

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
GRANTS COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 2022**

**ONLINE MEETING**

**Committee Members Present** were

Jo-Ann Davis, Chair of the Grants Committee  
Nina Fialkow, Council Chair  
Marc Carroll, Vice Council Chair  
Che Anderson (arrived midway through meeting)  
Barbara Schaffer Bacon  
Cecil Barron Jensen  
Karen Barry  
Kathleen Castro  
Karen Hurvitz

**Staff Members and Guests Present** were

Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director  
David Slatery, Deputy Director  
Catherine Cheng-Anderson, People & Culture Director  
Jen Lawless, Operations Director  
Bethann Steiner, Public Affairs Director  
Kelly Bennett, Program Officer for Artist Fellowships  
Dan Blask, Program Officer for Artist Fellowships  
Cheyenne Cohn-Postell, Program Officer for Equity & Inclusion  
Sara Glidden, Cultural Investment Portfolio Program Manager  
Maggie Holtzberg, Program Manager for Folk Arts & Heritage  
Ann Petruccelli Moon, Special Assistant to the Executive Director & Leadership Team  
Carmen Plazas, Communications Manager

Chair Jo-Ann Davis called the meeting to order at 1:02pm 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, 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.

Jo-Ann then asked Committee Members to approve the minutes of their last business meeting held on August 10, 2021. Vice Chair Marc Carroll moved to approve the minutes and Cecil Barron Jensen seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Che Anderson was absent all were in favor, and it was

RESOLVED: that the Grants Committee approves the minutes of the August 10, 2021 Grants Committee Meeting in the form presented to the Grants Committee at its January 13, 2022 Meeting.

Chair Jo-Ann Davis stated that she continues to thank the staff team at Mass Cultural Council for their resiliency and the quality of their work, then asked Executive Director Michael Bobbitt for his report.

Michael explained that he would give a full report at the full Council Meeting scheduled for January 27<sup>th</sup>, but that fall has been busy. Staff is executing grants through the new Grants Management System (GMS) and, though it was challenging, panelists and grantees report that it is an easier system to use. The system has many “bells and whistles” staff will work to integrate in the coming months. The data that will be available as a result will help to improve the granting process. Michael also shared that the Agency would hold a public input session on January 24<sup>th</sup> to gather input from the public on how they feel the Agency should spend its \$60.1M in ARPA funding. Staff will also gather written comments through February 7<sup>th</sup>. This input will be important as ARPA grant programs are built. Michael let Committee Members know they were encouraged to attend and listen and to share the session with their networks. Public Affairs Director Bethann Steiner added that Jo-Ann would co-chair the input session with Michael. And Michael added that he is particularly interested in hearing from historically underfunded communities.

Jo-Ann asked Michael to comment briefly on the progress around the Agency's racial equity plan.

Michael said that staff has itemized action steps within the plan based on fiscal year and at this point are on target with where they planned to be. Much has been accomplished including improvements to Agency job position postings. The Agency's new Director of People & Culture, Catherine Cheng-Anderson (who also heads the new Cultural Equity and Access Team), has looked at this and begun working to improve the ways in which the Agency recruits diverse talent. The team has also hired four BIPOC Outreach Coordinators. Michael said he would share the itemized plan with Committee Members.

Jo-Ann was reminded that there were two new members of the staff in the meeting and paused to welcome them: Catherine Cheng-Anderson who Michael had just mentioned in his report, and Cheyenne Cohn-Postell, the Agency's new Program Officer for Equity & Inclusion. Catherine and Cheyenne briefly introduced themselves.

Jo-Ann moved to the next item on the agenda: Artist Fellowship grant recommendations in choreography, poetry, and traditional arts, and invited Program Officer Dan Blask to give his report. Jo-Ann noted that a memo outlining the grant recommendations was included in the meeting materials.

Dan explained that Artist Fellowships are direct, unrestricted grants given to Massachusetts artists in recognition of their work and to encourage them to continue. The review is based solely on the artistic quality of their work, with the exception of Traditional Arts. Applicants to that program are evaluated on additional criteria relating to their standing within their traditional community. The Artists Fellowship team comprised of Dan along with Kelly Bennett and Maggie Holtzberg, invited panelists to

review work by applicants in the categories of choreography, poetry, and traditional arts. This year and last year, with the support of Executive Director Michael Bobbitt, staff has worked to emphasize and amplify BIPOC voices on those panels. Included in the memo Committee Members received it was noted that there was 70% BIPOC representation on the three panels and staff is very excited about the artists they have recommended the Agency fund. Dan explained that Fellowships are \$15,000 and Finalist awards are \$5,000.

Jo-Ann asked if Committee Members would have the opportunity to see work by the recommended artists recalling this was something that had been done in the past and Dan explained that staff would present a slideshow of works by the recommended artists at the full Council Meeting on January 27<sup>th</sup>.

