



Power of culture

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

TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2019

**PEABODY ESSEX MUSEUM
SLAEM, MA**

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order at 12:18 P.M.

Council Members Present

Nina Fialkow, Chair
Barbara Wallace Grossman, Vice Chair
Mal Sherman
Barbara Schaffer Bacon
Victoria Marsh
Sherry Dong
Kathleen Castro
Sandy Dunn
Troy Siebels
Karen Barry
Susan Leff
Jo-Ann Davis
Cecil Barron Jensen

Staff members present were Anita Walker, David Slatery, Greg Liakos, Jen Lawless, Ann Petruccelli, Kelly Bennett, Erik Holmgren, Rodrigo Guerrero, Diane Daily, Luis Cotto and Justina Crawford. Guests included Brian Boyles of MassHumanities, Cathy Edwards and John Henry of NEFA, Jay Finney and other staff from the Peabody Essex Museum and Matt Wilson of MASSCreative

Prepared on 3/14/19

Nina Fialkow opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the first meeting of 2019. She then introduced Jay Finney, the Chief Marketing Officer of our host, the Peabody Essex Museum.

Jay Finney thanked everyone for coming and said a few words about the museum. The institution undertook a major revitalization starting in the early 2000s and has come very far, very fast. He mentioned that 40,000 new square feet is coming online this fall (a new gallery and an education center) and summarized \$650 million of projects over the time period. He went on to mention that the museum's Director since 1993, Dan Monroe (who could not make it here today) has recently announced his impending retirement after years where he had overseen the merger creating the museum, the revitalization and the recent new addition.

Anita thanked Jay mentioned how great a partner Dan Monroe and the museum had been a great partner over the years- a major participant in both the Cultural Facilities Fund and the Cultural Investment Portfolio. She also noted that our External Relations Director, Greg Liakos, had originally come from the museum. She noted it was truly an anchor cultural organization in the community.

Nina then introduced two newly-appointed Council members, Jo-Ann Davis and Cecil Barron Jensen and asked the Council members to introduce themselves. Nina then asked Anita to introduce new Mass Cultural Council staff members and our guests today. Anita introduced Luis Cotto- a Program Manager in the Community Initiative who would be overseeing the Cultural District program (who would be presenting a new district later today) and Justina Crawford a Program Officer in the Community Initiative. She also introduced Brian Boyles, the new executive director of Mass Humanities and Cathey Edwards, the executive director of the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) and John Henry a NEFA board member, each of whom who be presenting later in the meeting. Anita recognized Matt Wilson, the executive director of MASS Creative. She also noted the attendance of staff members Erik Holmgren, Rodrigo Guerrero, Diane Daily and Kelly Bennett who would also be presenting later in the meeting.

Minutes and Reports

The Chair then called for a vote on the 140th Council Meeting minutes. Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

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

Nina thanked all the Council members for their service and referred to the upcoming calendar and committee listings included in the meeting book. She then called on Anita Walker to give the Executive Director's report.

Agency Updates

Anita started her report by noting that today was Day 25 of the federal government shutdown and noted Mass Cultural Council receives funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. At this point we have requisitioned and are waiting to receive over \$380,000 from the NEA to provide grants under our programs.

Anita then referred to the current Mass Cultural Council strategic plan which had been adopted a year and a half ago. In the first year, we focused on a lot assessment- a tech assessment looking at our technology needs and the way we use it and are currently implementing those recommendations. We also undertook a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) assessment. Now in the second year, we are implementing some of things suggested in the assessments. First, we will be updating and bringing together in one place all our human relations (HR) policies. We have retained an outside consultant and put together a cross-agency working group to put together a handbook. This will sit on the platform of state requirements to which we are already subject. Secondly, we are updating our application process for our programs and looking at how we do we attract applicants we are not reaching now and how can we make the process more open and accessible. For example, in the upcoming Cultural Facilities Fun (CFF) panel, we will be having session with the panelists to talk about recognizing unintended bias. We will also be dividing the panels by size of grant applicants so that smaller applicants won't suffer by comparison to larger more sophisticated applicants who can pour more resources and polish into an application.

In addition, the staff is looking at how we present financials. We will be retaining an accountant/consultant to help us make better use of the state's financial reporting system and use some coding tools so that we can better track spending both programmatically and geographically.

