



Power of culture

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING OF MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL**

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

ONLINE MEETING

Council Members Present were

Marc Carroll, Chair
Jo-Ann Davis, Vice Chair
Ché Anderson
Rhonda Anderson
Diane Asadorian Masters
Cecil Barron Jensen
Tom Bernard
Emily Bramhall
Vinny deMacedo
Iván Espinoza-Madrigal
Donna Haghighat
Allyce Najjimy
Ashley Occhino
Anika Lopes
Ellice Patterson
Julie Wake

Staff Members Present were

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.

Prepared on 1/16/26

The Chair took a moment to welcome newly appointed Council Member Vinny DeMacedo to the meeting and to the Council; Vinny briefly introduced himself.

The Chair then reported that he recently reviewed and approved an out-of-state travel request in accordance with Mass Cultural Council's policy. He reported the approval to the Executive Committee last week and was now sharing it with the full Council. The request was for Program Officer Käthe Swaback to attend a national Grantmakers for Thriving Youth convening in Baltimore on Dec. 2. The cost was \$400 for travel and lodging. There were no questions from the Council.

The Chair then provided an overview of the Executive Director transition, noting that Executive Director Michael J. Bobbitt will depart the Agency at the end of the calendar year. As discussed during the recent Special Executive Committee meeting, the Chair explained that he is recommending Deputy Executive Director David Slatery be appointed Acting Executive Director effective upon Michael's departure.

The Chair summarized the Executive Committee's discussion and vote, noting the strong confidence expressed by Executive Committee members in Dave's leadership and in the Agency's staff. He reiterated that Dave has served as Acting Executive Director previously, has been with the Agency for many years, and is well-positioned to ensure continuity and stability during the transition.

The Chair outlined the proposed Executive Director search process, explaining that he will establish a search task force, comprised of the Executive Committee and additional Council Members. He shared that there will be two task forces: one focused on the selection of an executive search firm, and another focused on the Executive Director search itself. The Chair and Vice Chair will soon meet with the Agency's senior staff members to begin drafting a Request for Proposals (RFP) for an executive search firm, which will be reviewed by the task force before being publicly released.

The Chair emphasized that once a search firm is selected, there will be multiple opportunities for Council Members, staff, and the cultural sector to provide input on the qualities, experience, and vision sought in the next Executive Director.

The Chair opened the meeting for questions and discussion regarding the appointment of David Slatery as Acting Executive Director. There were no questions.

The Chair then asked for a motion to approve the recommendation to appoint David Slatery as Acting Executive Director upon Michael Bobbitt's departure. Tom Bernard moved to approve the motion, Diane Asadorian Masters seconded the motion. By roll call vote, and noting that Petrina Martin, David Kong, and Simone Early were absent, the motion passed unanimously. Emily Bramhall was present, but her name was mistakenly omitted from the roll call; she confirmed her support of the motion after the meeting.

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

WHEREAS, the Council has today begun 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 is providing for interim leadership during the period prior to the time a new Executive Director is hired and begins working;

WHEREAS, the Council 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, pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 10, Section 52*, that the Council designate and the Chair concurs that the current Deputy Executive Director of the Council, David Slatery, in addition to his current duties, shall also serve as acting Executive Director, assisted by the existing senior leadership team and with no additional compensation, during the period between January 1, 2026 and the date a new Executive Director is hired and begins working.

**...The Council shall have an executive director with experience and a continuing interest in the arts, humanities and interpretive sciences who shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the chairman and the council, and whose compensation shall be fixed by the council, all subject to the consent of a majority of the council...*

The Chair then invited discussion regarding the Executive Director search process and the formation of the search task forces. He asked Council Members interested in serving to email him following the meeting, noting that the final composition of the task forces is still being determined.

Allyce Najimy asked whether non-Council members might be included on the Executive Director search task force. The Chair responded that at this time the intention is to look first to the Council, noting that during the 2020 search the task force consisted of the Executive Committee plus three additional Council Members. He added that he does not anticipate a shortage of interest from Council Members.

