



Power of culture

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

**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FORTY-SEVENTH MEETING
OF
MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL**

THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2020

ON-LINE MEETING

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM

Council Members Present were

Nina Fialkow, Chair
Marc Carroll, Vice Chair
Barbara Schaffer Bacon
Kathy Castro
Cecil Barron Jensen
Jo-Ann Davis
Sandy Dunn
Susan Leff
Victoria Marsh
Allyce Najimy
Troy Siebels
Ann Murphy

Staff Members Present were Anita Walker, David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Bethann Steiner, Ann Petruccelli Moon, Dan Blask, Kelly Bennett, Luis Cotto, Carmen Plazas, Lisa Simmons. Also present were Khang Nguyen, Annie Le, Caitlin Rowley, Nikki Erskine, Sandra and David Dennis, State Representative Carole Fiola, and Erin Williams.

Nina Fialkow opened the meeting by causing the following to be read into the record.

Please note that this meeting is an open meeting of a public body subject to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. A notice of this meeting together with the agenda was posted on Mass Cultural Council's website 48 or more hours ago (excluding weekends and holidays).

Prepared on 7/23/20

This meeting shall be open and accessible to all members of the public except at such times when this body has voted to go into closed executive session under the Open Meeting Law.

Please note that this body has invited staff of Mass Cultural Council to be present at the meeting.

Mass Cultural Council welcomes members of the public to attend its public meetings. Under the Open Meeting Law, however, this is not a public hearing and public testimony will not be taken. Individuals may not address the meeting without permission of the Chair.

Any member of the public may record this meeting provided that they first notify the Chair and must not interfere with the meeting. The Chair will then inform the members of the meeting that they are being recorded. This meeting will be recorded by the Council using the Zoom online meeting application

This meeting is a virtual meeting held under the Open Meeting Law as modified by the Governor's recent emergency declaration. Only Committee members, Council members and invited staff will be able to address the meeting. All other persons will be muted. Please note that anyone attempting to disrupt the meeting may be muted, have their ability to project video images shut off or even removed from the meeting, at the discretion of the Chair.

Draft minutes of the open session of this meeting shall be kept and shall be posted on Mass Cultural Council's website no later than 30 days after the meeting provided that such minutes shall not be considered official until they have been approved by this body in open session. Individuals asserting a violation of the Open Meeting Law may file a complaint with this body within 30 days or with the Attorney General's office thereafter.

Chair Nina Fialkow then called for a moment of silence in recognition of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the fight for racial justice. Once the moment of silence had concluded, she thanked the Mass Cultural Council staff for their continued work and kindness during this trying time.

Minutes & Reports

The Chair then called for a vote on the 146th Council Meeting minutes. Upon motion duly made and seconded it was unanimously by roll call vote, noting that that the following members were absent; Sherry Dong, Jake Brennan, Lillian Do, Karen Hurvitz, Matthew Keator and Karen Barry, it was

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the One Hundred Forty-Sixth Meeting of the Mass Cultural Council.

Nina then asked Anita Walker for her Executive Director's report.

Anita noted that this was her 53rd and final Executive Director's report at a Council Meeting. The agency is looking ahead at a year of recovery, rebuilding and renewal. Staff has been working from home and in that time has rolled out seven grant programs, five of which were new. She is extremely proud of the team for their work creating and

launching the Safe Harbors program. She then noted that the agency's service agenda had continued, Culture Chats have continued, and that the agency had held Town Hall meetings with state and federal legislators as a means of letting the field speak directly to decision-makers. A new survey closing June 30th was distributed to the field so the agency can learn not only what has been lost, but also what it will take to reopen. The agency held its first-ever weeklong virtual UP Awards ceremony earlier this month. Anita sent a statement about racial equity to the field that was reprinted by the NEA nationally. The agency has reinvigorated its focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) internally and externally. The staff has organized a POC (People of Color) Team and one member of that group attends a senior staff meeting each week. The staff has formed a new working group loosely called "From Covid Through Crisis" to potentially host a series of listening sessions with field focused on DEI issues. Anita then noted that it is Juneteenth, and asked the Council to consider a resolution around DEI to take the work a step further and call for accountable action. She then read the resolution:

After reading the draft of the resolution Anita continued and explained that the team is now asking that the Council focus on the DEI pillar, that it achieve the status of regular conversation at Council meetings, that our staff report on our DEI plan, and that our Council be part of that conversation, as much a part of the meeting as reading minutes. The Chair asked for a motion.

