

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 2020**

**ONLINE MEETING**

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM

**Committee Members Present** were

Nina Fialkow, Chair, Mass Cultural Council  
Marc Carroll, Vice Chair, Mass Cultural Council  
Jo-Ann Davis  
Victoria Marsh  
Troy Siebels

**Staff Members Present** were

Anita Walker, Executive Director  
David Slatery, Deputy Director  
Bethann Steiner, Communications Director  
Jen Lawless, Operations Director  
Ann Petruccelli, Chief of the Executive Director's Office

**Nina Fialkow** opened the meeting by referring to the Open Meeting Law Statement since no guests were present. Nina then asked that the minutes from four previous Committee meetings be approved. Upon motion duly made and seconded and after roll call vote noting that Sherry Dong was absent, it was unanimously

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approves the minutes of the March 3, 2020, March 24, 2020, March 31, 2020 and April 27, 2020 Executive Committee Meetings in the form presented to the Executive Committee at its June 2, 2020 Meeting.

Nina then asked Anita Walker to give her Executive Director's report.

**Anita** began by reporting that the staff is continuing to work from home and have been for 10 weeks, but this has in no way impeded productivity. In fact, they've rolled out seven grant programs adding up to six million dollars in grants. Five of those grant programs were brand new. In addition to grants and with the challenge of new technology, services and technical assistance have remained core to what the agency does, and every team has found a way to continue. Creative Youth Development holds weekly meetings that are now attracting participants from across the country. We are learning where technology is a great asset and where it is not. Weekly convenings have allowed the field to dig into subject matter week after week, make progress on challenges and develop solutions, as opposed to meeting once a year and then dispersing.

With regard to staff working remotely, Anita reported that the Governor had issued reopening phases for the state and the first phase is one that would allow businesses to slowly reopen with 25% of staff reporting in person. However, what is required to make this happen is extensive. Our building at 10 Saint James Avenue has done a lot of work to prepare the physical space, but there are still there are quite a few expenses that would be required in order to bring staff back. We are continuing to have regular conversations with staff about coming back to the office and about how we can continue to improve practices of working from home. The agency has also established strict protocols about staff coming into the office to retrieve items from their desks. When staff members were asked about coming back to work in the office there was less concern about the space, and more concern about commuting and childcare. Anita noted that the Governor did say those who are able to work from home should continue to do so. Senior Staff decided we would not ask our staff to come back in at this time. In time as guidelines loosen and more businesses are allowed to more fully open, there will be many issues to address with our physical space. For now, we are paying close attention to the needs of the staff and the conditions they work in. Anita noted that the staff has experienced a good deal of stress and anxiety

around Covid-19 in recent days and mentioned that the agency has contracted HR support in Joanne Horgan of Third Sector New England available to the team. Joanne has been asked to lead a self-care workshop for staff this summer.

Anita went on to discuss the agency's recent events including a Town Hall forum with Senator Ed Kennedy and Representative Paul McMurtry, Co-Chairs of the Committee on Arts, Tourism, and Cultural Development; a Town Hall Forum with Congressman Jim McGovern to discuss the federal response to Covid-19; and plans to hold a seminar focused on the Healthy Buildings Project at Harvard's School of Public Health.

Anita then began her update to the Committee about what is happening legislatively with the state budget. Anita mentioned Bethann Steiner's recent blog article.

**Bethann** indicated that not a lot of concrete information was available. There are estimates on the state deficit that range from four to eight billion dollars and legislators in A&F need to come to an agreement in terms of the revenue projection. Things are very up in the air, but all conversations indicate they are very hopeful for more federal stimulus. Bethann also reported that the possibility existed that the House and Senate could budget together, instead of having two separate debates followed by conference committee. It has even been discussed that Leadership will not allow individual legislators to earmark local priorities in the FY21 budget.

**Anita** added that she and Bethann and she are in close contact with the Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development Committee Chairs and that they'd all connected for a great discussion last week. Bethann will keep in regular contact.

Anita then informed the Committee about new legislation introduced by Representatives Barrett and Pignatelli that included \$75 million for the cultural sector. The bill is now in the TACD Committee and there will be a hearing on it soon.

Mass Cultural Council yesterday launched its third survey to the field. The survey will ask similar questions to previous surveys tied to financial impact - what it will actually cost organizations to reopen, how is your business model going to be impacted, how will your bottom line be impacted, can you open at all, or not until there is a vaccine? The deadline to

complete the survey is June 30, and the agency plans to use that data to build a package of investments including grants, services, and technical assistance.

Anita went on to discuss virtual events currently being presented by the agency:

The **UP Awards** are taking place each day this week, streaming on the agency's website. This is timely given that inclusion is the centerpiece of UP and there is much discussion around the traumatic and horrific events in Minneapolis. This underscores our work and the need to address the current conversation around race and social justice.