Julie Wake asked whether there were lessons learned from previous Executive Director searches and whether any aspects of the process might be approached differently this time. The Chair reflected on the prior search, noting that the length of time required was one of the most surprising elements. He described the process as thorough and methodical, involving scoring sheets, detailed reviews of proposals and candidates, and extensive discussion. He emphasized the importance of transparency and clear communication, and shared that he and then Chair Nina Fialkow worked hard to ensure that all Council Members were kept informed throughout the process—an approach he intends to continue.

Vice Chair Jo-Ann Davis concurred, emphasizing the significant time commitment involved, beginning even at the RFP stage. She described the process as demanding but fascinating and encouraged Council Members to consider participation to be mindful of the level of engagement required. She expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate again.

Cecil Barron Jensen shared that the process was a valuable experience that brought the Council together. She noted that the consultant played a key role in helping the

Council articulate the skills, qualities, and leadership style sought in the next Executive Director, including gathering sector-wide input through surveys and interviews.

Tom Bernard thanked the Chair and Executive Committee for their transparency and for opening the previous Special Executive Committee discussion to the full Council. He expressed appreciation for the deliberate approach and thanked David Slatery for stepping into the Acting Executive Director role during the transition.

Ellice Patterson raised a concern regarding transparency, noting that some Council Members learned of Michael Bobbitt's departure at the same time as the general public. She asked how information will be shared going forward with Council Members who are not serving on task forces.

The Chair asked Senior Director of Public Affairs Bethann Steiner to provide context. Bethann explained that the timing of the announcement was driven by coordination with OPERA America (Michael Bobbitt's future employer), which had requested that the information not be shared publicly until a specific time. The Agency honored that request and coordinated closely with the OPERA America on the announcement. Vice Chair Jo-Ann Davis added that the OPERA America had explicitly asked that no communication occur prior to their announcement.

The Chair clarified that this situation was unique and externally driven, and that going forward the Council should expect to receive information as promptly as possible when it is available. Ellice acknowledged the explanation.

Diane Asadorian Masters asked about the cost of using an executive search firm, how it is budgeted, and what type of commitment is typically sought from a new Executive Director. The Chair explained that the use of a search firm supports transparency and brings specialized expertise. He noted that the Agency has a line item for consultants in the budget, and that savings from the vacant Executive Director position during the search period can help offset the cost.

Deputy Executive Director David Slatery added that this approach was used during the previous search and that salary savings largely covered the cost at that time. Chief Financial Officer Cathy Cheng-Anderson noted that the last search firm contract was approximately \$45,000, and that funds are available to support a similar expense through the current budget.

Regarding contract length, the Chair shared that those details are typically finalized with the selected candidate and senior leadership, and that he would need to review prior agreements for specifics.

Allyce Najimy asked whether the job description, salary, and expectations for the role might change. The Chair confirmed that these elements will be reviewed in collaboration with the senior leadership team and the selected search firm.

Jo-Ann Davis emphasized that the leader needed today may differ significantly from the leader needed five years ago, and that Council input will be essential in defining the role and the skills required for the future.

Ché Anderson echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the importance of forward-thinking leadership, awareness of state and federal dynamics, and strategic alignment across the Commonwealth. He expressed enthusiasm for engaging deeply in the process. The Chair reminded Council Members of the collective strength and expertise of the Council, noting that members were appointed for a reason and bring valuable perspectives and sector knowledge to the process.

The Chair concluded the meeting by reminding Council Members of Michael Bobbitt's farewell celebration, scheduled for Tuesday, December 16th from 10:00am to noon at the Museum of African American History, and encouraged everyone to register and attend.

He invited Council Members to reach out to him following the meeting with questions, interest in serving on a search task force, or feedback on the process.

With no further business, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:51am.