In our largest grant program, the Cultural Investment Portfolio (CIP), we are implementing a new “v3” of this program which has been evolving and changing beyond the simple operating support grant program that it used to be ten years ago. With the aim of trying to answer the question of how we can best support cultural organizations, we are seeking to tailor our assistance to an organization's needs and this year, among other things, we will be providing a new focus on organizations which need help on financial matters. We want financially healthy organizations, a true cultural sector, and to maximize and protect public value. We have over the years established a true partnership with our CIP organizations and have developed a high level of trust and this is key for us when we are addressing the fragility of nonprofit entities in our field. We collect a huge amount of data on our grantees and we needed a way to review it and make the best use of it. So, we issued an RFP for a financial consultant and ultimately chose Nonprofit Finance Fund. They helped us develop a stress test with some key indicators of fragility. Participation is optional by organizations and those opting to join the program will need to involve both the organization's executive director and its board chair. So far everyone contacted has been very thankful to be included and has indicated a great deal of trust in Mas Cultural Council. This is a pilot program and we hope to develop a learning network and learn a lot more this year. This obviously is a very customized program designed for organizations in need and we will still be providing grants and typical services for all CIP organizations.

Jo-Ann Davis asked if we share best practices with organizations. Anita indicated yes and always have though its been more *ad hoc* previously. The full CIP team will report out on this later to the Council.

Anita indicated we had passed out the annual CFF report which we jointly submitted with MassDevelopment to the Legislature on December 31 and reported that we had received somewhere around 158 applications for CFF in the latest round of funding (which are currently being reviewed).

Anita then reported that the Legislature's new Cultural Caucus (which is a separate entity from the Legislature's official Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development Committee) has been rebooted and will meet tomorrow. Rep Mary Keefe and Senator Julian Cyr are heading up the Caucus. Anita's presentation will highlight some of the following items:

- Hireculture- the jobs board we maintain, had 1.65 million page views last year.
- Our Creative Minds Out Loud podcast has had 23,000 downloads
- We have held and will be holding a series of roundtables with legislators throughout the Commonwealth. The next one is in Quincy on February 12.
- The Commonwealth Awards will be this year (they are held every other year). This year there will be a new regional approach with 3 or so press conference events around the state to announce the finalists with a final event in Boston on April 8 where 4 awards will be given. No one will know the winners beforehand.

Advocacy Report

Nina called for the Advocacy Committee report and Mal Sherman as chair asked Greg Liakos as External Relations Director to present. Greg mentioned that he and Mal had discussed convening a meeting of the Committee soon. While the agency had an increase in funding last year to \$16 million, Greg reminded the members that Mass Cultural Council had been funded at the level of \$25 million in 1988 and at \$19 million in 2002 and that our aim is always to restore the council to those levels and referred to members to our advocacy statement contained in the meeting materials which calls for an increase in funding to \$18 million if FY20 (an increase of \$2 million). Greg described the Commonwealth's budget process and that the first step would be the filing of the Governor's budget on January 23. Greg described the packet of materials we have created to aid in our advocacy efforts and the roundtables Anita had mentioned earlier around the Commonwealth. Nina asked all the members to contribute to the council's advocacy efforts.

Gaming Update

At this point Anita mentioned that she inadvertently left out the update of where the gambling mitigation program stands. We have been working on developing the program as directed by gaming statute and with the first casino open last August, revenues for the program are starting to accumulate. However earlier this year the Executive Office for Administration and Finance (ANF) had raised some issues on the sufficiency of the legislative language to allow for the transfer of the funds to the Council to run the program. Other parties do not agree with this interpretation but nonetheless we are working on a technical legislative fix to address ANF's issue. Troy Siebels was part of the coalition that had helped include the language about funding the program back

when the law was passed in 2010 and he indicated he would work to ramp up advocacy efforts on behalf of nonprofit performance centers that will be (and are being) negatively impacted by casino bookings. This is a \$3-5 million issue annually. The Council members generally the issue with staff and the ways they could help work to get the funds transferred to the council.

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 was at or near target in most accounts. He mentioned the potential impacts on the ongoing federal shutdown and the potential withholding of NEA funds which could potentially create a \$388,000 hole in the budget but that would not need to be addressed until later in the year, should the shutdown persist. He also mentioned that we were in process of seeking an accountant/consultant to help us create more specific financial reporting.

