

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 2024

ONLINE MEETING

Committee Members Present were

Marc Carroll, Chair
Jo-Ann Davis, Vice Chair
Ché Anderson
Cecil Barron Jensen
Julie Wake

Staff Members Present were

Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director
David Slatery, Deputy Executive Director
Catherine Cheng-Anderson, Senior Director of Business Operations & Chief Financial Officer
Jen Lawless, Senior Director of Program Operations
Ann Petruccelli Moon, Deputy Chief of Staff
Carmen Plazas, Communications & Community Engagement Manager
Dawn Heinen, Digital Communications Manager

Chair Marc Carroll called the meeting to order at 10:03am 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 if Committee Members had reviewed the minutes of their last meeting held on June 12, 2024 and if so, he would look for a motion to approve them. Vice Chair Jo-Ann Davis moved to approve the minutes; Ché Anderson seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Iván Espinoza-Madrigal was absent all were in favor, and it was

RESOLVED: that the Committee approves the minutes of the June 12, 2024 Executive Committee Meeting in the form presented today.

Chair's Report

Marc began by thanking the Governor and legislature for approving the largest operating budget allocation in Mass Cultural Council's history and expressed his appreciation to all who had advocated for the Agency over the course of the budget process. The funds will be put to good use across the Commonwealth in the coming year. He then let Committee Members know that a meeting schedule for FY25 was included in their meeting materials; the next Council Meeting is August 22nd.

Executive Director's Report

Marc asked Michael to give the Executive Director report. Michael reported the following-Staff is preparing for the new fiscal year; the Programs team is rewriting guidelines and determining program open/close dates, Public Affairs is preparing new materials and updating MassCulturalCouncil.org, and Business Operations is preparing for the FY25 rollout. Advancement work is starting to pick up steam; other state agencies are beginning to approach Mass Cultural Council about including the arts in their work. In recent weeks the Agency has collaborated with the Mass Municipal Association on three events – two webinars, and a hearty presentation at the Mayors' Association gathering in Newburyport – it was wonderful to be in the room with so many mayors and to discuss how they can incorporate the arts into their cities. We've launched a series of webinars called the Spotlight Series which will showcase other state agencies. We began with the Mass Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) and an overview of their MA250 grant program which will support activities around the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. We are continuing to connect with other pertinent groups: the Mass Lodging Association, Commissioner Brian Arrigo of the Dept. of Conservation & Recreation, staff representing a federal Homeland Security program on violence prevention, and Michael has been appointed to the state's Inter-Agency Early Education and Childcare Task Force. The d/Deaf & Disability Equity Plan has launched, and four staff members attended the LEAD conference in Seattle who is focused on accessibility in the arts. The Agency is beginning to roll out the Tribal Cultural Council Program. Deputy Chief of Staff Ann Petruccelli Moon sends an update each month that includes a list of recent and upcoming meetings and engagements.

Legislative Update

Senior Director of Public Affairs Bethann Steiner was unable to attend the meeting due to a personal matter; Digital Communications Manager Dawn Heinen stepped in to deliver the report on her behalf.

- Formal legislative sessions for 2023-2024 ended on July 31. The Legislature will continue to meet twice weekly through the end of the calendar year, but, unless a special formal session is called by Leadership, no roll call votes can be taken. In the last days of session, Mass Cultural Council was watching and active in advocacy on two matters: the FY25 state budget and the Mass Leads Act, also known as the economic development bond bill.
- I am thrilled to report that Mass Cultural Council fared very well in the [FY25 state budget](#). Our \$26,850,000 appropriation breaks down to \$25,895,000 for operations and \$955,000 for 20 legislative earmarks. We believe that the Agency has never received a higher operating budget than this year. Mass Cultural Council is very appreciative of the support we saw throughout the entire budget process, from when the Governor filed her budget in January, to the joint legislative committee hearing in March, the House debate in April, the Senate

debate in May, and from the Conference Committee in July. We also would be remiss if we did not publicly thank our advocacy partners MASSCreative and Mass Humanities for joining us in advocating for this robust funding for arts and culture in the budget.