Upon motion duly made and seconded the motion passed unanimously by roll call vote, noting that the following members were absent; Sherry Dong, Jake Brennan, Lillian Do, Karen Hurvitz, Matthew Keator and Karen Barry, it was

RESOLVED THAT: Recognizing recent events that have occurred in the nation and the renewed awareness of the presence of systemic racism in our society, the Council hereby affirms a dedication to evaluating the progress made toward the objectives contained in the "Advancing Inclusion and Equity" pillar of its Strategic Plan which reads as follows.

ADVANCING INCLUSION AND EQUITY

Promote more diverse and inclusive participation in the cultural sector by ensuring equity in policies, practices, and opportunities.

Objectives

- *Cultivate a culture of equity and inclusion within Mass Cultural Council to ensure these values are reflected in all of our grants and initiatives.*
- *Encourage full participation in Mass Cultural Council-supported programs by promoting universal design principles, inclusive practices, and equitable access for all.*
- *Increase diversity in the sector by creating connections and expanding leadership opportunities for people of color, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups.*
- *Support artists and organizations working in diverse cultural traditions and/or underrepresented communities, with improved outreach, focused investment, and technical assistance.*

The Chair then moved onto the next agenda item: the search for an executive search firm to handle the search for a new Executive Director. Nina has been grateful for the Search Task Force members' time, energy, and effort along with the assistance of the staff. She noted that there was a robust response to the RFP with 33 applications having been received. Nina referred to the memorandum distributed as part of the meeting materials. She then asked Vice Chair Marc Carroll to say more about the process of selecting a firm.

The Vice Chair explained that the Search Task Force was assembled by the Chair. On April 6th an RFP was issued. The Task Force received a robust response with 33 firms submitting proposals. The proposals were reviewed by the Task Force and narrowed to a pool of 12. Each member of the Task Force reviewed and scored each firm's proposal on a 5-point scale. The Task Force considered qualifications, quality and thoroughness of response, clear plan to achieve goals, and diversity: both of candidates placed by the firm and also the firm's team. The final criteria was cost. After scoring, the Task Force invited the three firms with the highest scores for interviews. After interviews the references of two firms were checked and the Task Force finally settled on Arts Consulting Group (ACG) as the firm to recommend to the Council. This is based on ACG receiving the highest score, the strength of their references, and their reasonable cost. ACG is a Massachusetts-based firm. The decision was unanimous and Task Force members are looking forward to working with ACG pending the approval of the Council.

The Chair then invited other Task Force members to add their thoughts.

The Chair recognized Jo-Ann Davis who explained that in her work in human resources she has led many RFPs to find executive search firms and that this was one of the most thorough, rigorous, structured, and objective processes she'd been a part of. She let the Council know that when the Task Force independently settled on the same firms as the top 3 and that they all also settled independently on ACG as the top choice. She is very comfortable making this recommendation.

Troy Siebels and Victoria Marsh agreed.

The Chair asked for a motion. Upon motion duly made and seconded the motion passed unanimously by roll call vote, noting that the following members were absent; Sherry Dong, Jake Brennan, Lillian Do, Karen Hurvitz, Matthew Keator and Karen Barry, it was

RESOLVED: that the Council authorize the execution of contract with Arts Consulting Group to assist the Council in its search for a new Executive Director all in accordance with the memorandum from the Executive Committee presented to the Council at its June 18, 2020 Meeting.

Next on the agency was the resolution to authorize emergency funding in the absence of a quorum during the Covid -19 pandemic which the Council had previously discussed at the April 29 Special Meeting and asked David Slatery to read the draft resolution which had been circulated.

Upon motion duly made and seconded the motion passed unanimously by roll call vote, noting that the following members were absent; Sherry Dong, Jake Brennan, Lillian Do, Karen Hurvitz, Matthew Keator and Karen Barry, it was

RESOLVED: That in the event the Council receives any additional emergency funding related to the COVID-19 crisis, the Chair shall call a Council meeting to authorize the expenditure of such funds pursuant to a proposal from staff and if the Council shall not be able to assemble a quorum within 5 business days after such call, the Council hereby delegates to the Executive Committee the power to thereafter authorize the allocation of such emergency funding for purposes of response to the COVID-19 crisis and the Committee shall notify the Council that it is taking such action and shall report such action at the next occurring Council Meeting.

Next on the agenda was the resolution to establish interim leadership of the Council between Anita Walker's retirement on June 30th and the hiring of a new Executive Director. The Chair explained that the Council had authorized use of a search firm and noted that it is necessary to have someone acting as interim executive director. David Slatery read the draft resolution circulated with the meeting materials aloud.

