

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2020**

**ONLINE MEETING**

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM

**Committee Members Present** were

Nina Fialkow, Chair, Mass Cultural Council  
Marc Carroll, Vice Chair, Mass Cultural Council  
Jo-Ann Davis  
Sherry Dong  
Victoria Marsh  
Troy Siebels

**Staff Members Present** were

David Slatery, Acting Executive Director & Deputy Director  
Bethann Steiner, Public Affairs Director  
Jen Lawless, Operations Director  
Ann Petruccelli Moon, Public Engagement Manager

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order and, as no guests were present, dispensed with reading the Open Meeting Law into record. She then asked for the Committee to vote on the minutes from its last meeting. Jo-Ann Davis moved to approve the minutes, Troy Siebels seconded the motion. Upon unanimous roll call vote, it was

**RESOLVED:** that the Executive Committee approves the minutes of the June 2, 2020 Executive Committee Meeting in the form presented to the Executive Committee.

Nina then asked Acting Executive Director David Slatery for his report.

**Prepared on 1/4/21**

David stated that since the full Council last met on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, much had happened: The legislature passed a budget with level funding for the agency and sent it to the Governor who will act on it by this Monday. Staff has prepared a draft FY21 spending plan based on the number that was sent to the Governor and will present it today.

The agency is also partnering with the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) on a \$10M grant program that will disperse CARES Act funding to Massachusetts cultural organizations. The grant application closes this upcoming Friday, December 11 at midnight, and there is great interest in it – 320 applications are already in process. Recommendations will be due to EOHED by the following Friday on December 18. The maximum grants for applicants are \$100K. There was language in the call for applications which mentioned extraordinary need of up to \$500K, but any grants exceeding \$100K would only be after discussion with EOHED. Award letters need to be sent out by December 30<sup>th</sup>. It's a lot of work but it will be nice to make people happy at the end of the year.

Nina asked David how it would be ensured that there was fair and equitable geographic distribution of the funds. David responded that geographic distribution was not one of the specific parameters set forth in funding criteria. Jen Lawless explained that geography is indirectly considered because some funds must go to Gateway cities, rural/underserved communities, and to Cultural Districts, so while there isn't geographic distribution specifically listed, it is baked into the program guidelines.

David continued with his report: 19 new state legislators were elected in November, and Bethann has sent introductory letters to all of them. We have heard back from several of them and will continue to stay engaged.

We were saddened by the tragic fire at Jacob's Pillow in November and will be speaking with Director Pam Tatge tomorrow about how we might support their recovery.

David then moved on to present the draft FY21 spending plan proposal in the form of a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee (copy available upon request). Background information on the plan was sent to Committee members in advance. This will be a key element of next week's Grants Committee meeting.

David began, FY21 is a year like no other. The pandemic, economic struggles, racial equity issues have put us in very different circumstances. The focus for the year will be Recover, Rebuild, Renew.

Recover: financial support and services that we can provide the cultural sector to ensure they have a "safe harbor" and do not fold.

Rebuild: economic investments are necessary to help organizations and individuals prepare to reopen safely – capital investments, training, shifting from in-person to remote programming.

Renew: looking forward at the sector and working to promote access, dismantle systemic racism, so that when we can reengage with the public we do so starting fresh and anew.

That is the framework. The way we will accomplish this is: a \$650K investment in a second round of relief funding for individuals – more than doubling our investment in artists; a 50% increase in funding for Cultural Districts to help them rebuild; a modest increase in funding for Local Cultural Councils (\$4.15M to \$4.35M); and we've added a line item of \$50K for DEIA initiatives coming out of our all-staff sessions and public forums, and continuing funding for the Network for Arts Administrators of Color.

Jo-Ann Davis asked if this presentation is one that the team would eventually make to the full Council. David explained that this is a first look, a draft, that is approaching final. This presentation sets forth the large themes the year will address. Next week's Grants Committee meeting will focus more specifically on grant programs and allotments. Then for the full Council meeting on January 7<sup>th</sup> the team will have input from you (Executive Committee) and the Grants Committee. Jen Lawless added that this presentation today is highlighting things that are new and different for the coming year.

