

DRAFT-SUBJECT TO COUNCIL REVIEW AND APPROVAL

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

TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2019

**ROSE ART MUSEUM
BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY
WALTHAM, MA**

Chair Nina Fialkow called the meeting to order at NOON.

Council Members Present

Nina Fialkow, Chair
Barbara Schaffer Bacon
Victoria Marsh
Sandy Dunn
Troy Siebels
Karen Barry
Susan Leff
Matthew Keator
Marc Carroll
Ann Murphy
Allyce Najimy
Karen Hurvitz

Staff members and guests present were Anita Walker, David Slatery, Greg Liakos, Jen Lawless, Carmen Plazas, Ann Petruccelli, Dawn Heinen, Diane Daily, Angelina Lupini and Cyndy Gaviglio. Guests included emeritus Council Member Mal Sherman and his wife Barbara and emeritus Vice Chair Barbara Wallace Grossman (who arrived later), Luis Croquer,

Executive Director of the Rose Art Museum, Audrey Seraphin of Network of Arts Administrators of Color, Meg O'Brien of the Huntington Theater, Catherine Peterson of ArtsBoston, Jose Nieto of Argus Communications and Matt Wilson of MASSCreative. Also present were support staff from the Rose and representatives of a local paper.

Nina Fialkow opened the meeting and welcomed everyone and introduced Luis Croquer, Executive Director of our host, the Rose Art Museum.

Luis welcomed everyone to the Rose and gave a brief history of the institution. Anita thanked Luis conducting a tour of the museum's Howardena Pindell exhibit before the meeting.

Minutes and Reports

The Chair then called for a vote on the 141st Council Meeting minutes. Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: To approve the minutes from the one hundred and forty-first Council Meeting of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, in the form submitted to this meeting.

Nina then introduced two additional newly-appointed Council members, Karen Hurvitz and Marc Carroll and asked the Council members and guests to introduce themselves. Nina then asked Anita for her report.

Anita began by noting that today was the last day of winter so brighter sunnier days were ahead. In welcoming Karen and Marc, two new Council Members, Anita also noted that today was also a day for goodbyes as two longtime Council members' terms had come to an end- Mal Sherman, who has served on the Council for 14 years and has been chair of the Advocacy Committee (and who was joining our meeting today along with his wife Barbara) and Dr. Barbara Wallace Grossman, who had served for 12 years and been the Vice Chair (and would be joining the meeting later). The Council acknowledged and applauded Mal and Barbara for their work and service.

Agency Updates

Anita began her update by providing a frame-up of the day and noted that in the past few years, the agency has undergone a strategic planning process and also started a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)

review of our policies, practices and field. These efforts tie in well with the Rose's Howardena Pindell exhibit that the Council just toured before the meeting. She also noted that a recent study had shown that only about 3% of museum directors in this country were Latinx and that our host, Luis, was one of them. She related his story of coming to the Rose and noting the great quantity of Latinx and other internationally-focused works that the museum had stored in its collection and his plans to display them.

Today, we would be presenting the following to the Council

- A presentation from the Network of Arts Administrators of Color;
- A review of a video entitled "Look At Art-Get Paid" which describes a museum outreach initiative;
- An exercise to work with Council members on fashioning a DEI statement for the Agency;
- A focus on our strategic plan-influenced communications plan, including a look at our new website (scheduled for a soft launch in April,) and a discussion of an "elevator speech" and our new *Power of Culture* brochure. This brochure was inspired by Mal Sherman who advised us to have a simple easy to understand piece setting forth with facts and figures the value and impact of our work.

Additionally, we will hear a recitation from Xiadi Zhai, the 2018 Massachusetts Poetry Out Loud champion.

Anita then referred the 2010 Massachusetts Gaming Law, specifically those provisions which, due to the impact casinos have on nonprofit performing arts centers in terms of driving up the costs of booking performances, provided for a funding source (2% of the taxes collected by the Commonwealth on casino facilities) to establish a mitigation program. Troy Siebels at this point mentioned that with the new casino in Springfield having opened last August, non-profits arts venues were already feeling the impact.

Anita mentioned that staff had spent the past year designing and developing a program to disburse the collected mitigation funds to impacted performing arts presenters (75% of the funds per the law) and to cultural organizations more generally (the other 25% of the funds). One glitch which has arisen is that the Executive Office for Administration and Finance (ANF) has stated that the current language of the statute is not clear on how these funds will be transferred to the Council to make

payments under the program. Three Council members along with Anita and Dave have met with ANF recently and agreed upon mutually acceptable amendatory language to the statute which would permit the funds to be transferred and we will work to get this amendment included in an upcoming supplemental budget.