- Unfortunately, the other matter, the [economic development bond bill \(also referred to as the Mass Leads Act\)](#), was not resolved by the Conference Committee before formal sessions concluded at the end of July. Mass Cultural Council had actively engaged with various Committees charged with reviewing this major investment bill as the Cultural Facilities Fund was set to be recapitalized with \$50 million and also contained some other policies and language helpful to the creative and cultural sector. In early August the Governor issued a statement urging the House and Senate to complete its work on this major bill and, if necessary, come back for a special legislative session to take the necessary votes to enact the bond bill. The Speaker of the House and the Senate President both responded with statements that this could happen. Mass Cultural Council will continue to monitor the process and urge the Conferees to retain the items of interest to the Agency in the final bill.
- Next up, during the fall and early winter months, Mass Cultural Council will work on developing policy internally and with external stakeholders that may be filed as legislation in the upcoming 2025-2026 session.
- If you have any questions or policy ideas, I know Bethann would be happy to hear from you, please reach out to her via email and she will respond next week.
- On behalf of the Public Affairs team, I also wanted to highlight that we are working hard with our program team colleagues to prepare to launch the FY25 programs on the website, publish program guidelines, and support the virtual info sessions and office hours. After the spending plan is approved, you'll see our FY25 Programs At A Glance materials publish on the website, on social media, and in hard copy, describing our funding opportunities for the sector. And we'll work hard to market each of these programs as they are available throughout the fall, winter and spring.

There were no questions for Dawn; Cecil congratulated the Public Affairs team and asked Dawn to pass along the Committee's thanks to Bethan and the rest of the team.

Business Operations Update

Spending Plan

Senior Director of Business Operations and Chief Financial Officer Catherine Cheng-Anderson guided the Committee through an overview of the budget outline for the upcoming fiscal year, concentrating on fund allocation to support programming, advancement work, and initiatives. Following her presentation, Michael provided an overview of expanded work in advancement and equity for FY25.

Catherine explained the meeting materials sent a week ago included the proposed budget and program allocation spending plan for FY25, along with a preview of the grants committee slides to be presented in the afternoon. She explained that following the Executive Committee meeting, the FY25 grant recommendations for Mass Cultural Council programs, based on this plan, would be presented to the Grants Committee.

Once approved, the plan and recommendations would be voted on by the full Council on August 22, 2024.

Key budget highlights included a \$26.85 million state budget allocated for agency operations, representing a 3.62% increase from the previous year. As noted earlier, this amount comprises \$25,895,000 for operations and \$955,000 for 20 legislative earmarks, giving Mass Cultural Council the highest operating budget in its history.

She explained the total funding for FY25 is projected to be \$33.97 million, considering all funding sources. The plan allocates 81% (\$27.61 million) to grants, keeping administration and program-related expenses modest at 19%. When focusing solely on the state funding allocation of \$26.85 million, a similar distribution is observed: 79% (\$21.38 million) to grants and 21% to administrative and program-related expenses. In both cases, the legislative mandate to allocate at least 75% of state funding to grant programs is exceeded.

Catherine noted the plan proposes to dedicate approximately \$5.37 million from the casino tax revenue available through the Massachusetts Gaming Fund for the upcoming year of the Gaming Mitigation Grant Program. This includes approval to utilize the \$2,376,010 available as of June 30, 2024, and to allocate an additional \$2,996,945 expected to be accrued by December 31, 2024, for organizational support to cultural organizations and other administrative expenses.

Next, Michael highlighted several key FY25 advancement investments. These include developing a comprehensive advancement plan to enhance and expand strategic partnerships, recruiting a dedicated advancement team to execute this plan, and hiring a consultant to secure new funding opportunities. The plan aims to generate resources for research, advocacy, and infrastructure, supporting the cultural sector's growth. Additionally, the development of an MITx training program will cover essential business topics through an arts lens with curriculum based on the Sloan School of Management pedagogy.

Chair Marc Carroll asked Michael to say more about the MITx program, explain what his hope is for the cultural sector if they take the course, and describe how the program will be marketed. Michael explained that currently individuals often graduate with an art degree without having taken any business classes and this state of affairs helps to reinforce the notion of the "starving artist." This program aims to address that issue by giving individuals who otherwise have not had formal business training the opportunity to take classes focused on entrepreneurship and financial sustainability. The course will be free, asynchronous, self-paced, and virtual, which will make it more accessible, and as Catherine mentioned, the material will be based on the Sloan School of Management pedagogy. Mass Cultural Council will promote the opportunity through its usual channels and ask partner organizations to share the opportunity as well. The hope is that MIT will work with Mass Cultural Council, other state agencies, and cultural organizations in the fall to develop the content; to begin filming and creating the content in the winter; and launch in the spring.

Julie Wake asked how success will be measured noting that online learning is not for everyone, so might there be some sort of impact report besides the numbers of individuals who took the course. Michael is hopeful there will be some sort of rubric to assess learning and participation and will ask MIT how they typically measure the

success of MITx programming and how they might measure the success of this new initiative specifically.

