

A **motion** to bring the meeting to order at 6:34 PM was unanimously accepted.

Roll Call: Beth Ann Gallagher (chair), Jen Frasier (treasurer), Katharine MacPhail (secretary), Serina Gundersen Thomas (member) on zoom, John Walker (vice-chair) on zoom
Absent: Nicole Aruda (member) and Alex Mitchell (member)

A **motion** to discuss agenda items 7 and 8 to after the minutes review was unanimously Accepted.

Minutes Review

A **motion** to approve the minutes to be submitted as written was unanimously accepted.

A Party at the Crossroads (FY26-LCC-126143) Reconsideration Request

On Monday, November 24th, Beth Ann received a reconsideration request forwarded from our Mass Cultural Contact Jay Wong. (See attached letter). Beth Ann recounted the email discussions between her and Jay Wong.

While the MCC was going to initially deny the applicant's reconsideration request, and even drafted correspondence to that effect (The MCC is hesitant to ever overrule a council's Decision based on public benefit), Jay Wong was encouraging that the FCC agree to reconsider the application. When Beth Ann agreed to put the reconsideration on the agenda, the MCC drafted a new email saying it had approved the reconsideration request versus that this had been a mutual decision.

Beth Ann read the applicants' full reconsideration request into the public record; shared her responses to and research for it; and then opened the floor to her fellow Council members.

Here are the points Beth Ann and other Council members discussed:

1) "This pattern has created a widely recognized reputation among organizations of a similar demographic makeup"

The applicant Raeha Ramos claimed the FCC had a pattern of denying grants to area organizations supporting communities of color over the years. She did not substantiate the claim with any concrete examples. Based on Fairhaven's racial demographics (96% white), organizations serving communities of color tend to not plan in-town-occurring projects and target other municipalities, like New Bedford.

The FCC receives many applications from any background of applicants for projects occurring in New Bedford, which is much more diverse in all ways and has a bigger, more established, and robust cultural scene. New Bedford has a "wealthier" cultural council, but the competition for NBCC funds is increasingly intense. Applicants to the NBCC also apply to the FCC looking for funds. Usually these New Bedford-based individuals and organizations are applying for New Bedford-based projects.

The FCC states on our MCC page that we prioritize projects occurring in Fairhaven and that we are looking for a demonstrated benefit for Fairhaven's residents, wherever the project occurs. That is the point of the Local Cultural Council program to decentralize cultural decision making to a grassroots

level and hyper-localize the investment of cultural capital into all communities of Massachusetts. Every LCC of Massachusetts receives funding to invest in projects serving their residents. As 44% of surveyed residents shared that they have not attended a cultural event outside of Fairhaven in the past 2 years, we are investing our funds where they are most likely to benefit our residents.

Once we select what in-town projects to fund and for how much at our voting meeting, then we see if we have any leftover funds for out-of-town occurring projects. The FCC receives a lot of copy-and-paste out-of-town occurring applications with little to no customization for our priorities. Many of these applications do not mention Fairhaven residents, let alone share past or predicted participation of Fairhaven residents. When there are other applications indicating either or both, they are prioritized over projects offering only the possibility of participation.

2) "Despite this history, we applied again this year"

The applicant Raeha Ramos or the Oversoul Theatre Collective organization or its featured performer (MWALIM) have applied for three grants that Beth Ann was aware of. The two from previous fiscal years were:

The Thunderchild Street Show, FY24-LCC-70936 proposed for Livesey Park

Based on MWALIM's application, he obviously had a strong musical resume, and another pro was he wanted to perform in-town. The application's weakness was no local networking had been done. There were no references to any Fairhaven organizations in his application, and there was no letter of support from a sponsoring Fairhaven organization, like the Fairhaven BPW or the North Fairhaven Improvement Association. When we had the choice between individuals and organizations further along in their in-town networking and booking process, we chose those as more likely to happen.

After-the-fact, Beth Ann discovered that the park has no electrical sources for musical performances. This had no bearing on the decision made, but if the applicant had been further along in his planning, this issue would have been uncovered sooner and resulted in a change in budget or venue.

Oversoul Theatre Collective @ the Underground Railroad Cafe, FY25-LCC-91386 for New Bedford

The fact that the project was not occurring in Fairhaven ranked it lower in our priorities. We funded 17 projects that fiscal year. Only three 3 for out-of-town-occurring projects—Fairhaven High School's Festival of Lights Field Trip (FY25-LCC-104403), the Old Dartmouth Historical Society's (New Bedford Whaling) Museum Access for Youth (FY25-LCC-103973), and the Tri-County Music Association, Inc.'s Complimentary Senior Tickets (FY25-LCC-98836). All of those projects demonstrated a clear benefit to Fairhaven residents. 2 were for field trips for Fairhaven public school children, and 1 was for Fairhaven senior citizens to enjoy concerts for free.

3) "We attended the council's Zoom informational session specifically to ensure clarity and alignment with their priorities. However, the session offered no opportunity for discussion or inquiry."

