



Power of culture

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

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

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2020

ON-LINE MEETING

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order at 230 PM

Committee Members Present

Nina Fialkow, Chair of Executive Committee and Mass Cultural Council

Marc Carroll, Vice Chair

Victoria Marsh, Chair of Grants Committee

Troy Siebels, Co-chair of Advocacy Committee

Sherry Dong, Co-chair, Advocacy Committee

Staff members present were

Anita Walker, Executive Director

David Slatery, Deputy Director

Jen Lawless, Operations Director

Bethann Steiner, Communications Director

Nina Fialkow opened the meeting by referring to the Open Meeting Law statement circulated with the materials.

Nina then asked Executive Director Anita Walker for her report. Anita started by noting that the Governor had extended the work-from-home guidance to May 4. She reported that during this period, senior staff were meeting every morning and were holding weekly meetings with supervisors (all by Zoom). Anita provide a daily email memo to staff. Each work until is meeting at least once per week.

Anita reported on the research that the Council had conducted- over 1000 artists and organizations responded to our survey. Based on the data reported and our interactions with people in the field, staff has developed and moved forward with the relief programs we are putting before the committees to day and seeking permission to repurpose previously-budgeted funds and spending on new modified programs.

Anita is also hosting a few “Culture Chats” each week with guests from the field and last week hosted an online forum with the legislature’s Joint Committee on Tourism , Arts and Cultural Development to help turn the data into real stories from the field for the benefit of legislators- for example they heard how Jacob’s Pillow had to cancel their summer season for the first time ever and how the Boch Center laid many people off and the ripple effects of cancelling shows on other workers and generally highlighted the unprecedented nature of this emergency.

In today's meeting, staff is asking for some one-time authority to respond with alacrity to the seriousness of the current emergency. The request for the re-allocation and repurposing of funds is being brought to the Executive Committee today for review and the substantive aspects of the new programs is being brought to the Grants Committee.

Anita proceeded to describe the new programs and mentioned that one of them was specifically designed to help organizations access federal relief funds and assuming approval, we will be rolling out webinars soon.

Anita asked David Slatery to go through the various re-allocation of funds for the various programs being brought forward today and referred to the memo that had circulated to the Committee. Anita described the individual artist relief fund program would be distributed based on a randomized process (not first come, first served) and described the program as set forth in the memo provided to the Committee.

Anita went on to describe the proposed “Safe Harbors” program for organizations. She noted that our survey had shown \$130,000 in average losses per organization and we do not have anywhere near the funds necessary to compensate for that so we focused on educational resources (plus a stipend). This constitutes a redeployment of the 25% of the gambling monies which are dedicated to “organizational support” under the gaming law (MGL Chapter 23K). She noted that we had previously proposed dedicating these funds to a social prescription pilot program (see March 3 Committee meetings) but the COVID emergency

has changed that and we were now able to redeploy almost \$1 million toward the new program (while still retaining about \$120,000 toward organizations still working on social prescriptions). Safe Harbors as mentioned earlier will include online seminars presented by Nonprofit Finance Fund to help organizations navigate current rapidly-evolving issues related to this crisis- including how to access new federal relief programs together with a flat \$2250 stipend to all 335 organizations currently in our Cultural Investment Portfolio and Gateway programs (noting that a flat funding amount by its nature will help smaller organizations proportionally more than larger ones).

The Committee asked several technical questions at this point for which staff provided answers. Anita also mentioned that we had decided to ask to add gaming funds that had been collected since January 1 to the Safe Harbors and Gaming Mitigation Program (previously as voted in January the plan was to let 2020 revenues accrue during the year and then be spent for 2021 operations) Nina noted for the record that the requested changes and programs were one-time only events brought on by the need for a quick response to the current crisis. In future, new programs will follow a more traditional approval process allowing for more time for Grants Committee review. David in response to questions, discussed the allocation of funds both from the Council's approved budget and from the gaming funds. Anita described the need to keep a small portion of the Social Prescription Pilot Program in place at a lower level (\$120,000 as opposed to \$860,000) in order to recognize the work put in by health care and cultural organizations and keep the program alive for the other end of the crisis.

Nina then called for a vote. Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously held by roll call vote (and noting that member Jo-Ann Davis was absent)

WHEREAS, the Council approved a FY20 Spending Plan for the Council's operations which contained approval of several different grant and service programs and related activities; and

WHEREAS, due to the COVID-19 crisis, staff has proposed to amend said approval to reallocate \$225,000 of the funds approved as part of said Spending Plan toward funding a newly-designed COVID-19 Relief Fund for Artists and Cultural Educators as described in memoranda presented to the Executive Committee at its March 31, 2020 meeting; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 23K of the Massachusetts General Laws, as most recently amended by sections 3 and 4 of Chapter 142 of the Acts of 2019, provides that Mass Cultural Council will receive 2% of the Commonwealth's gross gaming tax revenue from casinos into the Massachusetts Cultural and Performing Arts Mitigation Trust Fund (the "Fund") to be managed by Mass Cultural Council; and

WHEREAS, staff of Mass Cultural Council had presented a plan (the "Plan") for usage of Fund revenues by memoranda to the Council on January 28, 2020 which Plan was reviewed and approved by the Council; and

WHEREAS, due the COVID-19 crisis, staff has proposed to amend said Plan to make use of all of the monies currently in the Fund so as to increase the amount of funds available to the Gaming Mitigation Program in 2020, deploy the resources of the Fund on a more accelerated basis to, among other things, fund a COVID-19 Emergency Initiative for Cultural Organizations to be called "Safe Harbors and Soft Landings" in the amount \$990,000 and also to allocate \$120,000 to the CultureRx Social Prescription Pilot; and

WHEREAS, immediately following the Executive Committee meeting, staff will be presenting the details of the new COVID-19 response programs discussed above for their review and approval;

NOW THEREFORE, it is hereby

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee recommends that the Council approve the re-allocation of resources and amendment of the Plan presented to the Executive Committee at its March 31, 2020 Meeting provided that the COVID-19 response programs discussed therein have been reviewed and recommended to the Council by the Grants Committee.

Nina then asked for consideration the agenda for the scheduled April 7 Council Meeting. She asked that a 10 minute break be included note that consideration of the Fall River Cultural District (originally scheduled for the cancelled March 13 meeting to be held in Fall River) be postponed until such time it could be celebrated in Fall River.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously held by roll call vote (and noting that member Jo-Ann Davis was absent)

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approve the draft April 7, 2020 Mass Cultural Council Agenda presented to the Executive Committee at its March 31, 2020 Meeting.

Nina mentioned that she would report on the progress of the Search Task Force (which is the Executive Committee) in her report to the Council on April 7. She asked staff to once again circulate the Search Firm RFP document and the aim of having it posted prior to April 7. She mentioned that other Council Members had asked to join the Task Force but she felt that 6 was the right number and the Executive Committee members contained a great amount of relevant expertise but that she would continue to reach out to other members for their specific input during the process.

There being no more business to come before the Committee, Nina as Chair adjourned the meeting.