

**UNOFFICIAL DRAFT SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE AT ITS NEXT MEETING
MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
OF
MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2020
ON-LINE MEETING**

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order at 11:00 A.M.

Council Members Present

Nina Fialkow, Chair
Marc Carroll, Vice Chair
Victoria Marsh
Barbara Schaffer Bacon
Troy Siebels
Matthew Keator
Sandy Dunn
Allyce Najimy
Kathy Castro
Ann Murphy
Karen Barry
Karen Hurvitz
Susan Leff
Cecil Barron Jensen

Staff members present were Anita Walker, David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Bethann Steiner and Erik Holmgren

Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order and had the following read into the record.

Please note that this meeting is an open meeting of a public body subject to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. A notice of this meeting together with the agenda was posted on Mass Cultural Council's website 48 or more hours ago (excluding weekends and holidays).

This meeting shall be open and accessible to all members of the public except at such times when this body has voted to go into closed executive session under the Open Meeting Law.

Please note that this body has invited staff of Mass Cultural Council to be present at the meeting.

Mass Cultural Council welcomes members of the public to attend its public meetings. Under the Open Meeting Law, however, this is not a public hearing and public testimony will not be taken. Individuals may not address the meeting without permission of the Chair.

Any member of the public may record this meeting provided that they first notify the Chair and must not interfere with the meeting. The Chair will then inform the members of the meeting that they are being recorded. This meeting will be recorded by the Council using the Zoom online meeting application

This meeting is a virtual meeting held under the Open Meeting Law as modified by the Governor's recent emergency declaration. Only Committee members, Council members and invited staff will be able to address the meeting. All other persons will be muted. Please note that anyone attempting to disrupt the meeting may be muted, have their ability to project video images shut off or even removed from the meeting, at the discretion of the chair

Draft minutes of the open session of this meeting shall be kept and shall be posted on Mass Cultural Council's website no later than 30 days after the meeting provided that such minutes shall not be considered official until they have been approved by this body in open session. Individuals asserting a violation of the Open Meeting Law may file a complaint with this body within 30 days or with the Attorney General's office thereafter.

Nina welcomed the members to this special meeting to consider the disposition of certain emergency funding received from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) from the federal CARES Act and to consider a resolution concerning future emergency funding. She asked Anita Walker to present the recommendation on CARES Act funding.

Anita thanked all the members for attending at short notice this special meeting of the Council. She explained that two weeks ago (just after the Council's April 7 meeting) we learned on a call with the NEA that the NEA was moving the CARES Act out to the states with speed. Chair Mary Ann Carter of the NEA is very data-driven and interested in getting the funds out the door and working in the community. In addition to funds provided to the states, the NEA is also making direct grants and in the interest of time, is sending them only to pre-qualified grantees- i.e. those that have received funding in the past few years. She encouraged the states to also move the funds quickly. The NEA also recognized that this would be an upcoming hard time for state arts agencies and indicated that the new funding will not require a match, not require additional reporting, be flexible in terms of timing and allow up to \$50,000 per state to be used for expenses of the state arts agency.

Anita explained that the current proposal was focused on "need, speed and diversity" in the use of these funds. As the circulated materials indicate, we are focusing on SPEED by proposing to provide these funds go to the current 74 Creative Youth Development (CYD) program (YouthReach, Ser Hacer) grantees, who have already been vetted and approved for funding this year so there will be no delay due to an application process. In terms of NEED, these programs serve more than 9400 vulnerable young people and have lost funding in recent years from foundations due to a shift in focus. The affected youth will suffer a loss of the safe space that these programs offer if they go away and problems of isolation and trauma will be exacerbated by the current shutdown of activity due to the COVID-19 emergency. As for DIVERSITY, more than 80% of the youth participants in these programs are persons of color from communities disproportionately affected by the coronavirus.

Anita referred to the circulated materials and indicated that the CARES Act funding would provide \$7000 grants to the CYD grantees except that for any program which received Safe Harbors funding of \$2250 (approved last meeting), those organizations would receive \$4750. Anita then asked Erik Holmgren to speak more about the programs and how they were faring during these times and noting that a weekly call with the

programs designed to keep in touch with Massachusetts programs had attracted the interest of CYD programs across the nation looking for ideas and strategies and the most recent call had included more than 100 participants.

Erik summarized the needs of the CYD programs which were frankly quite challenging even before the current crisis. They are struggling with ways to connect to youth right now and dealing with huge gaps in technology. Organizations are becoming de facto mental health centers. Participants tend to come from low income demographics which have suffered a disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis. The organizations are trying to focus on relationships and seeking to retain the teachers (who have established relationships with students) during this time. They would be difficult to replace. There is a mixture of fatigue and hope. Erik concluded by inviting Council members to participate on the weekly call mentioned by Anita.

Anita gave kudos to Erik and the CYD team for bringing the national conversation to the Commonwealth. CYD is the one program intentionally focused on the next generation and directly investing in youth.

