



*Power of culture*

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

**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FORTY-NINTH MEETING  
OF  
MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL**

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 2021**

**ONLINE MEETING**

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order at 2:07 PM

**Council Members Present** were

Nina Fialkow, Chair  
Marc Carroll, Vice Chair  
Barbara Schaffer Bacon  
Cecil Barron Jensen  
Karen Barry  
Kathleen Castro  
Jo-Ann Davis  
Shery Dong  
Sandra Dunn  
Matthew Keator  
Susan Leff  
Victoria Marsh  
Allyce Najjimy  
Troy Siebels

**Also Present** were Mass Cultural Council Staff Members David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Bethann Steiner, Charles Baldwin, Ann Petruccelli Moon, Maggie Holtzberg, and Carmen Plazas; Emily Ruddock of MASSCreative; Michael Arnold Mages, and Nora Long.

Nina opened the meeting by causing the following to be read into the record.

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).

**Prepared on 2/5/21**

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.

Please note that this body has invited staff of Mass Cultural Council to be present at the meeting.

Mass Cultural Council welcomes members of the public to attend its public meetings. Under the Open Meeting Law, however, this 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 first notify the Chair and must not interfere with the meeting. The Chair will then inform the members of the meeting that they are being recorded. This meeting will be recorded by the Council using the Zoom online meeting application

This meeting is a virtual meeting held under the Open Meeting Law as modified by the Governor's recent emergency declaration. Only Committee members, Council members and invited staff will be able to address the meeting. All other persons will be muted. Please note that anyone attempting to disrupt the meeting may be muted, have their ability to project video images shut off or even removed from the meeting, at the discretion of the Chair.

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.

As Chair, Nina welcomed all participants to the 149<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Mass Cultural Council and acknowledged a special guest – Michael J. Bobbitt who was appointed the Agency's Executive Director at the Council's last meeting, and who will begin his tenure on February 1st.

Nina then called for a vote on the minutes from the Council's 148<sup>th</sup> meeting on November 23<sup>rd</sup> and Special Meeting on December 18<sup>th</sup>. Barbara Schaffer Bacon moved to approve the minutes. Troy Siebels seconded the motion. Acting Executive Director David Slatery called the role. Acknowledging that Council Members Jake Brennan, Lillian Do, Karen Hurvitz, and Ann Murphy were not present it was unanimously

**RESOLVED:** To approve the minutes of the One Hundred Forty-Eighth and December 18 Special Meetings of the Mass Cultural Council.

Nina then thanked Agency staff for their work during the pandemic and amidst the social unrest happening in the country. She highlighted the calendar of Council meetings for the coming year included in the meeting materials and then asked Acting Executive Director David Slatery for his report.

David began by acknowledging that it was a difficult day given the insurrection in Washington D.C. the day prior. He then provided Council members with an update on the Cultural Organization Economic Recovery Program. As was discussed at the Council meeting on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, Governor Baker allocated \$10M of the commonwealth's allocation of federal CARES Act funds to cultural organizations and called on Mass Cultural Council to administer a grant program to distribute it. The Agency was to distribute the funds by December 30<sup>th</sup> and was successful in doing so: grants between \$1,000 and \$100K were given to 183 cultural organizations. This represented a super-human effort by staff and David gave special recognition to Jen Lawless, Sara Glidden, and Scott Hufford. The Agency has received a robust positive response to the 183 grant notifications; support has been called transformative. David acknowledged that while it is wonderful to have been able to do this, not getting a grant is crushing to organizations who were not successful and the need continues to be great especially for the about 240 organizations who applied and did not receive a grant. A funding list for the Cultural Organizations Economic Recovery Program is posted on the Agency's website. That concluded David's report.

Nina, acknowledged the tremendous effort made by staff, then asked Public Affairs Director Bethann Steiner for her Advocacy report.

Bethann began by letting Council members know it was a very busy end to the 2020 legislative session. Generally, most things should have happened in July, but were delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic; the most recent session was slated to end at midnight but didn't conclude until 4:31am. A key element staff was looking for was within the Economic Development Bill. We were thrilled over the summer to see \$31M in brand new capital spending authorizations and were hopeful this would be embraced and kept in conference report. It was, and has now been sent to the Governor. Staff has written to Governor Baker urging him to sign this into law. Bethann stressed that this is a bond bill and not a budget bill. Should it get signed into law, meetings would need to be held internally to determine priorities and make a strong case with the administration to release any funding. While this is not an immediate infusion of funds, it is a real vote of confidence that the legislature heard and understood the data Mass Cultural Council has collected and presented. Another piece of legislation on the Governor's desk is one that has been proposed for decades: a special commission to review the Massachusetts state seal and motto. Mass Cultural Council has a seat on the proposed commission; this is a nice extension of the Agency's DEIA work.

