

SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION
Thursday, Jan. 12, 2023, Meeting Minutes – Hybrid Live/Virtual Zoom Meeting

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:43 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. Swearing In of New and Reappointed Commissioners

Robert Grundfest and Maritza Martinez

IV. Roll Call

Commissioners: Rory Britt, Donnetta Bishop-Johnson, Natalie Pineiro, Kathy Faulks, Robert Grundfest, Jonathan Hress, Maritza Martinez, Edwin Scannell, Marge Sullivan

Staff: Walter Lane, Thomas D’Amico, Kaitlin Bundy, Robert Meyer, Tom Boccino

Advisory Members: Aldo Adiazola, Sean Blinn, Brian Faulks, Rikki Massand, Kathleen Palmer, Gale Skirkanish, Leslie Workman

Members of the Public: Dorothy Cordero, Don Esposito, Jessie Havens, Hilary Klimek, Chandler Potter

V. Approval of December 1, 2022, Minutes

Marge Sullivan asked to amend her report in Section VIII. Cultural & Heritage Commissioner’s Comments #2 to indicate that the National Park Service grant to the Wallace House was funded. The paragraph will now read, “On behalf of Paul Soltis, NJ Park Service Interpretive Specialist, Marge Sullivan thanked the Cultural & Heritage Commission and Somerset County Board of County Commissioners for writing letters of support for the Wallace House’s recently funded grant application to the National Park Service FY2022 round of the Semiquincentennial grant program to update the Historic Structures Report along with restoration work on the Wallace House due to water and moisture damage, improve landscaping and improve ADA accessibility.”

Motion to accept the minutes as amended made by Jonathan Hress and seconded by Marge Sullivan. Passed. **Abstain:** Robert Grundfest, Maritza Martinez

VI. Election of Officers

Nominating Committee: Kathy Faulks Chairman, Marge Sullivan

President: Rory Britt

Vice-President: Donnetta Johnson

Treasurer: Natalie Pineiro

Secretary: Kathy Faulks

No nominations from the floor.

Motion to accept the Nominating Committee’s recommendations made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Rory Britt. Passed.

VII. Correspondence

Staff received no correspondence to report at this meeting.

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VIII. Staff Reports/Old Business

The following reports were made by Tom D’Amico:

Historic Preservation Grant Program. Tom D’Amico noted that all 2021 contracts have been signed and the first payments made. The 2023 Historic Preservation Grant Program applications and guidelines will be issued the first week in February with a due date of April 21, 2023. Payments were made for the Rocky Hill Borough Hall, Kennedy-Martin-Stelle and Somerville Borough Hall projects.

County Historic Preservation Projects. Van Horne House: The County has Completed Phase II of the exterior restoration of the Van Horne House which involved work on the east wing of the house. Phase III will begin in the spring, which involves window restoration and work on the back porch including increasing ADA accessibility.

Stained Glass Windows

The County has hired a new general contractor and has begun discussions with Lamb Studios on Phase IV of the stained glass window project in the Jury Assembly Room, which is the old Dutch Reformed Church.

Baker-Duterstadt Farmstead

The consultants Connolly and Hickey Historic Architects will make two more site visits, the next one will be on Friday, January 13, 2023. They are planning to be done with a final draft of the Historic Structures Report within the month.

Van Doren Howe Property

Staff is awaiting the completion of the Historic Structures Report for the farmstead.

County Owned Historic Sites Survey

The consultant, Mills and Schnoering, is now working on the section of the report dealing with how other counties and entities adaptively reuse and administer their historic resources. This is a key element of the report since it will provide successful examples of how other counties preserve their historic sites.

The following reports were made by Kaitlin Bundy:

Local Arts Program Grant. The Local Arts Program Grant (LAP), are funds the Commission receives annually from the New Jersey State Council on the Art to primarily re-grant out to local non-profits and municipalities.

2022 Grants. Final report forms were sent out to all 2022 re-grantees in early November and were due back January 10, 2023. Staff has received 13 of the 15 final reports are working to review and process final payments to all re-grant organizations. Staff has been in contact with the two organizations with outstanding final reports.

2023 Grant. The Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission received 23 applications for the 2023 grant cycle totaling over \$580,000 in grant requests. Staff presented the recommendations of the

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Cultural & Heritage Commission and independent peer panel to the Board of County Commissioners on January 10th and are currently working to have the grant awards authorized via resolution this month.

Cooperative Marketing Grant. 2022 CMP Grant: The Cooperative Marketing Grant are funds the Commission receives from the NJ Division of Travel and Tourism to market and promote the Commission's Heritage Tourism event, Journey Through the Past. Staff has submitted the contract paperwork for the FY2023 Cooperative Marketing grant in the amount of \$10,050.00. Staff is currently working to finalize and submit the final report for the FY2022 grant to the state.

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) American Rescue Plan (ARP) Sub-granting for Local Arts Agencies Grant. 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 COVID-19 pandemic. Contracts from the six re-grant organizations are due back on January 17th. Once reviewed and approved by staff, the contracts will be sent to the Board of County Commissioner's for final authorization. The following organizations were awarded a grant of \$25,000.00:

- American Theater Group
- Center for Contemporary Art
- Frontline Arts
- Light Opera of New Jersey
- Music in the Somerset Hills
- Ukrainian History and Education Center

Black History Month. Staff have been asked by the County Administrator's office to pursue an event for Black History Month in February. Staff is currently working to try and put together a small event for the County.

The following reports were made by Robert Meyer:

CHPP Grant. The County History Partnership Program Grant (CHPP), are funds the Commission receives annually from the New Jersey State Historical Commission to primarily re-grant out to local non-profits and municipalities.

