the Task Force submitted action items and those items were analyzed and refined and turned into measurables with timelines.
- A clean copy of the Plan was sent to the full Council and staff for feedback.
- Michael received feedback from two Council Members relating to unintended discrimination. He and Deputy Director David Slatery met with each Member to discuss their concerns further.
- The Plan was then shared with state regulatory agencies as well as the Agency's legal counsel and clarifying language was added.
- Three discussion groups were formed: racial equity experts, BIPOC cultural workers, and white leaders. All feedback from the discussion groups was compiled and several edits were made to the Plan.
- A revised version of the Plan was shared with the full Council during a non-deliberative education session offered to Council members by Agency consultant Multicultural BRIDGE on August 12<sup>th</sup> and further feedback was considered.
- A final draft of the Plan was sent to the full Council yesterday and today staff is hoping for a vote to approve the Plan.

Nina thanked Michael and asked noted the Council Members who served on the Task Force – Vice Chair Marc Carroll, Barbara Schaffer Bacon, and Simone Early – and asked Council members if they would like to make any comments.

Council Member Karen Hurvitz stated that she was one of Council Members who responded to original plan with feedback based on work she does legally, and she is happy to see that the Plan has been edited so that problems can be avoided. Karen thanked Michael and the Task Force for taking her concerns into consideration.

Nina then recognized Council Member Rob Price. Rob thanked Michael and everyone else who worked on the draft Plan. Rob stated that he wants to see the Plan receive a unanimous vote but has qualifications. Rob added that in, the non-deliberative educational session with Multicultural BRIDGE that Council Members attended on August 12<sup>th</sup>, there was no opportunity to the full Plan. To ensure the integrity of the Plan, Rob referred to comments which he had forwarded by email previously (a copy of which is available upon request), and he looks forward to a discussion. Rob then referred to his comments which were related to the term “decolonization,” the Plan section on intersectionality and certain links to definitions.

Rob stated *decolonization* has a literal meaning and referred to the definition of from Encyclopedia Britannica specifically referring to a “*process by which colonies become independent of the colonizing country*” and citing several historical examples. The term has been used progressive activism as a metaphor for cultural appropriation, imposition of ideals, and displacement of marginalized voices in the culture and was uncomfortable using this principle without being crystal clear about the meaning. He asked if the Plan was specifically advocating returning land to the indigenous peoples of the Commonwealth? Or taking positions on other issues around the globe?

He also noted the term “intersectionality” was to explain how race, gender, and other individual characteristics “intersect” and overlap and noted that the concept of intersectionality occasionally leads to strange bedfellows. He recounted an incident at Tufts involving his son where issues around the horror of George Floyd's murder was then linked to issues surrounding Palestine and Israel and was used to motivate anti-Jewish bias, specifically involving the removal of his son as a Jewish student from a student organization for having an “inherent bias” He felt that concept of intersectionality is complicated and use of it exceeds the agency's expertise and scope. Rob also was concerned with a link to the Wikipedia definition of “white supremacy”. He did not think it was appropriate for an agency to link to a casual definition and suggested a more reliable definition be used.

Rob then asked that the plan be amended to 1) remove all current references to decolonization, 2) remove the paragraph on intersectionality, 3) add a statement to more specifically and constructively address the authors' intent, to wit “*We acknowledge that artists in the Commonwealth have a critical role in exploring intersectional equity objectives. Similarly, many of our stakeholders are confronting the negative consequences of the colonization of the Commonwealth's indigenous people. We will encourage these broader efforts through grant making and programming, while ensuring that all voices are heard, and everyone's lived experiences are respected;*” and 4) remove the link to the Wikipedia definition of White Supremacy in favor of that from a leading DEI scholar's definition.

The Council then discussed the procedure for considering such amendment. The Chair did not put forth the suggested amendments for a motion and vote as, at this point in the meeting, as the Council was having a conversation about the Racial Equity Plan as presented. The Chair stated that if other Council Members had responses to Rob's thoughts and concerns, they be addressed in the discussion.

Nina then recognized Simone Early who said she was responding to Rob's statement, but rather to ask two unrelated questions: first, could Michael describe the changes that were made to the last draft of the Plan and then, if could there be a discussion on racial injustice and solidarity.

