



Power of culture

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE**

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2025

ONLINE MEETING

Committee Members Present were

Iván Espinoza-Madrigal, Co-Chair
Diane Asadorian Masters
Allyce Najimy
Anika Lopes
Tom Bernard
Marc Carroll – ex officio
Jo-Ann Davis – ex officio

Staff Members Present were

Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director
David Slatery, Deputy Executive Director
Cathy Cheng-Anderson, Chief Financial Officer
Bethann Steiner, Senior Director of Public Affairs
Erik Holmgren, Manager of Strategic Partnerships & Advancement

Co-Chair Iván Espinoza-Madrigal called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm and asked Deputy Executive Director David Slatery to read the Open Meeting Law statement.

Iván then asked Committee Members if they'd reviewed the minutes from their last meeting held on August 11, 2025. If they had, he would look for a motion and a second to approve those minutes. Marc Carroll moved to approve the minutes; Anika Lopes seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Committee Co-Chair Ché Anderson and Committee Members Petrina Martin, Rhonda Anderson, and David Sun Kong were absent and with Tom Bernard abstaining as he was not then a member of the Committee it was

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the August 11, 2025 Advancement Committee Meeting in the form presented.

Iván then gave his Co-Chair's report stating that it was import for Committee members to continue to speak about and publicize the importance of the Agency's Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF) program. He had had the opportunity along with Council Chair Marc Carroll to attend the recent CFF celebration event in East Bost at Zumix and reported hearing from grantee organizations the importance of CFF funding- especially for items which may sometimes be hard to feature in a standard fundraising appeal (like HVAC improvements) so the CFF is crucial in that it is uniquely situated to help cultural facilities with basic improvements. He felt this needed to be stressed to legislators, the CFF not only provides needed funds, it also can greatly assist an organization in kickstarting its capital campaigns but highlighting the state support.

Iván then asked Michael for his Executive Director's report.

Michael started by noting that Bethann Steiner would later be talking about our efforts around a CFF technical corrections bill currently pending before the legislature. Micheal thanked Council members for attending agency events and emphasized how much it meant. Advancement work continues- the Agency's Advancement Team-Erik Holmgren and Carolyn Cole- are working with the rest of the staff on advancement goals and out meeting people across the Commonwealth and it's working. Erik will speak to it a little later in the meeting.

Michael then highlighted three trips he is taking for the Agency

- To the American Society of Landscape Architects in New Orleans to help build arts & culture into the field of landscape architecture- somewhat akin to a LEED/green buildings model
- To the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark NJ to promote arts prescription as part of a Arts & Healthy Communities conference, and
- To Yale to join its Cultural Innovation Lab to advocate for more arts infrastructure

Michael concluded his report and Iván as Chair called on Bethann Steiner for the Public Affairs report.

Bethann began her report by welcoming new Committee member Tom Bernard with whom she had worked with in various capacities over many years. Bethann mentioned the agency has two active bills being considered in the legislature. Bethann testified last month on the so-called "STEM to STEAM" bill at the education committee and will be testifying later today on the Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF) technical corrections bill, which would remove certain size and age restrictions on municipal projects and specifically permit tribal governments to apply on the same basis as municipalities. She thanked Council Members Ashley, Donna and Tom for writing in support of the STEM to STEAM bill and to Jo-Ann, Diane, Tom, Mark and Donna for writing in support of the CFF bill.

Bethann then mentioned that Michael thought it would be helpful to walk the Committee members through the steps of how to write to the legislature in support of Agency actions and used the example of new member Tom Bernard's correspondence on our two bills just discussed, noting that Bethann would provide the specifics of any bill the Agency is promoting and that copies should go the relevant committees and to the

member's own legislators (which information Bethann can also provide). Tom mentioned he had done this frequently in his other positions, so it was second nature.

Bethann then mentioned that the agency was undertaking several regional convenings over the next few weeks and months. This regional approach is different from prior years when we celebrated specific programs. We will have events in Cummington to celebrate Franklin and Hampshire County grants on October 27, at the Cape Cod Museum of Art on November 3 to celebrate Cape & Islands grants and in Hopkinton on December 1 to celebrate grants in the Metro West area and all members are invited to attend and amplify.

At the conclusion of Bethann's report, Iván called on Erik Holmgren to present the Advancement report. Erik presented a Power Point slide deck outlining the team's activities in the past few months, a copy of which is available upon request. Erik highlighted the fact that the Agency was making measurable progress in the area in terms of new funds that were being spent in the creative and cultural sector. Michael and Dave also made observations during the report. At the conclusion, Erik asked for questions and members were curious about whether various health organizations were yet involved in the Arts Prescription initiative offered to make introductions. Jo-Ann mentioned Western Massa Community Health and Fallon. Tom offered to speak with Guardian/Berkshire Life (and the new DCR Commissioner on other advancement efforts) and Anika mentioned Hilltown Health. Michael and Erik promised that staff would get them all appropriate language for introductory communications.

Marc thanked Michael, Erik and the team for pushing this work and stated that maybe a standard introductory form email would be helpful to share with all the Council members.

Iván then recognized Allyce who had two questions- one was whether the Agency was thinking of "big" events to draw larger attention to the Agency's work. Michael replied that staff had been thinking of redoing the Commonwealth Awards that the agency used to hold and perhaps focusing on those outside the cultural sector who had made efforts to support arts & culture. Allyce also asked about whether staff had considered partnering with a media organization or maybe producing a PSA to attract more attention to our efforts. Michael indicated that it was something we could consider as we planned for the future.

Iván then stated that staff had presented such an impressive body of work and summarized the various things that had been discussed. He expressed that these updates were so helpful and we all need to find ways to get the members more involved so they can usefully support these efforts.

There were no further questions, and the end of the agenda had been reached. Iván, as Chair, adjourned the meeting.