



*Power of culture*

**UNOFFICIAL DRAFT SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE COUNCIL AT ITS AUGUST 2019 MEETING**

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

**TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2019**

**JACOB'S PILLOW  
PERLES FAMILY STUDIO  
358 GEORGE CARTER RD  
BECKET, MASSACHUSETTS**

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order at NOON

**Council Members Present**

Nina Fialkow, Chair  
Barbara Schaffer Bacon  
Troy Siebels  
Karen Barry  
Susan Leff  
Matthew Keator  
Marc Carroll  
Allyce Najimy  
Karen Hurvitz  
Kathy Castro  
Cecil Barron Jensen  
Jo-Ann Davis

**Staff members present** were Anita Walker, David Slatery, Greg Liakos, Jen Lawless, Ann Petruccelli, Angelina Lupini, Sara Glidden, Michael Ibrahim, Kalyn King and Kelly Bennett. Many guests were also present and will be referred to throughout these written minutes.

**Prepared on 6/19/19**

Nina Fialkow opened the meeting and welcomed everyone and introduced Pam Tatge, Director of Jacob's Pillow.

Pam welcomed and thanked the Council for its support of Jacob's Pillow over the years- noting especially recent Cultural Facilities Funds grants and listing the improvements that had resulted from such grants.

Pam stated that Mass Cultural Council Executive Director Anita Walker is a true inspiration to the field and fuel for our work in western Massachusetts and a thought leader. She explained Jacob's Pillow is an 87-year old dance festival in motion and described the creative landscape for dance that had been developed in Becket. The institution attracts hundred thousand visitors each summer and runs a very selective school for dance. Also, this location contains a very important set of dance archives.

Jacob's Pillow is undertaking a Vision 2022 strategic planning process and is working to develop the facility to strengthen the field. The facility is used in the winter for development activities and community engagement.

Nina thanked Pam for her words and for hosting the Council today. Nina then brought to the Council's attention a recent *US News & World Report* article highlighting the Boston Literary Cultural District which had been designated by the Council a few years ago. Nina also pointed out the members a list of upcoming events to which all Council members are invited to participate.

### **Minutes and Reports**

The Chair then called for a vote on the 142<sup>nd</sup> Council Meeting minutes. Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED: To approve the minutes from the one hundred and forty-second Council Meeting of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, in the form submitted to this meeting.**

Nina then asked Anita for the Executive Director's report.

Anita thanked the Council Members for traveling to this very special place for today's meeting. Jacob's Pillow is a place that needs to be seen.

Anita referred to the Agency Updates contained in the Meeting Book and also referred to a list of upcoming events which had been distributed to Council members and encouraged Council members to attend. She then mentioned recent initiatives that we had been undertaking in Western Massachusetts. We are launching collaborative efforts with other state agencies and have been talking with social workers and have discussed whether there are any opportunities for collaboration around the issue of children in foster care. One of things that was mentioned was the issue of family and sibling reunions, which are a big part of the social workers' job, and it was specifically noted that there are not a lot of great locations for these except in state offices which are basically utilitarian and functional workspaces and can often have bad associations for the children involved. We arranged with several cultural organizations to offer up their venues for these types of meetings. We are thinking of this as a pilot program based in Western Massachusetts. Anita asked the Council Members for their thoughts on the initiative.

Matthew Keator asked if this was related to the EBT Card to Culture initiative. Anita indicated the relationships we established with the Department of Children & Families (DCF) around the EBT Card program opened up the opportunity for broader collaboration. She also noted that foster families do not necessarily have EBT cards so this initiative would be reaching a broader audience. Troy Siebels asked how we will know if this program is successful. Anita indicated that trying it out on a small scale as a pilot will allow us to identify issues that may arise and determine if, in fact, social workers find it useful and actually take advantage of the opportunity to make use of the cultural organization locations and find out what the foster families think about it. We will work with the cultural organizations on questions such as should additional programming be offered beyond making the space available. Frequent review and evaluation will be needed which is why we are starting small.

Cecil Barron Jensen mentioned that the nonprofits on Nantucket had something like this- a "dignified space" program which is similar and thinks this program would be a natural outgrowth for it and she will mention it to them.