Bethann then provided a brief update on changes in the legislature: House Speaker Robert DeLeo had resigned, and Representative Ron Mariano of Quincy had been appointed to replace him; letters had been sent from the Agency to all new legislators. There would now be a bit of a breather in terms of immediate policy work. The first deadline for Representatives and Senators to file bills is January 15<sup>th</sup> and the Governor's H1 budget would be filed on January 27<sup>th</sup>. There are no committees assigned right now, the House Speaker and Senate President will appoint members to committees and there may well be new Chairs and members of the Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development Committee. This is a great opportunity to bring the Agency's new Executive Director into the Committee and begin building relationships. In terms of current relationships, Bethann noted that since her arrival last year the Agency has made direct 1:1 contact with 36 Senators and 66 Representatives; a total of 102 legislative offices. Bethann then invited Emily Ruddock of MassCreative to give a brief update.

Emily thanked Council Members for the opportunity to speak and stated that MassCreative's partnership with Mass Cultural Council is paramount to their work. Emily thanked Bethann Steiner for her partnership as well as Troy Siebels who acts as a Board liaison between MassCreative and Mass Cultural Council. MassCreative is about to launch its policy setting for the year and has identified five realms where the creative community needs support: equal access and participation; the ability of young people to develop into leaders thanks to artistic experiences and a strong, rigorous arts education; communities animated thanks to the arts; the creative workforce – making sure individual artists and creative workers are properly supported and able to live in MA cities and towns; and the arts, health, and wellness. The last time MassCreative made policy recommendations the Board adopted them straightaway. This year MassCreative would like to have more dialogue around its policy agenda and seek feedback from artists, organizations, and communities before the document is finalized. Emily stated that MassCreative would also be looking at what bills are filed in the coming week and decide what to support or object to. She concluded by acknowledging that Covid would be the sixth policy realm of focus, but that the five she'd listed would be the primary focus.

Nina thanked Emily for her report and her partnership.

Victoria Marsh asked for clarification around the bond bill Bethann and Emily had mentioned. Bethann explained that the state budget is one thing, and that is the funding the Council will consider later in today's meeting. The capital budget is not a direct appropriation, but rather a vehicle to authorize a number of different initiatives that is fully administered by the Governor. Dave added that in any given year there are five to 10 times more bond authorizations as there is money to spend and that the bond bill lives for five years, so the Agency has that long to access the funds. Bethann explained that the Cultural Facilities Fund derives its funding from bond bills as well, but this \$31M authorization is new and that further explanation could be found on the Agency's blog.

Nina then asked Communications Manager Carmen Plazas for the Agency's DEIA report.

Carmen stated that Agency staff would participate in one more workshop with our DEIA consultant, Multicultural BRIDGE, and that working groups would soon meet with Gwendolyn VanSant (CEO of BRIDGE) to discuss next steps as, at this point, the racial the internal staff equity and DEIA working groups are on hold. With Gwendolyn the working groups will discuss the all-staff session and seek to discover what their next steps will be. DEIA points were introduced to the guidelines of the Cultural Organization Economic Recovery Program and staff was pleased that 51 organizations given grants have mission statements focused on DEIA work. There are similar preference points in guidelines for Projects grants which Council members will hear about later in the meeting. Finally, staff is looking forward to working with newly appointed Executive Director Michael Bobbitt who will be a partner and a leader in the Agency's DEIA work.

Nina thanked Carmen for her report and then asked David for the financial report.

David stated that this has been a year like no other: a global pandemic, economic collapse, and social unrest. In this transitional year, we are in month seven of the 12-

month fiscal year and are finally bringing forth a proposed fiscal year spending plan. We've had interim leadership during a search for a new leader. We are very happy to have Michael Bobbitt starting as Executive Director next month. Staff continues to work from home. Stability, service, and trusted partnership is the focus of this year's proposed spending plan. The Agency will offer its normal high levels of service tailored to specific current needs. To do this, a new approach has been adopted: Recover, Rebuild, Renew through which the Agency will provide financial support and services to ensure the cultural sector has a "safe harbor" and does not fold; economic investments that are necessary to help organizations and individuals prepare to reopen safely and shift from in-person to remote programs; and an inward look at the sector working to promote access, dismantle systemic racism so when we can reengage with the public we do so starting fresh and anew.

