

Posted on 12/5/25



*Power of culture*

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

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2025**

**ONLINE MEETING**

**Committee Members Present** were

Marc Carroll, Chair  
Jo-Ann Davis, Vice Chair  
Ché Anderson  
Cecil Barron Jensen  
Simone Early  
Julie Wake

**Council Members Present** were

Rhonda Anderson  
Diane Asadorian Masters  
Tom Bernard  
Emily Bramhall  
Donna Haghighat  
Ashley Occhino  
Ellice Patterson

**Staff Members Present** were

Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director  
David Slatery, Deputy Executive Director  
Cathy Cheng-Anderson, Chief Fiscal Officer  
Jen Lawless, Senior Director of Programs  
Ann Petruccelli Moon, Deputy Chief of Staff  
Carmen Plazas, Communications & Community Engagement Manager  
Bethann Steiner, Senior Director of Public Affairs

Chair Marc Carroll called the meeting to order at 11:03am and asked Deputy Chief of Staff Ann Petruccelli Moon to read the Open Meeting Law statement. He then gave his Chair's report. A farewell celebration for Executive Director Michael Bobbitt is scheduled

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for Tuesday, December 16<sup>th</sup> from 10am to noon at the Museum of African American History in Beacon Hill. He encouraged Committee Members to register and join the celebration and shared that the Agency learned late last week that Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll will attend. Earlier this week the Chair attended Metrowest Grant Celebration at the Hopkinton Center for the Arts. It was the final celebration of the fall tour. He noted his gratitude that Senate President Karen Spilka was able to join the event along with Representatives Arena-DeRosa and Tarsky; he also thanked Council Member Ellice Patterson for attending and commended the Public Affairs team for their hard work planning the event. He noted that this was Michael's final grant celebration event as Executive Director of Mass Cultural Council; a bittersweet moment comprised of a mix of sadness at Michael's upcoming departure, and happiness for all he has done for the cultural sector.

The Chair then let the Committee know about a recent out-of-state travel request he'd approved. Any staff travel outside Massachusetts must receive prior approval from the Executive Committee. If meeting timing makes that impossible, the request may be approved by the Chair and subsequently reported to the Executive Committee and full Council. Because the requested travel was scheduled for December 2, the Chair pre-approved it; he noted he will also share this with the full Council on December 10. The request was outlined in the Committee's meeting materials. Program Officer Käthe Swaback, was invited to participate in the Grantmakers for Thriving Youth convening in Baltimore. This is a national gathering of funders, researchers, community leaders, and youth organizers whose work centers on youth development, arts learning, equity, and community well-being. Participation in this convening will greatly strengthen and inform Käthe's work across YouthReach, Creative Experiences, the 3C Data Alliance, the YAIN network, and the Artists and Youth advancement portfolio. The Chair reported that the cost of the travel was \$400 and covered flight and lodging. There were no questions from the Committee.

He then shared that today the Committee would take a vote on his recommendation to the full Council that Deputy Executive Director Dave Slatery be appointed Acting Executive Director when Michael departs at the end of the year. He noted that the grant celebration he mentioned previously offered a great opportunity for him as Chair to speak with grantees, partners, members of the sector, and Senate President Spilka. He was pleased to report that the Senate President expressed strong confidence in the work Mass Cultural Council is doing and in the overall strength of the Agency. Even though the Council will soon begin an Executive Director search, she made it clear that she is confident in the Agency's leadership and direction. The Chair noted that some grantees were understandably sad about the transition, but everyone he spoke with echoed the Senate President's sentiments: the Agency is in a solid place. They consistently praised the Agency's staff—their direct contacts at the Agency—and remarked on how much they enjoy working with Mass Cultural Council. The Chair thanked the staff for everything they do every day; noting that none of this work is possible without their dedication to the sector.

Grantees were also curious about who the Council might hire next. They expressed confidence in Dave stepping in as Acting Executive Director; and Dave closed out Monday's celebration by reassuring attendees of the Agency's continued commitment to equity and inclusion, to the policies that have strengthened and amplified the cultural sector, and to the stability of the Agency during this transition. The Chair stated that Dave has helped build deep trust across the sector and made sure people know

there will be no sweeping changes as Michael departs. Dave has been with the Agency for 13 years, has served as Acting Executive Director before, and knows this work well. Everyone the Chair has spoken with felt comfortable with Dave moving into the role.

He noted that the cultural sector represents more than 130,000 jobs and generates nearly \$30 billion in economic activity, or 4% of the Commonwealth's GDP. It is essential that the Agency continues along this path. The Chair has great confidence in the senior leadership team—many of whom have been through a previous Executive Director search—as have several members of this Council. During the last search in 2020, Marc was Vice Chair and served on the search task force along with current Vice Chair Jo-Ann Davis and Council Members Cecil Barron Jensen and Allyce Najimy. Between staff and Council experience, the Committee can feel confident that the team will do their due diligence to find the next Executive Director. With that context, the Chair wholeheartedly recommended appointing Dave as Acting Executive Director. He then opened the meeting for questions and discussion by the Committee and Council Members who were invited to join as guests

Cecil expressed full agreement regarding Dave and the staff. Julie shared that although all are sad to see Michael go, he has set the Agency up for success with a strong vision, and she fully supports Dave. Diane, who is from New York City originally, asked Michael whether he had found an apartment in New York yet; he replied that his husband is handling the search and noted that the OPERA America building will undergo renovations this summer which shifts the timing of his move.

