

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

**MINUTES: SPECIAL MEETING OF MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
WITH ARTS CONSULTING GROUP**

MONDAY, JULY 13, 2020

ONLINE MEETING

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order at 10:33AM

Council Members Present were

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

Staff Members Present were David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Bethann Steiner, and Ann Petruccelli Moon. Also present were Wyona Lynch-McWhite, Bruce Thibodeau, and María Muñoz-Blanco from Arts Consulting Group.

Chair Nina Fialkow opened the meeting and referred to the Agenda and Open Meeting Law Statement circulated to the members. Nina then welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Wyona, Bruce, and Maria from Arts Consulting Group. Nina then asked Acting Executive Director David Slatery to give a brief update.

David framed up the current state of the agency two weeks past Anita Walker's retirement. The leadership team (David, Bethann Steiner, and Jen Lawless) meet every morning. They also meet with every work unit every four weeks. An all-staff meeting was held on July 1. The agency is currently operating on a one month "1/12" budget. Dave explained that it is common to find ourselves without a final budget on 7/1 and we are

Prepared on 8/31/20

used to interim 1/12th budgets, but of course this year is a little different due to the pandemic and the fact that the legislature has not yet drafted an FY21 budget. The agency is focused on services. A survey of the field closed on 6/30 and we are working with the Nonprofit Finance Fund to analyze the results. The survey documents the devastating impact of Covid-19 on the cultural sector. David offered to answer any questions Council Members had and there were none. The meeting moved forward to the presentation by ACG.

Wyona Lynch-McWhite began her presentation on the Executive Director Search by introducing herself and her colleagues, María and Bruce. Bruce spoke a bit more about the work of ACG in general and his background as president of the company. Wyona then gave an overview of the many service organizations, arts agencies, and Massachusetts nonprofits with whom ACG works.

Wyona then asked María to review the timeline for the search, and María walked the Council through it:

- June 29 & July 10: Introductory Search Task Force* meetings with ACG
- June 30 – July 10: Search Task Force completion of online questionnaire
- July 13 – 29: Board, senior staff, and key stakeholder meetings and survey
- July 29: ACG and Search Task Force finalize position announcement
- July 31: Public launch with ads, emails, networking; proactive recruitment begins
- August – September: receipt of applications and ACG interviews of qualified candidates; soft skills questionnaire to candidates and those they work with most closely; web and social media research on candidates
- Late September: Search Task Force reviews first cut of candidate written materials; preliminary semi-finalist candidate interviews to determine finalists
- October: finalist interviews with Search Task Force, Board, and staff. Educational verification, criminal background, and reference checks.
- Late October: Search Task Force recommends candidate to Board for approval, pending final due diligence, background, and reference checking
- November: candidate transitions into role, lines of communication established, press release and executive placement announcement developed and distributed
- December: new Executive Director begins

**Search Task Force Members include: Nina Fialkow, Marc Carroll, Victoria Marsh, Troy Siebels, Sherry Dong, Jo-Ann Davis, and Barbara Schaffer Bacon.*

Wyona explained that this will be an inclusive and collaborative process using industrial psychology tools which are proven to reduce bias and confirm that every candidate is having an equitable experience. Bruce added that ACG is very focused on equity, inclusion and access. Wyona's direct phone number is included in the position posting so she can be reached easily. The group plans to have many, many meetings with the Search Task Force, Council members, and staff and make sure as many interested parties as possible are involved. Bruce went on to walk Council Members through ACG's methodology highlighting that the process is not just about who we know from the past, there is a strong effort made to get to know new people.

Wyona moved on to discuss soft skills: competencies, communications, and driving forces. She highlights behavioral style - how we go about doing our work. Above that is adapted behavior. Driving forces refers to "why" a person does what they do, what makes them get out of bed in the morning, while acumen anchors the work.

Wyona spoke more about competencies: diplomacy, interpersonal skills, flexibility, decision making, influencing others, resiliency, stakeholder focus, and not-named: leadership. These are the top 7 competencies we've identified through questionnaires to Council members. Wyona asked Council members for feedback.

Allyce Najimy would like to see something about authentic relationship-building skills. Susan Leff added that negotiation seems highly important, especially with the legislature. Karen Barry thought the list looked good as-is. Bruce clarified that there are actually 25 core competencies, these are just the top seven; all 25 will be evaluated.

Allyce further explained what she meant by relationship building. She didn't want to see, "I need money and then I don't talk to you for another year." Or for the final candidate to only talk to people who are influencing the cultural money. She'd like to see the agency hire someone who can build really genuine strong relationships.

Karen Hurvitz would like to add creativity and vision to the list of competencies.

Wyona moved onto Communication highlighting: interaction, versatile, people-oriented, frequent interaction with others; we are looking for someone who is extroverted. Wyona asked the Council for feedback.

