

Posted on 07/14/2026



Power of culture

Unofficial Draft Subject to Approval by the Council at its next meeting

**Minutes of the Meeting of Mass Cultural Council's
Executive Committee
Wednesday, June 17, 2026**

Online Meeting

Council Members Present:

- Ché Anderson, Chair
- Jo-Ann W. Davis, Vice Chair
- Cecil Barron Jensen
- Simone Early
- Julie Wake
- Diane Asadorian Masters
- Vinny deMacedo
- Joyce Linehan
- Anika Lopes
- Allyce Najimy
- Ashley Occhino

Mass Cultural Council Staff Members Present:

- David Slatery, Acting Executive Director
- Ann Petruccelli Moon, Acting Chief of Staff
- Cathy Cheng-Anderson, Chief Financial Officer
- Jen Lawless, Senior Director of Program Operations
- Bethann Steiner, Senior Director of Public Affairs
- Carmen Plazas, Communications & Community Engagement Manager

Chair Ché Anderson called the meeting to order at 10:06am and asked Acting Chief of Staff Ann Petruccelli Moon to read the Open Meeting Law statement. He then asked if Committee Members had reviewed the minutes of their last meeting held on April 14, 2026. If they had, he would entertain a motion and a second to approve them. Julie Wake moved to approve the minutes; Vice Chair Jo-Ann Davis seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Iván Espinoza-Madrigal was absent, it was unanimously

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the April 14, 2026 Executive Committee Meeting in the form presented.

Ché then welcomed all present to the meeting, noting that he and Jo-Ann extended an invitation to the meeting to all Council Members, as an update on the Executive Director search process would be provided. He then paused to thank Jo-Ann for her guidance through that process and Acting Executive Director Dave Slatery for his hard work in support of it.

He began the update noting that former Chair Marc Carroll had assembled a task force to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) for an executive search firm. Their charge was to help ensure the Agency would continue its important work while moving the search process forward with urgency. He thanked all Council Members who contributed to developing the RFP.

There has been strong interest from search firms, and the goal is to complete the selection of a search firm within the next 30 days.

Once the search firm is selected, the process will move into several phases. First, an internal task force made up of Council Members will review applicants and narrow the field to a group of semifinalists. Those semifinalists will then be evaluated by a second task force composed primarily of external stakeholders, prospective partners, and members of the broader ecosystem who can provide valuable perspective on the qualities needed in our next Executive Director. That group will narrow the pool to a slate of finalists.

The recommendation will then come back to the full Council, where we will consider a single recommended finalist to lead the Agency.

An important part of this process will be engaging Agency staff. Early in the search, and again as we move toward the finalist stage, we'd like candidates to spend meaningful time with staff. It's important that candidates meet the people they will ultimately lead.

Ché shared that during his own first few months as Chair, he spent a great deal of time in the office listening to staff—learning what was working well, where there were opportunities for growth, and what aspirations people had for the Agency's future. He and Jo-Ann would like candidates to have those same opportunities to hear directly from staff, gain insight into the organization, and share their own vision for where they see the Agency going.

To summarize, we'll begin by selecting a search firm through the RFP process over the next 30 days. From there, an internal Council task force will review candidates and identify semifinalists. An external stakeholder task force will then help evaluate those semifinalists and recommend finalists. The Council will receive the final recommendation and make the ultimate selection of our next Executive Director.

The rationale for this multi-tiered process is so we ensure our next Executive Director has the confidence of the Council, the confidence of our staff, and the confidence of our partners and prospective partners. Bringing all those

perspectives into the process will help us identify the strongest possible leader to guide the Agency into the future.

With that, Ché let Council Members know he was happy to answer any questions or hear any thoughts about the process. It was clarified that while only Executive Committee Members were participating in votes and any other official actions during this meeting, all Council Members in attendance were permitted to participate in the discussion.

Joyce Linehan asked if a job description had been prepared. Ché responded that while a draft has been created, the description will not be considered final until work with the search firm begins. The draft was created based on the former Executive Director's job description and incorporated elements of the Agency's current strategic plan. Joyce asked if there would be an opportunity for Council Members to offer feedback. Dave noted that one of the first duties of the search firm outlined in the RFP is to develop a job description. Jo-Ann assured Joyce there would be plenty of opportunity for input from the Council on the job description before it was finalized.

Simone noted that in previous meetings it was discussed that there would be a description for role of those who will participate in the search task force so that if Council Members recruited potential participants, they'd be able to share an idea of the goals and time commitment.

Ché shared that an email had been sent to the Council asking for recommendations for members of the search task force and received a tremendous response. At this point, Ché has a list of 53 individuals who were recommended.

The next step is to narrow that list to a workable committee. While a group of 15 or 16 individuals could be assembled, Ché's preference is to keep it closer to nine members so the committee can work efficiently while still representing a diversity of perspectives.

If there is anyone Council Members feel should be strongly considered who isn't already on the list, they should send Ché names as soon as possible. His goal is to finalize the task force over the next week and a half.

Once the committee is established, a clear outline of its responsibilities and expectations will be provided. The primary responsibility of the task force will be to review candidates and narrow the pool to approximately five finalists for the next phase of the process.

