



Power of culture

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

**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED-SIXTY THIRD MEETING
OF
MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL**

THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 2024

ONLINE MEETING

Council Members Present were

Marc Carroll, Chair
Jo-Ann Davis, Vice Chair
Ché Anderson
Rhonda Anderson
Emily Bramhall
Simone Early
Iván Espinoza-Madrigal
Donna Haghightat
Cecil Barron Jensen
David S. Kong
Anika Lopes
Diane Asadorian Masters
Allyce Najimy
Ashley Occhino
Ellice Patterson
Mark Snyder
Julie Wake

Also Present were Mass Cultural Council Staff Members Michael J. Bobbitt, David Slatery, Catherine Cheng-Anderson, Jen Lawless, Bethann Steiner, Ann Petruccelli Moon, Carmen Plazas, Christian Kelly, Sara Glidden, Erik Holmgren, Cheyenne Cohn-Postell, and Lisa Simmons; Mass Office of Travel & Tourism Executive Director Kate Fox; and Massachusetts Municipal Association Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine

Chair Marc Carroll called the meeting to order at 10:06am and asked Deputy Executive 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

Prepared on 10/7/24

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 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.

The Chair welcomed Council Members and staff to the meeting, then turned the meeting over to Executive Director Michael Bobbitt who introduced a guest speaker: Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine. The Agency spotlights a pertinent partner or collaborator at each Council Meeting to illuminate its advancement and cross-sector work. Mass Cultural Council recently partnered with the MMA on three events: two webinars focused on the Agency's grants to cities and towns, and a presentation at MMA's annual Mayors' Association gathering about the full scope of the Agency's work. Adam shared a bit about his background and gave a brief talk on the mission and work of the MMA. Michael thanked Adam for speaking to the Council and reiterated the importance of this new relationship.

Marc then asked Council Members if they had reviewed the minutes of the March 21, 2024 Council Meeting & Retreat included in their meeting materials and if they had, he would look for a motion to approve the minutes. Vice Chair Jo-Ann Davis moved to approve the minutes and Ché Anderson seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Petrina Martin and Yvonne Hao were absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the March 21, 2024 Council Meeting and Retreat in the form presented.

Marc gave his Chair's report noting that he would be brief given today's robust agenda. He reviewed the upcoming schedule of Council and Committee Meetings and noted that David Kong had not yet been assigned to a Committee; he and Jo-Ann will discuss a Committee assignment for David soon. He concluded by expressing his gratitude to the Governor and state legislature who funded Mass Cultural Council at a historic level in FY25. He then asked Michael Bobbitt for his Executive Director's report.

Michael shared that August is a very busy month. Staff is working hard to transition into the new fiscal year and begin launching grant programs in September. He encouraged Council Members to read the monthly report shared by Deputy Chief of Staff Ann Petruccelli Moon to stay informed on the Agency's work. Michael, Dave, and Ann would welcome feedback, ideas, and insight from the Council especially relating to advancement work and relationship building. Michael gave a brief update on the Agency's equity work noting that this summer Mass Cultural Council launched its d/Deaf & Disability Equity Plan and its Native American & Indigenous People's Equity Plan. Open Door Arts has launched a free assessment tool for all arts organizations (nationally) – organizations can complete an online form and receive a report indicating what actions they can take to improve their accessibility. Work is also being done to expand the UP Innovation & Learning Network so that it can reach more participants. Senior Director of Program Operations Jen Lawless and her team are working to launch the Tribal Cultural Council program this fiscal year; it's modeled after the Local Cultural Council program.

There were no questions for Michael. The Chair asked Senior Director of Public Affairs Bethann Steiner for her report.

Bethann let Council members know that formal convenings of the legislature ended on July 31st, but the session is not over. Meetings will continue through the calendar year with, most likely, no roll call votes. As Marc mentioned it was a very successful budget season. Bethann thanked Council Members for their advocacy throughout the process. Mass Cultural Council and its partners told the strong story of the cultural and creative sector and is thrilled that the FY25 budget signed into law by the Governor included a record high allocation for Mass Cultural Council of \$26.9 million – breaking down into \$25.895 million for Agency operations with the remainder going to funded legislative earmarks. The Economic Development Bill (Mass Leads Act) unfortunately did not come out of conference committee in time for a roll call vote. The Governor has called on the House and Senate to return for a special session and to take a vote on the bill this fall; leaders on both sides do see this as an option. This is slightly concerning as the bill as drafted includes an additional authorization for the Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF); but CFF has enough funding to cover the FY25 grant round so if it doesn't happen this year, it

can still be done next year with no disruption to the program. Throughout the fall staff will work on developing policy proposals. A new legislative session will begin in January. Bethann met with Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development Chair Mindy Domb recently to update her on Mass Cultural Council's work. Chair Domb shared that support for the cultural sector is strong in the House thanks to the good relationship between the Agency and the legislators across the Commonwealth, the Agency's transparency, and its partnerships. Bethann thanked staff from the Chair's office, who were observing the meeting via livestream, for their support. To conclude, Bethann shared that the Public Affairs team – in anticipation of the Council's vote today – is working hard to prepare the website for the launch of FY25 programs, and to create materials detailing all grant programs. Council Members will hear from Bethann as programs launch; they are encouraged to share grant opportunities with their networks. Staff is also working on a webinar series spotlighting grant opportunities available to the cultural sector through other state agencies.

