

Spotlight



NEWSLETTER

FALL 2023



Celebrating Somerset County's Revolutionary History



Your County Government is Here to Serve You



Somerset County Commissioners (L-R) Paul M. Drake, Director Shanel Y. Robinson, Sara Sooy, Melonie Marano, and Deputy Director Doug Singleterry.

Somerset County's government serves more than 345,000 residents and 17,000 active employers in 21 municipalities. The County is governed by a Board of County Commissioners of five members elected countywide. Each January the Commissioners elect one member to serve as Commissioner Director and another as Deputy Director.

The Board of County Commissioners holds regular public meetings on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month in the County Administration Building at 20 Grove Street, Somerville. Regular meetings start immediately following the 5:00 pm work sessions and are streamed live on the County website and Facebook page. Items discussed at each work session will be voted on at the next regular meeting two or three weeks later.

Three other elected officials, known as the Constitutional Officers, serve the people of Somerset County.

The County Clerk is responsible for recordkeeping for real estate, businesses, and elections; recording veterans' discharge papers and supplying veteran IDs and peddlers licenses; and for receiving election petitions, designing election ballots, and certifying election results, among other functions.



The County Sheriff provides security at the Somerset County Courthouse and the County Complex; operates the Somerset County Jail; transports County prisoners; and is responsible for Sheriff's Sales, a K-9 Unit, and the execution of civil and criminal court warrants, among other duties.

The County Surrogate probates wills; qualifies executors, administrators, and trustees; handles all adoptions of minors and adults; and issues necessary documents for administering estates. 🏛️



Steve Peter
County Clerk



Darrin J. Russo
Sheriff



Bernice "Tina" Jalloh
Surrogate

On Our Cover: Revolutionary Somerset County!

Somerset County's impressive Revolutionary War history attracted the world-famous Middlesex County Volunteers Fifes & Drums band from Massachusetts to march down Main Street in Somerville and perform on the Somerset County Courthouse steps during the County's annual History on the Green event. The performance was arranged by the National Park Service's Washington Rochambeau National Historic Trail, which passes through the county. With many Revolutionary War headquarters, encampments, and skirmishes — as well as the first ever raising of the flag of the United States of America — Somerset County is preparing for a big celebration of the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026 and beyond. Cover photo by Chad Becker. 🏛️

Reserved Parking and Golf Discounts for County Veterans

In honor of their service, Somerset County is providing reserved parking for veterans at over 20 County facilities, including County golf courses. In addition, the Somerset County Park Commission launched 20% weekday discounts for veterans. Veterans are now able to more affordably enjoy the County's five beautiful golf courses, noted for being among the top public golf courses in New Jersey.

"I am pleased that the Park Commission can offer this discount to veterans," said Somerset County Commissioner Director Shanel Y. Robinson, who is herself a veteran of the Air Force Reserves. "For many veterans, affordability is an obstacle to enjoying our golf courses. This is one way to thank the vets for serving our country."

To qualify, veterans must be able to prove county residency and their status as a veteran. A veteran's ID is available through the Somerset County Clerk Steve Peter's Office. Reservations are made at the regular price via the Park Commission website, and the discount applied upon paying at the course. 🏠



Commissioner Director Shanel Y. Robinson (R), an Air Force veteran, shows off the new Veteran's Parking sign at Spooky Brook Golf Course in Franklin Township accompanied by veteran golfers (from right) Pablo Orozco (Marines) and Joseph Ciufo (Army), plus Somerset County Parks Secretary-Director Geoff Soriano.

Somerset County Transit Transitioning to Electric Vehicles



County Commissioners Melonie Marano and Paul M. Drake with the new EVs

Somerset County Transportation announced the addition of its first three electric vehicles (EVs) to further its transition away from fossil fuels. The new vehicles will provide paratransit shuttle service, transporting senior citizens and disabled residents to doctor's appointments, grocery shopping, and county senior wellness centers.

The new EVs support the County Commissioners' commitment to build a zero-carbon future, adopted in November 2021. The Transportation Division estimates the three new EVs will reduce annual carbon emissions by approximately 30 metric tons while saving the county approximately \$20,000 per year in fuel and maintenance. The vehicles also cost about \$10,000 less to purchase than the gas-powered vehicles they replaced.

"We are thrilled to acquire these new electric accessible vehicles to help with transportation services to Somerset County seniors and residents with disabilities," says Commissioner Melonie Marano, liaison to Transportation.

