

SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION
Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023, Meeting Minutes – Virtual Zoom Meeting

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 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 Bishop-Johnson, Natalie Pineiro, Kathy Faulks, Robert Grundfest, Jonathan Hress, Marge Sullivan **Technical difficulties:** Edwin Scannell **Absent:** Maritza Martinez

Staff: Thomas D'Amico, Kaitlin Bundy, Robert Meyer, Tom Boccino

Advisory Members: Aldo Adriazola, Sean Blinn, Brian Faulks, Hector Herrera, Rose Kopf, Rikki Massand, Kathleen Palmer, Gale Skirkanish, Leslie Workman

Members of the Public: Don Esposito, Jessie Havens

Commissioner Liaison: Deputy Director Melanie Marano

IV. Approval of January 12, 2023, Minutes

Motion to accept the minutes made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Jonathan Hress. Passed.

V. Correspondence

1. Kaitlin Bundy received the League of Historic Society of New Jersey Newsletter featuring an article titled "Baron von Steuben Plaque Unveiling at the Abraham Staats House." It was noted that The New Jersey Sons of the American Revolution donated in part towards the plaque. Somerset County Commissioner Melanie Marano was a featured speaker and Somerset County Commissioner Paul Drake was also in attendance.
2. Tom D'Amico received a letter dated January 27, 2023: Green Brook Upper Basin Flood Risk Management Project Draft General Reevaluation Report Study from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Validation Report stands as approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the focus is on continuing construction and pursuing budgeting of the Green Brook Flood Risk Management Project to include Middlesex Borough and parts of Middlesex and Union Counties.

VI. Staff Reports/Old Business

The following reports were made by Tom D'Amico:

Historic Preservation Grant Program. The 2023 Historic Preservation Grant Program applications and guidelines will be distributed early next week with a due date of April 28, 2023.

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 restoration of the west wing, window repair and restoration, and work on the back porch including a new handicap accessible ramp.

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Stained Glass Windows

The County has hired a new general contractor and has begun discussions with the 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 be visiting the site in two weeks and County staff will be meeting with them in three weeks to discuss the project. A final draft of the Historic Structures Report is planned to be completed within the month.

Van Doren Howe Property

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

Somerset County Court House Façade Restoration

Staff reported on a new project: The Somerset County Court House Exterior Façade Restoration project. This will involve the cleaning, repair and restoration of the exterior of the Somerset County Court House. The County Commissioners have allocated \$187,050.00 to this project. Mills and Schoering has been selected as the historic architect for this project. It was noted that Mills and Schoering is fully qualified according to the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Historic Architects.

County Owned Historic Sites Survey

As noted last month, the consultant, Mills and Schoering, is now working on the section of the report dealing with how other Counties and entities adaptively reuse and administer their historic resources. A questionnaire is being sent out to a number of counties in New Jersey with question concerning how they restore and maintain 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 Staff has received 14 of the 15 final reports and are working to review and process final payments to all re-grant organizations. Staff is in contact with the single organization with an outstanding final report. Staff is currently working on the 2022 Final Report for the LAP grant, which is due to the State on February 16, 2023.

2023 Grants The Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission received 23 applications for the 2023 grant cycle totaling over \$580,000 in grant requests. Grant funds were authorized via resolution at the January 24, 2023 County Commissioners meeting. The following 15 organizations will receive grant funding for 2023:

- Adult Day Center of Somerset County \$4,000.00

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• American Theater Group, Inc.	\$35,000.00
• Borough of Bound Brook	\$3,000.00
• Downtown Somerville Alliance	\$34,000.00
• Friends of the Abraham Staats House	\$1,000.00
• Friends of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead	\$22,700.00
• Light Opera of New Jersey	\$10,000.00
• Raag-Rang	\$10,000.00
• Raritan Valley Choral Society	\$3,300.00
• Raritan Valley Community College - Fine and Performing Arts Department	\$4,000.00
• Raritan Valley Symphonic Band	\$5,000.00
• Somerset Symphony Orchestra	\$10,000.00
• Somerset Valley Players	\$20,000.00
• Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum	\$18,000.00
• Ukrainian History and Education Center	\$20,000.00

Notification of awards and contracts have been mailed out to all organizations. Staff will work with the Clerk of the Board to schedule check presentations at the late February or early March County Commissioners meeting.

Staff is also currently working on the 2023 Contract due back to the State Arts Council on February 16, 2023.

