

**SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION**  
**Wednesday, June 3, 2020 Meeting Minutes – Virtual Zoom Meeting**

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**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 Osterdale Rosenblum, Edwin Scannell

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

**Freeholder Liaison:** Brian Gallagher

**Advisors:** Sean Blinn, Brad Fay, Bob Fazen, Jessie Havens, Hilary Klimek, Kathleen Palmer, Ray Sanderson, Marge Sullivan

**IV. Approval of May 6, 2020 Minutes**

Motion to accept the minutes made by Ann Osterdale Rosenblum and seconded by Phyllis Fittipaldi. Passed.

**V. Correspondence**

Kaitlin Bundy received a letter from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts Federal Cares Act Funding awarding Somerset County \$9,400.

**VI. Reports and Old Business**

**The following reports were made by Tom D'Amico:**

**Historic Preservation Grant Program:** Tom reported that the 2020 Historic Preservation Grant program applications are due on Friday June 5<sup>th</sup>. So far, three entities have had questions. Applications may be dropped off at the County Administration Building. When dropping applications the Sheriff's officer on duty must be told that the packet is for the Cultural & Heritage Commission. Tom also noted that a payment was made for the Brick Academy project.

**Historic Preservation Master Plan:** All comments on the Historic Preservation Plan have been sent to the consultants; we are currently reviewing the seven maps. The Open Space and Agricultural Preservation Plans' comments have also been submitted and the consultants are incorporating those into the text. We expect the Historic Preservation section to be completed and ready to be reviewed by the steering committee in a few weeks. We hope to have a steering committee meeting shortly thereafter.

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**County Preservation Projects:** As discussed at last month's meeting the County will be submitting a grant application to the New Jersey Historic Trust to continue the exterior restoration of the Van Horne House in Bridgewater. Kaitlin and Tom reviewed and made comments on the application which was prepared by the County Engineering Division.

The large stained glass window is scheduled to be removed on June 13<sup>th</sup> for restoration. Staff has arranged for Public Information Office to take pictures and video of the removal. Tom stated that he and Lucia Mostello of the County Public Information Office will be going to the Jury Assembly Room tomorrow to take some images prior to the window's removal.

**The following reports were made by Kaitlin Bundy:**

**Local Arts Program Grant:** 2020 Grant—Staff continues to work closely with the State Arts Council, helping to share and provide information during the COVID-19 crisis. Interim reports for all 2020 Re-grantees are due back on June 15<sup>th</sup>. Staff expects that a number of re-grantee organizations may present some issues in utilizing their grant funds as originally intended and will be working with all re-grantee organizations to come up with creative solutions to help these organizations fulfill their grant obligations for 2020 without having to simply give up their grant funding.

**2020 Census:** C&H staff continues to work with the County's Complete Count Committee, providing a variety of prerecorded virtual experiences that present a call to action for the census. Working with Public Information, we have already presented videos from a variety of different arts disciplines, including storytelling, visual art and instrumental music. Staff is currently also working to utilize the county's rich history to create a variety of history related videos promoting the census in the near future.

**Rapid Response Collecting:** The Commission's Rapid Response Collecting initiative *Somerset County Remembers*, went live a couple weeks ago. This includes a survey, activity pages, and engaging infographics to encourage residents to document their daily lives, thoughts and feelings during this time. Staff has been working with Public Information to get information out about the materials available, and staff has seen a number of survey entries coming in. Staff asked that Commission members contribute to the survey if they are able, and to pass the information along to their contacts to help reach additional members of the public. Staff also learned that around the same time, the Library system started a similar initiative, and has scheduled a meeting with the library for June 5<sup>th</sup> to discuss how C&H and the Library can partner on this initiative.

**Federal CARES Act Funding:** During Correspondence, Kaitlin read the email received by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts regarding its award of CARES Act Funding to each of the 21 counties in the state. With the help of County Council, Director of Public Works Paul McCall and Director of the Planning Division Walter Lane, C&H Staff was able to present a resolution before the Board of Chosen Freeholders to allow Cultural & Heritage to accept these funds.