Michael explained that after the Council reviewed the initially circulated draft Plan, two Council Members expressed concern about unintended discrimination against whites, so staff reached out to contacts at various state agencies including the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) as well as the Attorney General's office. And while these other state agencies could not offer anything in the way of an official review or endorsement of the Plan, they did discuss it with David and made observations. Michael also noted that we consulted with our outside counsel. After all such consultation, staff developed language to be added to the Plan. Michael added that he also spoke with members of the Native American community who stated that they felt invisible in the Plan, and they had suggested the inclusion of the concept of "decolonization" be added. Michael consulted with a Racial Equity consultant and believed that decolonization was an appropriate term to use, and it was added to the Plan.

The Chair recognized Karen Hurvitz who wished to offer a clarification on her concern about the initial draft of the Plan. Karen stated that her feedback wasn't about excluding whites, it was that Massachusetts has already defined racial discrimination through housing and education laws and all sorts of statutes pertaining to protected groups. Karen thought, based on cases she has read, that if the Agency defines BIPOC or other categories it deems worthy of protecting, this might be problematic legally. Other protected groups might not see themselves in the Plan. Karen feels this may expose the Agency to litigation and she drafted a memo that included cases where other agencies have been sued and their plans struck down by the courts. Michael thanked Karen for her feedback and stated that it had prompted staff to speak with personnel at other state agencies such as MCAD and with legal counsel and based on such to change some of the Plan's action steps. (It was noted that neither MCAD nor any other state agency had opined upon or approved or suggested any specific language for the Plan).

Simone recalled that during the previously referenced presentation offered by Multicultural BRIDGE the statement that the Agency stands in solidarity with oppressed, marginalized groups was discussed but she agreed that listing very specific groups could be limiting; the Agency could potentially exclude other groups.

The Council then discussed the mechanism for considering the proposed amendments. David indicated that per the statute, the Chair has discretion to determine how to proceed.

Michael offered that staff would remove the Wikipedia link Rob mentioned, but that

since he'd heard directly from Native Americans and vetted their feedback with racial equity experts who validated it, Michael would oppose taking the word "decolonization" out of the Plan and feels the Agency would be going against the very voices it is working to include in doing so.

Karen Hurvitz reiterated and further clarified her thoughts on not naming specific groups in the Plan, she feels the paragraph in the plan that mentions specific groups should be removed.

Rob stated that he feels the word "decolonization" is too broad. He would like to find a definition of the term that makes the word understood as a concept in DEI work as opposed to foreign relations.

Vice Chair Marc Carroll stated that in the context of the Plan, each time the word "decolonization" is used it is always mentioned in the context of arts and culture. Rob expressed that he believes there is only one place in the plan where the term "decolonization" is explicitly qualified as pertaining to the arts.

Barbara Schaffer Bacon stated that she is extraordinarily pleased with the process of the Racial Equity Task Force and with this conversation. Barbara is aware of a definition of "decolonization" specific to philanthropy and grantmaking by Edgar Villanueva which talks about how philanthropic processes that assess who to give to and how to give can perpetuate problems. Barbara stated that she would not support any amendment as it has been framed today. Barbara is uncomfortable with a number of things included in Rob's statement, but she sees the discussion as a positive thing. She does not know that the Council should move forward with a vote on the Plan today, but she is in support of the work.

Karen Hurvitz asked if the discussion regarding decolonization is as it applies to Indigenous people only or more broadly and could Barbara share a link to the Villanueva definition. Karen feels it's important to be very specific within the Plan and shared an example of why she feels this way pertaining to an incident her son encountered at Brown Medical School which tied Indigenous Peoples Day to a discussion of Israel and the Palestinians and caused a big furor on campus. Karen does not want to see something similar happen with the Agency's Racial Equity Plan.

In response Michael stated that he wants to note that the focus of the Plan is on decolonization in grantmaking in the arts and culture sphere. If that is understood, we should move forward and give the Racial Equity Task Force the authority to approve new language. Michael is concerned that what he is hearing is the very thing the Agency is working against: the loudest voices in the room are not necessarily the voices we should be listening to.

She then commented that "decolonization" is mentioned in the Plan 11 times. In a 13-page document, perhaps 11 mentions are too much. Karen Barry stated that seeing the investment by the Council in the Plan is encouraging. She also mentioned that she did not want to forget Simone's concerns, and that Rob's comments regarding the BRIDGE session were another good thing to consider as the plan is edited.

