

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

TUESDAY, MAY 3, 2022

ONLINE MEETING

Committee Members Present were

Nina Fialkow, Chair
Marc Carroll, Vice Chair
Che Anderson
Jo-Ann Davis
Sherry Dong
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.

Prepared on 5/17/22

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- Any "chat" or similar function on the Zoom platform hosting the meeting shall be disabled.
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- 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 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 March 8th and called for a motion to approve them. Sherry Dong moved to approve the minutes; Che Anderson seconded the motion. By roll call vote all were in favor, and it was

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approves the minutes of the March 8, 2022 Executive Committee Meeting in the form presented to the Executive Committee.

Nina welcomed her fellow Committee Members and Agency staff to the meeting and asked Michael Bobbitt for his Executive Director's report.

Michael let Committee Members know that staff is busy drafting plans for FY23 which Committee Members will learn more about at their meetings in August. Staff is also in the final stages of building two cultural sector Covid relief programs and will seek feedback on the process thus far today. Program teams are examining all Agency grant programs through a racial equity lens. Advocacy work is also in full swing, and the budget process is going very well thus far. The Agency recently completed its sixth Covid impact survey. At a high level 1,084 cultural organizations reported \$781M in lost revenue and more than 3,000 creative workers indicated \$31.9M in lost income. A press release about the survey results yielded a good deal of press coverage.

Michael then let Committee Members know that staff was submitting two requests for approval of out-of-state travel and David would explain this more fully.

David stated that, as Committee Members may recall, in 2018 a requirement was added to the Agency's line item stating that it is the duty of the Council (or its designee, the Executive Committee) to approve any out-of-state travel by Agency staff. Today there are two such requests for the Committee to consider. David referred to the written materials which had been circulated. The first request posed no cost to the Agency: Michael Bobbitt attended the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies' (NASAA) Board Meeting in Washington, DC from April 28-30. He is a member of the Board. NASAA covered the cost of airfare and lodging for its Board Members; the cost was approximately \$950. The second request is for staff members Charles Baldwin and Cheyenne Cohn-Postell to attend the LEAD Conference in Raleigh, NC in August. The cost will be \$3800 and is covered in the Agency's budget. David noted that the Agency has over the years repeatedly sent staff to the LEAD conference and the last travel request the Committee approved prior to the pandemic was for the LEAD conference.

Nina called for a motion to approve the requests. Che Anderson moved to approve, and Jo-Ann Davis seconded the motion. By roll call vote all were in favor, and it was

RESOLVED: To approve the staff-recommended out-of-state travel requests presented to the May 3, 2022 Executive Committee Meeting.

Nina then asked Public Affairs Director Bethann Steiner for her Advocacy report.

Bethann stated that last week the Massachusetts House of Representatives debated its budget and proposed funding Mass Cultural Council at \$22.5M – this represents a \$2.5M increase – there is an additional \$607K in earmarks attached to the Agency's line item in the House proposal. This does fall a little short of the \$27.4M request, but it is still an increase. There was a strong show of support from the House with 74 members (47.4% of the House) co-sponsoring the Agency's amendment. Now the budget moves to the Senate and Michael and Bethann are beginning a series of meetings with several members of the upper chamber. The Senate Ways & Means Committee will release its budget proposal next week and staff and partners will activate from there. The Agency is still seeking \$27.4M and should the proposal from Ways & Means be lower than this request, Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development Chair Kennedy is poised to file an amendment. Bethann stated that it is not uncommon for the House and Senate to propose different levels of funding.

Bethann then let Committee Members know that Bill H.3378 which would expand membership opportunities for Local Cultural Councils, sponsored by Senator Hinds and Representative Gordon, has moved further along in the process and will soon go to the full House for a vote and then to the Senate.

Vice Chair Marc Carroll asked Bethann to clarify if the House budget included earmarks and she explained that the budget was for a total of \$23,107,000 and included \$607,000 in earmarks and \$22.5M for Agency programs and services.