Karen Hurvitz asked what requirements there would be for organizations to participate. Anita mentioned issues of accessibility and hours of availability. Allyce Najimy asked if the Wonderfund could get more involved in this effort and Nina indicated that we could look into that further.

Anita stated that in other countries, arts have been considered a healthcare option and mentioned the concept of “social prescribing” in the United Kingdom which we became aware of in discussions with the Royal Theater of Plymouth (England) which has been active in the Mayflower 400 discussions. Arts engagement is considered a strategy for dealing with issues of isolation and loneliness.

Anita related a recent meeting with Commonwealth's Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), Marylou Sudders, about expanding the EBT Card to Culture program to the Commonwealth's health insurance program. She indicated that would be a large undertaking and they may look at next year, but the Secretary was interested in the meantime in expanding the card to culture program to the Mass Health Connector Card (which serves about 210,000 people). This would be a win-win for both HHS and our program- Mass Health Connector wants more members and to publicize its services and adding the card to culture program makes it better known and attractive while at the same time publicizing our existing program to a greater population and emphasizing the arts-health connection publicly.

Susan Leff thought this was an excellent fit and asked about metrics and mentioned other programs which are focusing on the idea of healthier outcomes- specifically the Vermont Social Innovation Fund, the Boston Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative (working with the Mass Housing Investment Corporation and the Conservation Law Foundation) and the Boston Medical Center- and these organizations' experiences, though not focused on arts & culture, could be helpful to our efforts.

Jo-Ann Davis mentioned that at Bay State Health, the focus was more on overall population health beyond clinical measurements and described it as a more holistic approach.

Anita recognized Program Officer Kalyn King's work on behalf of the EBT Card program.

Anita then detailed her travel around the state since the March meeting noting the most recent event was a site visit with the Pioneer Valley Ballet in Easthampton and related a story of a Marine veteran who had advised to come to ballet for medical issues and found he loved the athleticism involved and had been attending adult classes for over a decade. Barbara Schaffer Bacon related similar story of a local postman

who came to the organization as a result of medical conditions and has now been performing in productions for years.

Anita then referred to our new revised Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Statement contained in the Meeting book. Staff had presented a draft at the March meeting and asked the Council members for input. The general tenor of those comments was to make it shorter and to the point which we believe we took to heart in the new draft. Barbara asked how the statement would be used. Operations Director Jen Lawless replied that it was to be used as a framing statement around the agency's larger DEI plan and work. Greg indicated it would be included on our website and in communication materials.

### **Financial Report**

Nina then asked Deputy Director, Dave Slatery to give the Financial Report. Dave referred to the memo contained in the meeting materials, noting that the agency is near the end of the fiscal year and is at or near target in most accounts. Dave also presented a copy of the agency's financial policies which were based on the policies from the Executive Branch adopted by the Council last August and which had been discussed and developed with the assistance of the Council's Financial Task Force consisting of Nina, Troy and Sandy Dunn. These policies are part of a larger redraft of all of our personnel policies and effort to put all of our policies in one document and the financial policies were the preliminary focus of that effort.

### **Advocacy Report.**

Nina asked Greg to give the Advocacy Report. Greg reported that currently we were in the middle of the Senate FY 20 Budget process. Our line item had come out of the Senate Ways & Means Committee with a \$17 million appropriation (a \$1 million increase from FY 19) and language requiring a specified percentage of the appropriation be spent on grants. We are working with Senator Ed Kennedy of Lowell, the Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development on an amendment which would increase the appropriation to \$18 million and modify the language to more accurately reflect the way Mass Cultural Council supports the field (also mentioning that Anita and Dave had spoken to Senate Ways & Means staff about this). Approximately half of the Senate has signed on to these amendments. Greg thanked MASSCreative and the Council members for contacting their senators and thanked Barbara in particular for reaching out to some western legislators. Anita explained that, as to the language amendment, we

need to present the case that while Mass Cultural Council is a grant-maker- equally as important is its role as a provider of services to the cultural field. Dollars spent on services would not have counted as "grants" under the Senate Ways & Means language and we worked with Senator Kennedy on alternative language that would address this. We also proposed language providing that we would deliver a report on our grants and services and spending plan to the legislative committees so that they could be better informed on our practices.

Greg also thanked Marc Carroll for his observations and insights on the information pieces we were preparing in aid of our advocacy efforts.

