

SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION
Wednesday, May 6, 2020 Meeting Minutes – Virtual Zoom Meeting

Zoom Meeting Rules: Meeting is recorded; participants should mute during staff reports; commissioners unmute to vote; use chat to ask questions.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order in compliance with the Open Public Meeting Notice Act, Chapter 231, PL 1975 by President Donald Esposito.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

Commissioners: Don Esposito, Bob Bouwman, Rory Britt, Kathy Faulks, Phyllis Fittipaldi, Dennis Quinlan, Ann Rosenblum, Edwin Scannell, Peter Stavrianidis

Staff: Walter Lane, Kaitlin Bundy, Thomas D'Amico, Natalie Zaman, Robert Meyer

Freeholder Liaison: Brian Gallagher

Advisory Members: Sean Blinn, Brad Fay, Jessie Havens, Hilary Klimek, Kathleen Palmer, Ray Sanderson, Marge Sullivan

IV. Approval of March 4, 2020 Minutes

Motion to accept the minutes made by Phyllis Fittipaldi and seconded by Peter Stavrianidis. Passed.

V. Correspondence

Kaitlin Bundy read aloud an email correspondence from the New Jersey State Arts Council regarding the expected delay in awarding grant funds for the FY21 LAP grant due to the State's extension of the current fiscal year.

VI. Reports and Old Business

The following reports were made by Tom D'Amico:

Historic Preservation Grant Program

The County has received all the contracts for the six 2019 Historic Preservation Grant Program projects. All initial payments have been issued. The deadline for the 2020 Grant Program has been extended to Friday, June 5th at 5:00 p.m. We have received inquiries from Hillsborough Township concerning a possible grant application for the Van der Veer-Harris House.

Historic Marker Program: Tom stated that there was no change in status from the previous meeting.

SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION
Wednesday, May 6, 2020 Meeting Minutes – Virtual Zoom Meeting

Historic Preservation Plan: All chapters of the Historic Preservation Plan have been reviewed and comments by staff will be transmitted to Heritage Strategies. We plan to have a Steering Committee meeting in June.

County Historic Preservation Projects: All of the leaded glass for all five doors has been restored and installed in the Jury Assembly Room by Leo Art Glass Studio in the former First Dutch Reformed Church in Somerville. This includes the Plexiglas type covering for each window. The work on the large stained glass windows will begin in June. Tom will try to get images of the removal and reinstallation of the large stained glass windows.

The following reports were made by Kaitlin Bundy:

Local Arts Program Grant, 2020 Grant: Staff has been working closely with the State Arts Council, helping share surveys the Arts Council and Americans for the Arts have been generating to get a better picture of how artists and arts organizations are being affected during this time. We have also had meetings with the arts council regarding the 2020 grant cycle and the upcoming 2021 cycle. Commission staff have been checking in with all 2020 Re-Grantees during the COVID-19 crisis, to start getting an understanding of how all of our organizations have being effected during this time. Interim reports will be going out this week to all of our 2020 Re-grantees to confirm in writing how they are handling the current situation and to help organizations restructure grant projects, especially special project and creative placemaking applicants at this time.

2020 Census: Prior to the stay-at-home order, C&H was able to hold two of the originally schedule Culture Counts! programs, A Night of Hindustani music on February 29th which was reported on at the March Commission meeting and additionally we were able to present the music of the Philippines with the University of the Philippines Alumni & Friends Rondalla on March 8th at the Raritan Library. Don Esposito and Tom D’Amico were able to join us during the Rondalla performance. Both events were well attended and we received great feedback from both programs. Currently, C&H staff is working to try and change all of the remaining scheduled programming into virtual engagements, videos, activities, etc. Our first video with the Ukrainian History and Education Center was released on the county social media pages earlier this week, Freeholder Gallagher was kind enough to film the introduction and closing for the video for us, so we thank him for finding some time to safely go out and film himself. Staff is additionally looking for ways to engage our residents regarding the census during this time.