There were no further questions for Bethann. Nina asked Michael and Lawless for their report on the pandemic relief programs currently being designed by Agency staff for use of the up to \$60 million in funding made available in the Commonwealth's Immediate Covid-19 Recovery Needs Act passed last December. It was noted that these programs would later be presented to the Grants Committee later today for recommendation to the Council

Jen referred to the written materials previously circulated and explained that development of pandemic recovery programs has been a cross Agency effort led by a working group comprised of 10 to 12 staff members. The process began with a public input period in January and February. What staff heard and what the recent Covid-19 impact survey has reinforced is that the sector is still struggling. Organizations are reporting that earned revenue is nowhere near what it was in the past. It was made very clear that what is needed the most is unrestricted funding. The larger staff working group broke into two smaller groups: one addressing the needs of organizations, the other the needs of individuals. These groups worked in tandem to draft guidelines which incorporated all the Agency learned from administering the Cultural Organization Economic Recovery grant program (COERG) in December 2020 and the more recent AAPI Covid relief program along with its ongoing racial equity work. All of this work resulted in the draft guidelines the Grants Committee would review later today. The focus is on simplicity while incorporating all statutory requirements. Staff is looking forward to gathering feedback from the Grants Committee that will inform next steps as the guidelines are revised and refined before they are presented to the full Council at its next meeting on May 23rd. Ideally, guidelines will be posted publicly at the end of May.

Nina asked how many additional staff would be hired to manage the programs. Jen explained that this is not yet finalized but the need for additional staff has surfaced and is being discussed. There will be approximately 3,000 grants to distribute and more than 3,000 applications to process. Jen is working with David and People & Culture Director Catherine Cheng-Anderson to determine how many temporary staff will need to be hired. David added that staff is also talking to third parties such as the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) who might help process the grants.

Nina asked if staff has any indication that the sector will fully recover, and Michael responded that it's difficult to know. Indoor spaces are still vulnerable, and many arts patrons are older. Organizations are revising marketing plans to reach younger people and more diverse populations. It is hard to predict at this point as we are still not completely through the pandemic.

Jo-Ann expressed that since this afternoon will mark the first time the Grants Committee will see the draft guidelines there may be questions particularly about some of the terms included within them such as independent practicing artists and independent teaching

artist within the program for individuals. There may also be questions regarding the eligibility criteria within the program for organizations along with questions concerning who meets those criteria.

Jen briefly clarified several of the terms included in the draft guidelines and explained that it is important to the sector that the grants are given to organizations that are focused primarily on the arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences as opposed to larger institutions that offer an arts program. In some cases, this might be hard to determine and in those cases staff will lean towards including more organizations as opposed to excluding them. Jen clarified that there would be no independent panel, that staff would handle reviewing and scoring applications, this would include looking at mission statements. Support staff may be called upon to review 990s and expenses as opposed to making decisions as to whether an organization is primarily cultural. Jen added that Agency staff is experienced in this type of work.

Jo-Ann asked Jen to provide this type of context at this afternoon's Grants Committee meeting at the beginning of her presentation on the draft guidelines. Nina agreed providing this context would be helpful and would, hopefully, alleviate any confusion. Michael added that in addition to feedback from the Grants Committee, staff is also gathering feedback from the Agency's BIPOC Outreach Coordinators and considering beta testing to ensure there is no unintentional othering.

Nina thanked staff for their hard work on moved onto the final agenda item: approving the agenda for the full Council Meeting scheduled for May 23rd. David clarified one item on the agenda: the Council will vote on the terms of proposed pandemic recovery programs at its May meeting, but not the number of dollars or specific grant amounts. That will be part of the FY23 spending plan which the Council will consider at its August meeting.

Nina thanked David and asked for a motion to approve the draft agenda for the May Council Meeting. Troy Siebels moved to approve the agenda; Che seconded the motion. By roll call vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED To approve the draft agenda for the May 23 Mass Cultural Council meeting in the form presented to the Executive Committee at its May 3, 2022 meeting.

There was no further business at this point and Nina, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 10:35am.