

SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION
Thursday, April 6, 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, Donnetta Bishop-Johnson, Kathy Faulks, Robert Grundfest, Jonathan Hress, Edwin Scannell, Marge Sullivan. **Absent:** Maritza Martinez, Natalie Pineiro

Advisory Members: Aldo Adriazola, Brian Faulks, Rikki Massand, Gale Skirkanish, Leslie Workman

Absent: Sean Blinn, Hector Herrera, Rose Kopf, Kathleen Palmer, Roz Sherman

Members of the Public: Don Esposito, Jessie Havens, Margareta Warlick

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

Commissioner Liaison: Melonie Marano

IV. Approval of March 2, 2023, Minutes

Motion to accept the minutes made by Robert Grundfest and seconded by Jonathan Hress. Passed.

V. Correspondence

1. Kaitlin Bundy received a thank you letter from Barbara A. Friedman for her first place award in the *Farm to Frame* exhibit, on display on the first floor of the County Administration Building, and for staff's work on the exhibit.
2. Tom D'Amico received the Van Harlingen Historical Society newsletter.

VI. Staff Reports/Old Business

The following reports were made by Tom D'Amico:

Historic Preservation Grant Program. Staff has received the executed agreements and purchase orders for three out of the six 2022 Historic Preservation Grant Program Projects. The Agreements are in the County Commissioners office for execution. The 2023 Historic Preservation Grant Program Applications and Guidelines have been reviewed and will be distributed early April.

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 work on the back porch including a new handicap accessible ramp. The historic preservation consultants, Historic Building Architects, are currently developing the final plans and specifications for the project.

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 within the old Dutch Reformed Church in Somerville.

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Baker-Duderstadt Farmstead

On February 24th Cultural and Heritage Commission staff met with the consultants Connolly and Hickey Historic Architects. They delivered the draft of the Historic Structures Report for the site. We expect the completed HSR 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 investigative phase of the County Court House facade restoration project has begun. The consultant Mills and Schnoering have electronically scanned the building in order to develop the base plans for the project. The next step will be a detailed analysis of the masonry.

County Owned Historic Sites Survey

As noted last month, the consultants Mills and Schnoering are 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. They have received five responses so far. 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 (LAP) Grant 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.

2023 Grant. 2023 Local Arts Program Grant funds have been awarded to 15 organizations. Ceremonial checks were presented at the March 14th County Commissioners meeting. Contracts have been sent out to all 2023 re-grantees and were due back on March 15th. Staff have received 14 of the 15 contracts and have been in contact with the organization regarding the outstanding contract.

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 will begin preparing interim reports for the six funded organization's while continuing to provide updates to the NEA as requested.

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 secured spots in the marketing campaigns for Edible Jersey, Hook Magazine, Bucks County Magazine and Hudson Valley

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Magazine for the 2023 Journey Through the Past and is working with the county graphics department to prepare the advertisements needed for each campaign.

History on the Green

The second annual History on the Green will take place on July 22, 2023 at the Courthouse Green in Somerville from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00pm. The theme will again focus on the Washington-Rochambeau Pop-up Encampment.

Staff are working to secure various vendors to include a variety of activities throughout the day including:

- Revolutionary War Soldiers
- Children’s Activities with Liberty Hall Museum
- Hand-cut colonial style silhouettes
- Canon and Musket demos
- Meet and greet with George Washington and French General the Comte de Rochambeau
- Special appearance by the Massachusetts Middlesex County Volunteer Fife and Drum who will march from the Wallace House to the Court House Green for a special end of day performance.

This year staff will be sending out a sign up for those history organizations that would like to table at the event. This will provide another avenue for our local organizations to connect with the public.

The following reports were made by Robert Meyer:

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

2023 Grant. The 2023 County History Partnership Program Grant funds have been awarded to eight organizations. Contracts were due on March 15, 2023 and staff has received seven of the eight contracts. Staff is in contact with the remaining re-grantee about their outstanding contract.

Gallery. The Farm to Frame exhibit officially open in the Cultural & Heritage Gallery on March 9, 2023. This exhibit features artistic representation of 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. Over 50 pieces of artwork are on display, with mediums ranging from oil painting to stained glass. A reception for the gallery was held on March 24 at 6:00pm at the County Administration Building with over 100 people attending. Staff thanked all those who were able to attend the reception. The next gallery will be Photography from Raritan Valley Community College and will open on May 4, 2023.

The following reports were made by Katherine Himics:

Teen Arts Festival. The 2023 Teen Arts Festival will be held at Raritan Valley Community College on May 18th. This is the Commission’s annual arts education opportunity for middle school and high school students throughout the County to come together and celebrate their accomplishments in the

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arts. Program Coordinator, Katie Himics has taken lead in coordinating this year's festival and has been acquiring a talented and diverse pool of artists to both critique student work and present a variety of workshops and masterclasses throughout the day. School submissions are due mid- to end-April, and staff will then coordinate the schedule for the festival day.