**Culture Chats** are ongoing. We have presented 12 full hours of chatting since mid-March and we learn something new every time. Recent guests include Tim Ritchie, the new President of the Museum of Science and Gretchen Nielsen, Executive Director of From the Top.

**Nina** thanked Anita for her update and moved onto the next agenda item: FY21 Planning.

**Anita** introduced the session by explaining that the senior staff team wanted discuss with the Executive Committee their planning process heading into budget season. Anita mentioned that the Committee members had received a draft of the planning timeline from Jen Lawless. Anita explained that in a typical budget year senior staff would meet with program staff, then program staff would make requests to senior staff for the coming year, and senior staff would discuss those requests at a retreat and draft a budget. This year is obviously different.

Anita explained that at the Grants Committee meeting taking place after this Executive Committee meeting, the first part of the agenda would be devoted to regular business. The second part of the agenda would be an opportunity for Committee members to hear from program staff. The reason for this: last year senior staff understood that Council members wanted to spend more time with us on the planning process in advance of the August meeting when a new annual budget is typically discussed and voted on. So today, Grants Committee members will hear from three program areas – Artists, Communities, and Education and at next week's Grants Committee meeting they'd hear from staff from the

Cultural Investment Portfolio, Creative Youth Development, and UP, as well as hear more about the agency's partnership grants.

Anita mentioned that Jen Lawless also distributed graphs showing where grant money is being distributed across the state. Jen has looked at aggregate investments we are making to make sure we are meeting the needs our communities.

Anita went on to acknowledge that this is not a normal year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. None of our organizations are open other than zoos and gardens, and this is going to be a year of "Recovery, Rebuilding, and Renewal". We are not necessarily ever going back to normal, but rather building something new and in doing so can dismantle legacies of privilege, discrimination, and lack of equitable access.

Anita cited the importance of the agency focusing on its strength as a service agency, not just as a funder. The agency is strong because of the people who provide excellent services. At this point, specific budget numbers are almost meaningless. Staff intends to focus on providing service and continuing to devote 75% of its budget to grants while maintaining staff levels. We have assumed the elimination of in-person events in the coming year.

Anita then asked if David, Jen, or Bethann had anything to add.

**Jen** explained that in terms of process the June Council meeting will focus more on typical "May meeting" items- not FY21 planning.

**David** explained that at this point that any anticipated numbers for next year's budget are all speculative, no one knows yet what we will be working with. We assume there will be fewer resources and we know there won't be any draft budgets until at least July 1. We may be working with 1/12 budgets for some time. Right now, we are doing very high-level planning, we'd need more facts and figures before we go beyond that.

**Nina** asked the staff to speak about the 1/12 budget and month-to-month way of operating and describe how that would be managed.

**David** said that typically the agency gets an allocation of the budget at the beginning of a new fiscal year and runs basic business until the August meeting. This year if we get one month at a time and we don't know what the overall year looks like, there will be no resources to make

decisions on an overall yearly budget for the Council. There will be no grants until the legislature passes and the Governor signs a final budget.

**Marc Carroll** asked what the month-to-month allocations are based off of.

**Bethann** explained further that typically when the budget isn't ready a 1/12 budget means level funding, but with the deficit we just don't know.

**David** explained that purely as budget exercise, the agency was told by Administration & Finance that they are using the Governor's budget for this year which isn't as high as what the FY20 budget provided.

**Bethann** added that members of the state legislature themselves don't know what will happen just yet. Leadership has to determine where things stand and they are not ready to do that yet, they are still looking for info from the federal government.

**Anita** explained that there so many unknowns it would be irresponsible for them to tell us anything. They need to wait on federal stimulus. All we know is that events and convenings are gone for us in the coming year, we know we can have our staff provide services, we know how valuable those services are. Anita mentioned that the emails she gets from the State House typically indicate that folks are happy for the grants they receive, but it is the technical assistance and counseling from our staff that is truly valuable.

**Jo-Ann Davis** remarked that with so much uncertainty, it would be hard to take any other approach. She then asked if the staff anticipates any reduction in force.

**Anita** responded that everyone is nervous. Everyone can read the paper and know that things are precarious. The team has built three different budget scenarios were able to maintain staff under each one we have scenarios, have subbed \$2, \$4 or \$6 million dollar cut and we were able to maintain staff under each one. If the news is worse than the three scenarios, we are anticipating there is most likely the possibility of furloughs; furloughs are sometimes mandated by the state. We can only say to our staff that they are critical to the work we do, that we value them and will hold onto them as long as we can.

**David** added that we are being very careful, not making outward plans, and know we have vacancies coming up as people retire. We believe we have cushions built in.

**Victoria Marsh** stated that the framework senior staff had constructed makes sense to her, it seems there is a structure and guidepost to follow, and she appreciates the work the team has done.