The State will be making an addendum to the Commission's FY 2020 Contract to add the additional \$9,400 dollars. These funds come with very strict rules on how they can be utilized. The Commission is allowed to utilize 25% of these funds internally, with the remaining 75% going out into the public to

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arts non-profits or organizations that do arts programming, provided the funds specifically support their arts programming. Additionally, these funds can only be utilized for 3 specific functions:

1. Salaries for staff,
2. Fees to pay Artists, and
3. Utilities and or rent

**The following reports were made by Natalie Zaman:**

**NJ Historical Commission County History Partnership Program Grant:** 2020 Grant—Staff has shared the NJ Historical Commission’s and the Governor’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 about virtual programming and the 2020 and 2021 grant cycles. Interim reports for the 2020 CHPP grant cycle 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.

**Virtual Programming:** In addition to the Census programming, C&H staff has been working to create a variety of virtual programs, starting with artists 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 activities and events. Currently up on our social media are videos featuring the Ukrainian History and Education Center and Pysanky eggs, The Coffeehouse Project and making music at home and storyteller Queen Nur bringing voices of African American women and suffragettes to life.

**Weekend Journey through the Past:** Weekend Journey 2020 is planned to take place on Saturday, October 10 and Sunday, October 11, 2020. The initial paperwork has been sent to potential participating sites and is due at the end of June. In addition to traditional preparations for holding Weekend Journey, staff is exploring virtual platforms to hold and enhance the Weekend Journey experience.

**VII. New Business**

Kaitlin Bundy explained that the New Jersey State Council on the Arts Federal Cares Act Funding awarded Somerset County \$9,400. 25% could be spent internally with 75% to the public for arts programming. C&H will disburse the full \$9,400. This funding for public arts programs could only be spent one of three ways: salary for staff, artists’ fees or rent.

It is recommendation of staff that the Commission move on the following:

1. That the Commission re-grant the entire amount of CARES Act funding received (\$9,400).
2. That the Commission make these funds available to C&H 2020 LAP Re-grantees through a one-page questionnaire to allow re-grantees to justify their need and to confirm that they can utilize the funds as intended. Opening the funds up to the wider public would require the Commission create a new grant program that would need to go through purchasing.

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A committee would be established to make recommendations to the C&H Commission, who in turn would make recommendations to the Board of Chosen Freeholders. A resolution by the Freeholders is needed to allow C&H to accept these funds. Motion to carry out this program as described made by Kathy Faulks and seconded by Bob Bouwman. Passed.

Tom D'Amico reported that Warren Township requests a letter of support for their grant application to the NJ Historic Trust for the Mount Bethel Meeting House. Motion to write the letter to support Mount Bethel made by Kathy Faulks and seconded by Bob Bouwman. Passed. Rory Britt abstained.

A survey was sent out about Weekend Journey through the Past asking about participation of sites and what kind, i.e. virtual, hybrid, traditional. It was decided to wait until the July meeting when more information will be available about the need for social distancing. In the meantime, staff will prepare plans for possible scenarios. Brad Fay suggested an outdoor tour event. The Historic Preservation grant applications will be considered during a closed session of this meeting as well.

There has been some consideration of creating Arts and History non-profit Roundtable discussions.

**VIII. Open Meeting to the Public**

**IX. Announcements: Next meeting–July date TBA**

1. Jessie Havens is concerned that signs for WARO – Washington Rochambeau National Historic Trail based on incorrect maps could be installed in Somerset County. Reassurance was given noting that review of all county signs would go through Public Works and Planning.
2. Mayor Bob Fazen announced that the Declaration of Independence will be read on July 4<sup>th</sup> at the Washington Campground and live streamed on Facebook.
3. Kathleen Palmer announced that 3 businesses in Bernardsville will not re-open including the 1912 triplex movie theatre and Caldwell Bank.

**X. Adjournment**

Motion made by Bob Bouwman and seconded by Ann Osterdale Rosenblum to adjourn the meeting. Passed. Adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathy Faulks, Secretary