

SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION
Wednesday, November 4, 2020 Meeting Minutes – Virtual Zoom Meeting

Zoom Meeting Rules: Participants should mute when not speaking; commissioners unmute to vote; use chat to ask questions.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Commission President Donald Esposito in compliance with the Open Public Meeting Notice Act, Chapter 231, PL 1975.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

Commissioners: Don Esposito, Robert Bouwman, Rory Britt, Kathy Faulks, Phyllis Fittipaldi, Dennis Quinlan, Edwin Scannell

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

Advisors: Sean Blinn, Jessie Havens, Hilary Klimek, Kathleen Palmer, Ray Sanderson, Marge Sullivan

IV. Approval of October 7, 2020 Minutes

Motion to accept the minutes made by Phyllis Fittipaldi and seconded by Rory Britt. Passed.

V. Correspondence

No correspondence.

VI. Reports and Old Business

The following reports were made by Tom D'Amico:

Historic Preservation Grant Program

The Board of Chosen Freeholders awarded six County Historic Preservation grants totaling \$601,000. There were two municipal grants, \$125,000 for the Van der Veer Harris House in Hillsborough for windows and shutters, and \$76,000 for Rocky Hill Borough Hall tin ceiling restoration, interior trim, floor and stair restoration; and four grants for County projects: \$100,000 for the Jury Assembly Room stained glass window project, \$90,000 for the Duderstadt site including a historic structures report and mothballing and security for the house, \$160,00 for the Fleischman Carriage House Restoration and \$50,000 for cleaning the Lord Memorial Fountain. There were also two grants for projects in Somerset County that were awarded by the New Jersey Historic Trust; \$281,495 for the Mount Bethel Baptist Meeting House in Warren and \$50,000 for the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum. Unfortunately the County did not receive any funding for the Van Horne House.

Historic Preservation Master Plan

The County received the draft of the Open Space Master Plan and the Historic Preservation Master Plans which in turn were transmitted to the Steering Committee. (We expect to transmit the Agricultural Preservation Plan in mid-December.) We hope to have a Steering Committee meeting the week of November 23rd. After their review and any recommended changes are made to the Plans they will be posted on the County website and distributed for public review.

2020 SCCHC Meeting Dates:

Jan 8, Feb 5, Mar 4, May 6, Jun 3, Jul 22, Aug 27, Sep 9, Oct 7, Nov 4, Dec 2

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County Preservation Projects

Tom reported that part of the large stained glass window on the west side of the 1st Dutch Reformed Church (Jury Assembly Room) in Somerville was restored by Leo Art Studio in Clark, New Jersey and was reinstalled. It was removed on June 20th. The remainder of the window should be installed this fall.

The New Jersey Historic Sites Council approved the recommended alternatives that were prepared by the County for the Rock Brook Bridge. The State Historic Preservation Office drafted a 14 page resolution regarding the Bridge which included a number of requirements that the county must fulfill. The County also had initial contact with the Raritan Library to install their historic marker.

The following reports were made by Kaitlin Bundy:

Local Arts Program Grant

2020 Grant: Staff continues to check in with our 2020 LAP re-grantees to make sure they are on track for 2020. Staff is still waiting on final report information from the New Jersey State Arts Council to revise and distribute final report paperwork to all re-grantees.

2021 Grant: Applications for the 2021 grant round were due on October 27, 2020. Seventeen (17) applications were received. Applications have been mailed off to the independent peer panel that will review and score each application individually, and will meet via a zoom meeting in December to discuss all applications as a group before final scores are submitted. The applications total \$206,500 in total requests and include five (5) new applicants.

Technical Assistance Workshops

On October 29th, 2020 the Commission held: *What now? Strategies for Moving Ahead* by Allison Trimarco. The workshop discussed updated trends in audience opinions about both online and in-person programs, strategies for connecting with audiences, earning revenue to sustain an organization, and options for replacing traditional fundraising events with other sources of contributed revenue.

