

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

**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED-SIXTIETH MEETING
OF
MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL**

THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 2023

ONLINE MEETING

Council Members Present were

Marc Carroll, Acting Chair
Ché Anderson
Barbara Schaffer Bacon
Karen Barry
Kathleen Castro
Jo-Ann Davis
Sherry Dong
Cecil Barron Jensen
Matthew Keator
Barbara Krauthamer
Ann Murphy
Allyce Najjimy
Troy Siebels
Mark Snyder

Also Present were Mass Cultural Council Staff Members Michael J. Bobbitt, David Slatery, Catherine Cheng-Anderson, Jen Lawless, Bethann Steiner, Ann Petruccelli Moon, Carmen Plazas, Cheyenne Cohn-Postell, Charles Baldwin, Dan Blask, Erik Holmgren, Sara Glidden, Lillian Lee, Kalyn King, Maggie Holtzberg, Lisa Simmons, and Timothea Pham.

Acting Chair Marc Carroll called the meeting to order at 10:00am and asked Deputy Executive 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.

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.

Marc then asked Executive Director Michael Bobbitt to introduce the meeting's Mission Moment, an opportunity taken at the beginning of each Council Meeting to engage with the work of the creative and cultural sector. Today, Michael was pleased to share the Agency's new Strategic Plan launch video with the Council. Michael recruited Massachusetts-based video artist Wesley Verge to create a video that would introduce and publicize the new plan to constituents, partners, and leaders across the state and communicate the vibrancy of the creative and cultural sector. He then showed the video, which is [available on the Agency's YouTube channel](#).

Marc then asked if Council Members had reviewed the minutes from their last meeting held on May 24th, and if so, he would look for a motion to approve the minutes. Mark Snyder moved to approve the minutes and Troy Siebels seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Simone Early was absent, and Ann Murphy was absent but would join the meeting later was unanimously

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the One Hundred Fifty-Ninth Meeting of Mass Cultural Council.

Marc then let Council Members know a calendar of upcoming meetings for FY24 could be found on page 23 of their meeting materials. Currently the plan is for the Committees to meet on October 12th. The full Council will meet on November 1st. Marc is rethinking the way Council committees are structured; the Advocacy Committee may be restructured and rethought. He then let the Council know the Executive and Grants Committees met on August 4th to review the proposed FY24 spending plan. Both Committees approved the plans for review and discussion by the full Council today.

Included in the spending plan is a salary adjustment for Michael Bobbitt. Michael was hired in 2021 at a salary approximately \$25K lower than the salary possessed by the previous Executive Director at the conclusion of her 13-year tenure. Michael has requested that his salary be reviewed and adjusted to ensure pay equity. Senior Director of Business Operations & Chief Financial Officer Catherine Cheng-Anderson provided information to the Executive Committee about the salaries of other independent state agency leaders to see how Michael's current and requested salaries aligned. (A link to these materials from the Executive Committee meeting are contained in the meeting materials distributed to the Council members for this Council meeting.) During the August 4th Executive Committee Meeting this request was reviewed and approved (and is part of the Spending Plan that will be voted on later in today's meeting) with a request that Cathy update further salary research; (particularly information about the salary of the MBTA General Manager which the Executive Committee thought may have been listed incorrectly. The General Manager of the MBTA has an annual salary of \$470K; \$200K more than originally listed.) Cathy will be able to answer questions about the research and salary request later in the meeting during the spending plan presentation. Marc then asked Michael for his Executive Director's report.

Michael reminded Council Members of the monthly reports Ann Petruccelli Moon has been preparing and distributing that include past and upcoming engagements of the Executive Office. He thanked Council Members who had recently joined him at events – Matthew Keator, Allyce Najimy, and Cecil Barron Jensen. Since the May Council Meeting, staff has been paying special attention to the Agency's advancement strategy and connecting with leaders within the health, transportation, lodging, economic development, and tourism sectors. The team has also made strides with its Social Prescription program, the Grants team is making important adjustments to the grants management system, and the Fiscal team is working hard to complete grant payments.

Marc then asked Senior Director of Public Affairs Bethann Steiner for her report.

Bethann let Council Members know the FY24 budget process was complete. The Agency's \$25 million request was embraced by the Governor, House, Senate, and Conference Committee. It was a successful and smooth cycle. The final budget is \$25,895,000 - \$25 million which represents an 11% increase to the Agency's line item, plus \$895,000 for 16 funded earmarks. Bethann thanked the Public Affairs team for their work on the Strategic Plan video and let Council Members know there would be two large convenings this fall – one will take place on October 23rd, most likely in the Springfield area and a second convening will be scheduled for November. Final details will be shared with the Council soon. Bethann concluded by introducing Christian Kelly, a newly hired member of the Public Affairs team who will serve as Public Relations & Events Manager.

Marc then asked the staff for their presentation on the proposed FY24 spending plan.

Senior Director of Programs Jen Lawless shared a PowerPoint presentation outlining the plan. [A copy of the presentation is available online.](#) Jen, joined by Michael and Catherine walked Council Members through the Agency's proposed \$44 million spending plan for FY24 noting that – of the \$25 million state appropriation - 80% of the Agency's allocation will go to grants with 20% going to administrative and program costs; meeting and exceeding the requirement that 75% of the allocation go to grants. Once the presentation was complete, Marc thanked the staff for their work creating the plan and asked Council Members for their questions and feedback.