Virtual Programming: In addition to the Census programming, C&H staff has been working to create a variety of virtual programs, starting with artist originally engaged for the Teen Arts Festival and many of our re-grantee organizations. We are working with a variety of different disciplines in the arts to create a variety of both prerecorded virtual experiences, leading to live in person actives and events.

2020 SCCHC Meeting Dates

January 8th, February 5th, March 4th, April 1st, May 6th, June 3rd, September 9th, October 7th, November 4th, December 2nd

SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION
Wednesday, May 6, 2020 Meeting Minutes – Virtual Zoom Meeting

Historic Preservation and History Awards: 2020 Historic Preservation and History Awards have been postponed. We are optimistic that we will be able to hold the award in the fall of 2020; however the venue we had selected will not entertain any bookings until late August, so staff is revisiting other venue options. Tom has been organizing the information from the applications submitted, and we plan to work with the Awards Committee to find a date in the coming months to discuss the applications submitted and to announce the award winners this summer, and hopefully celebrate with them in the Fall.

Rapid Response Collecting: Commission staff has been engaging in meeting with the NJ Historical Commission and other counties and historic sites across the state regarding rapid response collecting, which is the term the Historical Commission is using for collecting information today that will be historically relevant in the future. It is a form of collect in response to major moments in history, such as the pandemic we are currently living through. Commission staff have been putting together a variety of ways collect information from residents, including a survey, activity pages, and engaging infographics to help encourage residents to provide information and ultimately help document their daily lives, thoughts and feelings during this time. Commission staff believes the survey and additional information will be able to go live on the county website by next week.

Crossroads of the American Revolution Annual Meeting: The Crossroad's annual meeting was held on April 21st. This virtual meeting summarized the findings of the consultant team hired to evaluate 150 revolutionary war related historic sites across the state of New Jersey. The 127 page Visitor Readiness Assessment can be found online at revolutionarynj.org. Sites that were evaluated in Somerset County should have received their individual evaluations from Crossroads. We have been told that Commission staff will receive the reports for all sites in Somerset County that were evaluated, but have not yet received the evaluations. Staff will be following up with Crossroads in the coming week regarding this information.

2020 4-H Fair: The 2020 4H Fair has been cancelled. The 4-H falls under the auspice of the Rutgers Cooperative Extension which has suspended all in-person events and activities through August 31, 2020

C&HC Strategic Visioning Plan: In March, the Commission's Strategic Visioning Consultant started in person interviews with several Commissioners, Brian Gallagher, the Commission's Freeholder Liaison, and Commission Staff. Staff has been working with the consultant virtually to set up a plan to continue this interview process so that all Commissioners, Advisory, Freeholders and key personnel can have time to speak with the consultant. These interviews will occur as either video or telephone

2020 SCCHC Meeting Dates

January 8th, February 5th, March 4th, April 1st, May 6th, June 3rd, September 9th, October 7th, November 4th, December 2nd

SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION
Wednesday, May 6, 2020 Meeting Minutes – Virtual Zoom Meeting

conferences. Commission staff will be in touch with those individuals who have not been interviewed yet to set up dates and times to work best for them.

Weekend Journey through the Past: Due to the current ongoing COVID-19 situation, Staff proposed, with Don Esposito's agreement that no major changes will be made to the 2020 Weekend Journey. While major changes were discussed, with the uncertainty of the Committee and even the Commission to meet in our current state, we feel that this is not the time to make major changes to the program. Instead, proposed changes will be discussed for the 2021 Weekend Journey. This will allow staff to move on lining up the sites and marketing for the current 2020 event. This is also all tentative in hopes that the event will be allowed to move forward in the Fall.

The following reports were made by Natalie Zaman:

NJ Historical Commission County History Partnership Program Grant, 2020 Grant: Staff has been checking in with our re-grantees and working closely with the NJ Historical Commission sharing the state commission's surveys to get a better understanding of how the COVID-19 crisis has affected our historic organizations. We have also attended virtual meetings held by the NJ Historical Commission regarding the 2020 grant cycle and the upcoming 2021 cycle. Interim reports for the 2020 CHPP grant cycle will be sent out this week and are due on June 15, 2020. The form has been simplified and has questions focused on how the COVID-19 crisis has affected our re-grantees.

