

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

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

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

Advisory Members: Aldo Adriaola, Sean Blinn, Brian Faulks, Rose Kopf, Rikki Massand, Kathleen Palmer, Roz Sherman, Gale Skirkanish, Leslie Workman

Members of the Public: Don Esposito, Margareta Warlick

IV. Approval of February 2, 2023, Minutes

Leslie Workman requested an amendment to her report in Section IX Advisory Comments #3 to correct the spelling of the name of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead’s Historian, Reverend Doctor David Janssen.

Motion to accept the minutes as amended made by Robert Grundfest and seconded by Maritza Martinez. Passed.

V. Correspondence

1. Tom D’Amico received a Link newsletter from the Raritan Millstone Heritage Alliance containing interesting articles: Paul Soltis, the New Jersey State Historic Resource Specialist for the Wallace House and Old Dutch Parsonage spoke at George Washington’s Annual Birthday Party. George Washington at Rockingham, and an article on the War of the Worlds were also featured.

VI. Staff Reports/Old Business

The following reports were made by Tom D’Amico:

Historic Preservation Grant Program. The 2022 Historic Preservation Grant Program Agreements and purchase orders have been distributed to all six recipients. The 2023 Historic Preservation Grant Program applications and guidelines are under internal review and will be distributed when the review is completed. The due date is April 28th.

County Historic Preservation Projects. Van Horne House: As discussed at last month’s meeting 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 the back porch including a new handicap accessible ramp.

Stained Glass Windows

The County has hired a new general contractor and has begun discussions with the Lamb Studios on

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Phase IV of the stained glass window project in the Jury Assembly Room which is within the old Dutch Reformed Church in Somerville.

Baker-Duterstadt Farmstead

On February 24th Staff met with the consultants Connolly and Hickey Historic Architects. They delivered the draft of the Historic Structures Report for the site. Completion of the Historic Structures Report is expected shortly.

Van Doren Howe Property

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

County Court House Façade Restoration

The County Court House facade restoration project will begin with the scanning of the Court House next month. That will be followed by a detailed analysis of the masonry.

County Owned Historic Sites Survey

As noted last month, the consultants 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. A questionnaire has been sent out to 10 counties in New Jersey with questions 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 all 15 final reports from the 2022 re-grant organizations. Final payments have been released for 13 of these organizations. Staff is working with the remaining two organizations to finalize their reports to close out the 2022 grant round. Staff submitted the Final Report for the Local Arts Program grant to the State on February 16, 2023, which has been approved and closed out by the State.

2023 Grant. 2023 Local Arts Program Grant funds have been awarded to 15 organizations. Contracts have been sent out to all 2023 re-grantees and are due back on March 15th. Ceremonial checks will be presented at the March 14th County Commissioners meeting. If your organization is receiving a check and have not yet sent an RSVP, please do so by March 10th. Staff submitted the 2023 Contract for the 2023 Local Arts Program to the State Arts Council on February 16, 2023. Which has been approved by 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.

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Five of the six funded organization's contracts have been finalized with their first payment being released. Staff is working with the final outstanding organization to finalize their contract.

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 submitted the final report for the FY2022 grant year, which was due on February 14th and has been approved and closed out by the state. Staff are currently working to secure spots in the marketing campaigns for Edible Jersey, Hook Magazine, Bucks County Magazine and Hudson Valley Magazine for the 2023 Journey Through the Past.

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. Tom D'Amico from staff did attend the event.

Teen Arts

Staff have been moving ahead with the planning of the 2023 Teen Arts Festival, which will take place in-person at Raritan Valley Community College on May 18th. This arts in education program brings Somerset County Middle School and High School students together to showcase 7 different arts disciplines including: visual art, creative writing, film, instrumental music, vocal music, theater and dance. The Commission's new Program Coordinator, Katie Himics has been reaching out to artists to participate in the festival day. Manager Kaitlin Bundy has been working with the College to complete the contract for use of the college in May.

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. Four have been submitted for release of payment. Staff is in contract with the remaining one re-grantee for corrections to their report.

2023 Grant. The 2023 County History Partnership Program Grant funds have been awarded to eight organizations. Contracts have been sent out to all 2023 re-grantees and are due back on March 15th. Ceremonial checks will be presented at the March 14th County Commissioners meeting. If your organization is receiving a check and have not yet sent an RSVP, please do so by March 10th. The 2023 Grant Contract was submitted to the State Historical Commission on February 14, 2023.