There were no further questions, and Ché asked Dave for his Acting Executive Director's report.

Dave reported that it has been a particularly busy week and a half, especially over the last three days.

He participated in the Creative Sector Summit in New Bedford, hosted by MASSCreative, where he spoke to approximately 350 attendees from across the cultural sector about opportunities and priorities for the field. He also noted that

members of the Advancement team (Erik Holmgren and Carolyn Cole) presented alongside the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) that day.

He was thrilled to participate in the grant celebration events held on Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard on June 15.

In addition, Dave attended a half-day seminar hosted by MassHousing in Norwood and participated in a gathering of New England executive directors hosted by the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) in Providence, Rhode Island. He shared that Massachusetts continues to be viewed as a leader among the New England states, noting that, with the support of the Governor and Legislature, the Commonwealth's cultural sector is widely regarded as the strongest in the region. He remarked that peer agencies look to Massachusetts as a model for leadership and best practices.

Dave concluded his update by highlighting the Programs Committee Meeting scheduled for later that afternoon. He noted that Jen Lawless had prepared a comprehensive presentation summarizing the Agency's grantmaking activity over the past year, providing a valuable overview of the scope and impact of its programs. He encouraged Council Members with questions to attend the committee meeting, where the presentation would be shared in greater detail. He then turned the meeting back to Ché who recognized Cecil Barron Jensen and Julie Wake.

Cecil thanked everyone who participated in the recent Island events and expressed appreciation to those who made the trip.

Julie echoed those sentiments, noting that while Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard may seem geographically distant, the visits provided a valuable opportunity to connect with local artists, cultural organizations, and community leaders. She shared that the conversations were insightful and highlighted the energy surrounding the impact of cultural funding in the region. She remarked on the wide variety of creative work taking place and emphasized how meaningful it was to engage with artists and partners the Council does not often visit in person.

Julie also expressed appreciation for the time spent with Senator Cyr and Representative Moakley, noting that the events provided excellent opportunities for networking and building relationships across both island communities.

She concluded by sharing that she especially enjoyed touring downtown Nantucket and visiting the Whaling Museum, adding that she came away with many interesting facts and a greater appreciation for the island's history. She thanked everyone who helped organize and host the visit.

There were no further questions and Ché asked Bethann for her Legislative and Public Affairs report.

Bethann reported that the Islands visit was a tremendous success. She shared that when the idea of visiting both Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard in a single day was first proposed to legislators, many thought the schedule was overly ambitious. In the end, however, the timing worked well, allowing legislators to

incorporate the visits into their district day activities. She noted that having dedicated time with them on the islands made the conversations especially productive.

Bethann said one of the highlights of the day was hearing legislators express their enthusiasm for the Legislature's proposed investment in arts and culture in the FY27 budget, which remains under consideration by the Conference Committee. She reported that the Agency has fared well throughout the budget process and is on track to receive what could be the highest operating budget appropriation in its history.

She also shared that Senator Cyr, a senior member of the Senate leadership team, announced that the Agency's line item is expected to receive a five percent increase—an increase that is uncommon among state budget line items. Bethann remarked that hearing that announcement, and the applause it received in Nantucket, was a proud moment and reflected the strong support for the Agency's work. While the budget remains in Conference Committee, she expressed optimism that it will emerge in a favorable position, with the remaining questions focused primarily on which earmarks will be retained.

On the policy front, Bethann reported that the Economic Development Bond Bill continues to move through the legislative process, including several spending authorizations that would benefit the Agency. She also noted that the STEM to STEAM initiative remains under review in the House Committee on Ways and Means.

Bethann highlighted several year-end communications and data resources that have recently been published. Funding lists are now available on the Agency's website, along with updated county reports. Legislator-specific reports are also nearly complete and will be available shortly. She noted that these reports have long been one of her favorite annual projects because they provide valuable tools for strengthening relationships with elected officials by illustrating the Agency's impact in their districts.

Finally, Bethann reminded Council Members about the Agency's final public event of the fiscal year, a virtual year-end celebration scheduled for June 25 from 11am to noon. The event will feature the House and Senate Chairs of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development, the Massachusetts Poet Laureate, and more than 100 participants from across the Commonwealth. She encouraged Council members to attend if their schedules allow.

Ché thanked Bethann along with the whole team recognizing their tireless work in advancing the Agency's priorities and consistently finding opportunities to move initiatives forward. He expressed the Council's appreciation for all that the staff does on behalf of the Agency.

During closing comments, Vinny DeMacedo shared his excitement about Cape Verde's recent success in the World Cup. Born in Cape Verde, he noted that the nation of approximately 500,000 people had earned a draw against one of Europe's top teams, describing it as a "miracle on the turf."

Che added that Boston's FIFA Fan Festival has created an exciting atmosphere throughout the city. He reflected on the beauty of seeing so many cultures come together to celebrate the world's game and encouraged Council members to take advantage of the opportunity to experience the festivities.

Anika shared that she had recently attended an intimate event with Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley, who spoke about the importance of arts and culture and their impact on communities. She said the conversation reminded her of the Council's work and thanked those who participated in the Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard visits, noting how meaningful those opportunities sounded.

The end of the agenda had been reached, and Ché, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 10:39am.