

**SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION**  
**Thursday, May 5, 2022, Meeting Minutes – Virtual Zoom Meeting**

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**I. Call to Order**

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

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

**III. Roll Call**

**Commissioners:** Rory Britt, Donnetta Johnson, Kathy Faulks, Natalie Pineiro, Don Esposito, Jonathan Hress, Dennis Quinlan, Ned Scannell EXCUSED: Marge Sullivan

**Staff:** Kaitlin Bundy, Thomas D’Amico, Natalie Zaman, Robert Meyer

**Advisory Members:** Sean Blinn, Brian Faulks, Hilary Klemick, Rose Kopf, Keiona Miller

**Members of the Public:** Brad Fay

**Commissioner Liaison:** Deputy Director Melanie Marano

**IV. Approval of April 7, 2022, Minutes**

**Motion** to accept the minutes made by Don Esposito and seconded by Natalie Pineiro. Passed.

**V. Correspondence**

1. Kaitlin Bundy received a letter of thanks to the Commission for supplying the shuttle bus for the weekend’s activities of The National Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association, Inc.
2. Kaitlin Bundy received a letter of thanks from Paul Soltis of the Wallace House to the Commission for supplying a letter of support of the Wallace House’s grant application to the National Park Service. A letter was also received from the Somerset County Board of Commissioners.

**VI. Staff Reports/Old Business**

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

**Historic Preservation Grant Program. 2022 Grant:** Staff received six (6) applications for the 2022 Historic Preservation Grant program with requests totaling \$1,263,234.00. Applications were received for the Pluckemin School House, the Dunster-Squibb Property, Washington Camp Ground, the Van Doren Howe Farmstead, the Van der Veer-Harris House and the Reasoner-True House.

**2021 Grant:** Five (5) 2021 Grant Program contracts have been received. These contracts have been executed by the grant recipients and the County Commissioner Director and payments have been made. Three more contracts are in the County Commissioners Office for execution.

**County Preservation Projects. Van Horne House:** The County Public Works Department continues to work on the east wing of the Van Horne House in Bridgewater. The project includes replacing the siding, installing a new cedar roof and replacing the gutters on the east wing. Much of the siding has been installed; however progress was delayed because of supply chain issues. Additional work is expected to begin next week.

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**Fleischmann Carriage House:** The County has awarded a professional Service Contract to Mills & Schnoering Architects, LLC for a Historic Preservation Plan and a design study for the Fleischmann Carriage House in Colonial Park in Franklin Township. Analysis of the structure is ongoing; County professional staff had a zoom meeting with the consultants to discuss potential re-use of the structure.

**Baker-Duderstadt Farmstead:** The County hired the historic preservation firm of Connolly & Hickey to complete a study and plans for the restoration of Baker-Duderstadt Farmstead in the East County Park in Warren Township. The contract was authorized by the County Commissioners at their meeting on March 22, 2022. The project is moving forward.

**Lord Memorial Fountain/Stained Glass Windows:** Staff is finalizing the State Historic Preservation Office Authorization to proceed with the application for the cleaning of the Lord Memorial Fountain. Staff is also working with the State on the application for the stained glass in the First Reformed Church.

**Historic Preservation Master Plan.** Thomas D’Amico reported that the County is updating the County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, the Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan and developing a new Historic Preservation Plan. As previously noted at the last meeting, the final draft of the Historic Preservation Plan is complete. A notice and a copy of the proposed Preservation Plan were sent to all municipal clerk and planning board secretaries. This notice was consistent with the County Planning Act, and notified the recipients of a virtual public hearing of the County Planning Board (held on March 30, 2022 at 4:45 p.m.) to take public comment on the Draft Preservation Plan. The plan has been added to the County website. Staff has solicited public input and received a number of comments which will be reviewed by the Preservation Plan Steering Committee. The plan has been endorsed by the County Park Commission, the County Agricultural Development Board and the Cultural and Heritage Commission. The County Planning Board should adopt the plan at its meeting on May 17, 2022.