C&H Gallery: Due to current restrictions in place for everyone's safety, the exhibit from the Contemporary Art Group is still on display. Staff is maintaining contact with all of the organizations with whom exhibits have been arranged for the remainder of 2020. Once it is safe to do so, the current exhibit will be taken down and new artwork will be installed, all of which is to be determined as the COVID-19 situation continues to unfold.

Teen Arts Festival: For the safety of all those involved, the Somerset County Teen Arts Festival slated to take place on May 13, 2020 has been cancelled. Staff surveyed participating schools for interest in holding a virtual festival, however the overwhelming consensus was that teachers, challenged with taking their day to day classroom activities to a virtual platform, and students not having access to artwork, tools, instruments and means of rehearsal, would not be able to participate. Staff will be publishing the 2020 Teen Arts Anthology of Creative Writing, and several of our upcoming virtual programs will be geared towards teens to provide them with potential opportunities for workshops and critiques in several artistic disciplines.

National Ag Day: For the safety of all those involved, Somerset County's National Ag Day celebrations were cancelled and events in which Cultural & Heritage was involved have not been rescheduled yet.

2020 SCCHC Meeting Dates

January 8th, February 5th, March 4th, April 1st, May 6th, June 3rd, September 9th, October 7th, November 4th, December 2nd

SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION
Wednesday, May 6, 2020 Meeting Minutes – Virtual Zoom Meeting

Ag and Commission staff will continue to monitor the ongoing situation to determine if any of the originally scheduled events can be rescheduled for later this year.

VII. New Business:

Van Horne House

The County Engineering Division will be applying to the New Jersey Historic Trust for a grant to help fund the continuation of the Van Horne House exterior restoration project. Kaitlin and Tom are reviewing and providing comments on the application. It has been requested that the Commission draft a letter to the New Jersey Historic Trust supporting the grant.

Motion to authorize writing a letter of support under the Commission President's signature for Van Horne House of Bridgewater in application to the NJ Historic Trust Grant Program made by Ann Rosenblum and seconded by Phyllis Fittipaldi. Passed.

Van der Veer-Harris House

Tom received a request from David Maski, Hillsborough Township Planner, asking the Commission for a letter of support for their grant application to the New Jersey Historic Trust to help fund the next phase of the Van der Veer-Harris House. The Township would like to link the County grant and the New Jersey Trust funding. Tom noted that the Township has successfully completed a number of County grant projects and that we encourage municipalities and non-profit organizations to apply for state and other grants

Motion to authorize writing a letter of support under the Commission President's signature for Vander Veer-Harris House of Hillsborough in application to the NJ Historic Trust Grant Program made by Bob Bouwman and seconded by Rory Britt. Passed.

Motion to remove the LAP & CHPP match requirements for 2020 made by Ann Rosenblum and seconded by Bob Bouwman. Passed.

2020 LAP and CHPP Grants

The State Arts Council and NJ Historical Commission has asked that all Counties consider dropping match requirements for all 2020 re-grantees to ease the burden on our arts and history organizations during the COVID-19 crisis.

Motion to remove the LAP &CHPP match requirements for all 2020LAP and CHPP re-grantees made by and seconded by Bob Bouwman. Passed.

2020 SCCHC Meeting Dates

January 8th, February 5th, March 4th, April 1st, May 6th, June 3rd, September 9th, October 7th, November 4th, December 2nd

SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION
Wednesday, May 6, 2020 Meeting Minutes – Virtual Zoom Meeting

2021 LAP and CHPP Grants

The State Arts Council and NJ Historical Commission have asked that all Counties consider dropping match requirements for upcoming 2021 grant cycle to ease the burden on our arts and history organizations, and encourage organizations to apply for funds in the 2021 cycle.

Motion to remove the LAP & CHPP match requirements for 2021 and simplify the grant application made by Bob Bouwman and seconded by Ann Rosenblum. Passed.

VIII. Open Meeting to the Public

Motion to open the meeting to the public made by Don Esposito and seconded by Rory Britt. Passed.