The Agency is adapting to serve the field with modified guidelines across programs to ensure processes are flexible and supportive and to minimize negative impacts of Covid-19 on applicants and grantees. The Agency is also modifying contracting processes to be Covid-19 responsive: emailing contract packages etc.

This year's total budget is \$24,038,741. We rely primarily on the state budget but have other sources of funding. This budget comprises an \$18.1M state appropriation – which represents a 1% increase as it includes no earmarks, an increased grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in the amount of \$959,600, \$3M in Gaming Mitigation Funds, and \$1M in funds from other sources.

David then provided a comparison between the Agency's FY20 and FY21 budgets with and without Gaming funds, and a summary of Legislative language stating that spending must align with the Agency's strategic plan, that 75% of state funding must go to grants, and that a report on planned spending was due by January 15<sup>th</sup>. 89% of state funding will go to grants if the proposed spending plan is approved – this does not include Gaming funds. With Gaming funds 108% of state funding would be awarded in grants.

The next portion of the presentation demonstrated how the proposed budget aligns with the Agency's strategic plan.

**Enriching Communities.** The spending plan seeks to provide communities the resources, training, and tools needed to increase their capacity and effect change. Staff proposes an increase of approximately \$196K for the Local Cultural Council (LCC) program and a 50% increase in funding for the Cultural Districts Initiative (CDI) to support their efforts to recover and rebuild. Cultural Districts depend on people being out and about, since this hasn't been possible, we will try to provide extra resources. Additionally, the plan seeks to help Festivals rebuild and transition to online offerings. The Cultural District designation process will be reimagined and there will be a robust series of online services offered: bi-weekly check-ins, the Communities team is constantly meeting with people. Also, partnerships with Mass Humanities and the New England Foundation for the Arts will be maintained.

**Growing the Economy.** David pointed out that right now a \$10M Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF) round is at play and this year that CFF money is specifically permitted to be used to help organizations recover from the impacts of the

pandemic. The agency will maintain vital reliable operating support via the Cultural Investment Portfolio and proposes an increase in investment in Gateway grants which is the pathway into the Portfolio for new organizations. The plan would also award 75 Artist Fellowship Grants and 35 Finalist Grants to working artists. David noted that artists have been hit especially hard by the pandemic and that a second round of funding was being proposed that would reach at least 433 individuals with \$1500 grants; any money not used by other programs would be reallocated to this relief funding. There is currently \$39K left over from the Cultural Organization Economic Recovery Program and staff proposes that we add that funding to this artists relief program – so a total of 460 artists would benefit.

Safe Harbors work would continue with 39 new technical assistance opportunities (webinars) for organizations around a variety of pertinent topics. These webinars would be free to all, regardless of whether they are a grantee or not. Additionally, cross-agency teams have developed technical assistance opportunities to offer guidance related to COVID safety and best practices for remote programming.

Strategic alliances between the cultural sector, private developers, state agencies, and other MA community and economic development groups would be built to stimulate economic growth and recovery; citing again the Cultural Organization Economic Recovery Program which dispersed \$10M of CARES Act funding.

The Agency's ongoing media partnerships would also be maintained.

**Advancing Inclusion and Equity.** Here the Agency will focus internally as well as externally. Work with our DEIA consultant, Multicultural BRIDGE will continue. A line item has been added to support DEIA initiatives - \$50K, listed as consultants, but does not have to be. Staff will report back after BRIDGE sessions conclude to share what is proposed moving forward. The UP program continues with its Innovation & Learning Network going fully remote this year. As part of the aforementioned cross-agency working groups, workshops focused on trauma and healing arts practices would be offered. An increase in funding for Project grants will help the agency reach organizations that are new to us. Funding for the Network for Arts Administrators of Color (NAAC) would be maintained; David noted that a specific proposal from NAAC had not yet been received. Funding for traditional artists would increase through the agency's Traditional Arts Apprenticeships program – this is partially funded with NEA money – of note, this year the Apprenticeships will move from a one-year program to two-year program.

**Empowering a Creative Generation.** Staff proposes an increased \$20K investment in YouthReach and SerHacer organizations (up from \$19K to \$20K) to help them continue to recover and rebuild. The STARS program would adapt to serve schools working in an ever-changing educational environment. While the funding level will be the same, the application process will change and be open for five days – typically these funds are spoken for within 30 minutes! The application will be open for longer to increase access. It is hard to know what the appetite will be for artist residencies in schools during the pandemic, any

leftover money will be transferred to the artist relief program. Creative Minds Out of School, Poetry Out Loud and the instrument program that supports SerHacer organizations will continue. Additionally, the agency will support the Youth Arts Impact Network to extend Boston-specific resources to organizations outside of Boston and engage new CYD programs ahead of the next grant cycle. The META fellowship program funded by the Klarman Family Foundation will be paused, along with the CYD teaching artist fellowships, Big Yellow School Bus, and the Amplify program. Funding will continue for Mass History Day. To replace Amplify, the agency will pilot the BIPOC CYD Youth Council.