Upon motion duly made and seconded the motion passed unanimously by roll call vote, noting that the following members were absent; Sherry Dong, Jake Brennan, Lillian Do, Karen Hurvitz, Matthew Keator and Karen Barry, the Council voted the following:

WHEREAS, Anita Walker, current Executive Director of the Council is retiring after 13 years of service on June 30, 2020;

WHEREAS, the Council is today authorizing the retention of an Executive Search Firm to assist in the recruitment and hiring of a new Executive Director;

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

WHEREAS, the Council has faith in the existing leadership team of the Council for this interim 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 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 interim period between June 30 and the date a new Executive Director has been hired and begins working.

Nina then asked Bethann Steiner to give her Advocacy report.

Bethann explained that staff was keeping up with conversations on Beacon Hill. In a normal year we'd know the House number and the Senate number, and a conference committee would be meeting to determine the final number. Due to Covid-19, none of that has happened. Right now, the legislature is trying to wrap its arms around what

deficit is in all parts of the economy, and the budget deficit is estimated to be somewhere around \$7B. The legislature is also trying to determine what federal relief might be coming and is waiting, with the tax deadline having been pushed back to see what comes in. We are anticipating interim budgets. There are lots of questions, and not a lot of answers. MassCreative is poised and the agency's line item is their #1 priority. As soon as staff has more info the Council will be informed.

The Chair then asked David Slatery to give his Financial report.

David explains that as previously discussed some funds have been reallocated to Covid-19 relief efforts. On the third page of their materials Council members can read how Gaming Funds were used. At this point the agency will commit all but about \$20K of the gaming funds due to the fact that casinos are closed. David was happy to entertain any questions from the Council.

No questions were asked. Nina thanked David for his efforts during these difficult times and moved to take a 5-minute break.

The meeting reconvened at 2:08pm. Allyce Najimy had left the meeting.

The Chair asked Grants Committee Chair Victoria Marsh to give her report.

Victoria Marsh explained that the Grants Committee had held two meetings earlier in the month: to look at artist grants and also to educate and inform Committee members on the agency's various grant programs, partnerships, and services via reports from Mass Cultural Council staff. On June 2nd the Committee met to review panel recommendations for FY20 artist fellowships in choreography, fiction/creative nonfiction, and painting. The Committee recommended that the Council vote to approve these recommendations. Before the vote, Victoria introduced Mass Cultural Council staff members Dan Blask and Kelly Bennet.

Dan explained that applications are anonymously judged and that review criteria is artistic quality and artistic ability based solely on the recent work submitted by the applicant. Dan and Kelly then presented the Council with a slideshow of work by recommended grantees.

The Chair then asked for a motion to approve the grant recommendations. Upon motion duly made and seconded the motion passed unanimously by roll call vote, noting that the following members were absent; Sherry Dong, Jake Brennan, Lillian Do, Karen Hurvitz, Matthew Keator and Karen Barry, the Council voted the following:

RESOLVED: To approve the FY 20 Artist Fellowship grant awards in the disciplines of Choreography, Fiction/Creative Nonfiction and Painting as recommended by the Grants Committee at its June 2, 2020 meeting.

Nina then moved onto the final agenda item: the designation of the Columbia Street Cultural District in Fall River.

Anita explained that while it was sad to delay, she was pleased the designation of the Commonwealth's 50th Cultural District was being put forward at her final Council

meeting. She noted that Massachusetts has more cultural districts than any other state in the nation and proceeded to run through a few slides from her site visit to the district in December 2019. She mentioned that Luis Cotto who managed the Cultural Districts Initiative had been to Fall River at least 10 times in the last year and recognized Council Member and Fall River resident Kathy Castro as a wonderful champion of the district.

Anita took Council members through the slideshow of images and then invited Representative Carole Fiola of Fall River to make some remarks. The Representative thanked Anita for her years of service, expressed her excitement at the potential designation, and recognized and thanked Council Member Kathy Castro for her efforts.

Anita thanked the Representative and then invited Sandra and David Dennis of Fall River to speak. They expressed how happy they would be to have the district designated today and said it was a great day for the City of Fall River, that the district is an important addition to the city and would hopefully generate more tourism in the wake of Covid-19.

Kathy Castro expressed that she'd hoped to have a true celebration of the designation and that she hoped that the agency could bring Anita back once a celebration is possible. She thanked David and Sandra for their efforts and committed to making sure the district would be sustained and grow.

The Chair then asked for a motion to approve the designation of the Columbia Street Cultural District. Upon motion duly made and seconded the motion passed unanimously by roll call vote, noting that the following members were absent; Sherry Dong, Jake Brennan, Lillian Do, Karen Hurvitz, Matthew Keator and Karen Barry, the Council voted the following:

RESOLVED: To approve the designation of a cultural district in Fall River, Massachusetts in accordance with the memorandum presented to the Council Meeting.

The stated end time for the meeting having been reached, Nina as Chair adjourned the meeting.