Anita next mentioned our EBT Card to Culture program, pursuant to which over 160 cultural organizations in the Commonwealth are providing free or discounted admissions to EBT card holders. This initiative is a collaboration with the Commonwealth's Department of Transitional Assistance and has resulted in more than 250,000 admissions since the beginning of the program. There was a large event for the program at the Children's Museum on February 27 at which Lauren Baker, the First Lady of the Commonwealth spoke.

We are also working with the First Lady on programs with the Commonwealth's Department of Children and Families (DCF) and with an organization called The Wonderfund on some different proposals. One involves a pilot project this spring in the Berkshires where DCF family meetings/reunions could occur at cultural organizations rather than at DCF offices.

Anita then spoke of a current grantee, The Care Center in Holyoke, which is an organization that supports, through an arts and culture focus, women who have had to drop out of school due to pregnancy. The Care Center is now working on an affordable housing project where 10 units will be available for its clients in a new facility with an arts and culture venue. Young women living in the units will be tasked with providing programming for the venue. This project is a great combination of affordable housing, social service and arts and culture policy.

Anita announced that Mass Cultural Council had been awarded the Berklee Urban Service Award together with our partners for the EBT Card to Culture program.

The Cultural Investment Portfolio (CIP) – our organizational support program- is implementing a new approach and looking at the concept of fragility in grantee organizations. Over the past 12 years, we have been building trust with these organizations and collecting financial information through the Data Arts Cultural Data Platform. Using this information, we have contracted with Nonprofit Finance Fund to

develop a “stress test” for organizations to see which organizations could benefit from some more individualized attention. Our test identified 41 potential candidates. We then spoke with the executive directors and chairs of each organization with the idea of building a learning network around fiscal issues. We will have a fuller report on the new CIP at the May meeting.

In addition, the agency has been doing a lot of podcasts- in fact seven new ones this week. These are available on the Council website and Council members are encouraged to check them out.

Anita informed the Council that chairs of the legislature's Joint Tourism, Arts and Cultural development have been appointed and will be Senator Edward Kennedy of Lowell and Representative Paul McMurtry of Dedham.

The biannual Commonwealth Awards will be occurring on Monday, April 8 at WBUR's new CitySpace location. This year will be a little different as nominees were announced and the winners will not be known until the ceremony. Greg Liakos, External Relations director, mentioned that the keynote speaker is Gustavo Dudamel, maestro of the LA Philharmonic and product of El Sistema and also that the CitySpace is a new facility which was built with Cultural Facilities Fund assistance. All Council Members are invited.

Anita mentioned our work with the Council Financial Task Force and how we are putting together financial policies and personnel policies in one place. We have shared an initial draft of the financial policies with the Task Force and are reviewing their comments and are working with an internal HR working group on broader personnel policies. We hope to have a full report in May.

Advocacy Report.

Nina asked Greg to give the Advocacy Report. Greg acknowledged that due to Mal's term ending, we were transitioning from his leadership as long-time Advocacy Committee chair and asked the Council to recognize Mal's service. At this point, there was a sustained round of applause for Mal.

Greg reported that Troy had been appointed the new chair of the Committee. Greg reminded the Council that in H1, the Governor had included just over \$16 million for Mass Cultural Council- a small increase

from our appropriation in FY19. The Council will be seeking an \$18 million appropriation in FY20.

We are sending out midyear reports to the legislature to show how the FY19 increase was spent in each legislator's district. We have held a series of legislative roundtables all over the Commonwealth with legislators and local officials and cultural leaders. Greg noted MASSCreative's Arts Advocacy Day was upcoming on March 26th and introduced Matt Wilson.

Matt discussed their plans for the day and noted that Mass Cultural Council's budget increase in a key plank in MASSCreative's platform. Anita mentioned that she will be testifying to the Joint Ways & Means Committee Budget Hearing on March 29 at Roxbury Community College.

Financial Report

Nina then asked Deputy Director, Dave Slatery to give the Financial Report. Dave referred to the memo contained in the meeting materials, noting that as is typical, the agency was at or near target in most accounts. He referred to a senior staff retreat at which leadership had looked at some expenses that had been originally budgeted for this year but would not be occurring this year thus freeing up some additional funds. He further mentioned that while the Council's FY19 budget looks to be in good shape, this year's spending plan is contingent upon receiving approximately \$325,000 in expenses for administering the CFF program which will not be available until MassDevelopment's board approves new awards and approves our reimbursement request. The current CFF round is underway and staff are in the process of preparing recommendations to the CFF Advisory Committee, who must approve them before sending them on to the MassDevelopment board. Dave indicated that this reimbursement happens every year and sees no problem this year, but as it is a contingent piece of funding that does not come in until the end of the fiscal year, he feels the need to note it as a contingency. There were no questions.

