

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 2023**

**ONLINE MEETING**

**Committee Members Present** were

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

**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 10:02am 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 thanked Dave and asked for a vote on the minutes from the Committee's last meeting held on March 3, 2023. Jo-Ann Davis moved to approve the minutes and Ché Anderson seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Troy Siebels was absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approves the minutes of the March 3, 2023 Executive Committee Meeting in the form presented to the Executive Committee.

Nina then gave her Chair's report and announced that the Council Meeting scheduled for May 24<sup>th</sup> would be her last and that she would step down after close to seven years as Council Chair and working with the tremendous staff and wonderful Council Members. She is stepping down voluntarily and feels it is time for someone else to step into the role. Nina wanted her fellow Executive Committee Members to be the first to

know her plans. She has sent a resignation letter to Michael and Dave who have shared it with the Governor's office. She said this is a bittersweet moment for her, and that she is pleased that Vice Chair Marc Carroll will serve as Interim Chair while the Governor's appointments office begins the work of appointing a new Chair.

Jo-Ann let Nina know that it has been an honor to have her as a colleague and learn from her. Being on the Council has been one of the best volunteer experiences she has had, and she thanks Nina for her wisdom.

Marc agreed with Jo-Ann and said he was saddened to learn this news and thanked Nina for her leadership and all that she had done for Mass Cultural Council and to promote arts and culture in Massachusetts.

Nina thanked Marc and Jo-Ann for their kind words and work as Vice Chair and Chair of the Grants Committee respectively.

Michael stated that he had worked with many Chairs of governing bodies during his career, and that Nina has been incredible. Michael hopes the whole cultural sector knows how much she has done and how much she has supported Michael and the work of the Agency. Jen added that Nina's tenure included a leadership transition, the pandemic, and other challenges and that her support has meant a lot to Agency staff.

Nina let Committee Members and staff know that she would still be very much involved in the cultural sector and to please invite her to everything the Agency does! She then asked Michael for his Executive Director's report.

Michael let Committee Members know that the fiscal team is working very hard to process more than 6,000 pandemic recovery grant contracts. Planning for FY24 in consideration of the Agency's new strategic plan is in full swing, the Committee will learn more about those plans this summer. Budget advocacy is ongoing, Bethann Steiner will share more about the Agency's progress later in the meeting. In January the Agency will deploy a multi-year plan to enhance access internally and externally for the Deaf and disabled communities. The Racial Equity Plan is ongoing with more work to be done in the coming year. Finally, the Agency will work to develop a Native and Indigenous culture plan to ensure we are being inclusive of the Native community internally and externally.

Nina then asked Dave to present the travel authorization for the Committee to review.

Dave reminded Committee Members of the out-of-state travel policy that requires all such travel to be approved by the Executive Committee. Recently Program Officer Carolyn Cole was presented with the opportunity to attend a global conference on cultural districts to be held in Montreal. The leadership team reviewed Carolyn's request and determined it is a good use of her time as the Agency is seeking to strengthen its own Cultural Districts Initiative in the coming years.

Nina asked Dave to clarify the cost and number of days of the conference and Dave explained the conference is three days long and will cost just under \$1600. Carolyn plans to drive to the conference.

Nina thinks the conference looks like a good opportunity and Marc agreed. Ché added

that he has attended similar conferences and finds them to be incredibly helpful; he thinks looking at the Cultural Districts Initiative on an international level will be positive and help with outside the box thinking; it will help the Agency to be more inclusive and intentional with the program.

There was no further discussion and Nina called for a motion to approve the travel authorization request. Ché moved to approve the request, and Jo-Ann seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Troy Siebels was absent it was unanimously

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

The Committee then moved ahead to the final item on the agenda – approving the agenda for the May 24<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting – as Committee Member Sherry Dong needed to leave the meeting and there was one final vote to be taken.

David explained that the meeting would largely focus on the implementation of the strategic plan and a presentation by Mass Humanities. Nina asked staff to add more information about the Mass Humanities presentation to the agenda but was otherwise in support of the proposed plans. There was no further discussion. Marc moved to approve the agenda and Sherry seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Troy Siebels was absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approve the draft May 24, 2023 Mass Cultural Council Agenda presented to the Executive Committee.

Nina then asked Bethann Steiner for her Advocacy report.

Bethann began by thanking Nina for her leadership. She then let Committee Members know that her report would be brief and very positive. The Agency is two steps through the annual budget process with two steps remaining. In January Governor Healy recommended a \$25 million allocation for Mass Cultural Council in H.1 – this represents an 11% increase to the Agency's line item. This was followed with the House budget which also recommended \$25 million for Mass Cultural Council and included new language reflective of the pillars of the Agency's new strategic plan. The House included 16 local priorities of House Members in the House budget; all are funded legislative earmarks and if they survive staff will work in partnership to steward the funds to recipients. The budget includes \$25 million for the Agency and an additional \$895,000 for earmarks. Mass Cultural Council is very happy with this proposal as it represents a robust investment in the cultural and creatives sector; the largest investment, in fact, since the late 1980s. Bethann is appreciative of all the partners in the House; no amendment was needed. This brings the Agency to the next step: the Senate. The Senate Ways & Means Committee will release their budget on May 10<sup>th</sup>. The chamber will debate for one week after that. Michael and Bethann met with several senate leaders including the Senate President and the Chairs of Ways & Means and Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development along with many other staff members and secured great support for the requested \$25 million. The debate will conclude right before Memorial Day weekend. Thus far the budget advocacy process has been very positive.

Nina thanked Bethann and asked if 16 earmarks was a large number? Bethann

explained that there are 160 House members and all file priorities for their districts. This is a larger number than in years past, but the budget itself is larger. All 16 earmarks are funded, and it's been determined that Mass Cultural Council is the right partner to steward the funds. Many line items host these types of funding priorities. This reflects that House members see these projects as a priority and that it is important to direct support to them.

David added that perhaps the Agency is a victim of its own success. With the budget increasing each year and the Agency expeditiously processing funding priorities in recent years, this might be the catalyst for an increase in earmarks, but these are pass through funds and in some respects represent the cost of doing business.

Bethann reiterated that the important thing is that the earmarks do not have to be funded, the spending could be mandated. Bethann appreciates that House members see Mass Cultural Council as the right partner to manage the funds.

There was no further discussion and the end of the meeting agenda had been reached. Nina, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 10:25am.