Amongst a general discussion on this issue: Barbara noted that it was important for the field to convey the message to the legislature that it was important for Council staff to be out in the field meeting with constituents and not just in the office in Boston (this is in reference to language in the House version of the line item which banned spending funds on travel). Matthew Keator opined that the language amendment was almost more important than the money amendment. Karen Barry emphasized the importance of transparency and was glad that the agency had proposed language providing for reporting on its spending plan and practices to the legislature.

Barbara also noted that it was important to mention how much we were collaborating with other state agencies and mentioned how deleterious it would be if Mass Cultural Council were subsumed into an Executive Department (As was attempted many years ago).

Matthew asked if we were getting our message out to the media and Greg indicated we were, mentioning an upcoming editorial board meeting scheduled for Anita with the Boston Globe.

### **FY19 Artists Fellowships- Round Two**

Nina noted that Victoria Marsh, Chair of the Grants Committee, could not be with us today although she was listening in on a phone (and under Council policy re remote participation, could not officially participate or vote). In Victoria's absence, Nina asked Jo-Ann Davis to give the report of the Grants Committee. Jo-Ann reported that the Grants Committee had met at a meeting chaired by Victoria on May 7, and had voted to recommend the staff recommendations described in the meeting materials for Round Two of the FY19 Artists Fellowships for approval by the Council. Jo-Ann also noted for the record that Victoria, as Grants Chair,

had, due to a pre-existing business relation of her employer (WGBH) with the following persons recommended by staff for fellowship or finalist awards in the Film & Video- Margo Guernsey, Tracy Strain and James Rutenbeck, had abstained from any recommendation of awards for these persons. Nina asked that the minutes reflect Victoria's abstentions.

Jo-Ann then called on Program Officers Kelly Bennett and Dan Blask to give a presentation on the recommendations for Round Two in the fields of Film & Video, Music Composition, and Photography.

First Dan and Kelly generally explained the program and that, unique among Council programs, the Artists Fellowship was an anonymous blind-judged program based purely on artistic quality, which has been in existence for more than 40 years. They then presented examples and descriptions of the recommended 18 fellows (\$15,000 awards) and 17 Finalist (\$1000 awards) for Round Two. The Council members asked questions about how the program was publicized and inquired it reached all of the areas of the state. Dan and Kelly explained the process and time periods for publicity. Anita stated we would send a special notification to the Council members alerting them to as key dates in the program- call for submissions, deadlines, dates of panel review etc.....

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED: To approve the FY19 Artist Fellowship grant awards in the disciplines of Film & Video, Music Composition and Photography as recommended by the Grants Committee at its May 7, 2019 meeting.**

Greg reminded the Council that the annual Artists Breakfast to be held on June 11 at the State House and encouraged all Council members were encouraged to attend.

### **Media Partnerships**

Nina asked Greg for a report on our Media Partnerships program. Greg gave the history of the program explaining that media organizations (public TV and radio) used to be considered along with other cultural organizations in operating support program (called the Cultural Investment Portfolio (CIP) which you will hear more about later in this meeting). However they did not really fit in with the rest of cultural organizations in terms of evaluation. About 10 years ago, the Council decided to approach non-profit media organizations in a different way-

by buying advertising spots for an amount roughly equivalent to the amount of a CIP grant and then using those spots to promote agency programs and grantees. Dave pointed out that the approximately \$120,000 we spend on media organizations would not count as “grants” under the current language contained in the Senate Ways & Means budget. Greg then played a sample thirty second ad. Greg then introduced Jerry Norton from New England Public Radio who spoke about the value of Mass Cultural Council support.

### **Cultural Investment Portfolio.**

Nina then asked Anita to introduce the Agency’s CIP staff- Sara Glidden, Program Manager and Supervisor and Program Manager Michael Ibrahim and Program Officer Kalyn King. Anita explained that the CIP team had given a presentation over a year ago but that now we were looking at making some adjustments to the program in FY20 and believed a deep dive into the program for the Council was warranted. Sara went through a detailed history of the program and summarized a number of the new features- all contained in a detailed PowerPoint presentation, copies of which are available upon request. Several representatives of cultural organizations in Western Massachusetts were also present to speak as to various aspects of the program. The first of these was