This statement is only half factual. Raeha Ramos attended our Grants Informational Session on Zoom, but she logged off before its end. Fairhaven TV, who runs all Fairhaven government organizations' Zoom sessions, provided Beth Ann with its attendance meeting log. Raeha missed the question and

answer session by minutes. As the recording of the Zoom shows, that question and answer session lasted for 22 minutes: <https://vimeo.com/1125963496?share=copy>

4) "And our follow-up email questions were not acknowledged or answered."

This claim was unverifiable. Beth Ann never received an email from the applicant Raeha Ramos. Prior to the reconsideration request, the last email she received from the organization came from MWALIM in 2024. Beth Ann had no reason not to answer any emails from the applicant.

There was the potential for the applicant to be using the wrong email address. Our Treasurer Jennifer Frasier was in charge of following up with applicants about incomplete applications. Since too many were missing key information or documents for their project proposals, she emailed all applicants a check list to review. In that email, she mistyped the Council email address. She said applicants wrote to her directly when their messages to the FCC email bounced. She did not receive any follow-up emails from Raeha Ramos. Beth Ann emailed and asked Raeha if she had written to the wrong email address, but she never provided Beth Ann with an answer.

5) Raeha Ramos objected to her proposal being denied due to "insufficient public benefit."

That is an incorrect quotation. The Council has a number of pre-written responses in our grant management system to choose from. Only 3 of the 6 denial reasons are relevant to the applications we receive. The one we most often use is: "Your project did not provide enough public benefit for our community compared to other proposals we received." In choosing that denial reason, we are sharing with an applicant that other projects have been prioritized over theirs. The grants management system then writes a denial form letter to the applicant.

6) "other types of cultural programming are routinely approved"

There is more than one way to interpret this statement. The FCC tries to do its best in matching Fairhaven residents' interest with its funding. We survey residents annually to ask them what kind of cultural programming they want. If this refers to particular organizations receiving funding more than once, it is true that we do not have a dependency clause in our guidelines currently, so there are some applicants who have received grants in successive years. When the FCC has its priorities and guidelines setting meeting, we have discussed a dependency clause and imposing grant limits.

A Party at the Crossroads (FY26-LCC-126143) Application Review & Vote

The FCC reviewed and discussed the application as if for the first time. The proposal was from the Multidisciplinary category and combined music and theatre traditions in a one-man show starring MWALIM. His selected in-town venue, the Shepherd Center for the Performing Arts, provided a letter of support. Members discussed the funding amount. In the past for a one-person performance without ticket revenue, the Council tended to award \$500 per applicant. The request here was \$1,000. This event would have a sliding scale ticket fee from \$10-\$20. Members discussed the budget (\$15,200), which was significantly higher than the projected revenue (\$1,500-\$2,000) and wished there was more detail about additional funding and in-kind support. Members reviewed and debated the potential predicted attendance of 50 people. As an organizer of in-town events, Beth Ann reminded the group that 50 people is a great yield for in-town events, especially those outside of the usual guaranteed hit

topics. In the end, the Council chose not to prioritize the project. A **motion** to deny the approval of the application was accepted with 4 YES votes and 1 ABSTENTION.

A **motion** to postpone the discussion of fundraising until next month's meeting was unanimously accepted.

Treasurer's Report

FCC was waiting for Anne Carreiro to sign the contract with the state in order to get the money. Despite some difficulties in her office at the town hall, she has signed the contract and FCC has the money for FY26.

Chair Report

Beth Ann received two requests for late applications and let them both know that late applications couldn't be accepted and encouraged them to apply next grant cycle.

A **motion** to schedule the next meeting on January 14, 2026 was unanimously accepted.

A **motion** to postpone the remaining agenda items to the January 14th was unanimously Accepted.

A **motion** to adjourn the meeting at 8:09 pm was unanimously accepted.

Respectfully Submitted,
Katharine MacPhail, Secretary

Respectfully Revised,
Beth Ann Gallagher



Fwd: FCC - Reconsideration Request

1 message

Beth Ann Gallagher <gallagherbethann@gmail.com>
To: Fairhaven Cultural Council <culturalcouncil@fairhaven-ma.gov>

Mon, Nov 24, 2025 at 12:02 PM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Wong, Jay (ART)** <Jessica.Wong@mass.gov>
Date: Mon, Nov 24, 2025 at 11:16AM
Subject: FCC - Reconsideration Request
To: gallagherbethann@gmail.com <gallagherbethann@gmail.com>

Hi Beth Ann!

We received this reconsideration request from Raeha Ramos (application attached.) Typically, we MCC denies requests from applications that are denied based on public benefit. But we're in a gray area with this one. We just wanted to hear your thoughts on how the deliberation went and how you'd like us to proceed with this one.

Thank you!
Jay

"To the Massachusetts Cultural Council,

I am submitting this formal Request for Reconsideration regarding the Fairhaven Cultural Council's denial of our proposal, A Party at the Crossroads (FY26-LCC-126143). We believe the council did not follow the Massachusetts Cultural Council's published guidelines, specifically those concerning Public Benefit, Non-Discrimination, and the obligation to provide a fair and equitable review process.