IX. Announcements and Comments

1. Next meeting - Wednesday, June 3, 2020.
2. Commissioner Phyllis Fittipaldi asked about potential effects on the budget due to the cancellations of events because of the COVID-19 crisis. Kaitlin Bundy responded that events are being rescheduled or held virtually. Walter Lane and Freeholder Gallagher confirmed that the County's 2020 budget is still temporary.
3. Tom D'Amico announced that Johnny Carawan, Trail Manager of WARO (Washington Rochambeau National Historic Trail) gave a phone briefing today which Kathy Faulks and Brad Fay also attended. Some highlights:
 - The NPS will be funding a painting by renowned artist Don Troiani commissioned by the Museum of the American Revolution.
 - Site sign standards have been developed but route signage needs state sign plans.
 - There are projects for bike and kayak trails.
 - A statue of Rochambeau will be unveiled at the Riverwalk in Yorktown, Va. dedicated by the NPS.-There are Volunteer Recognition programs and a Junior Ranger Program.
 - There will be a trail assessment looking to protect trail resources. As questioned by Jessie Havens, this may be where corrections to the route may be made.
 - Trail film in 2023
 - Updated Unigrid brochures
4. Advisor Member Brad Fay announced that the Millstone Valley Preservation Coalition in partnership with the NPS will apply for a grant this month for a WARO – Washington Rochambeau National Historic Trail auto tour as a way to experience the history and historic sites of the Millstone Scenic Byway safely in a private car. Emphasizing the importance of creating virtual experiences, he shared two additional projects:
 - The D & R Greenway Landtrust will hold a virtual gala, the 2020 Greenway Gala Watch Party at 5:30p.m. Saturday, May 9, 2020 on Princeton TV or drgreenway.org.

2020 SCCHC Meeting Dates

January 8th, February 5th, March 4th, April 1st, May 6th, June 3rd, September 9th, October 7th, November 4th, December 2nd

SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION
Wednesday, May 6, 2020 Meeting Minutes – Virtual Zoom Meeting

- Montgomery Township is creating a website, “Montgomery Together” part of which will include a virtual art gallery that will connect students to seniors and provide content for the public.
5. Advisory Member Jesse Havens asked the following questions:
- The Dirk Gulik House did not receive its assessment from Crossroads, did others receive their assessments? Kaitlin Bundy responded that each site should get a copy. If they did not receive theirs yet, they should get in touch with Crossroads to have them resend.
 - Is there any funding available for the 2020 grant cycle or was all of it accounted for? Kaitlin Bundy responded that all 2020 grant funding was allocated.
 - Many historic sites were omitted from the Crossroads survey. Will we contact Crossroads about this? Kaitlin Bundy responded that we submitted a list of sites that should have been included for Crossroad’s consideration.
 - The National Park Service is working on a book about W3R. Have they consulted us to make sure that their routes are correct? Tom D’Amico responded that they did not consult us but that he and Kathy Faulks listened to a presentation from WARO. The Department of the Interior is looking to do another trail assessment.
 - Is there any output from Cultural & Heritage on the Griggstown Bridge and resulting traffic issues. Their local paper stated that there will be an online discussion for the public to comment. The meeting should be in person. Walter Lane responded that he spoke to the County Engineer and there will be an opportunity for public comment, however nothing has been scheduled yet. How that meeting will be held will be dictated by the stay at home regulations. Freeholder Gallagher added that a public forum is much more desirable and efficient, and while everyone’s preference is for an in person meeting we have to adapt to the situation.
6. Freeholder Gallagher publically thanked the Cultural & Heritage staff for their work for the county and praised their enthusiasm, creativity and flexibility. He also publically thanked everyone who is working on behalf of Somerset County.
7. Walter Lane also thanked Cultural & Heritage. The entire Planning Division staff has been working remotely and hasn’t slowed down. He is proud of their hard work and dedication.

X. Adjournment

A motion was made by Bob Bouwman and seconded by Ann Rosenblum to adjourn the meeting. Passed. Adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Faulks, Secretary