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 floor of the County Administration Building and will run through March 6, 2023. The next gallery will be the Farm to Frame exhibit which will feature artistic representation of farms preserved by Somerset County by over 30 New Jersey artists, in celebration of

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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. A reception for the gallery will be held on March 24 at 6:00pm at the County Administration Building.

Technical Assistance Workshop. On February 28th, the Commission held an emergency preparedness workshop with consultant Ellen Korpar. The workshop covered the disaster planning process, the contents of a disaster plan and business continuity issues. Despite the snowy weather, the workshop was well attended by local organizations. Staff thanked those who attended, including Donnetta Johnson, Leslie Workman and Rikki Massand, and hope the workshop provided some valuable information about emergency readiness. Staff asked for any feedback on the workshop to share with Ellen.

VII. New Business/Action Items

250th Committee: Rory Britt announced the members of the 250th Committee. Rory also spoke of the programming extending beyond the 250th in 2026, with the 250th anniversary of The Battle of Bound Brook in 2027, the Middlebrook encampment in the winter of 2027-28 and in 2029, and the Washington Rochambeau Route in 2030. Kaitlin Bundy talked about the planned Round Table meetings to be used as information gathering, where the county listens to its constituents; an in-person meeting is being planned in south county, possibly Montgomery or Hillsborough, another in north county, possibly the Environmental Center, and a third will be held virtually for those unable to attend in-person.

VIII. Commissioner Comments

Thomas R. D'Amico, AICP/PP, Supervising Planner & Historic Sites Coordinator

Tom spoke of how big the 225th was for Somerset County. He expects the 250th to be a long-term event extending beyond the 250th with lots of tie-in to Somerset County.

Cultural & Heritage Commissioner Comments

1. Robert Grundfest asked about the lack of social media for Cultural & Heritage, Kaitlin replied that it is county policy for the Public Information Office to handle the County social media accounts.
2. Jonathan Hress commented that he enjoyed the arts installation on the Courthouse Green. Kaitlin explained that Somerset County worked with the Downtown Somerville Alliance to get approval from New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office.
3. Kathy Faulks thanked the County for its support of Tory Jack Day and announced the Abraham Staats House will host the Battle of Bound Brook on April 15 and 16, 2023.
<https://www.staatshouse.org/events/battle-of-bound-brook/>
4. Maritza Martinez offered help with arts resources and programming.

IX. Advisory Committee Comments

1. Leslie Workman commented that the Emergency Preparedness workshop was well done and well run. It was very reassuring to share with like-minded people.

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2. Kathleen Palmer announced her gallery is hosting an artist reception on Friday, March 3, 2023, from 6:00pm to 9:00pm, titled *Upbringing: Nourishing the Internal Expanse Paintings by Andrea Gianchiglia* at Studio 7 Fine Arts Gallery, 5 Morristown Road, Bernardsville, NJ 07924. <https://studio7fineartgallery.com>
3. Rose Kopf asked if the April meeting was in person. Staff responded that the April meeting will be held virtually.
4. Sean Blinn sent a link to the AASLH Field Guide to the American 250th. <http://download.aaslh.org/Making+History+at+250+Field+Guide.pdf>
Sean also announced that The Center for Contemporary Art, located at 2200 Burnt Mills Road, Bedminster, NJ 08721, will be hosting an Arts Throwdown on April 20, 2023. <https://ccabedminster.org>.
Sean attended the Northern Slavery Collective Conference and stated that it was a valuable resource to help tell the story of America at 250. <https://dyckmanfarmhouse.org/initiatives/northern-slavery-collective/>
5. Brian Faulks talked about don Juan de Miralles and the importance of Spain to America during the American Revolution.
6. Rikki Massand, Montgomery Township Landmarks Commission Chairman, commented that the Emergency Preparedness workshop was great. He also stated that the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management offers free classes to non-profit organizations on the topic of emergency readiness. The Montgomery Fun Fest will be April 30 at Skillman Park by the Montgomery Business Association. Rocky Hill will hold their Poetry Walk Path behind Brough Hall in April.

X. Open Meeting to the Public

1. Don Esposito asked Tom D'Amico about the Duterstadt Barn. Tom replied that the barn framing is about 80% good with the other 20% needing repairs or replacement. The barn is leaning and may need to be dismantled and reassembled in order to not break any of the joints. Don thanked the staff and Commission for the Proclamation he received.

XI.

Announcements/Other News:

The next SCC&H meeting will be virtual. Meeting on Thursday April 6, 2023.

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XII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Jonathan Hress and seconded by Maritza Martinez. Passed.
Adjournment 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Faulks, Secretary

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