"Advocating for energy efficiency and conservation is important to us in Somerset County," says Commissioner Paul M. Drake, long-time member of the Energy Council. "This is an amazing opportunity to continue to make the county sustainable and create a cleaner future." 🏠

SIGN UP NOW

FOR FREE TRANSPORTATION ALERTS



Scan QR Code



Text
RIDESOCO
to **888777**

Receive real-time text and email notifications

Get immediate updates on:

- CANCELLATIONS
- DELAYS
- REROUTES



New Preservation Plan Earns National and Statewide Awards



Somerset County Commissioner Director Shanel Y. Robinson announced a new preservation plan at the Stoutsburg Surland African American Museum in Montgomery.

Somerset County's new Preservation Plan was honored by the National Association of Counties (NACo) and NJ FUTURE recently, adding to the recognition the county has received. The plan is believed to be the first in the nation to combine historic, farmland, and open space preservation.

Somerset County has preserved 15,000 acres of open space, with a goal of 24,000

Somerset County's integrated Preservation Plan was developed by the Office of Planning, Policy, and Economic Development with input from government, corporate, and non-profit partners, as well as hundreds of residents committed to preserving and enhancing Somerset's environmental, agricultural, and historic assets.

NACo presented its 2023 Achievement Award for Planning at its July National Conference in Travis County, TX, and NJ FUTURE announced that Somerset County will receive a Smart Growth Award at a ceremony in October.

The plan includes stewardship of all currently preserved properties, provides guidance for future acquisitions, integrates climate change mitigation, and makes the connection between preservation and economic development and tourism.

"We are in a time of incredible, fast-paced change and Somerset County is committed to taking advantage of the opportunities presented, as well as ensuring smart planning to protect the high quality-of-life our residents expect and deserve," said Commissioner Paul M. Drake, liaison to the Somerset County Agricultural Development Board, Park Commission, and Planning Board.

Somerset County's open space inventory is approaching 15,000 acres with a new goal of 24,000 acres. The County also has close to 9,000 acres of preserved farmland with a new goal of 16,000 agricultural acres. As part of the comprehensive new plan, Somerset County is collaborating with non-profits in preserving properties for recreation, historic preservation, and conservation using Somerset County's dedicated Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund. 🏡

Somerset County 4-H Fair Celebrates 75th Anniversary

Between 35,000 and 40,000 residents and visitors attended the 75th anniversary Somerset County 4-H Fair at the North Branch County Park in Bridgewater. Somerset County employees were out in force, using a large county government tent to educate residents of the many services available to residents.

The theme of the county tent was "Healthy & Strong," to bring attention to the County's many resources for helping residents recover from the recent pandemic, including the Somerset County Health Department, the Senior Wellness Centers, extensive mental health and recovery services, and more. 🏡




Somerset County Surrogate Bernice "Tina" Jalloh (L) joined with 18 other divisions and departments in meeting fairgoers in the big county tent.

State Budget Includes \$22 million for Projects in Somerset County

The State of New Jersey's 2024 budget includes over \$22 million in community and infrastructure projects in Somerset County, obtained with the help of the county's legislative delegation and the Governor's Office, working with county and municipal officials. The projects are listed in the table below. 🏡

PROJECTS	COST
HAMILTON ROAD <i>Bridge over Conrail RR Somerset</i>	\$ 4,100,000
MONTGOMERY <i>Orchard Road sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.</i>	\$ 3,000,000
COUNTY OF SOMERSET <i>County Multi-Use Facility in Hillsborough</i>	\$ 2,500,000
CAMP MEETING AVENUE <i>Bridge over Trenton Line, CR 602 Somerset</i>	\$ 2,000,000
MANVILLE <i>Emergency Management Communications</i>	\$ 2,000,000
FRANKLIN <i>Somerset Community Action Program – Youth Center Programs</i>	\$ 1,500,000
ROUTE 202, OLD YORK <i>Intersection improvements in Branchburg</i>	\$ 1,500,000
MONTGOMERY <i>First Responder Radios</i>	\$ 1,482,000
COUNTY OF SOMERSET <i>Great Road (CR 601), Bridge over Bedens Brook</i>	\$ 1,000,000
SOMERSET COUNTY VOTECH SCHOOL <i>Capital Improvements</i>	\$ 750,000
HILLSBOROUGH HIGH SCHOOL <i>Upgrades and repairs</i>	\$ 626,000
BROWN AVENUE / ROUTE 206 <i>Large Truck Bypass in Hillsborough</i>	\$ 500,000
SOUTH BOUND BROOK <i>Municipal Building</i>	\$ 500,000
ROCKY HILL <i>First Responder Radios</i>	\$ 303,000
HILLSBOROUGH FIRE DEPARTMENT <i>Communications Equipment</i>	\$ 250,000
MANVILLE <i>VFW Post 2290 Roof Installation</i>	\$ 200,000
BERNARDSVILLE <i>Boylan Terrace Neighborhood Pedestrian Connection</i>	\$ 112,000
MONTGOMERY <i>Tree Planting Project</i>	\$ 75,000