That concluded the discussion and the Chair asked for a motion to approve his recommendation to the Council that Dave be appointed Acting Executive Director upon Michael's departure. Julie moved to approve the recommendation, Ché seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Committee Member Iván Espinoza-Madrigal was absent the motion passed unanimously:

WHEREAS, Michael J. Bobbitt, current Executive Director of Mass Cultural Council is resigning as of December 31, 2025;

WHEREAS, the FULL Council at its next meeting will begin undertaking discussions about the process by which a new Executive Director will be selected and hired;

WHEREAS, the search process will take several months and therefore the Council will need interim leadership during the period prior to the time a new Executive Director is hired and begins working;

WHEREAS, the Executive Committee has confidence in David Slatery, the current Deputy Executive Director, and existing leadership team of the Council for this period,

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS RESOLVED THAT, that the Executive Committee recommend to the Council that, pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 10, Section 52, the Council designate, with the concurrence of the Chair, that the current Deputy Executive Director of the Council, David Slatery, in addition to his current duties, be appointed as acting Executive Director, assisted by the existing senior leadership team and with no additional

compensation, during the period between when Michael leaves on December 31 and the date a new Executive Director is hired and begins working.

The Chair then outlined next steps. He explained that under Mass Cultural Council's Enabling Act, it is the responsibility of the Chair and the Council to select the Executive Director. That statutory language is quoted in the resolutions included in the Committee's meeting materials. As the Council begins the process of selecting a new permanent Executive Director, the Chair would like to gather input from the Committee and the full Council. During the most recent search in 2020, the Council followed the same thoughtful, deliberate, and stakeholder-inclusive process established in the prior Executive Director search in 2006. During that process the Chair established a search task force comprised of the Executive Committee along with additional Council members. The Chair mentioned that Vice Chair Jo-Ann Davis's strong background in administration and human resources was invaluable to the search task force last time. The Chair asked Council Members interested in serving on the task force to please let him know of their interest after the meeting. Given the complexity of running an Executive Director search—and the need to appropriately manage external interest in the role—we have engaged an executive search firm for the past two searches. The firm (during the last search it was Arts Consulting Group) was selected through a public RFP process and was responsible for guiding and managing the full search and selection effort. The Chair will ask staff to begin preliminary research and prepare a draft RFP for an executive search firm. Once the search task force is formed, it can review and refine that draft, and the final RFP can be issued after discussion with the full Council. The Chair's goal today is to hear members' perspectives on the process and confirm whether there is agreement to follow past precedent. The Chair shared that the feedback he and the Vice Chair have received from staff reinforces that this must be a thoughtful and deliberate process. The decision we make will shape the Agency's direction for years to come, and there is no need to rush it. The Agency will remain in strong hands with existing staff, who are deeply engaged in implementing the current Strategic Plan developed under Michael's leadership. The Chair concluded by stating that he believes it is important to have a collective discussion regarding the overall search methodology as a full Council before taking additional steps.

Donna asked whether, if Council Members are aware of search firms that may be interested, we should send their names to anyone in particular. Marc explained that once the RFP is created, it will be sent to individual firms when referrals exist, but it will also be publicly posted so that anyone may apply.

Ché asked whether we had thought about a general timeline for releasing the RFP, convening the search task force, and whether any pre-work with cultural leaders had been considered to gather ideas for the process. The Chair explained that he and the Vice Chair will be scheduling meetings with the senior team to determine the timeline. Regarding sector input, he noted that last time the Agency's search firm helped to conduct a sector-wide survey, spoke with Agency staff, and interviewed all Council Members. There will again be many opportunities for input as the Council determines the qualities needed in the next leader.

Jo-Ann and Cecil both spoke about the previous search process, calling it thoughtful and deliberate and involving all stakeholders. Cecil added that it was a great learning experience about both the sector and the organization and that although she is not

happy Michael is leaving, she is looking forward to participating again.

Marc noted that the 2020 process took time to find the right candidate in Michael, and that while circumstances are different now, including new challenges at the federal level, the goal remains to identify the leader best able to guide the Agency forward. He emphasized the need for support and wisdom from all Council Members, staff, and the sector. Multiple discussions will take place as the process unfolds, and Marc encouraged anyone who knows potential candidates to contact him.

Tom Bernard thanked Marc and the Executive Committee for opening this meeting to all members of the Council and for the transparency ahead of next week's discussion at the Special Council Meeting.

Diane asked whether the search task force will be limited to Council members; Marc confirmed that it will, with the Executive Committee with other Council members invited.

Ellice Patterson asked whether there are specific dates Council Members should keep in mind for supporting the RFP process. Marc said that exact dates are still to be determined. Dave reminded the group that we will have a full Council meeting next week, offering another opportunity to share updates.

The Chair then moved to the final item for discussion: the agenda for the December 10 Special Council Meeting. He walked through the agenda, noting the formal vote on Dave's appointment as Acting Executive Director. There were no questions and the Chair asked for a motion and a second to approve the agenda. Ché moved to approve the agenda, and Julie seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Committee Member Iván Espinoza-Madriral was absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approve the draft December 10, 2025 Mass Cultural Council Special Meeting Agenda presented to the Executive Committee.

With no further business, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:40am.