

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 2023**

**ONLINE MEETING**

**Committee Members Present** were

Marc Carroll, Vice Chair  
Ché Anderson  
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

Vice Chair Marc Carroll called the meeting to order at 9:32am 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

Marc then asked Executive Director Michael Bobbitt for his update.

Michael let Committee Members know that staff has now closed all grant programs for FY23. Festivals & Projects applications are still under review, as are Cultural Facilities Fund applications. Staff is working hard to manage the more than five thousand checks to be cut for the Cultural Sector Recovery Programs; working with the Comptroller's office to process payments as quickly as possible. As the Committee knows, the Agency is undertaking a strategic planning process. Once the plan is finalized, plans for FY24 will begin. Michael concluded by letting Committee Members know there was positive news this week as Governor Healey released her H.1 budget and proposed \$25M for the Mass Cultural Council.

Marc moved to the next agenda item, an update on the Strategic Planning process.

David noted that all the Committee Members had attended the goal setting retreat held earlier in the week. Now senior staff will meet with Strategy Matters to development of a document that will be the new Strategic Plan. This document will be sent to the Council on March 15<sup>th</sup> – seven days prior to the March Council Meeting. This will then be put forth to the full Council for its approval and, if approved, will inform the development of the FY24 spending plan. Staff is interested in hearing what Committee Members thought of the retreat.

Marc thought the retreat went very well; he was happy to see those who attended in-person and pleased that others were able to participate virtually. Marc enjoyed the planning session and thought the group developed good ideas.

Jo-Ann agreed. She has been to many retreats and felt this was facilitated beautifully; noting that it is challenging to shepherd a large group through a discussion and to have ideas coalesce and believed that, at the end of the day, the product was very directional. Jo-Ann is looking forward to discussing the full document with the Council; she suggests Council Members be encouraged to read and review the document in advance of the Council Meeting and come prepared to discuss it.

Ché Anderson participated in the retreat virtually and shared that he could feel the energy in the room even as a remote participant. He thought the retreat was productive and moved the ball down the field significantly. Kudos to the facilitators.

David asked Ché if he thought a hybrid meeting could work for future Council Meetings given his experience at the retreat. Ché felt that for the most part the experience was very smooth; only a couple of instances where someone participating virtually wanted to say something and it took an extra moment. He was happy that the virtual option was included as he would not have been able to participate otherwise.

Michael let Committee Members know that senior staff met with Strategy Matters yesterday. There was consensus around the buckets that were settled on at the retreat; only a bucket on internal structure was missing. Senior staff's job will be to help staff stay high-level and high-impact; to focus on sector-wide, big picture storytelling. Professional development is challenging with Mass Cultural Council competing with arts service organizations, nonprofits, consultants, even the internet.

Marc let Committee and staff members know that he is currently working with another state agency on this very topic; he will share what he learns.

Jo-Ann added that whenever an agency embarks on a new plan and begins thinking about the future it's also important to note what will not continue, what we will stop doing, and this can be challenging.

Operations Director Jen Lawless noted that staff had begun exploring consolidation with the Festivals & Projects grant program. Concerns were eased because grant amounts increased and all constituents who were served by the previous two programs were eligible to apply for the new one.

There was no further discussion, and Marc asked Public Affairs Director Bethann Steiner for her Legislative update.

