

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2023**

**ONLINE MEETING**

**Committee Members Present** were

Nina Fialkow, Chair  
Marc Carroll, Vice Chair  
Jo-Ann Davis  
Troy Siebels

**Staff Members Present** were

Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director  
David Slatery, Deputy Director  
Jen Lawless, Operations Director  
Catherine Cheng-Anderson, People & Culture Director  
Bethann Steiner, Public Affairs Director  
Ann Petruccelli Moon, Public Relations & Events Manager  
Carmen Plazas, Communications & Community Engagement Manager

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order at 10:01am 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.

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, in order 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 that 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

Nina then asked if Committee Members had reviewed the minutes of their last meeting on August 5, 2022 and called for a motion to approve them. Troy Siebels moved to approve the minutes; Jo-Ann Davis seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Che Anderson and Sherry Dong were absent, all were in favor, and it was

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approves the minutes of the August 5, 2022 Executive Committee Meeting in the form presented to the Executive Committee.

Nina welcomed her fellow Committee Members and Agency staff, wished everyone a happy new year, and thanked them for their dedication, leadership, participation and noted that there were many exciting things on the horizon for the Agency. She then asked Executive Director Michael Bobbitt for his report.

Michael let Committee Members know it had been a very busy summer and fall. At this point, every grant program – excluding Cultural Facilities Fund – has opened and closed. The pandemic recovery programs made for a large and exhaustive campaign. Staff was able to radically adapt outreach efforts and the numbers Committee Members see today will show the benefits of doing so. Michael noted that the outreach methods used for the recovery programs will be applied to all grant programs moving forward. The Strategic Planning Task Force, comprised of Council Members and Agency staff, is deeply engaged in its process, and turning the corner from theoretical thinking to strategy. Michael thanked all who participated in interviews, focus groups, and surveys pertaining to the Strategic Plan. The months ahead will be busy as the process continues and as staff begins writing checks for the two recovery programs. Michael then let Committee Members know that this afternoon he would begin the Lead Boston leadership program along with 45 other local leaders. Michael would like to see the program add the arts to its curriculum in the future. David noted that the schedule for Lead Boston conflicted with Committee Meetings in March, May, and June. Ann will be in touch with Committee Chairs to reschedule those meetings.

Nina then asked Michael to elaborate further on the status of the Strategic Planning process.

Michael let Committee Members know that Nina had formed a strategic plan RFP task force several months ago to assist her in vetting responses to the Agency's RFP seeking a strategic planning consultant to lead the strategic planning process. The Agency engaged the firm, Strategy Matters and a second version of the Strategic Planning Task Force was formed. The full Council and all members of the Agency's staff participated in a strategic planning retreat in October. More than 900 people responded to the strategic planning survey, that information along with information gathered in focus groups and interviews, was distilled into a SWOT analysis that is assisting the Task Force as it looks at the Agency's mission and theory of change which will be part of the full Council Meeting later in January. Open meetings with staff have been held, and as the process continues there are some nerves, but the process is moving ahead, and it is nearly time to begin exploring what the new language will mean programmatically.

Nina then asked Public Affairs Director Bethann Steiner for her legislative update.

Bethann stated that it is an exciting time on Beacon Hill. The 2023/2024 legislative session began last week with the swearing in of the House and Senate. There are five new senators and 21 or 22 new representatives – two elections are still being decided due to a small margin of error. The Healey Driscoll administration also began last week. Bethann has reached out to the Governor and Lieutenant Governor to offer congratulations and to all newly elected officials in the House and Senate to introduce the Agency. Michael has a relationship with Governor Healey; there is some nice ground to build on. The beginning of the legislative session is a busy time. There are two key deadlines ahead. January 20<sup>th</sup> is the bill filing deadline. There are typically 5,000 bills filed with a very small number making it through the whole process. Bethann will review all bills that are filed and track any that are of interest to the Agency. The deadline for the Governor to file H1, her first budget, is March 1<sup>st</sup> – typically this happens in January, because it is the Governor's first year there is a slight delay. This will be the kickoff to the budget cycle. The Agency will review H1, respond, and build an advocacy plan. Bethann anticipates the rest of the budget cycle moving at its typical schedule with the Committee on Ways

& Means Hearing happening in March, the House budget in April, the Senate budget in May, and Conference Committee resolving by July 1. Bethann will be in touch with updates.

Nina added that she and Bethann have invited Governor Healey to attend the full Council Meeting on January 26<sup>th</sup>. Nina noted that Governor Baker was very supportive of Mass Cultural Council, and she looks forward to that support continuing with the new administration.