David then continued with the presentation highlighting more elements of the plan including an increase in funding for Projects grants to increase the ability of the program to reach organizations that are new to us and to increase focus on promoting DEIA work; an increased investment in Gateway grants to ensure pathways for more organizations to Portfolio funding; a pause for Big Yellow School Bus and Amplify programs; increased investment in YouthReach and SerHacer organizations. David further clarified that YouthReach grantees are currently in their third year of funding, due to the pandemic and the difficulties resulting from it, funding will be extended into a fourth year and a new round will be implemented next year instead. Nina asked if staff thought there would be concern about the YouthReach decision. Jen Lawless responded that the intent is to invest in services that will help new/future YouthReach applicants apply, things will keep moving in that regard.

David continued: the agency proposes adapting the STARS program by extending the window for applications and adapting so as to serve schools in the ever-changing educational environment. David noted that all STARS money not used will go to the individual artists fund which also funds teaching artists. Nina asked if since most STARS-funded programs would be remote, might they be shareable. Jen Lawless stated that since residencies are in schools where strict privacy policies exist, programs would not likely be shared externally.

Continuing with the presentation David noted that the UP Innovation & Learning Network would this year be fully remote. Also, there would be a proposed increased investment in traditional artists as part of the agency's commitment to promoting DEIA. In prior years, grants for traditional artists totaled \$50K to \$70K, and in FY21 the team proposes increasing that to \$100K with \$30K coming from the National Endowment for the Arts. Traditional Arts apprenticeships comprise one of the agency's most diverse programs, and the team wants to prioritize them. David continued, there was thought given to pausing the Festivals grant program, but staff advised that festivals are still delivering work virtually and/or working to determine how to rebuild. As such, \$50K will be put into that program this year – this represents a 50% reduction in typical funding for Festivals.

David then moved on to talk about a proposed agency-wide service agenda addressing programmatic needs as well as cross-agency topics including: COVID-19 safety, remote delivery of programs, responding to trauma/healing arts, and promoting

racial equity and DEIA work. It is also proposed that guidelines across programs be modified to ensure processes are flexible and supportive to minimize negative impacts of the pandemic on applicants and grantees. The agency will also modify contracting processes to be COVID-19 responsive – packages will be emailed since many are not in their buildings and may not have access to a printer; customer service barriers being addressed. Jo-Ann Davis expressed her happiness with the plan to be more responsive and accessible and feels it is very much in-line with what the field needs.

David then provided an outline of the budget explaining that it was fortuitous that the agency unlocked Gaming mitigation funds right before January, as it enabled us to meet some immediate needs of the filed at the beginning of the pandemic in March. Overall, we have a little more than \$24M assuming we get \$18.1 from state, NEA funds increased to \$959K, and \$3.88M of Gaming funds, and another \$1M from other sources.

Dave then summarized what funds would be dispersed to the field in FY21: \$19,621,072 including Gaming Mitigation funds, and \$16,794,213 without Gaming funds. David also provided a summary of the legislative language which requires the agency to align spending with its strategic plan, invest 75% of state funding in grants, and report on spending by January 15<sup>th</sup>. Jo-Ann asked who the spending report would be submitted to. Bethann Steiner responded that it would go to the clerks of the House and Senate and appear in both journals. David explained that the Gaming funds make it easy for the agency to meet the 75% rule. Counting Gaming funds, we have provided grants equal to 108% of our state appropriation and without it we have 89%. A large portion of our budget from the legislature is going to grants, it is not going to overhead, salary or services. It is going to grants.

The spending plan overview having concluded, David referred then to the budget memo Committee members received outlining the proposed spending plan in detail. Having already explained the major changes to the plan, David highlighted some uncommitted Gaming funds (\$1.3M) that are not part of the memo, and also noted that salary numbers are down since the agency has three open positions: Executive Director being one of them. Jo-Ann asked what the other two positions are. One of them is Events support, Angelina Lupini took a voluntary layoff early on in the pandemic. Also, the agency's longtime Fiscal Officer, Michael Nagle retired. Elsie Sanon was promoted into his position, Carina Ruiz-Esparza formerly of the Creative Youth Development team was promoted into Elsie's position, leaving a vacancy in the CYD area.

David was happy to answer any questions about the memo, the Committee decided to review the memo line-by-line and David walked the Committee members through it.

After reviewing the memo line-by-line there was a brief discussion about the agency's office space lease, a fixed cost. David explained that currently, only one or two members of the staff are going into the space due to the pandemic, and the agency is in year 5 of a 10-year lease. The team has a vendor, Creative Office Pavilion, lined up to make the space Covid-compliant for approximately \$27K. The agency retained about \$30K in NEA CARES funds for administrative facilities costs and will use it for COVID-related expenses of outfitting the office.