Rob, in response to Michael, expressed that this is not about the loudest voices dominating. Rob does not want to be so characterized because he has a point of view

about specificity. He is making sure the product is clear, excellent, and specific. Rob neither wants the Plan to land flat, nor to have his point of view used as a cause célèbre.

As time was growing short and there were many more items on the agenda, it was the sense of the Council at this point that the Plan be sent back to staff and the Racial Equity Task Force for revisions based on discussions at the Council Meeting and that a new draft would then be brought to the Council for consideration at a Special Meeting to be scheduled in the very near future. No vote was taken.

**Strategic Plan.** The Chair then asked Michael to briefly explain the next order of business: consideration of an extension of the Agency's Strategic Plan. Michael explained that the Council had in 2017 approved a plan through 2022. Because of previous Executive Director Anita Walker's departure and Michael's recent appointment as the Agency' new Executive Director as well as the effect of Covid causing the loss of a year of preparation, staff proposes extending the current Strategic Plan so that there will be sufficient time for consideration and public engagement to build a new plan. Nina called for a vote. Barbara Schaffer Bacon moved to extend the current strategic plan, and Kathleen Castro seconded the motion. David called the roll and noting that Council Members Troy Siebels, Sherry Dong, Cecil Barron Jensen and Susan Leff were not present, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED:** To extend Mass Cultural Council's existing FY18-22 Strategic Plan through FY23.

Nina then asked Michael to present the FY22 budget and spending plan.

**FY22 Spending Plan.** Michael began by reminding Council Members of the process. Staff began with a discussion of focus areas and looked at programs for the year to determine priorities. The Agency had a very successful advocacy campaign and has received a nearly \$2M increase to its allocation. Staff is proposing increasing grant allocations and prioritizing administrative needs within the Agency. Michael then walked Council Members through a brief PowerPoint presentation, a copy of that presentation is available upon request.

Michael outlined the Agency's FY22 Priorities:

- Increasing investment in a cultural sector still reeling from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic
- Launching the Agency's Racial Equity Plan and designing a new learning cohort for the cultural sector
- Operational Improvements and Efficiencies including a new Grants Management System, increasing the capacity of the Agency's Fiscal team, and hiring a new Director of Human Resources

Michael told Committee Members that Mass Cultural Council's budget for FY22 is nearly \$29M. This is comprised of a \$21.3M allocation from the state, \$1.9M in federal dollars from the National Endowment for the Arts, \$5.1M in Gaming Mitigation funds, and \$577,285 in other funds. Michael reminded Committee Members of the legislative language that requires the Agency to align its spending with its strategic plan, to invest

a minimum of 75% of state dollars into grants, and to report on its spending plan by January 3, 2022.

Michael then presented a comparison of grantmaking dollars between FY21 and the proposed FY22 spending plan:

**Total Grantmaking (including Gaming, COERG Funds, and earmarks)**

FY21: 29.6M; FY22: \$24M

**State Appropriation Grantmaking (excluding Gaming, COERG Funds, and earmarks)**

FY21: \$16.3M; FY22: \$17.9M

The Agency plans to grant \$24M in FY22, this equals 112% of the FY22 state appropriation. If Gaming Mitigation funds are not included in the total, the Agency will still give 89% of its state appropriation to the cultural sector in the form of grants.

Michael briefly reviewed the four pillars of the Agency's strategic plan which act as tent poles for the proposed FY22 spending plan: Enriching Communities, Growing the Economy, Advancing Inclusion and Equity, and Empowering a Creative Generation. He then outlined the recommended grants and services within each of these four pillars as further outlined in the power point presentation (copies available upon request).

Nina thanked Michael for his presentation and asked if Council Members had any questions. She recognized Allyce Najimy who asked if the increase in grants would mean new nonprofits would be funded or if the increase would simply mean current grantees would receive more money. Michael responded that as part of the work the Agency is doing with Racial Equity and recruitment and with having more money available, new grant applicants will be sought. Allyce offered to send suggestions to Michael. Michael thanked Allyce and mentioned that the Agency's new Grants Management System will also help in recruitment efforts.