That concluded the general overview, David invited Council Members to ask any questions they had.

Karen Barry was recognized by the Chair and stated that she had three questions. First, she asked for clarification around the 108% and 89% compliance that had been mentioned and whether or not when we look at direct funding can we factor in things like payments to consultants and panelists and other items that appear in lines 8 through 16 of the proposed spending plan. David explained that only things we can properly call a grant can be counted, but that it had been negotiated that the grant money can be provided from any source.

Karen then asked for clarification around the \$38K in CARES Act funds that were retained noting that \$27K would go to making the agency's office space Covid compliant, she wondered if the agency wasn't able to do that under the defined usage of the CARES Act, if there was any ability to take that unused money and put it back into grantmaking.

David explained that this particular CARES money was actually from the NEA and the agency had received it back in the spring – different from the CARES funds that came from the Governor and were dispersed via the Cultural Organization Economic Recovery Program. The cost of making the agency's office Covid compliant is estimated to be \$27K, since it does need to be spent on facilities costs, the agency would put the remaining \$9K towards rent (thus freeing up other resources for grantmaking).

Finally, Karen asked for clarification around line 9: \$15K for a financial consultant.

David explained that this was to upgrade the agency's financial reporting systems. Currently staff works on a spreadsheet and an upgrade is necessary. The team is looking at upgrading to Microsoft Dynamics and the \$15K would be to pay someone to train staff on how to use it. It is important for the agency to improve its financial reporting tool.

There were no further questions from Council Members. Nina stated that the Executive Committee had reviewed the spending plan and recommends its approval, but a vote would not be taken until after the Grants Committee's presentation. Before moving ahead, Nina asked David to review the Conflict of Interest procedure.

David asked Council Members to refer to page 50 of their Board book where any possible conflicts of interest are disclosed and that any member who had so disclosed a conflict with respect to a particular organization or grantee would abstain from any vote or discussion regarding any Mass Cultural Council grant or service to such

organization or grantee. David asked Council members to review the list one more time, and there were no questions or changes to be made.

It was noted that all votes approving the FY21 grant recommendations will note the various possible conflicts and abstentions of the Council Members in attendance at this meeting.

Sandra Dunn disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to Discover Central Massachusetts.

Nina Fialkow disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to Boston Ballet and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

Susan Leff disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to the Boston Children's Museum and Mass Humanities.

Victoria Marsh disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to Company One and WGBH.

Barbara Schaffer Bacon disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to Arts Extension Institute.

Troy Siebels disclosed that he would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to the Hanover Theater/Worcester Center for the Performing Arts, Worcester Cultural Coalition, Discover Central Massachusetts, and Indian Hill Music.

Sherry Dong disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to The Chinese Historical Society of New England.

Kathleen Castro disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to Little Theater of Fall River, New Bedford Festival Theater, and The Fall River Coalition for Arts and Culture.

Marc Carroll disclosed that he would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra and The Rivers School.

Jo-Ann Davis disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to The Care Center.

Cecil Barron Jensen disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to Artists Association of Nantucket, The Nantucket Historical Association, and the Nantucket Cultural District.



Nina then asked Grants Committee Chair Victoria Marsh for her report.

Victoria stated that the Grants Committee met on December 17<sup>th</sup> to review grant recommendations. The Committee determined that the plan meets the current needs of the cultural sector as it positions itself to rebound. Victoria stated that the Committee unanimously voted to recommend to the full Council that we approve the grant recommendations. She explained that she would walk Council members through each section, but trusted they'd already read the book and the detailed report. Victoria explained that she would read the line and grant name, if there were questions, they could be addressed, but there are many grants to vote on and we will work efficiently through them. She further clarified that rather than voting on individual grants, we are voting to approve the plan as a whole, knowing that each grant is within that vote. There were no questions, and Victoria proceeded to walk Council members through each line:

Section 7, Relief Fund for Individual Artists and Cultural Practitioners

Section 8, Traditional Arts Apprenticeships

Section 9, Artist Fellowships

Section 10, the Cultural Investment Portfolio

Section 11, Media Partnerships

Section 12, Local Cultural Councils, Cultural Districts, and Festivals

Section 13, Creative Youth Development

Section 14, Education Programs: STARS, Creative Minds Out Of School, Mass History Day, Poetry Out Loud

Section 15, UP Initiative

Section 16, Mass Humanities Partnership

Section 17, New England Foundation for the Arts

Section 18, Network for Arts Administrators of Color

Section 19, SMU Data Arts Program

That concluded the Grants presentation. David explained that unless there was any objection, all resolutions could now be voted on with one roll call.