Other:

It was noted that updating the Survey of Historic Sites in Somerset County of 1989 will be done in line with the new Master Plan after the Survey of county-owned historic sites is completed.

VII. New Business/Action Items

250th Round Tables Staff has secured venues to host two in-person round-tables and one virtual round table in April. The virtual round table will take place on April 18th. The northern round table will take place at the Environmental Education Center on April 19th and a southern round table will take place at the Hillsborough Municipal Complex on April 13th. A sign up for the round tables has been sent out, but the Commission was encouraged to reach out to any an all local organizations they know and encourage them to attend.

New Jersey Historical Commission Project Grant

A **Motion** to support the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission application for the New Jersey Historical Commission Project Grant to create a Docent Training Program and Tool Kit made by Kathy Faulks and seconded by Jonathan Hress. Passed.

VIII. Additional Staff Comments

Walter C. Lane, AICP/PP, Director, Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development

Walter offered additional thanks to C&H Staff, Kate Katzer, and Tom Boccino for their work on the Farm to Frame exhibit and reception.

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.

IX. County Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Liaison Melanie Marano.

Commissioner Marano thanked the C&H Staff for their work in creating the Farm to Frame exhibit and to Rikki Massand and his team for publicizing it at the Montgomery News.

X. Cultural & Heritage Commissioner Comments

1. Marge Sullivan announced that the NJ League of Municipalities had previously asked for photo submissions of local scenes and places. 42 photos were selected and published in this month's magazine, one of which was of the Somerset County Courthouse at night. Marge noted that it was

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- one of only a few buildings featured. As part of the Battle of Bound Brook Weekend, on Friday, April 14, 2023, Heritage Trail Association will have the “Annual Wine and Cheese Fundraiser” with a special unveiling of items related to Philip van Horne. www.heritagetrail.org
2. Kathy Faulks announced the Abraham Staats House will host the Battle of Bound Brook on April 15 and 16, 2023, with activities in Bound Brook, Bridgewater, and South Bound Brook throughout the weekend. <https://www.staatshouse.org/events/battle-of-bound-brook/>
 3. Donetta Bishop-Johnson expressed her support for the Docent Training Program, stating that it would be important for volunteer organizations. Donnetta announced The Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum (SSAAM) held a Women’s History Month event in March with had a great turn out. SSAAM will celebrate Jazz Appreciation Month with “Jazz in the Sourlands,” a series of special events on **Friday April 28 and Saturday April 29**. The program is dedicated to jazz musicians form the Sourland Mountains region and will feature performances by local jazz musicians. The Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum will host a Juneteenth Celebration titled "Freedom Forward" on Saturday, June 17, 2023, from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. <https://www.ssaamuseum.org/upcoming-events>
 4. Robert I. Grundfest expressed his excitement about upcoming events and willingness to help publicize them.
 5. Rory Britt announced that the Egg-o-mat has been unearthed and is ready to be moved to the Wagner Farm Arboretum. It is a post-World War II egg vending machine of galvanized steel. It will be on display soon with a possible celebration coming as well.

XI. Advisory Committee Comments

1. Leslie Workman commented that the Kennedy Martin Stelle Farmstead is getting more active with construction and the State is looking at their cow shed. Leslie also announced the following programs at the Farmstead: The Potters' Guild Show & Sale will be held on April 22 and 23, 2023, from 11:00 am - 5:00 pm. A lecture titled "Disabilities Then, Disabilities Now" by Dr. Nicole Belolan will be held on Sunday, April 30, from 2pm – 3pm; North Sea Gas, a popular Scottish folk band, will be performing in the English Barn on Saturday, May 6, from 7pm – 9pm. <https://farmsteadartscenter.org/fa-home/>
2. Gale Skirkanish announced that the Lost Valley Nature Trail Grant project starts in the Fall. Gale also noted that the Manville Road Diet has begun. This is a public safety project in which the speed limit is set at 25 miles per hour on a single road from south to north.
3. Rikki Massand announced that the Montgomery Fun Fest will held on Sunday, April 30 at Skillman Park by the Montgomery Business Association. Rocky Hill will hold their Poetry Walk Path behind Brough Hall in April. He thanked Marge Sullivan and the Heritage Trail Association for facilitating Somerville’s Walking Tour to be held Sunday June 6, 2023 at 2pm. Rikki noted that he forwarded an email from RevNJ to Rory Britt and Kathy Faulks with a draft ordinance to encourage municipalities to pledge support for the 250th. It was also noted that a call for photographs is open and that photos of local historic sites should be submitted. www.revnj.org

XII. Open Meeting to the Public

1. Don Esposito clarified that the Egg-o-mat is off of Route 202 and wished a happy Easter and Passover to those who celebrate.

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2. Margareta Warlick announced a meeting of the Recreation Committee at the Kirch-Ford-Terrill House 7:30pm April 13, 2023.

Announcements/Other News:

The next SCC&H meeting will be in person in the 3rd Floor County Commissioners' Meeting Room. Meeting on Thursday May 4, 2023.

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XIII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Jonathan Hress. Passed.
Adjournment 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Faulks, Secretary

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