There were no further questions on the proposed spending plan. Nina asked Vice Chair Marc Carroll to speak about the Budgeting Task Force she had formed to help review the plan. Members of the Budgeting Task Force include Nina, Marc, Che Anderson, Karen Barry, and Rob Price.

Marc explained that Nina had formed the Budgeting Task Force to provide input to the Chair on the proposed \$29M spending plan. The Task Force asked several questions and offered suggestions such as adding a description of the use of casino tax revenues during the year, a statement that the Council followed procurement laws when retaining consultants and goods and services, and asked staff to look carefully at how much of the plan is spent on grants versus administrative elements. As a result of these conversations, the Task Force is supportive of the spending plan as it was presented today and appreciates the thorough and transparent vetting of the allocation of spending. Additionally, members of the Task Force voiced their appreciation of the inclusive nature of the process and of being more deeply involved in the creation of the plan. The Task Force is excited to see increases in grant allocations and investments in operational needs within the Agency.

The Chair then let Council Members know that the Executive Committee had reviewed the FY22 spending plan and recommends it for approval. She explained that she would

seek a motion and a second and then Grants Chair Jo-Ann Davis would walk Council Members through specific grant recommendations and answer any questions Council Members had. Then, there would be one vote on the spending plan and all grant recommendations. Kathleen Castro moved to approve the spending plan. Marc Carroll seconded the motion. Nina then asked Jo-Ann to begin her presentation of the grant recommendations.

**Conflict Disclosures.** David reminded Council Members that on page 61 of their Meeting Book they would find a Conflict-of-Interest List and asked if there were any additions. There were no additions or changes to be made and it was noted that all votes approving the FY22 grant recommendations will note the various possible conflicts and abstentions of the Council Members in attendance at this meeting.

Nina Fialkow disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to **Boston Ballet** and the **Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum**.

Susan Leff disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to the **Boston Children's Museum** and **Mass Humanities**.

Ann Murphy disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to **MASSCreative**.

Barbara Schaffer Bacon disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to **Arts Extension Institute**.

Kathleen Castro disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to **Little Theater of Fall River, New Bedford Festival Theater**, and **The Fall River Coalition for Arts and Culture**.

Marc Carroll disclosed that he would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to **Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra** and **The Rivers School**.

Jo-Ann Davis disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to **The Care Center**.

Rob Price disclosed that he would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to **The Center for Arts in Natick**.

**FY 22 Grants Recommendations.** Jo-Ann then proceeded with her presentation and let Council Members know that in addition to the presentation Michael gave, there are exhaustive materials in their Meeting Book. The Grants Committee met on August 10<sup>th</sup> to thoroughly review all grant recommendations. Jo-Ann acknowledged the work that Michael and the staff have done to assess the grantmaking process and thanked the Grants Committee Members for their contributions. Jo-Ann then asked for a motion to approve the FY22 grant recommendations explaining again that there would be one vote on those recommendations and the spending plan at the conclusion of her presentation. Rob Price moved to approve the grant recommendations, and Kathleen Castro seconded the motion. Jo-Ann then walked Council Members through the

recommendations pausing between each section listed below to allow Council Members to ask questions:

FY 22 Grant Recommendation: Artists Fellowships  
 FY22 Program Recommendations: Traditional Arts Apprenticeships  
 FY22 Grant and Program Recommendations: Cultural Investment Portfolio (CIP)  
 FY 22 Media Partnerships  
 FY22 Allocation and Grant Recommendations: Community  
 FY22 Grant and Program Recommendations: Creative Youth Development  
 FY 22 Grant and Program Recommendations: Education  
 FY 22 Grant and Program Recommendations: UP  
 FY 22 Grant Recommendation: Cultural Equity Learning Community  
 FY 22 Grant Recommendation: Mass Humanities Partnership  
 FY 22 Grant Recommendation: NEFA  
 FY 22 Grant Recommendation: MASS Creative  
 FY 22 Grant Recommendation: Network of Arts Admins of Color  
 FY 22 Grant Recommendations - SMU Data Arts

There were no questions from Council Members.