Simone Early asked if it will be known how many Massachusetts residents participated in the program and noted that while the program is free, obtaining an actual certificate has a cost associated with it and might the Agency consider offering grants to cover that cost. Michael explained that the MITx platform is open to all (internationally) so the MIT team will need to be asked to track the numbers of residents from Massachusetts specifically. He added that the certificate is expected to cost somewhere between \$25-50 and hopes artists will be able to afford this; regardless, they will be able to add MITx to their resumes.

Julie asked if they'd also track what types of artists enroll in the course – musicians, visual artists, etc. Michael will inquire about adding a field to the registration form that could capture artist mediums. Julie added that she is happy to learn the course will also be open to arts leaders, especially those running smaller organizations.

Vice Chair Jo-Ann Davis congratulated Michael and the staff on the new partnership with MITx and all the partnerships that are part of the Agency's advancement work. She is eager to hear more.

Julie asked how many regions within the Commonwealth are home to organizations participating in arts prescriptions; she would love to see her region participate in the program and is curious what the Agency is thinking of in terms of a timeline.

Michael explained that arts prescriptions and the work with Art Pharmacy is in its infancy, and he envisions a 20-year ramp-up until it becomes a fully normalized feature of the healthcare environment. There are 400 organizations signed on at this point and one major healthcare partner in Mass General Brigham. Michael likened the concept of arts prescriptions to seatbelts: they became optional in cars in the 1950s, but it wasn't several decades until they were mandatory and understood as a vital safety tool.

Ché Anderson commented that many innovations like seatbelts took a long time to catch on because they came about before social media whereas today, there is a strong interest in innovation and there are more channels of communication. We might see the opportunity grow faster than we expect.

Cecil Barron Jensen added that the program Fresh Connect which prescribes healthy food, runs through Mass General Brigham; perhaps a connection can be made between arts prescriptions and Fresh Connect. Simone suggested the book *Your Brain on Art* which discusses the ways in which exposure to and participation in art can bring about positive changes in people might be something Art Pharmacy could give to potential recruits. Julie mentioned a program with the National Park Service that promoted walking for a healthy heart.

Then Catherine provided the group with a summary of investments in equity, such as scaling up the access and disability learning hub, implementing the d/Deaf & Disability Equity Plan, launching the Tribal Cultural Council program, and implementing the Native American & Indigenous Peoples Equity Plan. Resources will be dedicated to assisting individual grantees, especially those with disabilities and limited income, in obtaining grant funding and services.

Travel

Catherine explained that under the Mass Cultural Council's Financial Policies, all out-of-state travel must receive pre-approval from the Executive Committee. The proposed travel requests have been reviewed and determined to directly benefit the Agency and its constituents, align with our strategic plan and equity plans, and have expenses justified by the value of the travel. A Travel Authorization Form is on file for each employee.

It was proposed that Michael and Program Officer for Folk Arts & Heritage Summer Confuorto attend the NASAA Assembly 2024, scheduled for October 23-26 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The bi-annual conference will position Mass Cultural Council as a leader in sessions on creative economic development, cross-sector partnerships, emergency management, and strategies for underserved constituencies. Michael will lead a session at the conference alongside Art Pharmacy Executive Director Chris Appleton focused on arts-based social prescription. Michael and Summer will also engage with federal partners, enhancing collaboration and policymaking, and benefit from networking opportunities. The conference aligns with the Agency's strategic plan, offering essential knowledge and connections. Total costs to the Agency for both Michael and Summer to attend will be \$2,193.00.

Michael was invited to attend and speak at the Grantmakers in the Arts (GIA) Annual Conference from October 6-9, 2024, in Chicago, IL. Michael will attend and present on cross-sector partnerships. This year's conference introduces a public policy track, providing a platform for funders supporting artists and arts organizations. Michael's participation will showcase the Agency's work, foster relationships, and offer insights into culture, creativity, and social change. Costs to the Agency will be \$2,375.00.

Catherine proposed to attend the Strategic HR Conference taking place October 27-29, 2024, in Bretton Woods, NH. The conference covers workplace diversity, compliance, technology, employee relations. As Senior Director of Business Operations and Chief Financial Officer, also serving as Chief Human Resources Officer, Catherine's previous conference attendance has improved the Agency's HR strategy and vision. Costs to the Agency will be \$1,795.00.

Marc had three questions regarding the proposed travel. First, he asked if, given that Michael is presenting at both NASAA and GIA, any of his costs would be waived. Deputy Chief of Staff Ann Petruccelli Moon responded explaining that Michael's conference registration fee would be waived at NASAA but not at GIA. Catherine added that Summer Confuorto's costs for NASAA are minimal as most of them are being offset by stipends allocated by NASAA's cooperative agreement with the National Endowment for the Arts specifically for staff who work in folk arts and heritage. Marc asked if the NASAA cost listed in the travel memo reflected Michael's discount – it does. Marc asked if the cost of the HR conference is for lodging and Catherine explained that the costs cover conference registration and mileage. Catherine explained that she would have no need for lodging, so there would be no cost to the Agency for that.