There being no further questions Jo-Ann asked for a motion to vote to recommend the FY22 Artist Fellowship Program grants in choreography, poetry, and Traditional Arts. Karen Barry moved, and Barbara Schaffer Bacon seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Che Anderson was absent all were in favor, and it was

RESOLVED: To recommend to Mass Cultural Council the FY22 Artist Fellowship grant awards in the disciplines of Poetry, Choreography and Traditional Arts as reviewed by the Grants Committee at its January 13, 2022 meeting.

Jo-Ann moved to the next item on the agenda, Gaming Mitigation Program grants, and asked Cheyenne Cohn-Postell to give an overview to supplement the memo Committee Members had received in their meeting materials.

Cheyenne explained that the Gaming Mitigation Program is a legislatively mandated, formula funded program. The formula factors in the percent of eligible performances open to the public that feature touring artists and the amount of fees paid to those artists. Staff worked to clarify the definition of "touring artist" between the first and second cycle of the program, they also created a template for organizations to use to report performance information and worked to choose a time period for reporting that would be fair to returning applicants in light of the pandemic. During this second round all 39 applicants reported on calendar year 2019, and all were eligible. There were 12 applicants from the first round that did not return. Staff is recommending that \$675K be added to the previously approved \$3M to ensure that the 39 applicants are as close to level funded as possible. These applicants need this funding in order to be competitive with casinos. Gaming Mitigation Fund grants are a minimum of \$2500 and a maximum of \$250K.

Karen Barry thanked Cheyenne for her report and let Committee Members know she'd worked with Cheyenne to conduct outreach to potential new applicants. Cheyenne thanked Karen for her help in reaching new applicants.

Barbara Schaffer Bacon asked if these grants were calculated based on calendar year 2019 – pre-COVID – what does staff anticipate looking at in the future. Her question was sparked by seeing Club Passim/47 Palmer on the funding list.

Cheyenne explained that it was based on feedback from grantees. Operations Director Jen Lawless added that looking ahead staff was imagining they'd only skip one year of

data, but 2021 is not shaping up to be much better. The funds are mandated by the statute to pay touring artists. Whatever the next steps are, staff will have conversations with constituents to make a fair decision and mitigate any negative impacts of these two COVID-impacted years. Once that feedback is gathered, staff will talk with Committee Members about it.

David noted that program is funded from 2% of the commonwealth's casino tax revenues and that casinos have been doing very strong business lately and the Council has been recently receiving \$250K - \$300K per month for this program. Earlier today the Executive Committee recommended adding \$675K to the allocation and that represents nearly all the money we've collected to date. In a year, we should have at least \$3M - \$3.5M for the next round.

Jo-Ann asked if the allocation of the funds is strictly formula funded as she is noticing some odd numbers in the funding list. Jen explained that it is and the formula is based on the amount of money spent on touring artists and the total percent of performances that include touring artists. If an organization relies heavily on touring artists, they will feel more impacted.

Jo-Ann asked if staff knew why 12 organizations chose to not reapply. Cheyenne responded that staff would ask that question as they conduct future surveys. She knows that some organizations are not being encouraged to apply for relief money, one organization tried to submit an application five days late, one organization wasn't aware the application was looking at calendar year 2019 and were worried if they didn't do any business, they didn't have any reason to reapply, some were thinking they were going to get \$1K and felt like the application was too heavy a lift to continue.

Cecil asked if all organizations are non-profits. Jen responded that there is one municipality and occasionally a for-profit manager can apply on behalf of a non-profit. Cecil hopes that Committee Members can help in the future within their communities to encourage organizations to apply as it's disappointing to hear those 12 grantees opted not to reapply.

Cheyenne explained that when staff was planning this second round, they were expecting a few less applicants considering the clarified touring artist definition, but more than 39 were expected and awareness of the program does need to be raised.

Jo-Ann agreed and stated that a refresh on the criteria, boundaries, and qualifications for the program would be helpful. There were no other questions and Jo-Ann asked for a motion to recommend the 39 recipients of Gaming Mitigation Program grants to the full Council. Cecil moved; Kathy Castro seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Che Anderson had joined the meeting, all were in favor, and it was

RESOLVED: To recommend to Mass Cultural Council grants under the Gaming Mitigation Program to the 39 organizations described in the memorandum presented to this meeting.

Jo-Ann stated that the end of the agenda had been reached and asked if there was any further business.

Barbara asked if in addition to managing the \$60.1M in ARPA funding would staff be charged with managing the earmarks contained in the line item which allocated funding the Council.

David explained that Administration & Finance has let the Agency know that (thankfully) the Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development would manage those 119 earmarks.

Cecil let Committee Members know she'd recently met someone who runs a small arts organization on Cape Cod and that person was singing the praises of the new Grants Management System, kudos to all involved.

Michael mentioned that next month Cheyenne will lead a conversation with staff about looking at grantmaking through an equity lens and customer service so that our applicants will have an easier time getting free money.

Jo-Ann remarked that she reads Michael's update to the Council each month and she is impressed with how much he is accomplishing; she commends Michael on being in the field so much during this challenging time.

Jo-Ann thanked Committee Members for their time and, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 1:41pm.