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. Staff have been reviewing all of the contracts received from the six re-grant organizations for this grant. As contracts are approved, they are sent to the County Commissioner's office for signature. Once the contracts are fully executed, first payment of the grants will be released to the organizations.

Cooperative Marketing Grant. 2022 CMP Grant The Cooperative Marketing Grant are funds the Commission receives from the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism to market and promote the Commission's Heritage Tourism event, Journey Through the Past. Staff have submitted the contract paperwork for the FY2023 Cooperative Marketing grant in the amount of \$10,050.00. Staff is working with the County Finance Department to finalize and submit the final report for the FY2022 grant to the state and will start contacting our various media outlets for print and digital ads for the 2023 event starting this month.

Black History Month Staff thanked Kathy Faulks and the Friends of the Abraham Staats House for allowing Commissioner Director Shanel Y. Robinson to provide the welcome at the Staats House's Tory Jack Day on February 11th at 9:30am. Additionally, the County Public Information Office will be

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promoting Black History Month initiatives happening throughout the County all month long. Staff asked the Commission and Advisory Board to make sure Staff is aware of any local events occurring in February.

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 Staff has received final reports from all five re-grant organizations. Two have been submitted for release of payment. Staff is in contact with the remaining three re-grantees for corrections to their reports. Staff has submitted the 2022 Final Report for the CHPP grant, which was due on January 30, 2023.

2023 Grants The 2023 County History Partnership Program Grant funds were authorized for release at the January 24th County Commissioners Meeting. The following eight organizations will be receiving grant funds:

• Bernards Township Library	\$2,000.00
• Downtown Bernardsville	\$16,250.00
• Borough of Bound Brook	\$2,000.00
• Friends of the Abraham Staats House	\$6,000.00
• Friends of the Kennedy Martin Stelle Farmstead	\$5,000.00
• Millstone Valley Preservation Coalition	\$15,500.00
• Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum	\$15,000.00
• Ukrainian History and Education Center	\$2,000.00

Notification of awards and contracts have been mailed out to all organizations. Staff will work with the Clerk of the Board to schedule check presentations at the late February or early March County Commissioners meeting. Staff is also currently working on the 2023 Contract which is due back to the State Historical Commission.

Gallery The ArtSee exhibit officially opened in the Cultural & Heritage Gallery on January 18, 2023. This exhibit features 48 works of acrylic, fiber art, mixed media and oil works by members of ArtSee. The exhibit is on display on both the first and third of the County Administration Building and will run through March 6, 2023. Our next gallery will be the Farm to Frame exhibit which will feature artistic representation of 19 farms preserved by Somerset County by over 30 New Jersey artists, in celebration of 40 years of farmland preservation in Somerset County as well as the 40th anniversary of the Cultural & Heritage Commission. The Farm to Frame exhibit will open on March 9, 2023.

Other Staff has been working with emergency preparedness consultant Ellen Korpar to provide a technical assistance workshop covering emergency preparedness for local organizations. The workshop is scheduled for 10:00am on February 28, at the Environmental Education Center in Lord

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Stirling Park and will last 4 hours. The workshop will cover the disaster planning process, the contents of a disaster plan and business continuity issues. Information will also be provided about resources to help with planning in order to protect people and property. There will also be an example walk-through risk assessment of the Environmental Education Center which will show the process and explain its importance. This workshop will cost \$10 to cover lunch costs. At least 12 organizations need to attend to hold the workshop.

<https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/cultural-heritage/technical-assistance/emergency-prep>

VII. New Business/Action Items

2023 Meeting Structure Discussion of future meeting types led to the following proposal: There will be quarterly in person meetings in May, September, December of 2023, and January of 2024. There will be virtual meetings February, March, June, October, and November of 2023. **Motion** to accept the proposed meeting schedule made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Natalie Pineiro. Passed.

2023 Cultural & Heritage Committees Rory Britt announced the standing Committees for 2023 and described their duties and responsibilities.

VIII. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Liaison: Commissioner Melanie Marano

As the 250th Anniversary of the American Independence is fast approaching, the Board of County Commissioners has made it a priority for Somerset County Heritage Tourism. The objective of pushing the 250th Anniversary is to blend all threads of the celebration together to drive tourism; exposure in tourism will help drive economic development. It was noted that hotels have been suffering because business travelers have returned to pre-pandemic levels. This blend of historic tourism, culture and arts is planned to help further grow the business and the economic health of the County.

