

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF
MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2020
12:30 PM**

ON-LINE MEETING

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order at 12:30 PM

Committee Members Present

Nina Fialkow, Chair of Executive Committee and Mass Cultural Council
Marc Carroll, Vice Chair Mass Cultural Council
Victoria Marsh, Chair of Grants Committee
Troy Siebels, Co-chair of Advocacy Committee
Sherry Dong, Co-chair, Advocacy Committee
Jo-Ann Davis, Member At Large

Other Council Members Present

Karen Barry
Matthew Keator
Barbara Schaffer Bacon
Ann Murphy
Karen Hurvitz
Cecil Barron Jensen
Allyce Najimy
Kathy Castro
Susan Leff

Staff members present were
Anita Walker, Executive Director

Prepared on 5/12/20

David Slatery, Deputy Director
Jen Lawless, Operations Director
Bethann Steiner, Communications Director

Nina Fialkow opened the meeting by thanking everyone to this meeting of the Executive Committee to which all Council members had been invited. She recognized the challenging times in which the members and the staff were operating and appreciated everyone's attendance. She mentioned that this meeting originally scheduled for March 16 and had to be postponed because of the coronavirus crisis and Governor's announcement on March 15 which had effectively closed the Mass Cultural Office and so it took some time to rethink this meeting as a Zoom conference to which everyone could participate remotely. She thanked all the members for their presence and patience.

Although this meeting is meant to address the search process for a new Executive Director, the Committee had invited Executive Director Anita Walker to give an update on what the staff activities and response to the current conditions.

Anita thanked everyone for coming and said that while she was not staying for the entire meeting, she wanted to give a quick update on what had been occurring these past few weeks. She stated that when she decided to retire, it was because strength of the agency and staff and the field and then this crisis happened.

The leadership team meets every morning by Zoom and communicates with the rest of the staff through a daily memo. Not only is work going on but very important work is going on for our field. Anita referred to the recent survey conducted by the Council showing the devastating impact of the virus on arts and culture organizations. This will be a large and difficult crisis for our field. Organizations right now can't count on earned revenue (no events), no donations (people are uncertain) and no endowment income (the stock market is down precipitously).

Anita noted that the survey we put out to the field garnered 1000 responses in 5 days- a huge number for our surveys. The survey showed \$55.7 million in current losses, an average of \$133,000 per responding organization, more than 8000 jobs impacted by layoffs and cutbacks and more than 5000 gigs cancelled for the 600 individual artists who

responded. Spring is key time for performances after the winter and due to conditions, everything is being cancelled.

Compounding the layoffs is the fact that "1099 workers"-independent contractors- are not eligible for unemployment. We are working with our field and legislative delegation to see if this can be addressed.

We held a webinar to address the crisis last week and over 400 people attended. Staff is working on plans to repurpose some funds from our budget to address the needs of our constituents including a fund to address individual artists and cultural practitioners and also repurposing some of the gaming funds dedicated to "organizational support" to a program we are calling "Safe Harbors, Soft Landings" which will provide some financial assistance to organizations but will be used also to retain the Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF) to provide assistance through online presentations and other coaching to the field. Even though we have \$800,000 available for this purpose, that is only a drop in the bucket compared to overall losses so we thought to deploy funds to provide accurate useful information about how to manage during the crisis and how to apply for federal assistance.

All of these ideas will come as proposals to the Executive and Grants Committees for review and consideration on March 31 and the Council on April 7.

Nina thanked Anita for her report and at this point Anita left the meeting.

Nina stated that while this meeting had been envisioned to focus on the search process for the next Executive Director, she and the Committee had thought it was important given the rapidly evolving nature of the COVID-19 emergency to give everyone an update on what the staff had been doing. She then asked Marc Carroll as Vice Chair to briefly summarize the memo that had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Marc summarized the timeline of events since Anita had met with the Chair and Vice Chair to say she was planning on retiring at the end of the fiscal year. He related that Nina as Chair had appointed the members of the Executive Committee as a Search Task Force and determined the need to engage a professional search firm to assist the Council in its search for the new Executive Director. He explained that this process largely follows the example of what the Council did the last time it recruited an Executive Director in 2006-07. He explained that the

purpose of this session- a convening of the Executive Committee as the Search Task Force with all Council Members invited was to solicit input and get all of the members' initial thoughts and concerns on the search.

Nina then asked if any other Executive Committee members had any comments. Jo-Ann Davis commented that she thought employing a search firm was absolutely necessary based upon her 20+ years of experience in the human relations industry. She noted she had conducted many searches for high-level positions and always used a firm. It's a sophisticated undertaking requiring vision, strategy, political savvy, diplomacy and the ability to cast a wide net. We as Council members have other full-time responsibilities and it is most efficient to rely on the outside expertise of a firm. Also, a firm helps to protect against outside pressures from third parties and helps with transparency, professionalism and reflecting unbiased behavior.

Troy Siebels indicated he agreed with Jo-Ann and thought an outside firm would keep the process apolitical and would also help uncover candidates that a call for applications would not. He noted that Mass Cultural Council is a national leader in this field.

Sherry Dong echoed Jo-Ann and Troy's comments and noted we are looking for top talent and we should have someone who helps us see candidates throughout the nation.

Victoria Marsh agreed with the prior statement and deferred to Jo-Ann's expertise.

Nina then asked for any questions or comments from the other members.

Karen Barry asked about communication. Nina indicated that the selected firm would interview all of the members and help us understand the necessary skills we want are and what the marketplace is. The firm will act as a liaison.

Barbara Schaffer Bacon indicated she was in full support of hiring a firm and noted they would need to meet with both staff and the field but was concerned that the decision was made by the Executive Committee without input from the other members. She noted the current virus conditions have made communication that much more important.

Nina noted that indeed current conditions had impacted communications- originally there was to have been a Council meeting on March 13th which had to be cancelled. We are in new territory and learning our way through. The search firm will help us shape the search process and determine methods for the entire Council to participate and provide input.

Karen Hurvitz asked about the nature of the appointment process and who hired. Nina asked Dave Slatery to summarize the statute which provides that the executive director is approved by the Chair and the Council and somewhat invites the process where the Chair would propose a candidate for approval by the Council though that is not the only method. Nina indicated that would be consistent with past process.

Victoria stated we needed a search firm to work with us to determine the best process so that we have buy-in from all constituencies and the Council.

Barbara asked about the period between Anita's announced departure, June 30 and the time a new executive director is selected. Nina indicated that the Committee had full confidence in the staff, the senior staff of Dave, Jen Lawless and Bethann Steiner and that Dave as Deputy Director would act as Executive Director during the interim period.

Karen Barry asked about how salary would be determined. Jo-Ann stated that a search firm would help us determine the market rate and that we would also do independent research. Nina asked Dave to explain his outreach to the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. Dave said he had requested and received information about salaries, budget sizes and search processes of other state arts agencies from NASAA.

Barbara opined that it was worth it to take the time to find the right candidate and there was no need to rush and she had full faith in the staff. Jo-Ann agreed. Marc indicated we will take our time to find the most competent candidate.

As the time allotted for the meeting was ending, Nina thanked everyone for attending and their input and interest and that she hoped like all of the other thousands of people in the cultural sector that the current emergency will pass and we will soon be back at the theater and other

cultural organizations soon. She re-emphasized that the Search Task Force would aim to communicate as best as it can.

The meeting adjourned.