2018 Council Retreat Follow Up

Nina called for the next item on the agenda. Mass Cultural Council Staff members Erik Holmgren, Rodrigo Guerrero and Diane Daily then gave an update of what staff had done with the “giant flip-chart full of ideas” that had been generated at the Council’s Retreat focused on Creative Youth Development (CYD) last October. Erik referred to the memo in the meeting materials and referred to three areas in which the agency will move forward-

1. Expanding the age range of our programs and looking at early childhood opportunities
2. Expanding our teaching artist program beyond music.
3. Broadening who we talk to about CYD to include workforce development professionals, mental and public health practitioners, juvenile justice experts and the associated public and private agencies.

Diane then spoke a bit about our outreach to early childhood programs to connect cultural organizations to young children and families. As a pilot program, we are looking at cultural organizations on the Cape with existing early childhood programming and with Massachusetts

Department of Early Education and Childcare centers in the area. Erik then spoke about outreach to the philanthropic community to seek more funding for artist/educators. Rodrigo spoke of how Mass Cultural Council is viewed as a trusted partner (though not one with as much funding ability as foundations) in the field and our efforts in building the national and international field.

FY19 Artists Fellowships- Round One

Nina called on Victoria Marsh as Chair of the Grants Committee to give the Committee's report on the recommended Artists Fellowship Grants. Victoria called on Program Officer Kelly Bennet to give a presentation on the recommendations for Round One in the fields of Crafts, Dramatic Writing and Sculpture/Installation/New Genres.

Kelly presented examples and descriptions of the recommended 16 fellows (\$15,000 awards) and 16 Finalist (\$1000 awards) in these fields. Victoria reported that the Grants Committee had reviewed the staff recommendation and voted to recommend approval by the full Council. Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: To approve the FY19 Artist Fellowship grant awards in the disciplines of Sculpture/Installation/New Genres, Crafts and Dramatic Writing as recommended by the Grants Committee at its meeting on January 8, 2019.

Anita reminded the Council that the annual Artists Breakfast is held every year in June and it's a wonderful event and an opportunity to meet the artists who have been awarded fellowships. Sandy Dunn said that it would be interesting to collect geographic and demographic data on the awardees after the fact to see who we are reaching in the Commonwealth.

MassHumanities

Nina then introduced and called on Brian Boyles, executive director of MassHumanities to talk about the organization. Brian thanked the Council for inviting him to speak and for its support of MassHumanities and indicated he was relatively new, having been on the job since October. Brian generally described MassHumanities and mentioned that, as Anita had noted earlier, the organization was suffering from federal shutdown issues as well as funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) is being held up as well. Brian then showed a video

from the organization's Governor's Award ceremony about the Humanities which featured several students from the Clemente Program.

New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA)

Nina then introduced Cathy Edwards, executive director and John Henry, board member of NEFA. John thanked the Council for its support of NEFA and thanked the council for its mission, mentioning that he had previously been on the board of Arts & Business Council of Greater Boston, a Mass Cultural Council grantee. Cathy then described NEFA as a regional arts organization based in Boston and, like the Council, also funded in part by the NEA. Cathy then showed NEFA's 40th anniversary video from last year and summarized the organization's new strategic plan. She also noted that Anita serves on NEFA's advisory committee.

Franklin Cultural District

Nina then called for the presentation of a new cultural district. Anita then introduced Luis Cotto, the new Community Initiative Program Manager for Cultural Districts. Luis mentioned that he had started at the council the previous fall and much of the work on this new district proposed district in Franklin has been done by the recently-retired Meri Jenkins. Luis then began a slide show on the proposed Franklin Cultural District noting that Franklin was the first town in America named after Ben Franklin, was the home of the first public library in the nation (thanks to books donated by Ben Franklin) and had the longest active one-room schoolhouse in America. The slide show (copies of which are available upon request) then commenced and contained a great deal of information and pictures about Franklin. At the conclusion of the slides, Luis invited Representative Jeffrey Roy (who had entered the meeting) of Franklin to speak. Representative Roy thanked the Council and spoke of Franklin's connection with Horace Mann and mentioned how he had met Anita back in 2013 about a theater project and how that conversation had turned into a cultural district application 5 years later. Deputy Town Manager Jamie Heller (who had also joined the meeting) thanked the Council and spoke and mentioned how the Cultural District application had helped galvanize town resources leading the town to investing in presentation materials in the library highlighting the books donated by Ben Franklin.

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

VOTED: To approve the designation of a cultural district in Franklin, 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 next door in the museum and then adjourned the meeting.