2022 Grants: Final report forms were sent out to all 2022 re-grantees in early November and were due back January 10, 2023. Staff has received four of the five final reports and is in the process of reviewing them before final payments can be released. Staff has been in contact with the fifth re-grantee about submitting their report.

2023 Grant: The Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission received 11 applications for the 2023 grant cycle totaling over \$325,000 in grant requests. Staff presented the recommendations of the Cultural & Heritage Commission and independent peer panel to the Board of County Commissioners

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on December 13th and are currently working to have the grant awards authorized via resolution this month.

Gallery. The Camera Naturalists Photo Club exhibit and The Woodturnings & Bird Carvings exhibit officially opened in the Cultural & Heritage Gallery on December 1, 2022. The Camera Naturalists exhibit features 33 works of photography which are displayed on the first floor of the County Administration Building. The Woodturnings & Bird Carvings exhibit features 16 pieces of carved wood which are displayed on the third floor of the County Administration Building. Both exhibits will run through January 17, 2023. Our next gallery will feature artwork from ArtSee and will open on January 19, 2023.

Other. Tom D’Amico noted that the Somerset County Public Works Department cleared a pathway to the Castner-Compton Cemetery on Vogt Drive in Bridgewater which is owned by the Somerset County Historical Society and surrounded by County owned property.

IX. New Business/Action Items

2023 Meeting Dates.

Motion to accept the proposed meeting schedule made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Jonathan Hress. Passed.

Discussion of future meeting type led to the following proposal: Quarterly hybrid meetings will be held in January, May, September, December of 2023 and January of 2024. Meetings will be held via Zoom in February, March, June, October, and November of 2023. This proposal is dependent upon the approval of County Counsel.

Motion to accept the proposed meeting schedule made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Natalie Pineiro. Passed.

Other. Kaitlin Bundy thanked Don Esposito for over 40 years of service to the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission and for his part in its creation. Don expressed his gratitude. It was noted that the 2023 Journey Through the Past will occur on October 7 & 8, 2023.

X. Cultural & Heritage Commissioner Comments

1. Robert Grundfest expressed that he was happy to be appointed and looks forward to serving as a Cultural & Heritage Commissioner.
2. Marge Sullivan commented that the Cultural & Heritage history committee should be called to meet as soon as possible because the 250th Anniversary of the American Independence is fast approaching. It was noted that the Board of County Commissioners has made the 250th a theme for Somerset County Heritage Tourism. Kaitlin Bundy remarked that the committee appointments will be determined this month. Walter Lane, Director Somerset County Planning, Policy, and Economic Development, stated that staff has been working internally for some time on 250th preparations, as it part of the newly adopted Master Plan and that the County should be first in line for 250th related funding requests.
3. Kathy Faulks announced upcoming programs at the Abraham Staats House: on January 14, 2023, at 12:30pm General Washington, portrayed by Samuel Davis, presents "The Dark Days of the American Revolution." This program will cost \$35 with reservations or \$45 at door.

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At 3:00pm the unveiling of the “Baron von Steuben Plaque” will take place outside the house. This plaque was made possible in part by a donation from the New Jersey Society Sons of the American Revolution (NJSSAR). Following the unveiling, there will be refreshments and tours until 4:00pm. This event is free to the public. www.staatshouse.org

4. Donnetta Bishop-Johnson announced two Black History Month Events at the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum: “Meet Harriet Tubman”, will be held on February 7, 2023, at 6:00pm. Live on Zoom, Dr. Daisy Century returns to portray American heroine Harriet Tubman in a live virtual performance with audience Q&A. Registration for this free event can be found at: <https://www.ssaamuseum.org/tubman>

The 2023 Oxtail Fest, a feast celebrating African American and Caribbean-style Oxtail along with a delicious selection of food from across the African diaspora, will be held on February 26, 2023, from 3:00pm – 6:00pm at The Antique Barn at Cashel in Hillsborough. Ticket information and more can be found at: <https://www.ssaamuseum.org>

5. Natalie Pineiro expressed her thanks to Somerset County for their help in having an arts installation on the Courthouse lawn. Natalie also recognized Walter Lane for being awarded the Outstanding Professional Planner Award by the American Planning Association.
6. Rory Britt echoed Marge Sullivan’s remarks stating that we need to move swiftly and urgently toward the 250th event.

XI. Advisory Committee Comments

1. Sean Blinn congratulated Walter Lane on his Outstanding Professional Planner Award and thanked Don Esposito for his years of service. Sean also announced that an International Juried Exhibition will be opening at the Center for Contemporary Art on Friday, January 20, 2023. <https://ccabedminster.org/>
2. Rikki Massand, Montgomery Township Landmarks Commission Chairman, congratulated Walter Lane and thanked Don Esposito. He also stated that Somerville will soon have a full walking tour and that historical signage is being worked on for Tillman Park.
3. Hilary Klimek said this will be her last meeting and expressed that it was a great honor to have served as an Advisory Member. Leslie Workman of Farmstead Arts will represent Bernards Township after appointment.

XII. Open Meeting to the Public

Public Comments

1. Jessie Havens commented that there was slavery in New Jersey during the Colonial era. In Somerset County, the slavery centered in the south part of the county where the Dutch lived. Jessie applauds the Cultural & Heritage Commission for taking action regarding the 250th, noting that local organizations are looking for direction.

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Announcements/Other News:

The next Somerset County Cultural & Heritage meeting will be held via Zoom on Thursday, February 2, 2023. Kaitlin Bundy will inform the Commission of the outcome of discussion with County Counsel concerning the hybrid quarterly meeting schedule and inform them if meetings will occur in a hybrid format, occur live, or remain virtual.

XIII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Jonathan Hress. Passed.
Adjournment 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Faulks, Secretary

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