It is important to state that we entered this process fully aware of the council's funding history. For many years, organizations in the region, particularly those led by, serving, or representing communities of color, have experienced repeated rejections from the Fairhaven Cultural Council, typically with "lack of public benefit" cited as the justification. Our own past applications to this council received the same outcome for the same stated reason. This pattern has created a widely recognized reputation among organizations of a similar demographic makeup.

Despite this history, we applied again this year in good faith, hopeful that the process had improved and that the council was aligning its practice with the Massachusetts Cultural Council's stated emphasis on equity, access, and diversity.

We attended the council's Zoom informational session specifically to ensure clarity and alignment with their priorities. However, the session offered no opportunity for discussion or inquiry, and our follow-up email questions were not acknowledged or answered. This created an experience that did not provide equitable access to information or guidance for applicants seeking to comply with the council's expectations.

The denial of our proposal (see attached letter) on the grounds of "insufficient public benefit" reflects a misapplication of the state's guidelines. MCC guidance explicitly states that advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and access is a key component of public benefit, that large attendance is not required, and that LCCs should consider their community engagement findings when determining local priorities. Our program directly advances DEIA goals, centers cultural experiences of importance to the region, and is open and accessible to the public. Rejecting such programming as lacking public benefit; particularly in light of the

council's consistent pattern of similar rejections, constitutes a failure to apply the Public Benefit requirement as defined by MCC.

Additionally, the Massachusetts Cultural Council requires all LCCs to uphold strict Non-Discrimination standards. While we are not asserting intentional discrimination, the cumulative pattern of outcomes produced by the Fairhaven Cultural Council, year after year, results in a discriminatory impact. Programs led by or serving communities of color are consistently rejected under identical reasoning, while other types of cultural programming are routinely approved. Such a pattern is inconsistent with MCC's non-discrimination requirement and does not reflect equitable grantmaking practice.

Taken together, these concerns indicate that the council did not adhere to the state-mandated standards of public benefit evaluation, non-discrimination, or equitable applicant engagement.

For these reasons, we request reconsideration based on procedural grounds, as allowed by MCC guidelines. Our request is not rooted in disagreement with artistic judgment, but in the council's failure to follow required state and local guidelines in the review and evaluation of our proposal.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We respectfully request that the Massachusetts Cultural Council review the Fairhaven Cultural Council's decision and ensure that state guidelines are applied fairly, consistently, and in alignment with MCC standards."

Funding Opportunity: The **Cultural Facilities Fund** provides capital and planning assistance to nonprofit and municipal cultural facilities; application deadline is December 11.

You're Invited: Mass Cultural Council is celebrating our FY26 grant recipients in **MetroWest** on Dec. 1. Register to join us!

Jessica "Jay" Wong (黃慧美)

She/Her

Program Officer

Communities Initiative

Mass Cultural Council

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Power of culture

Under Massachusetts Law (M.G.L. Chapter 66), any email created or received by an employee of Mass Cultural Council (including attachments and forwarded message threads) is considered a public record subject to public inspection, examination, and copying unless protected by a statutory exemption.

FY26 Grants Information Session Zoom Participants Log

Name (original name)	Email	Join time	Leave time	Duration (minutes)	Guest	Recording disclaimer response	In waiting room
FTV (Erick Sa)	esa@fairh	10/08/2025 6:26:	10/08/2025 7:31:	65	No	OK	No
Daisydots		10/08/2025 6:26:	10/08/2025 6:37:(11	Yes	No Response	Yes
	15089712462	10/08/2025 6:28:	10/08/2025 6:38:4	11	Yes	No Response	No
Rae R.		10/08/2025 6:29:	10/08/2025 6:37:0	8	Yes	No Response	Yes
Aaron Dore		10/08/2025 6:30:	10/08/2025 6:36:0	6	Yes	No Response	Yes
Beth Ann Gallagher		10/08/2025 6:34:	10/08/2025 6:34:4	1	Yes	No Response	Yes
Nina Mach		10/08/2025 6:34:	10/08/2025 6:37:(3	Yes	No Response	Yes
Beth Ann Gallagher		10/08/2025 6:34:	10/08/2025 7:31:0	57	Yes	No Response	No
Aaron Dore		10/08/2025 6:36:	10/08/2025 7:31:0	55	Yes	OK	No
Daisy D. Dots (Daisydots)		10/08/2025 6:37:	10/08/2025 7:31:0	55	Yes	OK	No
Nina Mach		10/08/2025 6:37:	10/08/2025 7:31:0	55	Yes	OK	No
Rae R.		10/08/2025 6:37:	10/08/2025 7:05:0	28	Yes	OK	No
Lisa esten		10/08/2025 6:37:	10/08/2025 6:38:0	1	Yes	No Response	Yes
Lisa Esten (Lisa esten)		10/08/2025 6:38:	10/08/2025 7:31:0	53	Yes	No Response	No