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

**Local Arts Program Grant. 2022 Grant:** All 2022 contracts have been reviewed and submitted for final signature with the County Commissioner’s Office. As fully executed contracts are returned to our office, staff releases the first payment to each individual organization. The first payment consists of 75% of the organization’s total grant award for the year. Staff will begin reaching out to all 2022 re-grant organizations to schedule face to face interim discussion meeting in the upcoming weeks. These interim discussions provide staff with a better understanding of any challenges being faced by our organizations during the year.

**2023 Grant:** Staff has begun to update the application guidelines for the 2023 grant round.

**NEA ARP Sub-granting for Local Arts Agencies Grant:** Staff is waiting on final approval of the application and guidelines from County Counsel. Once approval is received applications for the NEA ARP Sub-grant will go live. The Commission received \$150,000.00 in funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). These funds are intended to help support jobs in the arts sector, keep the doors open to arts organizations, and assist the field in its response to and recovery from the

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COVID-19 pandemic. This grant is limited to six (6) awards of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) each. Applicants will be allowed to use funding to support:

- Salary support, full or partial, for one or more staff positions.
- Fees/stipends for artists and/or contractual personnel for services they provide for specific activities in support of your organization’s general operations.
- Costs associated with health and safety supplies for staff and/or visitors/audiences (e.g., personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer, etc.).
- Facilities costs such as rent and utilities, e.g., electric, phone, gas bills. (NOTE: Costs related to home offices, upgrades to HVAC/ventilation systems, and other capital improvements are UNALLOWABLE.)
- Marketing and promotion costs.

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

**County History Partnership Program Grant. 2022 Grant:** All 2022 re-grantees contracts have been fully executed. Staff is currently releasing first payments to each individual organization. The first payment consists of 75% of the organizations total grant award for the year. Staff is also preparing interim report forms. The New Jersey Historical Commission has not released their interim report yet (staff revises the interim report forms so that they are in line with the State’s).

**2023-2025 Grant Cycle:** Staff submitted the Commission’s application for the 23-25 CHPP grant on Monday, May 2, 2022. We should be informed about our award status before the end of the summer (last year we were notified in August).

**Cooperative Marketing Grant. 2022 Grant:** The Cultural & Heritage Commission was awarded \$12,900 in Cooperative Marketing Grant funds from the NJ Division of Travel and Tourism. Funds were used to purchase ad space in digital and print media with target audiences in the greater tristate area to promote the 2022 Journey through the Past event and economic development in Somerset County. Staff encumbered funds through our purchase order process and is working with our Graphics department to update and create the ads that will be run—the first will appear in June.

**2023 Grant:** Staff will apply for Cooperative Marketing Grant funds from the NJ Department of State, Division of Travel and Tourism for 2023 and are currently working on the Declaration of Intent; the application is due in June. Again, the tristate area will be targeted.

**C&H Gallery.** The current exhibit in the Cultural & Heritage gallery is “Ukraine 1933: A Cookbook” from the permanent collection of the Ukrainian History and Education Center in Somerset. The display is a portion of a lino-cut print series by artist Mykola Bondarenko. The prints depict the unbelievable “menu” upon which the survivors of the Holodomor, the genocidal artificial famine of 1932-22 subsisted. Additionally on display in our cases on the third floor, and also from the Ukrainian History and Education Center’s permanent collection, are 92 pysanka eggs. The symbols on these Ukrainian Easter eggs predate Christianity and are a symbol of hope in dark times. Representatives from the UHEC have noted that when they first spoke to us about this exhibit, which marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Holodomor, that they never could have foreseen the relevance of this exhibit in light of current events.

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**The following reports were made by Robert Meyer:**

**Teen Arts.** Staff has received and reviewed all student submissions for the 2022 Teen Arts Festival. In total, 243 submissions were received and each will receive an adjudication video from one of 22 professional artists. This year, 527 students from 11 schools participated. Adjudication videos are due back to staff by May 13, 2022. Once received, adjudication videos are reviewed by staff and will be reviewed by staff and sent to the school coordinators. Visual works will be displayed on the County website and the administration building starting in June. An anthology of creative writing submissions is also being produced.