Somerset County VoTech High School



The Somerset County VoTech High School will receive \$750,000 for capital improvements in the 2024 state budget. Shown in photo are (R-L) County Commissioner Deputy Director Doug Singletery, VoTech liaison, and VoTech Superintendent Robert Presuta, with VoTech Educator-of-the-Year finalists Guillermo Reina and Susan Kiser, and Principal Hector Montes.

Back to School with Project First Class!



The Somerset County Sheriff's Office partnered with the Somerset County Commission on the Status of Women to collect donated school supplies as part of Project First Class. Gathering to fill backpacks with supplies were (front, L-R) Somerset County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Karissa Hahn, Somerset County Commission on the Status of Women Treasurer Patti O'Byrne, County Commissioner Sara Sooy, and Commission on the Status of Women Chair Karen Thomas. Also, (back, L-R) Somerset County Sheriff's Office Community Policing & Public Affairs Coordinator William Schievella, Commissioner Paul M. Drake, Commissioner Deputy Director Doug Singletery, Sgt. Adrian Romero, and Sheriff Darrin J. Russo.

“Stigma Free” Mental Health Conference Attracts Large Crowd

More than 100 county residents and mental health professionals gathered at Raritan Valley Community College in May for the second annual “Stigma-Free Mental Health Conference” organized by Somerset County’s Human Services Department.

Attendees came together to learn more about best practices and community resources, and to hear from professionals, family members, and those eager to learn more. The primary goal of the annual conference is to reduce the stigmas around mental health and substance use disorders and increase access to competent and accessible care in Somerset County communities.

“1 in 5 Americans are afflicted with a clinically diagnosable mental illness, but only 1 in 4 of those people receive treatment, largely due to social stigma,” said Commissioner Deputy Director Doug Singleterry, liaison to the County Mental Health Board. In his remarks at the conference, he also praised Human Services staff, including Mental Health Administrator Meg Isbitski, the primary conference organizer.

The event also launched the new Somerset County HELPS Mobile Outreach Van, designed to increase access to Somerset County services relating to mental health, recovery, food insecurity,



Commissioner Deputy Director Doug Singleterry (L) presents a resolution to Human Services staff Lisa Federico, Addiction Services Director, and Stephanie Billitz, Behavioral Health System Navigator, in appreciation for their work in planning the Stigma Free Conference in May.

homelessness, and more. The Human Services website offers a schedule of planned stops by the HELPS Van. To invite the HELPS Van to an event or a community organization, call **908-704-6300**. 🏠

“Gold Seal of Approval” for Richard Hall Community Health and Wellness Center

Somerset County operates the Richard Hall Community Health & Wellness Center (RHCHWC) to provide County residents with medical, dental, and mental health services. The Center recently received accreditation and the Gold Seal of Approval® from the large health care accreditation agency known as The Joint Commission (JC), for the eighth consecutive time since 2002. To achieve this level of excellence, RHCHWC is required to demonstrate its ability to comply with strict national standards and provide the highest quality of behavioral health care to its patients and local communities.

“The Joint Commission conducted an unannounced, arduous onsite review of Richard Hall’s quality of behavioral healthcare by conducting face-to-face interviews and a deep analysis of Richard Hall’s procedures and record system,” said Somerset County Commissioner Paul M. Drake, Human Services liaison. “This accreditation assured County residents and Richard Hall clients that they can and will receive local, world class mental health and substance use services.” 🏠



County Commissioner Paul M. Drake (R) at the Richard Hall Community Health and Wellness Center in Bridgewater with Executive Director Nicci Spinazolla

Somerset County’s Human Services Department offers a wide range of mental health, wellness, and other support via the County website.




