

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2024**

**ONLINE MEETING**

**Committee Members Present**

Marc Carroll, Acting Chair  
Ché Anderson  
Jo-Ann Davis  
Troy Siebels

**Staff Members Present**

Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director  
David Slatery, Deputy Executive Director  
Jen Lawless, Senior Director of Operations  
Bethann Steiner, Senior Director of Public Affairs  
Ann Petruccelli Moon, Manager of Executive Affairs  
Carmen Plazas, Communications & Community Engagement Manager

Acting Chair Marc Carroll called the meeting to order at 10:02am 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 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.

Marc then asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the October 12<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee Meeting. Jo-Ann Davis moved to approve the minutes; Troy Siebels seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Sherry Dong was absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approves the minutes of the October 12, 2023 Executive Committee Meeting in the form presented to the Executive Committee

Marc then moved onto his Chair's report. He noted that there have been many changes since the Committee's last meeting in October. He has been appointed Chair and Jo-Ann has been appointed Vice Chair by the Governor. There have also been several new appointments made to the Council, and last week orientation sessions were held for seven new Council Members. There will be several new faces at the full Council

Meeting on January 25<sup>th</sup>. There will also be changes made to the makeup of Council Committees. Marc, Jo-Ann, and Michael will meet with all new appointees to help determine which committees they will be assigned to; he is aiming to make these assignments by the Council Retreat on March 21<sup>st</sup>. Marc concluded by acknowledging and thanking former Council Members Barbara Schaffer Bacon, Matthew Keator, and Karen Barry whose appointments had recently ended. He then asked Michael for his Executive Director's report.

Michael mentioned that in addition to orientation sessions and introductory meetings, all new appointees will be assigned a Board Buddy – a member of the Council who has served for one year or longer who can be a resource for new members as they get up to speed on the Agency and their role as a Council Member. He then reminded Council Members of the monthly reports written by Ann Petruccelli Moon that include updates on the work of the Executive team. Advancement continues to be a major focus of the team's work. Michael and David are working hard to build relationships within other sectors and agencies. Mass Cultural Council's relationship with the Mass Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTT) has been reinvigorated in recent weeks; the two agencies will present together at the North of Boston Tourism Summit. Michael will present at an upcoming Mass Marketing Partnership meeting, as well. The Creative Youth Development team is also focused on advancement work particularly as it pertains to Arts on Prescription. At the January 25<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting, Chris Appleton from Art Pharmacy will give a presentation on that work. Michael has had very positive meetings with the Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler and staff from the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education. The Communities team is working to strengthen the Agency's relationship with the Mass Municipal Association. Yesterday, the first meeting of the Tribal Task Force took place. The Agency is working to build a Tribal Cultural Council program, similar to the Local Cultural Council program. All grant programs for FY24 have opened and all have closed except for the Gaming Mitigation program which will close on February 1<sup>st</sup>. Festivals & Projects and the new organizational support program (to be named) will open in March – those grants will be fulfilled with FY25 funds. Jen Lawless is leading our new cultural mapping work and we have hired a consultant, Diversity North, to consult with us on the work. We know this work will help with advocacy efforts and help us to build better grant programs.

Marc thanked Michael and asked Senior Director of Public Affairs Bethann Steiner for her legislative update.

Bethann explained that this is the second year of the legislative session. As such, those on Beacon Hill will have a good deal of work to do in the formal session that runs through July 31<sup>st</sup> at midnight. The state budget process is beginning very soon. The Governor will deliver the State of the Commonwealth address next week. On January 24<sup>th</sup> she will release her H.2 budget proposal. This current year Mass Cultural Council is funded at \$25 million. The Agency reached out to the Governor before the December holidays with a request for \$28 million in FY25 – this number was reached based on the unmet need the Agency saw reflected in application data. The staff is also working to support MassCreative's Advocacy Week events. The centerpiece of the week will be a large gathering at the State House on January 24<sup>th</sup>. Hundreds are expected to attend and advocate for the creative sector. Council Members are encouraged to register for the event, if they cannot attend Bethann is happy to work with them to craft a message to their legislators in support of the day's activities and the sector at large.