Nina then called for a single vote on the FY22 Budget & Spending Plan and the FY22 Grant Recommendations and David called the roll. Noting that there were 11 votes in favor, three abstentions (Karen Hurvitz, Ann Murphy Che Anderson), and that four members were not present (Troy Siebels, Sherry Dong, Cecil Barron Jensen, and Susan Leff) were not present, it was held

**WHEREAS**, the General Court of the Massachusetts State Legislature has appropriated a budget of \$21,375,000 to the Massachusetts Cultural Council (the "Council") for FY22 and the Governor duly signed said budget;

**WHEREAS** Council staff presented a draft FY22 budget and spending plan (the "Plan") to the Executive Committee at its meeting on August 10, 2021;

**WHEREAS** the Executive Committee reviewed said plan and recommended that it be forwarded to the Council for approval;

**WHEREAS** Council staff presented the Plan to the Mass Cultural Council at its meeting on August 24, 2021 (the "Council Meeting").

**NOW THEREFORE**, it is hereby

**RESOLVED:** To approve the Plan as reviewed by the Executive Committee and as presented at the Council Meeting and attached hereto, subject to the further approvals of the individual grant and program recommendations to be considered and voted upon the Council later in this meeting; and

**RESOLVED:** To make available funds from the Massachusetts Cultural and Performing Arts Mitigation Trust Fund (the "Fund") to be spent in FY22 in the manner set forth in the Plan.

And

**WHEREAS** Council staff presented the grants portion of the Plan to the Grants Committee at its meeting on August 10, 2021 ("Grants Committee Meeting"), in connection with recommended grant allocations;

**WHEREAS** the Grants Committee recommended to the full Council the allocation of the grants presented at the Grants Committee Meeting;

**WHEREAS** the Grants Committee reviewed procedures of grant allocations and recommended that the Council approve the same;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, it is hereby

**RESOLVED:** To approve the Traditional Arts Apprenticeships grant recommendation in the total amount of \$100,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee;

**RESOLVED:** To approve the recommended Artist Fellowship program grant allocations totaling \$652,500 as recommended by the Grants Committee;

**RESOLVED:** To approve grant allocations to the Cultural Investment Portfolio, CIP Gateway and CIP Projects, for a total of \$6,203,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee;

**RESOLVED:** To approve the funding of the Apprentice Grants program in the amount of \$100,000 and Artist Fellowship program allocations totaling \$1,300,000, all as recommended by the Grants Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To approve the allocations to the Cultural Investment Portfolio, CIP Gateway and CIP Projects (collectively, the "CIP Programs") as recommended by the Grants Committee for an aggregate total of \$6,797,500.

**RESOLVED:** To approve allocations to the Media Partnerships program of \$130,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To approve an allocation to the Local Cultural Councils totaling \$4,785,000, up to \$412,500 in Cultural District grants, and \$300,000 to the Festivals Program all as recommended by the Grants Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To approve grant allocations to YouthReach program, continued funding of the Instrument Library in the combined amount of \$1,636,000 plus expenditure of any remaining CARES Act funds, participation in the META and CYP Teaching Artist Fellowships program with outside foundations and funding up to \$120,000 in grants/stipends/reimbursements to participating organizations in the CultureRx program all as recommended by the Grants Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To approve the following Arts Education grant allocations, \$1,265,000 to the STARS program, \$20,000 in support of Massachusetts History Day, \$20,000 in support of the NEA-funded Poetry Out Loud program and \$8,000 to Arts | Learning for its School Arts Leader Program, all as recommended by the Grants Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To approve the continuation of the UP Program with grants of up to \$155,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To approve a \$50,000 partnership grant to Arts Connect International for development of its Cultural Equity Learning Community (CELC) 2.0 teaching course as recommended by the Grants Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To approve a grant to Mass Humanities totaling \$754,886 as recommended by the Grants Committee. Section 20 **RESOLVED:** To approve a grant to NEFA of \$60,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To approve a grant to Mass Creative for \$15,000 to improve their website as recommended by the Grants Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To approve an allocation of \$35,000 to ArtsBoston acting on behalf of the Network Arts Administrators of Color as recommended by the Grants Committee.

**RESOLVED:** to approve to contract with SMU Data Arts to provide the Cultural Data Profile tool as recommended by the Grants Committee.

The motions passed and the Chair thanked her fellow Council Members remarking that FY22 would be a big year for the Agency. She then asked Public Affairs Director Bethann Steiner for her Advocacy Report.