Bethann let Committee Members know that the beginning of the legislative session has been very productive and positive. The Governor's budget was released on March 1<sup>st</sup> and she proposed \$25 million for Mass Cultural Council; this is historic and represents an 11% increase to this year's operating budget. The Agency's public reaction to this news was positive and thankful. Mass Cultural Council will testify on March 31<sup>st</sup> at the Joint Ways & Means hearing in Gloucester. David will testify as Michael will need to attend the Western Massachusetts celebration for Cultural Sector Recovery grants; more than 150 grantees are registered to attend, along with press, several elected officials, and Council Members. There are two new chairs of the Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development: Senator Paul Mark and Representative Mindy Domb. The Agency sincerely appreciates the leadership of Senator Ed Kennedy and Representative Carole Fiola, the previous Committee Chairs. The Committee's Research Director, Derek Dunlea will stay with the Committee, Bethann is pleased to report. She has reached out to all new members of the TCAD Committee to congratulate them and is beginning to build relationships. Bethann concluded by thanking those Committee Members who attended the Agency's celebration of Cultural Sector Recovery Grants at the State House in February. There will now be four regional events in South Yarmouth, Worcester, Beverly, and Williamstown. Council Members are welcome to attend the celebrations and should let Ann or Bethann know if they plan to be there.

Marc thanked Bethann for her update. He then asked if Committee Members had reviewed the minutes of their last meeting held on January 11, 2023 and called for a motion to approve them. Ché Anderson moved to approve the minutes; Jo-Ann Davis seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Chair Nina Fialkow and Sherry Dong were absent, all were in favor, and it was

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approves the minutes of the January 11, 2023 Executive Committee Meeting in the form presented to the Executive Committee.

Marc then moved to the next item on the agenda: travel approvals for staff.

David explained that Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO) has a pertinent topic coming up at their annual conference in Washington DC which is called "courageous unlearning". Attendance by senior staff members will help staff look at current grantmaking practices and achieve greater equity. Michael feels it is important for three members of the senior staff team to attend this two-day conference and take in the information together, especially as they work to pursue the forthcoming strategic plan.

Michael added that not only is there the strategic plan, but also the racial equity plan, the draft Native plan, and next year's Deaf and disabled plan. As the Agency looks at consolidating grants and having fewer programs but more grantees, there needs to be a focus on outreach and unlearning will be crucial.

David noted that staff is working with five thousand grantees as part of the Cultural Sector Recovery grant programs, many of whom are new to the Agency. This work has been an incredible learning experience; many of the Agency's processes and procedures are still uninviting and can be off-putting and there is much to learn and perhaps much to unlearn as we deal with a different type of grantee in terms of familiarity with bureaucratic and legal processes. The sessions at the GEO conference

will be valuable. Staff is asking the Committee to approve David, Michael, and Jen's travel and participation in the conference.

Marc asked if the staff would fly to Washington on Sunday evening and return on Tuesday evening and David responded that they would. Jo-Ann thinks this is a very important topic and asked that staff share their learnings with the Council at a future meeting. Dave noted that staff would return from the conference two days before the May Council Meeting and could provide an update then.

Marc called for a motion to approve the travel request. Jo-Ann moved and Troy seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Chair Nina Fialkow and Sherry Dong were absent it was

RESOLVED: To approve the staff-recommended out-of-state travel requests presented to the March 3, 2023 Meeting.

Marc moved to the final item on the agenda, reviewing the agenda for the March 22<sup>nd</sup> Council Meeting.

David clarified that the Massachusetts Poetry Out Loud champion would join for the Mission Moment and that Lexington and Cummington would be the Cultural District applicants the Council would consider. Staff would also move the Cultural Districts item to the beginning of the meeting so that the Strategic Plan discussion could come last and have open-ended time.

Jo-Ann asked if this would be a virtual meeting or an in-person meeting. Bethann explained that public bodies are able to meet virtually through the end of March. There is a supplemental budget currently moving through the legislature that would extend that deadline to March of 2025. Should that make it to the Governor's desk the Agency might have the ability to meet virtually moving forward, should the Council choose to do so.

There was no further discussion and Marc asked for a motion to approve the March 22<sup>nd</sup> Council Meeting agenda. Troy Siebels moved to approve the agenda and Ché seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Chair Nina Fialkow and Sherry Dong were absent it was

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approve the draft March 22, 2023 Mass Cultural Council Agenda presented to the Executive Committee.

Marc asked if there was any further business to discuss and there was not. As Vice Chair Marc adjourned the meeting at 10:05am.