There were no questions for Bethann; but Michael took a moment to thank Bethann and Public Relations & Events Manager Christian Kelly for the strong media coverage they secured for arts prescriptions and noted that there is more to come.

The Chair then paused and asked if Mass Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTT) Executive Director Kate Fox who had joined the meeting as a guest would like to say a few words. Kate thanked the Chair and shared that she sees Mass Cultural Council as an impressive agency with a great team. MOTT is working hard on the Mass250 grant program - a competitive grant program that will award funds to support programming and interpretation that tell the stories of the American Revolution in Massachusetts and will increase tourism and travel to and within Massachusetts. The application deadline for the program is August 26th. MOTT is also implementing a new tourism campaign called "Made Possible" to showcase Massachusetts as a dynamic travel destination for visitors across the globe and the best place to live, raise a family, and build a business. Council Members can learn more at visitma.com.

Marc moved to the next item on the agenda and asked Michael to introduce the presentation on Mass Cultural Council's FY25 spending plan. Michael – joined by Senior Director of Programs Jen Lawless and Senior Director of Business Operations, Chief Financial Officer, and Chief Human Resources Officer Catherine Cheng-Anderson – presented a slide deck outlining the Agency's spending plan for the new fiscal year. A copy of the presentation is available upon request.

Julie Wake is impressed with the Agency's work to coordinate artwork by Massachusetts artists for display in the Governor's Office; most recently a Cape Cod artist was featured.

There were no further comments or questions for Michael, Jen, or Catherine and Marc asked Dave to review the Conflict-of-Interest procedures for FY25.

Dave explained that under state ethics law Council Members may not take official action pertaining to any organization in which they have a financial interest, employment, or board membership; and, rather than leaving the room for the vote on grant recommendations, their conflicts of interest are disclosed in the minutes, and this indicates that they that take no part in the discussion or the vote on funding for any of those identified organizations. He asked Council Members to review conflicts of interest list in their materials and indicate if there are any updates and several members

updated their disclosures. Iván Espinoza-Madrigal disclosed that he is affiliated with the New England Foundation for the Arts and the Institute of Contemporary Art. Anika disclosed that she is affiliated with the Ancestral Bridges Foundation. Ellice Patterson is affiliated with Abilities Dance. Rhonda Anderson indicated that she is affiliated with Ohketeau Cultural Center, NEFA, and Mass Humanities. The full list of disclosures is included below.

The Chair had brief issues with his Zoom connectivity, so Vice Chair Jo-Ann Davis moved to the next agenda item: the Grants Committee's recommendations on grant proposals for FY25 which were outlined in the prior presentation by Jen Lawless. The Chair then rejoined the meeting.

Grants Committee Co-Chair Cecil Barron Jensen shared that the presentation to the Grants Committee on August 8th was extraordinary, exhibiting impressive breadth and depth and a fresh take on how the Agency distributes its grants across the Commonwealth. The Grants Committee voted unanimously to recommend the grant proposals to the full Council. Grants Committee Co-Chair Julie Wake echoed Cecil's comments and congratulated the staff team for pulling together a strong plan for FY25.

There were no questions for Michael, Jen, or Catherine.

Marc shared that the Executive Committee had also unanimously voted to recommend the FY25 spending plan to the Council for a vote and proposed taking a consolidated vote to approve all parts of the spending plan and grant recommendations – Section 10 in the Meeting Book – unless there were further questions. There were none.

Mark Snyder moved to approve the spending plan and grant recommendations; Diane Asadorian Masters seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Petrina Martin and Secretary Yvonne Hao were absent and

WHEREAS, the General Court of the Massachusetts State Legislature has appropriated, and the Governor has signed into law, a budget of \$26,850,000 to the Mass Cultural Council for FY25;

WHEREAS Mass Cultural Council staff has presented a draft FY25 budget and spending plan to the Executive Committee at its meeting on August 8, 2024 (the "Plan");

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

WHEREAS Council staff presented the Plan to the Mass Cultural Council at its meeting on August 22, 2024 (the "Council Meeting").