**Anita** added that she was eager to see the results of the survey. Those results will help us hone in on where the investment goes. It will provide great guidance. We have also had conversations with people serving on the Governor's reopening task force and one thing that is ringing true is that there are two issues here: health and the economy. They are not separate issues; they are integrated at moment but it feels like state is looking at them separately.

**Anita** explained that the team was trying to find avenues into the greater discussion so that the agency and cultural organizations can be part of the holistic plan from the Governor. She went onto say that they'd had plenty of conversations with the field: they want a safe environment. They want trust with patrons. Anita sited a gaping lack of information from people who are experts, and said we need experts to tell us what to do. In terms of cultural sector, that has not been forthcoming.

**Jo-Ann** informed the group that guidelines for healthcare organizations were also sparse, very little knowledgeable resources to help folks determine how to reopen.

**Anita** said the agency is uncomfortable being the source of information for people because this is not our expertise. As we gather resources, we are putting them on our Covid-19 webpage and we are referring to the Governor's orders, we don't intend to compete or deviate from them. There is just a frustration with the lack of information.

**Troy** stated that he assumed the Hanover will be part of Phase 4 of the Governor's plan. This assumption is based on nothing other than the Hanover is a large venue. He also indicated that they'd like to explore outdoor programming, but there is a lack of clarity around outdoor gatherings as well. They are hoping to open back up in October, but want to be careful and do it right and avoid wasting time or money.

**Nina** asked if modifications to a theater would fall under the guidelines of the Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF)

**Anita** responded and explained that anything capital is eligible for CFF. In the survey to the field we've asked what kind of capital investment do you need to make in order to reopen. This would be fodder for a CFF increase. One really exciting prospect is our field taking the lead in healthy buildings, Joe Allen is the hottest thing going, and had so many interesting facts. Everyone knows we need clean air outside, but you spend 90% of your life indoors, how much time have you spent thinking about indoor air? Joe does studies on sick buildings. He says your building maintenance crew has a greater impact on your health than your doctor.

**Jo-Ann** left the meeting at 2:30pm.

**Anita** continued to explain that Joe Allen already has best practices for managing during Covid, now he wants to look way ahead to rebrand our spaces as healthy spaces. There are already programs like LEED, and at a time where health is so central and people want to be in healthy spaces, you'll find downtown buildings will be empty. They are on contract to design the new ART, and Joe has agreed to do a webinar with us and Diane Paulus so we can get our field, in the process we are taking a step forward.

- 10-minute break -

The meeting was reconvened at 2:45pm.

**David** referring to the meeting's agenda indicated that the Committee would now walk through the proposed agenda for the June 18<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. David said there were three votes the Council may want to take:

1. A vote to authorize a contract with the selected executive search firm;
2. A vote to set interim leadership of the Council until the new Executive Director is hired.; and
3. A vote to allow the Executive Committee to act in the event we receive extra emergency federal funding from the NEA.



**Marc Carroll** asked if the funding specifically needed to be from the NEA.

**David** indicated that was what the prior resolution addressed but money could come from NEFA or from another federal agency.

**Nina** asked David to work on the wording to include other sources of funding.

**Nina** asked if how notifications would occur once a search firm was selected

**Marc** said his understanding was that we'd notify the firm, but it would be pending the approval of the Council.

**Nina** said she wanted the timing to be precise and that it should all happen at the same time. She doesn't want anyone to think they were not kept in the loop. It is very important to think about timing.

**Marc** asked if a timeline was included in the original RFP.

**David** says we will select the firm by June 15<sup>th</sup>, but we can put off posting to CommBuys until after then and we can give a memo to Council on June 18<sup>th</sup> about the selection

**Jen** said it sounded like the task force will not have a decision until the end of the day on June 15<sup>th</sup>, so we could work on a memo between the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Nina** said that she is sensitive that Council members feel they are kept updated.

**Jen** suggests the team tell the selected firm only on the 15<sup>th</sup> and send a memo to Council on the 16<sup>th</sup> giving them two days to read it.

The Committee assented

**Nina** reported that she and Anita have had a conversation and that Anita will send out a memo about her thoughts on the transition within the week. The timing is right since it's her last month.

**David** read the remainder of the proposed agenda for the June 18<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting.

**Victoria** asked if when we do the presentation of the FY20 Artist grants for approval, will we do a slideshow.

**Jen** responded that yes, Kelly Bennett and Dan Blask will be able to show images virtually during the online meeting. Upon motion duly made and seconded and after roll call vote noting that Sherry Dong and Jo-Ann Davis were absent, it was unanimously

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approve the draft June 18, 2020 Mass Cultural Council Agenda presented to the Executive Committee at its June 2, 2020 Meeting.

The stated end time for the meeting having been reached, Nina as Chair adjourned the meeting.