Anita asked David Slatery to explain the expense provisions in the NEA guidance. David indicated that up to \$50,000 was permitted to be used by agencies and the proposal contemplates \$38,300 to be spent on rent (as permitted per the NEA guidance). This amount allowed for \$7000 grants to each CYD program and was a prudent investment toward next year when funds were likely to be reduced. Any money spent on rent will free other state funds to be available for grants and services to the field next year.

Nina asked for questions and Karen Barry was recognized and mentioned that she was thrilled that funds were going to this area and asked about updating the funding list. Erik indicated the CYD funding list would be updated. Karen also raised the issue of some CARES Act funding going to municipalities to make them whole through July and noting that some of the CYD grantees were municipalities suggesting that perhaps that they might not need this funding.

Ann Murphy stated that this was a great story and wanted to get the word out and emphasized the number of young people impacted.

Barbara Schaffer Bacon thanked the staff for their work and asked if all the programs were actively working or toward preservation of the programs. She asked if any programs have discontinued or is there any program we are not funding?

Erik responded that our applications have continued by 50% last time we opened up the grant pool 2 years ago so we are close to the saturation point. There may be others out there but we can look at them in the next grant cycle which may occur after the current emergency ends.

Erik reported the programs are monitored closely and we have received no reports of any program discontinuing. CYD grants are focused on program support not on operating support for an organization although per the terms of the NEA Cares funding, these funds may be used for operating support type expenditures like salaries and facility costs. Anita notes that in contrast NEH CARES Act funds are more restrictive.

Allyce Najjimy mentioned that she funds the Foundation To Be Named Later and thought it was great that general operating support was available to these programs. She wondered if rather than holding on to expenses, we could increase the grants by \$500.

Anita mentioned that staff had discussed this but decided to retain expenses as we feel nervous about the future. David stated that we believed it was prudent to retain some hedge against future funding reductions and since the NEA had basically invited agencies to address operating needs by making the retention of expenses so facile. He stated the Council was going to need to be very opportunistic about funding sources in order to be able to continue deliver services to the field in FY 21. He stated that the expenses would go to pay approximately one and a half months of rent in FY 21 and that the money saved would go to Council programs and services.

Anita asked Bethann to describe recent news about arts funding ideas. Bethann referenced Representatives Pignatelli and Barrett's stand-alone idea to provide \$75 million in funding to support cultural organizations. They are seeking to have this idea admitted as a bill to the legislature and have described it "a starting place for a conversation"

Barbara spoke in favor of retaining the expense funds stating that the future is unknown and it is prudent to have some reserves. Anita noted that with no increase in staff, we had put out two new grant programs

and with approval today, are about to put out a third -all within the last month. She noted that the fiscal staff had increased their quantity greatly.

Nina then called for a vote and referred to resolution circulated with the meeting materials.

Upon motion duly and seconded, it was voted unanimously by roll call vote, noting that members Sherry Dong, Jo-Ann Davis, Lillian Do and Jake Brennan were absent, as follows

RESOLVED: that the Council approve the allocation of NEA CARES Act funds to its Creative Youth Development programs in accordance with the memo provided to it at its April 29, 2020 Meeting.

Nina thanked the Council for its speedy work on this matter. Barbara noted that the grantees were not evenly distributed across the state. Erik noted that he hoped to expand on the geography in the next round of funding. Victoria thanked Erik for all of his and his team's hard work.

Nina then noted that more emergency funding might be made available and moved to the second item on the agenda- a resolution delegating authority to the Executive Committee to approve future emergency funding to existing programs without the need the need for a full Council meeting. This would allow the Council to move very quickly and the action would be offered to the Council for ratification at the next occurring Council meeting. Nina asked for comments

Karen Barry indicated she would not be in favor of such a resolution- she understood the need to move with speed but believed that ratification did not offer enough opportunity for other members to weigh in on funding decisions. She noted that today's meeting was put together quickly with little delay. She stated faith in the staff and Executive Committee but wanted to the ability to consider actions beforehand.

Sandy Dunn wanted the delegation to have more specifics and limitations so it wasn't as open-ended.

Victoria suggested maybe the delegation could be limited as only being applicable when the Council cannot meet with a quorum with X days of notice.

Barbara noted that she agreed with the comments and did not want the full Council to cede so much authority to a committee.

Kathy Castro asked if this could be limited to the current COVID emergency and Nina indicated that it was.

Nina thanked the members for their thoughts and indicated she appreciated the comments.

Anita suggested the resolution could be redrafted to reflect the comments and brought back to a future meeting.

Karen Barry indicated it should be simple and non-lawyerly. Cecil Barron Jensen stated there was a strong diverse Grants Committee that should be part of this. Matthew Keator opined that such authority should only be limited to times the Council is unable to meet. Sandy mentioned that all members should be notified if there is lack of a quorum. Karen Hurvitz saw no need for the resolution since the Council was able to meet quickly and easily today.

Victoria suggested a revised resolution and directing staff to add some of the conditions mentioned. Nina indicated that staff should draft a revised resolution and circulate it prior to the next Council meeting.

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