Poetry Out Loud

Nina then asked staff to present on the Poetry Out Loud (POL) program. Education Program Manager Diane Daily began by thanking Mal for his years of service to the Council and especially his advocacy for science education. Diane described POL – it is federally funded through the National Endowment for the Arts at \$17,500 per year and is basically a poetry recitation program for school students across the Commonwealth

and we have selected Huntington Theater to run the program. Diane introduced Meg O'Brien who directed the program at the Huntington. Meg remarked on this great 14 year partnership with the Council and how the program had provided a great opportunity to connect with schools and provide a platform for a "Your voice is powerful" message. Meg then introduced Xiadi Zhai- the 2018 winner of the Massachusetts Poetry Out Loud competition,

Xiadi told the Council what the program had meant to her and said how she wished more students were aware of it. Xiadi then recited "the Golden Shovel" by Terence Hayes.

At the conclusion of her recitation, the Council applauded in appreciation, and Anita thanked Xiadi for her beautiful delivery.

Diversity/Equity/Inclusion Update

Anita explained that next we are going to present on certain aspects of our work with respect to DEI. The first part will deal with our efforts to help increase the numbers of people of color working and in leadership in the cultural field. To that end, the Council had voted as part of the FY19 budget to support the Network of Arts Administrators of Color (NAAC), an organization housed at ArtsBoston. She then introduced Audrey Seraphin from the NAAC Steering Committee to give a presentation on NAAC's operations. Audrey gave a powerpoint presentation (copies of which are available upon request). Barbara Schaffer Bacon asked about mentors and sponsors. Victoria Marsh asked about efforts to attract persons of color to Boston. Catherine Peterson thanked the Council for its support of the program and especially the participation of Council staff members Justina Crawford, Lisa Simmons and Carmen Plazas.

Anita then introduced the next part of the program- how does DEI apply to cultural nonprofits? These organizations have been asking in terms of DEI goals- "How can we diversify our staff? Our board? Our audience?" National Arts Strategies invited Anita earlier this year to take a look at one effort at answering this question. The program "Look At Art, Get Paid" was further described in a 10 minute video shown to the Council (copies of which are freely available online by googling the title) This initiative focuses on strategies for art museums to make themselves more accessible to persons who may not have been interested in museums or felt they were not welcome and on ways to get these persons into a museum. The program advertised on buses and other urban locations, to pay people to sign up and get paid to "review" a museum.

At the conclusion of the 10-minute video, the Council engaged in a lively conversation about the effort. The feeling was the program was effective and Marc Carroll noted that it made an excellent use of focus groups which helped to challenge the museum's view of reality. Barbara noted it was similar to program in Pittsburgh. Ann Murphy mentioned that it was helpful to see DEI goals actually made actionable. Allyce Najimy noted that sometimes things like alarms on the art (as highlighted in the video) can be unfamiliar and can make the museum space seem unwelcoming. Susan Leff observed that it was important for museums to listen to people- i.e. other outreach efforts such as free admission hours may not meet the needs of the target audience.

Anita noted that a lot of museums in Massachusetts are interested in DEI efforts and that we are planning on developing a pilot program next year with 3 museums and the designers of the Look At Art, Get Paid program.

Next Greg Liakos presented a copy of a draft "DEI Statement" for the Council that staff had worked on (a copy of it is included in the meeting materials) and asked for the Council members' input in order to create a definitive statement for Mass Cultural Council. The council engaged in broad discussion of the draft statement with the general observation that it should be shorter and more direct and avoid "grant language jargon" and maybe focus group it.

Anita thanked the Council and said this was very helpful and we would have a new iteration of the statement at the next meeting.

After a short break, the Council reconvened and were treated to a demonstration of the new website- Dawn Heinen, the Council's Digital Communications Manager explained that the existing site, though fine and serviceable is now 20 years old and out of date. Dawn walked the Council through the new site and showed its many new functionalities.

After the website demonstration, Anita introduced Jose Nieto of Argus Communications, the firm that had helped us develop the new site and also the *Power of Culture* booklet discussed earlier. Jose then ran the Council through an exercise for how to develop an "elevator speech" to help members describe their work with the Council and framed the messaging platform. A copy of Jose's powerpoint presentation is available on request.

At this point, former vice chair Barbara Wallace Grossman joined the meeting. As her and Mal Sherman's 12- and 14-year terms of service had just expired, they were treated to a musical tribute, written by Anita and sung by Cyndy Gaviglio.

There being no more business to come before the Council, Nina as Chair then reminded the Council members that there would be a reception across the street in the Brandeis faculty club and then adjourned the meeting.