Nina as Chair called for a motion to approve the spending plan and grants for FY21. Jo-Ann Davis moved to approve both; Kathy Castro seconded the motion. David called the roll, noting again that Jake Brennan, Lillian Do, Karen Hurvitz, and Ann Murphy were not present. It was unanimously voted by the members present as follows:

WHEREAS, the General Court of the Massachusetts State Legislature has appropriated a budget of \$18,180,000 to the Massachusetts Cultural Council (the "Council") for FY 21 and the Governor duly signed said budget;

WHEREAS, Council staff presented a draft FY21 budget and spending plan (the "Plan") to the Executive Committee at its meeting on December 10, 2020;

WHEREAS, the Executive Committee reviewed said plan and recommended that it be forwarded to the Council for approval;

WHEREAS, Council staff presented the Plan to the Mass Cultural Council at its meeting on January 7, 2021 (the "Council Meeting").

NOW THEREFORE, it is hereby RESOLVED: To approve the Plan as reviewed by the Executive Committee on January 7, 2021 and as presented at the Council Meeting and attached hereto.

and

WHEREAS, Council staff presented the grants portion of the Plan to the Grants Committee at its meeting on December 17, 2020 ("Grants Committee Meeting"), in connection with recommended grant allocations;

WHEREAS, the Grants Committee recommended to the full Council the allocation of the grants presented at the Grants Committee Meeting;

WHEREAS, the Grants Committee reviewed procedures of grant allocations and recommended that the Council approve the same;

NOW, THEREFORE, it is hereby

RESOLVED: To approve funding a new Relief Fund for Individual Artists and Cultural Practitioners in the amount of \$651,000 plus any contributions from any other source plus unexpended amounts from the STARS program and other approved grant programs all in accordance with the memo submitted to the Council and as recommended by the Grants Committee;

RESOLVED: To approve the Traditional Arts Apprenticeships grant recommendation in the total amount of \$100,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee;

RESOLVED: To approve the recommended Artist Fellowship program grant allocations totaling \$652,500 as recommended by the Grants Committee;

RESOLVED: To approve grant allocations to the Cultural Investment Portfolio, CIP Gateway and CIP Projects, for a total of \$6,203,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee;

RESOLVED: To approve allocations to the Media Partnerships program of \$130,000 as recommended by Grants Committee Meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve a grant allocation to the Local Cultural Councils totaling \$4,350,000 up to \$397,500 in Cultural District grants, \$50,000 to the Festivals Program as recommended by the Grants Committee;

RESOLVED: To approve grant allocations to YouthReach and SerHacer and Amplify, continued funding of the Instrument Library in the combined amount of \$1,490,000 plus expenditure or any remaining NEA CARES Act funds as recommended by the Grants Committee;

RESOLVED: To approve the following Education grant allocations, \$1,150,000 to the STARS program (Provided that any unused funds be repurposed to the Relief Fund for individual artists and cultural practitioners as described elsewhere), \$10,000 to the Creative Minds Out of School program, \$5,000 to the Early Education & Childcare Pilot, \$20,000 in support of Massachusetts History Day, \$20,000 in support of the NEA-funded Poetry Out Loud program, as recommended by the Grants Committee;

RESOLVED: To approve the continuation of the UP Program with grants in the amount of \$80,000,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee; RESOLVED: To approve a grant to Mass Humanities totaling \$686,191 as recommended by the Grants Committee;

RESOLVED: To approve a grant to NEFA totaling 60,000 provided that Mass Cultural Council does not provide more than the other New England states provide to NEFA as recommended by the Grants Committee;

RESOLVED: To approve a grant allocation of \$25,000 to ArtsBoston acting as fiscal agent on behalf of the Network Arts Administrators of Color as presented as recommended by the Grants Committee; and

RESOLVED: to approve a grant to SMU Data Arts to provide the Cultural Data Profile tool as recommended by the Grants Committee.

All resolutions were approved unanimously after roll call vote by all members present.

Nina thanked Council members for their time. There being no further business, questions, or discussion, Nina as Chair adjourned the meeting.