

General Membership Meeting of the Freelance Musicians Association (FMA)

Via Videoconference

February 4, 2026

Nate Omdal, President, Local 76-493, Seattle, WA, called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM, EST.

oOo

Omdal presented the minutes from the January meeting. A motion was made and carried to approve the minutes as submitted.

oOo

Omdal provided brief opening remarks and contextual framing for ongoing organizing work within the Federation, with particular emphasis on freelance engagement and emerging campaigns.

oOo

Omdal introduced Zack Reaves, member Local 47, Los Angeles, CA, to present an overview of the Candlelight Concerts Series productions and recent issues facing these freelance musicians performing throughout the US and Canada. Reaves, a cellist and arranger for Candlelight, discussed recently emerging concerns, including the introduction of a new flat-rate payment structure, no compensation for travel, decreasing quality of musical arrangements, and insufficient personnel hiring, e.g. omitting the drummer from hip-hop themed shows without altering the music arrangements. Reaves shared that following a successful social media campaign and petition letter signed by several hundred musicians, the decrease in payment structure had been rolled back by Fever, the parent company for Candlelight.

Gabriel Kristal, Director Organizing Services, AFM, and member Local 238-291, Poughkeepsie, NY, requested a point of personal privilege and spoke to a recent meeting with Wages Argott, Freelance Services Director, AFM, and Tino Gagliardi, International President, AFM, providing additional context on early-stage organizing conversations around the Candlelight Concerts.

Members present from across the Federation contributed a range of perspectives and firsthand experiences regarding Candlelight. Dana Rokosny, President Local 99, Portland, OR, spoke as a core participant in a Candlelight ensemble, noting extensive personal experience (over 100 performances) and variability in conditions across markets. Ruth Berry, President Local 380-443, Oneonta, NY, shared details from contractor communications, highlighting the layered employment structure, i.e. Listeso Music Group's acting as a subcontractor for Fever, and the separation of contractual terms from compensation details.

Several members raised concerns regarding non-union participation in various regions and the challenges this presents for local organizing, as well as many member musicians' hesitancy to engage with the AFM. Hunter Buen, Staff Organizer Local 99, Portland, OR, and others noted the role of major investment capital behind the concert series, and Joel Pargman, member Locals 7, Orange County, CA, and 47, Los Angeles, CA, inquired about ticket pricing structures across markets, prompting discussion of revenue variability.

Edmund Velasco President, and Tammy Noreyko, Secretary-Treasurer, Local 7, Orange County, CA, underscored the distinction between employer-driven models and worker-led organizing, emphasizing that "the workers are the union," stressing accountability of leadership to membership.

Kristal suggested the development of educational programming utilizing MPTF and Freelance Co-Funding resources, building a clear counter-narrative centered on collective power, worker value, and solidarity, and continued coordination with Federation leadership and staff on Candlelight-related organizing effort.

o0o

Omdal provided a brief follow-up on the AFL-CIO's "Labor in the Pulpits" initiative involving organizing workers in houses of worship. Omdal encouraged continued regional participation and reporting on local engagement efforts.

o0o

Omdal led discussion on further committee development, including advocacy and issue-specific organizing for jazz musicians, legislative and policy-related endeavors, and communications initiatives around media content and outreach. Members present expressed interest in participating, with several volunteering or indicating intent to engage.

o0o

Omdal expressed appreciation to presenters and participants, noting that many members of Local 802, New York, NY, were unable to attend the meeting due to a crucial in-person-only membership meeting occurring at the same time.

General discussion followed, including next steps for independent contractor organizing, future meeting topics, and the growing value of the FMA as a space for peer learning, organizing dialogue, and information-sharing.

o0o

A motion was made and carried to adjourn the meeting at 6:09 PM, EST.