Mark Snyder was happy to see that the Agency will create a Native & Indigenous Equity Plan in FY24 and wondered if there would be any efforts made to help migrants in Massachusetts. Michael let Mark know that part of the Agency's work in FY25 will be to create a plan to support immigration; nothing that the Racial Equity Plan has some overlap with this work already.

Cecil congratulated the staff for their efforts to weave the new Strategic Plan throughout the spending plan then asked about the work to support organizations to reach Net Zero; would this be through financial help, outreach and education, etc.? Jen let Cecil know this will be a very specific workshop and that a similar workshop was offered in FY23. The workshop will be offered virtually and will be recorded. Cecil would like to attend and plans to encourage others to do the same.

Marc noted that some Council Members needed to leave the meeting at 11 am and so if there were not any other questions on the plan, he would entertain a motion to approve it. Dave let Council Members know that the bulk of the presentation by the staff was included in their materials and there has been an opportunity to offer feedback and ask questions; if Council Members would like to take the vote now and have time for follow-up discussion following the vote, they can do so; it is at their discretion.

There were no objections, however Dave paused to review the conflict-of-interest list with Council Members prior to the vote. Council Members were encouraged to review the list which outlines the organizations with which Members have a vested interest to ensure they did not participate in any discussion or votes pertaining to those organizations. There were no additions to the list.

Grants Committee Chair Jo-Ann Davis gave a brief report letting Council Members know the Grants Committee met on August 4th and thoroughly reviewed the recommendations made by the staff contained in section 9b of the meeting materials. The Committee voted to recommend the plan to the full Council. Jo-Ann thanked Jen and the staff for the work they did to build the plan and if Council Members have no questions, Jo-Ann feels a vote can be taken.

The Council had therefore decided to take a consolidated vote to approve the FY24 spending plan and all FY24 grant recommendations. Mark Snyder moved to approve the plan and grant recommendations; Barbara Schaffer Bacon seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Simone Early was absent and

WHEREAS, the General Court of the Massachusetts State Legislature has appropriated, and the Governor has signed into law, a budget of \$25,895,000 to the Mass Cultural Council for FY24; AND

WHEREAS Mass Cultural Council staff has presented a draft FY24 budget and spending plan to the Executive Committee at its meeting on August 4, 2023;

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, 2023.

NOW THEREFORE, it is hereby

RESOLVED: To approve the Plan as recommended by the Council Meeting subject to the further approvals of the individual grant and program recommendations below; and

WHEREAS Council staff presented the FY24 grants recommendations to the Grants Committee at its meeting on August 4, 2023 ("Grants Committee Meeting");

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 allocations to the Cultural Investment Portfolio and CIP Gateway programs as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting for an aggregate total of \$6,990,300.

RESOLVED: To approve \$100,000 in Media Transition Grants to 5 public media companies, as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve of the fourth cycle of the Gaming Mitigation Program as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve up to \$855,000 in Cultural District grants as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve an allocation to the Local Cultural Councils totaling \$5,500,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting. Arts Education & Youth

RESOLVED: To approve grant allocations to YouthReach program in the amount

of \$1,870,000, as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve allocations of \$1,428,100 to the STARS program, as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve the following grants- \$30,416 to the Youth Arts Impact Network with EdVestors, \$20,000 in support of the NEA-funded Poetry Out Loud program and continued grant funding of the Instrument Library in the amount of \$15,000, all as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve the Projects/Festivals program with a grant allocation of \$1,850,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve \$480,000 in UP Innovation Fund Grants, as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve a grant of \$175,000 to Art Pharmacy for continuation of the CultureRx Social Prescription program as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve Council a \$62,500 grant to Arts Connect International for continuing the Cultural Equity Learning Community (CELC) 2.0 teaching course in FY24, a \$70,000 grant to ArtsBoston acting on behalf of the Network Arts Administrators of Color, a \$5,000 grant to the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs for support of its Truth Commission project and a \$20,000 grant for an organization to be selected to scale up the UP Innovation Learning Network program, all as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve a grant to Mass Humanities totaling \$943,608, a grant to Mass Creative for \$33,000 and a grant to NEFA of \$70,000, all as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve the funding of the Apprentice Grants program in the amount of \$180,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve a grant allocation of \$1,875,000 for up to 375 grants of \$5,000 as part of the new FY24 Individual Creativity Grants Program as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve continuation of the Cultural Sector Recovery Grants for Individuals program in FY24, using whatever leftover Pandemic Recovery Funds are determined to be available by staff, for further grants under the program, as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

The following Council Members abstained from voting and/or discussing grants pertaining to the organizations listed under their name:

Marc Carroll

- a. Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra
- b. The Rivers School