- **Laurie Norton Moffat** from the **Norman Rockwell Museum**-who spoke as to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her museum (and how Rockwell’s “Four Freedoms” works will be featured as part of the upcoming 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day) and thanked the Mass Cultural Council for its work and support. Laurie has enjoyed working with Mass Cultural Council and was excited to hear from Anita today about the arts & health care initiatives, mentioning a partnership the museum has with a psychiatric hospital around work related to de-stigmatizing mental health issues. She thanked the Council for being “stewards of culture” and mentioned how the interactions with other cultural organizations as required by CIP- i.e. participating as a site visitor to Peabody Essex Museum and PAAM on the other side of the Commonwealth had allowed her to speak with and observe peers dealing with similar issues and these communications helped her in her own work at the Rockwell Museum.. She emphasized the convenings and professional development and the sharing of ideas offered by the CIP program and staff really helps to provide information otherwise only available at conferences.



Michael spoke a bit about how the program had moved from grant panels and evaluative awards to formula funding with an emphasis on site visits and communication and services. Michael spoke about the various webinars, tools and workshops the program provided. In effect, Mass Cultural Council acts as a free consultant to many organizations. He then introduced the following guests-

- **Tracy Wilson, Berkshire Music School** who talked about the benefit her organization received from various tools such as a recent “emergency preparedness” workshop for cultural organizations, courses in how to implement Universal Participation principles and using the agency’s capacity-building tool. She believes these all helped and were useful in helping the school obtain a CFF grant.
- **Margaret Keller, Community Access To the Arts** who talked about how the capacity-building tool and one-on-one discussion with Council staff about issues such as development were benefits that supplemented the dollars provided by the basic grant. She also mentioned that the personal consultations and podcasts were very helpful.

Michael explained how the podcasts and direct consultations had helped build trust with the field over the years. He explained that this year, we were looking at seeing if we could help organizations where there were warning signs of potential financial trouble. We looked into reviewing the years of financial data that have been supplied by CIP organizations to develop a way to identify “stressed” organizations that might benefit from greater attention. To that end, we publicly procured (in accordance with the Council’s FY 19 approved budget and spending plan) a financial consultant-

- **Nicole Curtain, Nonprofit finance Fund (NFF)** was the consultant retained and she explained that upon being retained by Mass Cultural Council, devised a test to look through the finances of the grantee organizations and had identified 36 organizations that could benefit from greater attention based on a set of objective financial criteria. These organizations were contacted and asked if they wanted to participate further
- **Chip Blake, Orion Magazine** was one of the stress-tested organizations that was contacted, and he expressed his

appreciation for receiving the “gift of consultancy” to help them address and understand some issues.

- **Kate Maguire, Berkshire Theater Group** gave a paean to Anita and the Mass Cultural Council staff for the work they put in to help the organization with some major issues.

Kalyn at this point indicated that we had run out of time, but that staff would be available afterwards to answer questions.

Nina thanked the team and the guests for their very informative presentations. Matthew announced he had to leave but wanted the minutes to reflect that he would have voted in favor of the next item on the agenda- the designation of the Lenox Cultural District and left.

**Lenox Cultural District.** Nina then called for the presentation of a new cultural district. Anita stated before the Council was a recommendation for the approval of the Commonwealth's 47<sup>th</sup> Cultural District in Lenox. While a slide show ran showing sites in the newly proposed district (copies of which are available upon request), Anita narrated the impressions and review of the district. Anita then recognized several guests in attendance with connections including Representative Smitty Pignatelli, Lenox Selectperson Ed Lane, Christopher Ketchen, Lenox Town Manager Laura Brennan, Senior Planner, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Beth Gamble, Lenox Cultural Council

Anita asked Representative Pignatelli to make a few remarks. He started off by congratulating the town and mentioning how much the people of western Massachusetts appreciated the fact that Mass Cultural Council staff had come out and visited (Anita referenced nearly 100 visits over the recent past) and he would work to persuade his colleagues so that nothing would prevent that in the future. He mentioned how Lenox had transformed itself over his lifetime to become such a destination. This cultural district is the next chapter in the renaissance and renewal of Lenox

Nina then called for a vote. After a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED: To approve the designation of a cultural district in Lenox, Massachusetts in accordance with the memorandum presented to the Council Meeting.**

There being no more business to come before the Council, Nina as Chair then reminded the Council members that there would be a reception and then adjourned the meeting.