Marc moved to the next item on the agenda: the updated travel policy. Dave explained that the updated policy is included in the meeting materials sent to the Committee last week. Staff is asking the Committee to vote to recommend the updated policy so it can be brought to the full Council at their meeting on January 25<sup>th</sup>. The policy includes everything that was discussed during the last meeting, but Dave was happy to answer any questions from the Committee. There were no questions, so Marc asked for a motion to recommend the policy. Jo-Ann moved to recommend the policy to the full Council for their approval; Ché seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Sherry Dong was absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: to adopt and recommend to the full Council the written Out of State Travel Approval Policy as presented.

Marc moved to the next item on the agenda. Michael Bobbitt is seeking approval to travel to Washington, D.C. on January 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> for his participation in a convening hosted by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the White House Domestic Policy Council entitled Healing, Bridging, Thriving: A Summit on Arts and Culture in our Communities. This summit, the first of its kind, will gather leaders from different sectors, including government officials, artists, academics, and community leaders. The focus is on discussing how to better integrate and elevate the arts and humanities across the country. Michael will also attend a pre-summit caucus organized by Communities First, which will focus on equitable planning, policymaking, and systems change through creative and artistic collaborations. His participation will directly benefit his role at Mass Cultural Council and aligns with the Agency's strategic goals of fostering an inclusive cultural and creative sector and promoting it throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As the top cultural public official in the state, Michael's presence at the summit is crucial for sharing the progress and initiatives of the Commonwealth's creative and cultural sector with national leaders. The cost to the Agency is \$635 and Michael will share what he learns at the Summit when he returns.

Marc asked what the \$635 would cover. Michael explained that this would cover his travel, lodging, parking, and meals for two days. Jo-Ann asked if this summit was similar to the conference Jen Lawless attended in the fall. Jen explained that the conference she attended was presented by Communities First and discussed federal funds and who in the states was the point person for those funds. Michael added that in the Agency's strategic plan it is proposed that resources be put towards having someone scan federal funds to see where they might benefit the creative and cultural sector. His attendance at this summit will be a strong introduction to this work.

Ché expressed that he is excited to see that Mass Cultural Council is at the table for this important conversation happening at the federal level.

There were no further questions or discussion and Marc said he would look for a motion to approve the travel request. Ché moved to approve the request, Troy seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Sherry Dong was absent it was

RESOLVED: to approve the staff-recommended out-of-state travel request as presented to the Meeting.

Michael added that Jen Lawless is leading several major projects that are yielding great results; her team has been productive, proactive, and is always asking the right

questions. Jen said that it has been exciting to work with the new Tribal Task Force, she and the rest of the staff have learned a lot and are deeply grateful to have Erin Genia as a partner in the work. The Communities team is working hard, and it appears it may be possible to establish the Tribal Cultural Council within the Agency's ambitious timeline. The cultural mapping project is ramping up and Jen is thrilled to have Deborah Kenyon co-leading the work. Michael added that the Agency has secured several great partners who have provided funding for the mapping project; a list of those partners will be provided to the Council soon.

Jo-Ann is pleased with how staff has worked to analyze its grantmaking efforts and thanked Jen and her team for their hard work. Michael added that Jen, joined by Deborah, Colin Baylor, and Evelyn Nellum also led the consolidation and creation of the Grants Management System (GMS) and it has been exciting to see how everyone in the Agency is using it in their work.

Marc thanked Jen and moved to the final item on the agenda: approval of the January 25<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting agenda. The Committee reviewed the agenda and there were no questions or discussions. Troy moved to approve the agenda; Jo-Ann seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Sherry Dong was absent it was

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approve the draft January 25, 2024 Mass Cultural Council Agenda presented to the Executive Committee.

Jo-Ann asked if the subject of the March Council Retreat had been determined. Michael would like to use the retreat as a jumping off point to talk about the budget process, review the strategic plan, and connect in person generally.

Jo-Ann asked if all the pandemic relief funds had been distributed. Jen explained that there are 30 individuals who will receive a final notice about their grant, if they do not respond their grants will be canceled. Staff will then go down the list of applicants and give grants to those who did not receive a grant during the initial round.

There were no further questions, and the Chair adjourned the meeting at 10:39am.