**VII. New Business/Action Items**

1. **Emergency Funding Request – Abraham Staats House.** The Abraham Staats House suffered significant water damage from an overflowing sink located on the second floor of the house. There was damage to the door which is the main entrance, and ceiling and wall damage. The Borough wishes to apply for an emergency grant from the Historic Preservation Grant Program to fund these repairs. Assessments were made by qualified historic preservation consultants; Hahr Construction, Inc., a qualified historic preservation firm, provided an estimate for all repairs at a cost of \$9,500. Rory Britt asked for confirmation that the estimate provided would cover all repairs. Tom D’Amico confirmed. Don Esposito asked that time depressed handles be installed in the sink to prevent repeat occurrences. Tom D’amico stated that the restroom in question was not open to the public but that the request would be made. Kathy Faulks, Dennis Quinlan and Ned Scannell did not participate in, or take any action on the Abraham Staats House Emergency Funding Request discussion. A Motion to recommend emergency funding for repairs to the Abraham Staats House in the amount of \$9,500 to the County Commissioners was made by Don Esposito and seconded by Natalie Pineiro. Passed.
  
2. **Journey Through the Past – Museum of the American Revolution First Oval Office.** The Commission was provided the opportunity to collaborate with the Museum of the American Revolution on their First Oval Office Project. The Museum has an exact replica of George Washington’s war tent which serves as a traveling education outreach resource for the Museum. The tent is furnished with reproductions of historically accurate equipment such as camp stools and a camp bed that includes replicas of Washington’s own bed linens and clothing. Erecting the tent and attending to the encampment are costumed living history educators, including those dressed as Washington’s Life Guard. Guests immerse themselves into George Washington’s world and learn the important role of the tent. The Museum would like to erect the tent on the Courthouse Green in Somerville during the Journey Through the Past event. The Museum would also share in promotion of this event through outreach to its email and social media constituency, as well as through direct outreach to its donors and constituents in Somerset County. County Consultant Brad Fay informed the Commission that having the tent and reenactors for Journey Through the Past would cost \$5700 and that overnight/weekend security would be needed. The Board of Somerset County Commissioners would determine the source of the funding for this initiative. (Some funds might be available from the NEW-ARP Grant.) A Motion to engage the First Oval Office Project for Journey Through the Past was made by Don Esposito and seconded by Jonathan Hress. Passed.

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Robert Meyer noted that historic sites have until May 13 to submit their participation forms for Journey Through the Past October 2022.

**VIII. Commissioner Comments**

1. Donnetta Johnson announced that Somerset County's Juneteenth will be Thursday, June 16, 2022, at the Somerville Court House Green.
2. Kathy Faulks announced the NJ Paranormal Investigators Program at the Abraham Staats House Saturday, May 14, 2022, at 6:30pm \$35 in advance, \$45 at door.
3. Deputy Director Melanie Marano commented that she appreciates the work of historic groups and noted some recently attended events by the National Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association, Inc., the Battle of Bound Brook, and the Ukrainian Cultural Center.
4. Kathy Faulks made the Commission aware of a project that Paul Soltis of the Wallace House is working on called Unveiling Memories.

**IX. Advisory Committee Comments**

1. Sean Blinn talked during the National Council of Public History about Accessibility at Historic Sites at the Jacobus Vanderveer House.
2. Sean Blinn participated in a panel discussion during the National Council of Public History of Revolutionary Houses, Revolutionary Narratives and cited the Abraham Staats House video, "The Old Kitchen at the Abraham Staats House: A Window into Slavery in New Jersey," for its glimpse into the reality of slavery in New Jersey and the lives of the enslaved people who were part of the living history of the Staats' homestead, during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Brian Faulks shared that the Ukrainian Cultural Center has artifacts from World War II and prior.

**X. Open Meeting to the Public**

**Announcements/Other News:**

**The next SCC&H meeting will take place VIRTUALLY on Thursday June 2, 2022.**

**XI. Adjournment**

**Adjournment 8:38 p.m.**

Motion to adjourn was made by Jonathan Hress and seconded by Donnetta Johnson. Passed.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathy Faulks, Secretary

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