NOW THEREFORE, it is hereby

RESOLVED: To approve the Plan as recommended by the Executive Committee and presented to the Council Meeting subject to the further approvals of the individual grant and program recommendations below; and

WHEREAS Council staff presented the FY24 grants recommendations to the Grants Committee at its meeting on August 8, 2024 ("Grants Committee Meeting");

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 a Mass Cultural Council a grant to Mass Humanities totaling \$977, 389 as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve a Mass Cultural Council grant to NEFA of \$70,000, as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve a Mass Cultural Council grant to Mass Creative for \$30,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve a Mass Cultural Council grant to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (or related entity) for \$50,000 for the MITx Arts Entrepreneurship Online Program as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve a grant of \$100,000 to Art Pharmacy for continuation of the Social Prescription program as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To endorse the approach by staff to provide \$7,200,000 in unrestricted operating support grant to cultural organizations under both the Cultural Investment Portfolio program and new Operating Grants for Organizations as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To endorse the approach by staff to provide of the fifth cycle of the Gaming Mitigation Program as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve up to \$870,000 in Cultural District grants as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To make allocations to the Local Cultural Councils totaling \$5,700,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve up to \$103,950 in allocations to Tribal Cultural Councils as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve grant allocations to YouthReach program in the amount of \$1,870,000, as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve Mass Cultural Council grants of \$1,500,000 to the STARS program as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve a grant of \$36,000 to the Youth Arts Impact Network with EdVestors, \$25,000 in support of the NEA-funded Poetry Out Loud program and a grant of \$18,000 in leftover funds provided by the Linde Family Foundation for the now-concluded Creative Youth Development Teaching Artist Fellowship program to Health Resources in Action, all as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To allocate \$2,175,000 for at least 435 grants of \$5,000 as part of Grants for Creative Individuals Program (plus any unused funds from any other approved grant program for additional grants) as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve of the Projects/Festivals grants totaling \$1,850,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve \$480,000 in UP Innovation Fund Grants, as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve a \$50,000 grant to ArtsBoston acting on behalf of the Network Arts Administrators of Color, and a \$100,000 grant to Open Door Arts for the Arts and Culture Accessibility Resource Hub, as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

The following Council Members abstained from voting and/or discussing grants pertaining to the organizations listed under their name:

Marc Carroll

- a. Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra
- b. The Rivers School

Jo-Ann Davis

- a. The Care Center
- b. Springfield Museums
- c. MASSCreative

Cecil Barron Jensen

- a. Artists Association of Nantucket
- b. Egan Maritime Institute

c. Nantucket Cultural District

Che Anderson

- a. Worcester County Mechanics Association (Mechanics Hall)
- b. Worcester Historical Museum
- c. Worcester Art Museum
- d. Institute of Contemporary Art

Donna Haghighat

- a. WAM Theater

Ivan Espinosa-Madrigal

- a. New England Foundation for the Arts
- b. Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA)

Julie Wake

- a. Arts Foundation of Cape Cod

Rhonda Anderson

- a. Ohketeau Cultural Center
- b. New England Foundation for the Arts
- c. Mass Humanities

Ellice Patterson

- a. Abilities Dance

Anika Lopes

- a. Ancestral Bridges Foundation

Marc congratulated all and reiterated that this is the largest operating budget in Agency history. He thanked Jen and the Programs team, Jo-Ann, Cecil, and Julie for their hard work bringing the recommendations to fruition.

Michael thanked Council Members for their support.

Catherine reported on one final item: she explained that under the Mass Cultural Council's Financial Policies, all out-of-state travel must receive pre-approval from the Executive Committee. At the August 8th Executive Committee Meeting, four proposed travel requests were reviewed, determined to directly benefit the Agency and its constituents and align with its strategic plan and newly adopted d/Deaf and Disability Equity Plan, and were approved by the Committee. A Travel Authorization Form is on file for each employee and the total cost of the travel is \$6363.00. Marc added that the Committee agreed all proposed travel represented good use of staff time, and that staff would share their learnings at a future Council Meeting.

Marc asked if Council Member had any final thoughts or questions and Allyce Najimy shared that it was wonderful when Vice President Kamala Harris recently visited Pittsfield and the Colonial Theater was used as a venue for her speech, bringing national attention to the organization and the arts in Western Massachusetts. It would be wonderful if more arts organizations and venues could be used for events such as this. Marc agreed with Allyce and Dave noted that while it's fantastic for cultural

organizations to be used as venues for events that draw national attention and while the Agency could be involved with and promote events involving elected officials who are appearing as part of their official duties, he noted that the Agency would not be able to be involved in any political campaign activities.

There were no further comments or questions. Marc, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 11:30am.