Jo-Ann Davis

- a. The Care Center
- b. Springfield Museums
- c. MASS Creative

Barbara Schaffer Bacon

- a. Arts Extension Institute

Troy Siebels

- a. Hanover Theater/Worcester Center for the Performing Arts
- b. Worcester Cultural Coalition
- c. Discover Central Massachusetts
- d. Indian Hill Music
- e. MASS Creative

Ann Murphy

- a. MASS Creative

Sherry Dong

- a. The Chinese Historical Society of New England

Kathleen Castro

- a. Little Theater of Fall River
- b. New Bedford Festival Theater
- c. The Fall River Coalition for Arts and Culture

Cecil Barron Jensen

- a. Artists Association of Nantucket
- b. Egan Maritime Institute
- c. Nantucket Cultural District

Che Anderson

- a. Worcester County Mechanics Association (Mechanics Hall)
- b. Worcester Historical Museum
- c. Worcester Art Museum
- d. Institute of Contemporary Art

The vote having passed unanimously, Marc thanked staff and Council Members for their work. Barbara remarked that the Grants Committee spent the full two hours of its meeting thoroughly reviewing the presentation and was impressed with the framing of this year's allocations and how they play into the future of the Agency.

Marc then asked Catherine for her Business Operations report.

Catherine began by reminding the Council that in May of 2023, she transitioned from her post as Director of People and Culture and became the Senior Director of Business Operations and the Agency's Chief Financial Officer.

She was thrilled to introduce a new member of the fiscal operations team. Ashley Freeman is the new Manager of Financial Operations. Ashley brings a decade of state purchasing and finance experience that will be invaluable to the team. Catherine is excited to have her onboard and build capacity on the finance team.

Since Ashley's arrival, the team has deployed a new standardized procurement process across the Agency. This new process aligns with Mass Cultural Council's racial equity goals and supports the Commonwealth's Supplier Diversity initiatives. This substantial change in the way we internal business represents a step forward in ensuring fairness, and administrative efficiency within our purchasing.

Catherine next shared that the Agency's dedicated finance team is at the finish line with pandemic grant payments. Of the 7,000 grant payments about 100 remaining pandemic grant contracts are left to process and pay. This is a significant milestone for Catherine's team and the Agency. The last individuals awaiting grant payments are experiencing the greatest issues with their bank accounts, changing of addresses, the treasury department is intercepting payments from grantees, and other complications. These problems are adding an unexpected layer of complexity to getting the payments out to them. Despite these challenges, the team is working closely with each individual to sort out their issues and ensure that they receive their grant payment.

Catherine then asked Program Officers Cheyenne Cohn-Postell and Charles Baldwin – who are members of Catherine's Business Operations Department – to give their report on Cultural Equity and Access Initiatives.

Cheyenne congratulated her colleagues on reaching shared goals with priority points and exceeding demographic goals. Staff saw a significant increase in the number of applications the Agency received from individuals with disabilities as well as a large increase in the racial and ethnic diversity of its applicant pool. Staff was able to fully engage with new applicants; emails have an open rate of 80%, which is extremely high.

Charles shared his gratitude to the Council for investing in a process that has allowed staff to hear from constituents when developing its new Disability Equity Plan. The two consultants who are reviewing our external and internal practices and programs are discovering ways we can create more opportunities for people in the creative and cultural sector who have disabilities. On September 28th the draft plan will be presented to the full staff.

Marc expressed that, as a marketer himself, he is astonished at the 80% open rate Cheyenne mentioned.

Karen Barry thanked Charles, Cheyenne, and the rest of the staff for their work and asked how much longer the Agency had access to the pandemic relief allocation. Catherine let Karen know FY24 will be the final year; most of the funds have been distributed and the remaining \$1 million will be distributed in FY24 as new grant money.

Karen then asked if any thought had been given to reallocating the money the Agency spends on rent {of its office space} towards grants. Michael stated that there are a few more years on the lease, but staff will begin brainstorming about the Agency's office space very soon. Dave clarified that the lease goes through January 2026; the Agency with assistance from the state through the Department of Capital Asset Maintenance and Management (DCAM) signed a 10-year lease in 2016. Karen has heard success stories from other agencies who have renegotiated leases with DCAM and perhaps a change can be made sooner. Staff will explore this possibility.

Karen then expressed that she is in favor of the work done around pay equity. She is aware that everyone in state government is slated to receive a 4% increase retroactive to July 2023 and another 4% increase in January 2024. Karen is interested in seeing Catherine's pay equity report, particularly the compensation for management levels other than Executive which was discussed earlier in the meeting. Catherine let Karen know that a pay equity assessment for managers was done in FY23, and she will share this document with Karen.

Barbara asked when the Council might hear more about the Agency's cultural asset mapping project. Michael responded that he is in the process of talking with funders around the state to see who might want to join Mass Cultural Council in funding the project. An RFP will be prepared within a few weeks and will be shared with Council Members.

Mark Snyder then expressed his thanks to the legislature for approving the Agency's line item. Bethann added that she wished to thank the Agency's partners at Mass Humanities; MASSCreative; and Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development Co-Chairs Paul Mark and Mindy Domb for their support across both chambers.

There were no further questions or comments and the end of the meeting agenda had been reached. Marc, as Acting Chair, adjourned the meeting at 11:11am.