C&H Visioning Plan Update

The resident's survey finished up on October 23rd. The consultant is currently reviewing responses to the survey and staff notes on the draft plan submitted. Staff is working with the consultant and hopes to have a final draft plan ready to submit to the Commission on or before the December 2020 meeting.

Historic Preservation and History Awards

The Historic Preservation and History Awards took place virtually on October 28, 2020 at 7pm. This was the Commission's first ever virtual ceremony. All of the recipients seemed very happy with their awards and the ceremony.

The following reports were made by Natalie Zaman:

NJ Historical Commission County History Partnership Program Grant

2020 Grant: Staff continues to check in with our 2020 CHPP re-grantees to make sure they are on track. We are completing updates to our 2020 Final Report Form based on the New Jersey Historical Commission's final report requirements. When revisions are complete it will be sent to our 2020 re-grantees.

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2021 Grant: Requests for Applications for the 2021 CHPP Grant were due on October 20th and we received 9 applications. One organization was offered funding directly by the state; that organization elected to accept the state's money, so for 2021 we have 8 applications with a total of \$124,416.00 in requests. Three of the applicants are new to this grant. Applications were sent to and received by the panelists who will meet on November 19th to discuss them, finalize scores and make recommendations for the Committee.

Weekend Journey through the Past

The 15th annual Journey through the Past took place throughout the month of October with our traditional "Weekend Journey" occurring on Saturday October 10th and Sunday October 11th.

This year due to the ongoing pandemic, the event was presented in a, "choose your own adventure" format. People were able to visit open historic sites in person on October 10th and 11th, take a self-guided driving tour of the Millstone Valley National Scenic Byway created by the Millstone Valley Preservation Coalition, participate in a History Hunt and take a virtual journey through the past through our story map. While our numbers were less than last year, we still had significant engagement. Natalie shared a chart that featured the following information: With 10 out of 14 sites reporting, there were over 800 in person visits for the traditional Weekend Journey held on October 10th and 11th. Many people were glad and expressed gratitude that the event took place. The Virtual Journey through the Past which included the Commission's Story Map, GIS Map. History Hunt and website, reached 4,962 people. Combined in person and virtual engagement reached 5,702 people. In addition to traditional marketing and advertising, Facebook boosts were employed with a reach of 41,120.

Arts and Humanities Month

October was National Arts and Humanities Month. The Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders read the official proclamation for Arts and Humanities Month at the October 13th Freeholder Meeting. In conjunction, C&H staff and the Graphics department produced a coloring book featuring arts and history activities. The book is available at various branches of the Somerset County Library System. The proclamation was on display with a supply of books at the main branch in Bridgewater.

VII. New Business

1. 2021 Local Arts Program Grant Funds: Kaitlin Bundy reported the New Jersey State Council on the Arts awarded Somerset County \$77,349, a \$5,000 increase from 2020. Usually 25% would be spent internally with 75% to the public for arts programming. It is recommended that C&H only retain 20% and disburse \$61,880 as re-grants. Motion made by Rory Britt and seconded by Kathy Faulks. Passed.
2. 2021 County History Partnership Program Grant Funds: Kaitlin Bundy reported the New Jersey Historical Commission awarded Somerset County \$47,808, a \$10,000 increase from 2020. \$12,500 must be designated for operating expenses but it is recommended that the additional \$10,000 be added to the re-grant program. Motion made by Rory Britt and seconded by Kathy Faulks. Passed.
3. C&H Grant Committee: With the additional requests for funding from the Arts and History non-profit organizations this year it is recommended that a Grant Committee be appointed to help evaluate the applications. President Donald Esposito appointed Rory Britt, Kathy Faulks, and Peter Stavrianidis.

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VIII. Open Meeting to the Public

IX. Announcements and Comments:

Next SCC&H meeting will take place VIRTUALLY on December 2, 2020.

X. Adjournment 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Faulks, Secretary

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