Nina then asked David and the team begin their update on the Recovery grant programs.

David explained that later, at the Grants Committee Meeting, staff would present the grants to be awarded through its two recovery programs: Cultural Sector Recovery Grants for Organizations and Cultural Sector Recovery Grants for Individuals. There are over 1200 organizations who have qualified for funding, and there were 7500 applications to the individuals program – significantly more than can be funded. As applications to the program for organizations were reviewed, staff noted that several small organizations had applied, and that all eligible applications could be funded with the funds allocated. As such, staff is proposing that \$5 million be shifted from the Organizations program to the Individuals program. This will mean that all eligible organizations will receive a grant, and that 4,000 individuals (as opposed to the 3000 originally contemplated) will also receive funding. Over \$31 million will be granted to organizations, and \$20 million will go to individuals. This was allocated differently in the FY23 spending plan approved last August, so staff is seeking the Committee's approval to recommend moving \$5 million from the organizations program to the individuals program. If the Committee approves the recommendation, the full Council will vote on this at its meeting on January 26<sup>th</sup>.

Nina opened the meeting to discussion and asked if any Committee Members had questions or comments on the recommendation.

Nina recognized Jo-Ann Davis who wanted to thank Michael and the entire team for the amazing amount of work that went into the process of building and managing these two grant programs. When she reviewed the materials, she was blown away by how thoughtful the process was; this is amazing work by the team with rock solid methodology and she cannot express her gratitude enough for the professional work the staff has done.

Michael thanked Jo-Ann and noted that it was an all-Agency effort; the sad news is that there are a good number of individuals who will not receive a grant.

Nina added that it's important to show the work that goes on behind the scenes and to share the overwhelming need that exists within the sector. She then asked if the re-allocation the staff was recommending was within the guidelines of the state's Pandemic Recovery Funds allocation the Agency had received under the Covid Response Act and David responded that it was.

Vice Chair Marc Carroll asked what would happen to the 3500 individuals who would not receive a grant; how will the Agency keep them engaged.

Operations Director Jen Lawless explained that because of the timing of the programs, staff was able to engage people in real-time so that they were aware of other programs they were eligible for such as STARS Residencies or the Local Cultural Council Program. Some new applicants have already found their way to those programs. The Agency advertised all available grant programs together so that potential applicants knew the Recovery program was one of many opportunities. Still, staff plans to continue to work to engage those applicants who do not receive a grant from the Recovery program.

Nina asked how the Agency would tell the story of these two programs and Bethann explained that this wonderful story of cross-agency collaboration would be told via a press release, blog post, and series of celebrations beginning with on at the State House in February. Nina thinks this is a good opportunity to engage Council Members. Marc attended an event the previous Friday in Framingham where the Cultural Districts Initiative was celebrated, and it was very well-attended and positive.

There were no further questions or comments, and Nina called for a vote on Section 7 – the reallocation of \$5 million of Pandemic Recovery funds from the Organizations program to the Individuals program. Jo-Ann moved to approve the recommendation; Troy seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Che Anderson and Sherry Dong were absent, it was

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee recommends that the Council approve a \$5,000,000 reallocation of Pandemic Recovery Funds between programs as set forth in the FY 23 Budget and Program Allocation Plan so that \$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.

Nina then moved to the final item on the Committee's agenda: reviewing the draft agency for the January 26<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting. Upon motion duly made and seconded and that Che and Sherry were absent, all were in favor and it was

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approve the draft January 26, 2023 Mass Cultural Council Agenda presented to the Executive Committee.

Troy thanked the staff for all their hard work. Michael expressed that he wished the process could move faster. Jen explained that staff has had talks with the Comptroller and the number of grants the Agency is planning to distribute is unprecedented. The Commonwealth needs to approve every single payee and the Comptroller is staggered by what the Agency plans to distribute. If there is a slow-down, it may be due to the Comptroller and not within the Agency's control.

Dave added that he doesn't have the exact number, but the Agency is planning to distribute 5200 grants – there are fewer residents than that in some Massachusetts towns, so this is historic! Jen let Committee Members know that last year the Agency distributed 1800 grants, this year it will distribute more than 6900 grants. Michael said the need is great and he heard from several artists that they did not apply to make room for others. Michael thinks that this need can be part of the Agency's advocacy campaign and he is very excited to fund all sorts of new constituents including drag artists for the first time.

That concluded the agenda for the Committee meeting and Nina, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 10:35am.