

Meeting of the Freelance Musicians Association

Via Videoconference
October 1, 2025

Nate Omdal, President, Local 76-493, Seattle, WA, called the meeting to order at 5:06 PM, EDT.

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A motion was made to approve the minutes of the September 3, 2025, meeting. The minutes were approved as submitted.

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Omdal thanked the group for attending and reflected on the excitement and enthusiasm from the previous meeting. Omdal discussed challenges and recent successes in organizing efforts, referencing a local public radio article about musicians organizing to encourage the community to divest from Spotify. He emphasized that musicians are eager for advocacy and resources to help them pursue their goals.

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Wages Argott, Director of Freelance Services, AFM, and member Local 802, New York, NY, introduced guest Evan Kassof, an organizer from the Philadelphia AFL-CIO. Argott underscored the need for as many voices as the room as possible and broad participation to identify key issues to tackle. Argott noted that meeting minutes would be detailed so musicians unable to attend the monthly meetings can stay fully informed and involved even if unable to attend. Argott expressed admiration and encouragement at the work of the Philadelphia Musicians Coalition, a grassroots body of working musicians who have created a document defining wage and labor standards for jazz musicians via their weekly meetings.

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Kassof, a professional organizer and musician, discussed their work with the Philadelphia Council AFL-CIO and the Philadelphia Musicians Coalition. Kassof noted that the Council represents around 110 locals and 160,000 workers throughout Philadelphia, including the AFM. Kassof shared insights from their work with Philadelphia Musicians Coalition, which engaged in regular meetings to set wage and labor standards for local musicians. Kassof shared that the catalyst for many of these initial efforts was the opening of a new live jazz

venue, Cellar Dog, a regional location of the New York City-based venue. Kassoff added that initial efforts to reach and establish fair standards received no response. Thus, Kassof continued, the Coalition met and created the Philadelphia Jazz Venues Labor Standards Agreement document establishing fair labor standards for this and several other live venues. Kassoff also referenced SEIU 32BJ's geographic organizing model: identifying and organizing employers within a region simultaneously. Kassof outlined strategies such as standard agreements, collective demands, and potential escalation through coordinated withholding of labor, emphasizing one-on-one conversations, training, and strategic timing (e.g., the upcoming World Cup events in Philadelphia).

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Omdal opened the meeting for discussion and inquired about potential talking points for local advocacy. Bob Smith, member Local 618, Albuquerque, NM, suggested audition requirements for AFM membership. Kassof clarified that the challenge is not participation but rather low standards. Discussion continued regarding inclusion of both members and non-members to strengthen organizing efforts. Kassof added they were unsure of potential implications of the Taft-Hartley Act for this kind of organizing.

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Leni Kreienberg, Field Organizer at the International and member of Local 802, suggested the FMA lay plans to formalize a governance structure and begin identifying and working on organizing issues in committees or working groups.

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Omdal continued the open discussion. Those present agreed to make decisions by majority vote until more formal structure could be established. Ken Hatfield, member Local 802, New York, NY, asked whether chapters would be established; Omdal responded that this would wait until a board is elected. Argott proposed forming local freelance organizing committees rather than formal chapters initially. Kreienberg noted that there is no formula to become approved as a Player's Conference by the IEB. The FMA would primarily need to demonstrate its goals, governance structure, and commitment to creating the necessary financial structure (501(c)(5) status).

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Discussion continued regarding requirements for official AFM Player Conference recognition. Tammy Noreyko, Secretary Treasurer Local 7, Orange County, reported setting up a bank account for the FMA and beginning the process of securing a new EIN and 501(c)(5) status. Edmund Velsaco, President Local 7, Orange County, CA, recommended

opening nominations for three board seats until November 1st. A motion was made and carried to approve the recommendation. A motion was made and carried to hold leadership elections at the December FMA meeting.

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Omdal led additional discussion and invited those present to submit ideas for committees and working groups within the FMA to carry out the needs of the larger body and provide focus on individual issues. The following groups were created and those listed joined the respective groups:

- Jazz Advocacy Committee: Omdal, Hatfield, Bonnie Janofsky, Trustee, Local 47, Los Angeles, CA, Gene Perla, member Local 802, New York, NY
- Legislative Committee: Hatfield, Velasco, Janofsky
- Communications Committee: Valeri Speights, Office Manager, Local Houston, TX, Antoinette Follett, AFM Director of Communications, Argott
- P2 Visa Workgroup: Omdal, Argott, Dennis Passley, Membership & Contracts Coordinator, Local 149, Toronto, ON

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Argott stressed the urgency of P2 visa processing delay advocacy for Canadian musicians, specifically as a call to action for American musicians better positioned to raise the issue and apply pressure to their legislators. Argott invited Passley to speak, who echoed this sentiment and implored the American musicians for assistance, while adding how deeply affected Canadian musicians have been by these processing issues and increased costs. Additional discussion continued with input from Liana White, Executive Director, Canadian Office, including announcement of the upcoming virtual town hall meetings to address immigration concerns from musicians throughout Canada and the collection of data to identify tangible financial losses from all parties.

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Omdal led further open discussion. John Shipley, President, Local 368, Reno, NV, recognized the presence of Paul Sharpe, former AFM Freelance Services Director and member Local 279, London, ON, crediting him with the founding and initial idea for the Freelance Musicians Association decades prior. Stacey Eliason, member, Local 76-493 and Local 105, Spokane, WA, reported on the loss of CBAs at the Cornish College of the Arts, and Omdal elaborated on the implications for those affected. Hatfield suggested examination of our reliance on technology, specifically related to musical work, citing an article they had written in the October issue of Local 802's Allegro publication. Kathryn

Engelhardt, member Local 802, New York, NY, offered support for a Federation-wide payroll service.

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Argott advised those in attendance that the format for the general meetings would soon shift from focus on structure and organizational setup and more to discussion around key topics and reporting on actions from the subcommittees within the FMA. Argott identified the need to create communication channels for those present and others unable to attend to continue to build committee membership and identify and prioritize and key issues.

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Will Kimsey, member Local 7, Orange County, CA, invited indie artists and freelance members to appear on his Music Outlook LA podcast to discuss independent artist issues, urging those present to reach out digitally via info@kim-zentertainment.com, or visit their site at <https://kim-zentertainment.com>.

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A motion was made and carried to adjourn the meeting at 6:27 PM, EDT.