Jo-Ann requested that staff share their learnings from the conferences at a future Council Meeting.

Jo-Ann asked for an update on the Agency's leased office space. Catherine explained that the Agency is in touch with the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM). DCAMM is assessing the space and has given the Agency the option of going out for an RFQ or working with the building's management to extend the lease on the current office space at 10 Saint James Avenue. The current lease ends in January 2026.

Marc asked Catherine which option she felt made more sense: negotiating an extension or moving. Catherine stated that the most desirable options is extending the lease by five years; she believes this will cause less interruption and is more cost effective.

Simone inquired as to the number of people working in the office. Catherine responded that staff is required to work in the office six days per month. Simone asked for further clarification – is everyone coming in on the same day, for example. Michael explained that some teams come in all together on the same six days, some do not, and added that another goal is to be able to hold large, all-staff and potentially Council or Committee meetings in the space. All of this will be determined once costs are known, and potential adjustments are made to the office space.

Simone asked if staff might consider doing a feasibility study of the space. Catherine explained that the Commonwealth has a formula used to assess space, and DCAMM will use that formula to determine what square footage Mass Cultural Council will need. Dave added that 10 years ago when the lease was last extended, the staff was smaller, only 20 to 25 people; now that the staff is approximately 40 people, but they are not full-time in the office the Agency will need to see how that shifts the way in which the space is structured and used.

There were no further questions about the spending plan, travel requests, or office space. Marc asked for a motion to recommend the proposed FY25 budget and program allocation to the Grants Committee. Cecil moved to recommend the plan, Ché seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Iván was absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: that, the Executive Committee recommends that the Council approve for recommendation to the Grants Committee and full Council the FY 25 Budget and Program Allocation Plan presented to the Executive Committee

Marc asked if the proposed out-of-state travel the Committee would vote on meant a full approval or a recommendation that the Council vote to approve the request. Dave explained that the Council delegated the authority to approve travel requests to the Executive Committee so that this will be a vote to approve the travel and that if the travel is approved, it will then, per the out of state travel policy, be reported to the Council at the next meeting. Simone moved to approve the requested travel; Julie seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Iván was absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: to approve the staff-recommended out-of-state travel requests presented to the August 8, 2024 Meeting.

Mass Cultural Council's Financial Policies and Procedures

Catherine concluded her report with an update on the Agency's revised Financial Policies and Procedures, noting that the last wholesale revision to such policies occurred on August 27, 2019. The new document also includes revised travel guidelines, which were approved at the Executive Committee meeting on October 12, 2023. Additionally, it encompasses policies related to credit card use, purchasing goods and services, internal controls, fraud mitigation, and cybersecurity. This living document will be updated as needed; at least annually to ensure it remains current.

Catherine highlighted that all approvals and authority outlined in the 2019 policy remain unchanged in the revised version. She emphasized that the document has been modernized to align with the latest standards and practices of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This alignment has led to more restrictive policies in certain areas to enhance controls, security, and compliance.

New sections on cybersecurity and access control have been added to provide additional safeguards for the agency's operations. These updates ensure that our financial management and procurement processes are efficient, transparent, and responsible. Additionally, the policy has been rewritten and formatted to improve readability, eliminating redundant procedures that are already covered by Commonwealth job aids, which are only necessary for fiscal staff members.

Simone asked if the Agency's procurement policy includes diversity goals. Catherine explained that the Agency follows the Commonwealth's procurement policies but finds that Mass Cultural Council is more equitable than the Commonwealth requires.

Marc asked for clarification on how many staff members currently have a P card. Catherine explained that currently three staff members have P cards: Deputy Executive Director Dave Slatery, Manager of Office Operations Carina Ruiz-Esparza, and Digital Communications Manager Dawn Heinen. Dave has elected to return his card which will occur soon and then all expenses will be divided among the two remaining cards.

Jo-Ann asked Catherine to send her an original and a red lined version of the financial policies so she could take a closer look at the revisions.

Draft Agenda: August 22nd Council Meeting

Marc asked Committee Members if they'd reviewed the draft agenda for the August 22nd Council Meeting and they had. There were no questions, so Marc asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Ché moved to approve the agenda; Cecil seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Iván was absent it was

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approves the draft August 22, 2024 Mass Cultural Council Agenda presented to the Executive Committee.

There were no further questions and Marc, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 11:20am.