Thomas J. Boccino, PP, LLA - Supervising Planner – Preservation

It was announced that the County has closed on the Herb Patullo property which is inside of Washington Valley Park. This is the site of Wayne's Brigade Encampment according to a study done by Hunter Research.

Cultural & Heritage Commissioner Comments

1. Kathy Faulks announced that Somerset County is partnering with the Abraham Staats House in Celebrating Black History Month. Commissioner Director Shanel Y. Robinson will make the Welcoming Remarks at the Annual "Tory Jack Day" Event at 9:30am on Saturday, February 11, 2023. Seating begins 9:00am, for the first speaker, author Cindy Williams Newsome, who will be discussing her book, "*Hobbsstown: The Forgotten Legacy of a Unique African American Community.*" Seating begins 10:30am for the second set of speakers, Joe Becton and his brother, who will be presenting "*The Becton Brothers' Musical Walk Through History.*" \$15 per

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ticket. The program is available in-person or via ZOOM. Register in advance at Eventbrite via www.staatshouse.org.

2. Donnetta Bishop-Johnson announced two Black History Month Events at the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum; Meet Harriet Tubman, will occur on February 7 at 6:00pm. Live on Zoom Dr. Daisy Century returns to portray American heroine Harriet Tubman in a live virtual performance with audience Question & Answers. Register for the free event at <https://www.ssaamuseum.org/tubman>. SSAAM's 2023 Oxtail Fest will be held on February 26, from 3:00pm to 6:00pm at The Antique Barn at Cashel, in Hillsborough, and will feature a feast celebrating African American and Caribbean-style Oxtail along with a delicious selection of food from across the African diaspora. Tickets and sponsorship opportunities can be found at: <https://www.ssaamuseum.org>
3. Natalie Pineiro expressed her thanks to Somerset County for their help with the arts installation on the Courthouse lawn.

IX. Advisory Committee Comments

1. Gale Skirkanish explained that she is seeking signage for Lost Valley, The Battle of Millstone (Van Nest's Mills), and Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Trail (W3R) through Manville.
2. Kathleen Palmer offered her art gallery, Studio 7 Fine Arts Gallery, for use to non-profits for free. The gallery can be found online at: www.studio7artgallery.com. Kathleen asked about the distribution of Herb Patullo's collection of historic artifacts and artwork and was told that most pieces had been auctioned off at the estate sale. Former Bound Brook Mayor Robert Fazen obtained two paintings for the Bound Brook Library. Two replica cannons remained in place with the property. Kathleen stated that Peter Palmer is now the official historian for Bernardsville 100th anniversary in 2024 and is doing an oral history of what he knows. She encourages other towns/sites to do the same. Tom D'Amico recommended that local municipalities get involved through the CHPP grant program, as oral histories are eligible projects.
3. Leslie Workman requested a list of Cultural & Heritage members and stated that the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead added Historian Reverend Doctor David Janssen to their organization.
4. Hector Herrera requested an update on the Old Stone Arch Bridge in Bound Brook. Tom Boccino replied that the project is on hold for the time being.
5. Brian Faulks stated that the 2023 Battle of Bound Brook will be held April 15-16, 2023. <https://www.staatshouse.org/events/battle-of-bound-brook/>
6. Rikki Massand stated that the Montgomery Township Historic Committee meeting which had been planned for February 2 has been postponed to February 16 due to technical difficulties. It was also announced that Somerville will soon have a full walking tour, sponsored in part by Preservation NJ, which will take place on Sunday, June 11, 2023 at 2:00pm. Rikki asked for reassurance that the Rockbrook Bridge restoration be overseen and Tom D'Amico replied that he will contact the County Bridge Division. Rikki also supports Gale Skirkanish's signage quest for Manville and the W3R Trail.

X. Open Meeting to the Public

Public Comments

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1. Don Esposito announced “Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad” will be occurring on Saturday, February 4 2023, at 12:00pm at the Raritan Library. <https://raritanlibrary.org>
2. Jessie Havens commented that Herb Patullo’s property was important to Somerset County. She also congratulated the Cultural & Heritage Commission for having a 250th Committee, noting that the County often does not get the recognition it should for its Revolutionary War history. She stated that she is looking forward to the 250th Committee in regard to getting the County more recognition. Jessie seconded Rikki’s comments about the Rockbrook Bridge restoration and seconded Kathleen’s comments on oral history projects.

Announcements/Other News:

The next SCC&H meeting will be held virtually on Thursday March 2, 2023.

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XI. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Robert Grundfest. Passed.
Adjournment 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Faulks, Secretary

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