Dial **9-8-8** if you need immediate support.

Recycling & Public Works Now Accepting Food Donations

Somerset County is now accepting canned food donations in conjunction with **First Saturday Recycling Drop-Offs** at the Somerset County Recycling Center at 40 Polhemus Lane in Bridgewater, and as part of the Electronic Waste Recycling at our Public Works facilities in Hillsborough and Bridgewater on weekdays.




Canned goods only (no glass or perishables) should be delivered in any kind of shopping bag. For additional information about recycling, visit co.somerset.nj.us/recycling. 



County Clerk Steve Peter Launches New County ID Program

Somerset County Clerk Steve Peter now issues County resident photo identification cards as an option for proving identity, age, or residency as may be required by government agencies, businesses, and employers.

“The Clerk’s Office already helps residents obtain a variety of legal documents, such as Passport processing, business trade name registrations, and veteran IDs,” said Somerset County Clerk Steve Peter. “Offering these county resident IDs is a natural extension of these existing services, and we anticipate many residents will be interested.”

To obtain a county resident photo ID, individuals must prove their identity with a birth certificate, naturalization certificate, or a valid passport. In addition, they must demonstrate Somerset County residency by presenting a lease or rental agreement, utility bill, bank statement, pay stub, or other government-issued ID. Minors may provide a school ID plus a parent or guardian’s signature. 

SOMERSET COUNTY NJ
RESIDENT IDENTIFICATION CARD





Steve Peter

RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Birth Date:	Hair: Brown	Issued: 6/6/2023
Height:	Eyes: Blue	Expires: 6/6/2025
Weight:		

This card is not REAL ID compliant.
Visit dhs.gov/real-id for information.

STEVE PETER, COUNTY CLERK

Additional details are available on
the County Clerk’s website.
soconj.gov/clerk



Somerset County's
18th Annual
JOURNEY THROUGH THE PAST

Visit select Somerset County, NJ
Historic Sites in person on
SATURDAY,
October 7, 2023,
& SUNDAY,
October 8, 2023
and virtually throughout October at
www.SCHistoryWeekend.com






Made possible with funds from the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission, a partner of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, the New Jersey Historical Commission, and the New Jersey Department of State, Division of Travel and Tourism.

SPONSORED BY THE SOMERSET COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



SAVE THE DATE
SUNDAY

OCT
15

2023

SOMERSET COUNTY
DIVERSITY
Festival

SOMERSET COUNTY - EVERYONE BELONGS HERE!

ACTIVITIES • ARTISTS • FOOD • MUSIC

2 STAGES FOR PERFORMANCES

12:00PM - 4:00PM • GROVE & MAIN STREETS • SOMERVILLE

Updates on social media & www.co.somerset.nj.us/diversity

Made possible by the funds from the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission, a partner of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.




Somerset County
20 Grove Street
P.O. Box 3000
Somerville, NJ
08876-1262

PRSR STD
U.S. Postage Paid
New Brunswick, NJ
Permit # 1

Subscribe to our
E-Newsletter!



www.co.somerset.nj.us

¡Aprende a hablar inglés gratis!



Voluntaria Barbara Lawler de los Voluntarios de Alfabetización del Condado de Somerset, con una cliente de ESL en una biblioteca del Condado.

El Condado de Somerset está financiando un nuevo programa para enseñar inglés a adultos de forma gratuita. Llamado First Steps Basic English, el programa piloto de 18 meses está siendo supervisado por la Junta de Desarrollo de la Fuerza Laboral de Greater Raritan en asociación con Raritan Valley Community College, la Comisión de Servicios Educativos del Condado de Hunterdon y los Voluntarios de Alfabetización del Condado de Somerset. Si usted o un miembro de su familia desea obtener más información o registrarse, diríjase a la página web o use el código QR. El programa también está buscando tutores voluntarios del idioma inglés.



Learn to Speak English for Free!

Somerset County is funding a new **FREE** program to teach the English language to adults.

Called **First Steps Basic English**, the 18-month pilot program is overseen by the Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board in partnership with Raritan Valley Community College, Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission, and the Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County.

If you or a family member would like to learn more or sign up, go to www.thegrwdb.org/ESL or scan this QR code. The program is also seeking volunteer English language tutors.