**Advocacy Report.** Bethann acknowledged MASSCreative Executive Director Emily Ruddock, Mass Humanities Executive Director Brian Boyles, and City of Boston Chief of Arts & Culture Kara Elliott-Ortega and thanked them for their help throughout the budget process which began in January and ends now as the plan is adopted. Bethann also acknowledged Tyler Cotta and Derek Dunlea from Chair Carole Fiola's office who were present for today's meeting. It is Bethann's expectation that soon after Labor Day the legislature will return and focus on regular public hearings and that meetings of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development will resume as well. Bethann will keep Council Members informed of any meetings and/or hearings that call for public comment and will share any testimony submitted by the Agency. The Agency's current advocacy focus is on ARPA funds - \$5B is slated to be invested in Covid relief; this is one pillar of the Agency's Power of Culture advocacy campaign. The statewide Covid Cultural Impact Commission Chaired by Senator Ed Kennedy and Representative Carole Fiola announced a bold set of recommendations at the end of June calling for \$575M in ARPA funds for the cultural sector to be distributed through Mass Cultural Council. There will be a sustained and targeted advocacy push starting with a series of hearings. Staff will be asking Council Members to engage in this advocacy process.

Nina thanked Bethann for her report and thanked Michael, staff, and Council Members for all they did to support FY22 budget advocacy efforts.

David at this point asked to be recognized by the Chair and noted that he had received an inquiry about abstentions and clarified that if a member had noted a potential conflict on the conflict list, it was not necessary for a Council Member to abstain from the entire vote as the Conflict list would indicate that the member has abstained with respect to a particular organization as to which a conflict was noted. Ann Murphy indicated she had misunderstood the instructions and meant to vote in favor of proposed resolutions only noting the specific conflicts. Che Anderson indicated he had done the same. David said that while the vote had already been taken and passed, he would make sure the minutes reflected these comments.

**Cultural Districts.** Nina then asked Luis Cotto for his presentation on Cultural District redesignations. Luis let Council Members know that nine Cultural Districts were being presented today for redesignation. He noted that the Boston Literary Cultural District was also eligible for redesignation however, prior to the pandemic the District was considering whether or not to continue, and the impacts of Covid solidified their decision not to. Luis referred Council Members to the memo included in their meeting materials and briefly spoke about each District:

- The City of Worcester grew by 14% according to the census, and some are attributing that to art offerings. In 2019, Worcester hosted the Agency's annual Cultural Districts Initiatives.
- The Aquinnah Circle Cultural & Historic District and the West Concord Junction Cultural District are doing incredible work with small staffs. West Concord personifies the small nonprofit spirit and makes money go far.
- The Crossroads Cultural District (Greenfield) and the Nantucket Cultural District have changed their management model to be smaller and stakeholder driven. Luis acknowledged Council Member Cecil Barron Jensen who is part of that effort in Nantucket.
- Luis also noted that the Nantucket Cultural District is the only District to extend its borders. The District will now extend a 7-minute walk to include the Nantucket campus of the Museum of African American History.
- The Plymouth Bay Cultural District and Amherst Center Cultural District as both have major renovation projects recently completed: the Plymouth Center for the Arts and the Emily Dickinson Museum in Amherst.
- Luis visited the Scituate Harbor Cultural District last year during Small Business Saturday. Main Street was closed to traffic for the event; the District is one of the only ones to report an increase in visitation.

Nina thanked Luis for his report and called for a vote to approve the redesignation of the nine Cultural Districts. Jo-Ann Davis moved to approve the recommendations, Allyce Najimy seconded the motion. David called the roll and noting that Council Members Troy Siebels, Sherry Dong, Cecil Barron Jensen, Karen Barry and Susan Leff were not present, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED:** to approve the re-designation of the following nine previously approved Cultural Districts: Amherst, Aquinnah, Beverly, Crossroads [Greenfield], Nantucket, Plymouth Bay, Salisbury [Worcester], Scituate Harbor and West Concord

That concluded the business of the meeting. Nina thanked her fellow Council Members for their time today and for the robust discussion. The Racial Equity Task Force will reconvene to analyze feedback on the Racial Equity Plan and a Special Council Meeting will be scheduled very soon. As Chair, Nina adjourned the meeting at 11:51 am, Council Members remained online for a few moments to have the aforementioned photo taken.