Karen Barry thinks building relationships is critical. She would also want someone with established relationships and advanced working knowledge of state government, budgets and numbers. Cecil would like someone compassionate. Troy, compelling or inspiring. Karen Barry added that introverted energy can be incredibly effective as well. Karen Hurvitz added that a knowledge of history and culture in Massachusetts is important.

Bruce let the Council know that the team will also look at the personalities of the agency's seven supervisors, leaders in the agency to see what hard and soft skills were already present within the team.

Next up: Motivations – receptive, altruistic, instinctive, collaborative. These are the driving forces behind a person's work. Bruce notes that this is based on the six core elements which include: knowledge, utility, surroundings, others, power, and methodologies. Wyona clarifies this is not a psychology test. This is a tool to reduce bias and create frameworks that will infuse the entire process.

Next: Acumen – understanding others, practical thinking, systems of judgement, sense of self, role awareness, self-direction. This helps to craft questions for candidates based on who they are. Professional background is obviously important, too. ACG wants to hear from Council on that piece as well.

Karen Barry stated that she did not feel the search should be limited to those who have run a state arts agency in the past. She realizes pay equity is another sensitivity that we as a Council have faced. There will be candidates that are valued at a much higher level than state government pays, there are limitations on state budget and perceptions to think of.

Susan Leff said it is tempting to revert to a comfort level, to look for someone who has exact skill set, or someone who, professionally, looks like Anita, we have to resist that. Susan noted that "well, MA is different" is something she frequently hears during search - processes, but that the agency can hire at an executive level out-of-market, that there would be a steep but fast learning curve, and our executive team is very strong. We should aim for the best set of qualities in this 360 degree picture and not limit ourselves; we should also note that this person will face constant change with term limits on Council members and legislators, organizations will have leadership changes; this person will face constant change.

Wyona explained that the goal is to have those conversations with key stakeholders, with the limitations that Susan has detailed but that when ACG writes the competencies it is with the understanding that there is already a strong leadership team in place. Bruce added that he was glad the Council was open to candidates from other fields and other states and then further clarified that the search is very open: open to Council members and staff as well. That there should be no one who has an inside track. Response to any inquiry needs to be that we have hired a search firm, that's it.

Matthew Keator expressed that he would like to hear would like to know David and Jen's thoughts. Wyona clarified that ACG is meeting with agency staff tomorrow.

David explained that as the senior team, they are well-aware that the Council is the appointed authority, that the team has a great deal of experience, and know what goes into running the agency. He views his, Jen's and Bethann's roles as being a resource. They are here to support the Council and while they all have personal ideas of what to look for in a candidate, the team is built to adapt to whomever is hired. Jen added that she would be following the lead of the Council and Task Force, and Bethann agreed.

Allyce requested to clarify her earlier point. She agrees we should be open to people with all different backgrounds, but with an eye toward what we have done but also what we will do, adding that someone who can interact with the business world along with the cultural sector would make for a strong candidate. Nina asked Allyce to further clarify. Allyce says the world is going to change. How are we thinking about the future and how does that relate to who we are going to hire; a connection to the business world would be good. Nina said surely there could be a conversation about the business world and added that the current vision for the agency is based on the strategic plan. Bruce let Council members know that elements of the strategic plan are included in the draft position posting.

Kathy Castro highlighted the importance of diversity and inclusion in the search process and in all work done by the agency noting that the Grants Committee had discussed possibly reallocating towards DEI efforts. Jen acknowledged that in the short-term some

grant programs will have lower demand due to the impacts of Covid-19 and that DEI work will be important as the agency makes those shifts.

Cecil remarked that Allyce had made an interesting point about the agency's strategic plan. Not to say we'd drive away from it, but we should let it evolve and certainly a new Executive Director would want to drive the plan in a new way. She hoped there would be opportunities for new ED to "blue sky" the new reality, but noted that the strategic plan is needed to create focus. Wyona agreed that a key focus of a visionary leader is to be part of that plan.

Barbara Schaffer Bacon added that she hoped in the course of interviewing we could hear about ideas people have. That we want new ideas and don't want to put a narrow bend on things. Wyona explained that initially ACG will talk with candidates about their previous experience but eventually there will be a shift and they'll talk about a future vision.

Bruce noted that ACG would be talking with leaders at MassHumanities, MassCreative and other partners. Barbara encouraged the team to also talk with the Barr Foundation, The Boston Foundation, and the Network for Arts Administrators of Color.

Nina thanked Wyona, Bruce, and María for their in-depth presentation. She encouraged Council members to reach out to ACG should they receive any inquiries about the position. Wyona agreed and asked Council members to remain out of the process, to refer interested parties to ACG.

Karen Barry asked if the posting and salary range would be shared before advertising. Bruce responded that the posting will be shared but the team is unsure about the salary, they are still talking with the Search Task Force about that decision.

Wyona thanked all for attending. Nina as Chair adjourned the meeting.