Nina asked if there are parameters around where the agency's physical offices can be located. She asks this in light of the fact that there have been inquiries regarding the office space cost. David explained that the agency has a lease through January 2026,

and in 2024 could explore whether or not the offices should relocate. The current location works well because of its proximity to public transportation, the staff's homes, the State House, and various cultural organizations. Jen added that every state agency has to follow a DCAM process and that it's not entirely up to the agency to negotiate leases. Nina asks staff to prepare to answer questions about the cost of the office and to have the facts available to present.

Dave highlighted for the Committee that the agency proposed putting money into upgrading its financial systems so that reporting can be more up-to-date and no longer relegated to an Excel spreadsheet.

Jo-Ann noted an increase in the consulting line and asked for clarification. David explained that these are program services, and none are overhead. Gwendolyn Van Sant of Multicultural BRIDGE is in line 8 as she is part of the agency's racial equity work. The consulting line is for Safe Harbors for services to field, and also includes some money ArtsBoston's work on the Festivals Lab as well as site advisors for the Cultural Districts Initiative. The CYD team has \$40K set aside for services. As the Amplify program is paused, they would like to create an advisory council of CYD alumni, BIPOC alumni, and work with consultant Julia Gittelman on onboarding new applicants to the YouthReach program.

Nina suggested that a note be added to the memo to highlight areas where funding had increased or changed and David briefly summarized those changes: CDI funding increased to \$7500, Artist Fellowships were restored to \$652K, CIP has eight organizations moving from Gateway to the Portfolio and increased funding on Gateway and Projects. Media partnerships stayed the same. LCC funding increased to meet local pandemic needs, Festivals funding was cut in half, Cultural Data Project money stayed the same. The NEA increased funding to \$20K for Poetry Out Loud – this is all federal money. Traditional Arts Apprenticeships will be two years long instead of a single year. Big Yellow School Bus has been paused and STARS has been level funded with any unused funds slated to go to artists. The agency would not receive funding from the Klarman Family Foundation this year and is in discussion with them about what to do with unused funds from the previous year – as META was paused. The UP initiative is level funded – the Innovation & Learning network would be offered this year (virtually) – the ILN alternates with the UP Awards which were last year. The Cultural Compact grant program is paused, and staff needs to figure out how to expand it so it benefits more communities. David highlighted line 37 of the memo - \$651K for individual artists – and said the goal is to get those funds out the door as soon as possible, shortly after the January meeting; David reiterated that unused funds from other programs would move to this line so they could benefit individuals.

David then clarified an error from last fiscal year: staff was oversubscribed last spring and somehow missed \$17K in STARS payments. Fortunately, we have money in our trust accounts and were able to remit the payments out of those reserve funds. David also noted a 1% increase to MassHumanities' allocation – due to the 1% increase for the agency's allocation.

Nina, thanked Dave for the presentation and asked him to incorporate the Committee's feedback. David let the Committee know that staff has a resolution to be put forward for a vote to recommend that the proposed spending plan move on to the next step in the process. Troy Siebels moved to put the proposed spending plan forward, Nina

seconded the motion. Upon roll call vote and noting that that Sherry Dong had left the meeting and was not present to vote, it was

**RESOLVED:** that the Executive Committee recommends that the Council approve for recommendation to the Grants Committee and full Council the FY 21 Budget and Spending Plan presented to the Executive Committee.

David then noted the draft agency the Committee had received for the full Council meeting scheduled for January 7<sup>th</sup> and asked if there was any comment of feedback and if Nina would like MASSCreative to make a presentation. Nina indicated that she would like them to do so. David noted that a conflict-of-interest list would be sent to the Council next week, as well. Vice Chair Marc Carroll asked for clarification as to whether MASSCreative would present. David confirmed that MASSCreative will present.

Jo-Ann Davis inquired as to how many CDI renewals there would be. David clarified that CDI renewals would be coming off the agenda, and would be part of the March or May Council meetings. There will be no CDI renewals in January.

Nina asked for clarification around voting at Council meetings remotely. David explained that the Governor changed the rules around meeting votes at the beginning of the pandemic, it is unclear if that will change for good, or just temporarily.

David thanked the Committee for their feedback. Nina as Chair adjourned the meeting. at 3:24pm.