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

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL

TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2025

ONLINE MEETING

Council Members Present were

Marc Carroll, Chair
Jo-Ann Davis, Vice Chair
Ché Anderson
Rhonda Anderson
Emily Bramhall
Simone Early
Iván Espinoza-Madrigal
Cecil Barron Jensen
Donna Haghighat
Diane Asadorian Masters
Anika Lopes
Ellice Patterson

Also Present were Mass Cultural Council Staff Members Michael J. Bobbitt, David Slatery, Bethann Steiner, Catherine Cheng-Anderson, Ann Petruccelli Moon, and Dawn Heinen.

Chair Marc Carroll called the meeting to order at 10:05AM and asked Deputy Executive Director David Slatery to read the Open Meeting Law statement.

After David read the statement, the Chair explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss and vote on two matters: one, a compensation recommendation for Executive Director Michael Bobbitt; the second, the process for regular reviews of the Executive Director's compensation moving forward. The Chair gave a summary of the events that led to today's meeting: late last year, Executive Director Michael Bobbitt requested an adjustment to his salary because he felt it fell below that of his peers. The Council last met to review Michael's compensation in August 2023. At that time the Executive Committee agreed that if a salary adjustment was requested again, the Council should hire a third-party consultant to assist with salary benchmarking. This is exactly what the Council did. Arts Consulting Group (ACG) – the same group that worked with Mass Cultural Council for the Executive Director search that led to Michael's hiring – performed salary benchmarking research and produced a report and recommendation. ACG suggested the Executive Director's salary should fall within

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\$179,000 and \$215,000 annually. At the time of Michael's request for an increase, his salary was \$185,000, which did fall within the recommended range. In January 2025, Michael, along with all senior directors and managers at Mass Cultural Council, received a 3% cost-of-living adjustment, increasing his annual salary to \$190,550. (*The meeting minutes have been corrected to reflect this amount, which was mistakenly stated as \$195,500 during the meeting.*) However, after further meetings, the latest of which took place on April 16, the Committee decided to provide Michael with an increase and bring his salary to \$197,000 annually – the midpoint of ACG's recommended range – given Michael's outstanding performance and his years of service. The Chair thanked Vice Chair Jo-Ann Davis for her work as the Committee moved through the process and asked if she had anything to add.

The Vice Chair thanked the Chair and stated that he accurately summarized the process. She also shared that in her experience as an HR professional and as a member of the Council in 2023 when the Executive Director's salary was previously discussed, the practice of hiring a third-party consultant for salary benchmarking is advisable, wise, and the right thing to do.

The Chair recognized Ché Anderson, who echoed the sentiments shared by the Chair and Vice Chair's and expressed that while this was a challenging process with a number of factors at play, one of the things the Executive Committee agreed on is that Michael is doing an excellent job as the Agency's Executive Director.

The Chair recognized Cecil Barron Jensen who thanked the Chair and Vice Chair for handling this sensitive and difficult process so professionally; she added that the Committee loves the work Michael is doing.

The Chair recognized Simone Early who asked if Michael would receive another cost of living increase this year. The Chair explained that Senior Director of Business Operations and Chief Financial Officer Catherine Cheng-Anderson informed him that another cost-of-living increase of 2% will most likely occur in July. If it does, Michael will receive that increase as well. As part of the process the Council will vote on later in the meeting, the Executive Committee will reserve the right to determine if the Executive Director receives cost-of-living increases on a case-by-case basis and if there is a scenario where the Council doesn't feel it's the right time for the Executive Director to accept a cost-of-living increase a meeting can be held to discuss this.

The Chair recognized Diane Asadorian Masters who asked if there has been any talk of a hiring freeze or funding freeze within state agencies given that state government budgets will be impacted by the reduction in funding from the federal government. The Chair asked Catherine Cheng-Anderson to respond, and she stated that she and the senior leadership team are watching this closely but haven't heard anything official pertaining to the executive branch just yet.

There were no further questions. The Chair reiterated that the salary recommendation for Executive Director Michael Bobbitt is \$197,000 effective today, April 22, with no retroactive pay. He asked for a motion and a second to approve the recommendation. Donna Haghighat moved to approve the recommendation; Rhonda Anderson seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Allyce Najimy, Julie Wake, Ashley Occhino, Mark Snyder, David Kong, Petrina Martin, and Yvonne Hao were absent, it was unanimously

RESOLVED: That the Council approves the Executive Committee's salary recommendation for Executive Director Michael Bobbitt as announced at the Council Meeting.

The Chair explained that the second item the Council would consider is a resolution to adopt a policy moving forward on how the Council will handle Executive Director compensation. The Executive Committee agreed that reviewing the Executive Director's salary every three years to ensure the position is compensated fairly and that the Agency can retain the best possible talent. Every three years a qualified third-party professional will be retained to provide salary benchmarking data. In addition, and as was just discussed, the Council will reserve the right to decide whether cost-of-living increases apply to the Executive Director's compensation. Cost-of-living increases will be automatic unless the Council recommends a review and discussion.

The Chair recognized Simone Early who expressed that she did not believe the recent salary benchmarking research by ACG included comparisons across state agency heads with budgets similar to Mass Cultural Council's. Simone requests that this be part of future salary benchmarking research.

The Chair asked Simone if she was referring to the timeline or the research itself. Simone refers to the information included in the report; the current report looks at many different executives doing the exact same work Michael is doing, but it did not include a comparison between executives in state agencies working with state budgets.

The Chair recognized Diane Asadorian Masters who asked if the salary review every three years would also include a performance review. The Chair explained that it would be a salary review, but that when the Council is considering whether to give the Executive Director a raise, their performance would be part of that consideration.

The Chair recognized Iván Espinoza-Madrigal who expressed that the Council shouldn't need to wait for the formal report or study to implement salary changes. Adjustments could be made based on an internal year-end review. Benchmarking, which we conduct every three years, is a separate process focused on gathering external data to ensure our compensation remains competitive. It's important to distinguish between these two, as we want to maintain the flexibility to make necessary salary adjustments between benchmarking studies.

The Chair clarified that historically there have been at least one or two cost-of-living increases given by the Commonwealth each year that the Executive Director will still be eligible for; the position will not have a pay increase freeze for the three years between benchmarking studies. The Chair asked Catherine Cheng-Anderson to confirm this, and she stated that this cadence of cost-of-living increases is accurate, adding that when the Commonwealth goes through economic hardship this could change for senior leadership and managers.

There were no further questions, and the Chair asked for a motion and a second to approve the policy. Diane Asadorian Masters moved to approve the policy; Anika Lopes seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Allyce Najimy, Julie Wake, Ashley Occhino, Mark Snyder, David Kong, Petrina Martin, and Yvonne Hao were absent, it was unanimously

RESOLVED: That, the Council shall adopt the following policy when approving the Executive Director annual compensation

- No less frequently than every three years hereafter, the Council shall retain a qualified independent third party professional firm to provide executive salary benchmarking data with respect to the Executive Director's compensation, all on such terms as the Chair may direct; and
- The Council shall reserve the right whether to allow any Commonwealth "cost of living" increases for managers generally to apply to the Executive Director's compensation.

The Chair concluded the meeting by encouraging Council Members to attend Creative Sector Day at the Massachusetts State House on April 30 stating that it is an important event and a great way to celebrate the creative sector.

Council Members were confused because there was an erroneous message sent via an Outlook calendar item earlier that morning indicating that the event was canceled. It is not canceled, and Deputy Chief of Staff Ann Petruccelli Moon will send a note clarifying this to the full Council momentarily.

There were no further questions, and the Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:32pm.