

SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION
Thursday, January 11th, 2024. Meeting Minutes – In Person Meeting
3rd Floor, County Administration Building, 20 Grove St., Somerville, NJ 08876

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. Swearing in of New and Reappointed Commissioners

Kathy Faulks

IV. Roll Call

Commissioners: Rory Britt, Donnetta Bishop-Johnson, Kathy Faulks, Robert Grundfest, Jonathan Hress, Marge Sullivan

Excused: Natalie Pineiro, Edwin Scannell

Absent: Maritza Martinez

Staff: Kaitlin Bundy, Robert Meyer, Katie Himics, Tom Boccino, Walter Lane

Advisory Members: Aldo Adiazola, Sean Blinn, Rose Kopf, Rikki Massand, Margareta Warlick, Leslie Workman

Excused: Brian Faulks

Members of the Public: Jessie Havens, Olinda Young

Commissioner Liaison: Melonie Marano

V. Approval of December 7th, 2023, Minutes

Motion to accept the minutes made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Robert Grundfest. Passed.

VI. Election of Officers

Nominating Committee: Robert Grundfest, Jonathan Hress, Marge Sullivan

President: Rory Britt

Vice-President: Donnetta Bishop-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 Robert Grundfest. Passed.

VII. Correspondence

Staff received no correspondence to report at this meeting.

VIII. Staff Reports/Old Business

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 Arts to primarily re-grant out to local non-profits and municipalities.

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2023 Grant. 2023 LAP re-grantee final reports are due on January 12th, 2024. Staff are reviewing reports as they are received and will release final payments once all necessary elements are met.

2024 Grant. On December 19th, 2023, the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution authorizing the following sixteen 2024 LAP awards totaling \$191,700.00:

• Adult Day Center of Somerset County	\$6,000.00
• American Theater Group	\$31,000.00
• Bernards Township Parks & Recreation	\$6,000.00
• Borough of South Bound Brook	\$2,000.00
• Bound Brook Cultural Arts Committee	\$3,500.00
• Friends of the Abraham Staats House	\$1,200.00
• Friends of the Kennedy Martin Stelle Farmstead	\$21,000.00
• Light Opera of New Jersey	\$25,000.00
• Music in the Somerset Hills	\$36,000.00
• Raag-Rang	\$6,000.00
• Raritan Valley Choral Society	\$3,000.00
• Raritan Valley Community College Arts & Design Department	\$5,000.00
• Raritan Valley Symphonic Band	\$6,000.00
• Somerset Symphony Orchestra	\$8,000.00
• Somerset Valley Players	\$11,000.00
• Ukrainian History and Education Center	\$21,000.00

All re-grant organizations have been notified of their grant awards. Contracts are expected to be sent out shortly after final approval from County Counsel. Organizations that did not receive funding have also been notified. Additionally, staff are working to finalize the contract with the State Arts Council and submit all ADA requirements to the state as well. Staff have also been working with consultant ION Contracts and expect to pilot a digital contract submission process with a small selection of regrant organizations.

Long Range Plan. A public hearing of the Cultural & Heritage Commission’s Long Range Plan for consideration of adoption into the County Master Plan will be held during the Somerset County Planning Board’s February 20th, 2024 meeting. Notice to all of the Somerset County municipal clerks and planning board secretaries will be going out in late January.

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.

2023 Grant. The 2023 CHPP re-grantee final reports are due on January 12th, 2024. Staff are reviewing the reports as they are received and will release final payments once all necessary

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elements are met. Staff are also working on the final report to the New Jersey State Historical Commission which is due January 30th.

2024 Grant. On December 12th, 2023, the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution authorizing the following seven 2024 CHPP awards, totaling \$63,750:

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| • Borough of Bound Brook | \$3,000 |
| • Friends of the Abraham Staats House | \$11,946 |
| • Friends of the Jacobus Vanderveer House | \$21,350 |
| • Friends of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead | \$3,000 |
| • Heritage Trail Association | \$13,145 |
| • Ukrainian History and Education Center | \$6,000 |
| • Van Harlingen Historical Society of Montgomery, Inc. | \$5,309 |

All re-grantees have been notified of their grant awards. Staff is currently preparing all contracts for the 2024 grants. Organizations that did not receive funding have been notified as well. Staff is working on the 2024 contract to be submitted to the state. Staff have also been working with consultant ION Contracts and expect to pilot a digital contract submission process with a small selection of regrant organizations.

Cooperative Marketing 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.

2023 Grant. Staff is working on the final report due to the Division of Travel and Tourism in early February.

2024 Grant. Our 2024 grant was approved in the amount of \$12,450. The contract was finalized and submitted in late 2023. Staff has reached out to all the proposed vendors and will be confirming the ads once purchase orders have been generated.

Gallery. The Scrubs Paper Project exhibit opened on December 1st and features 65 pieces. The artwork, from Frontline Arts, was created on paper which is handmade from deconstructing donated scrubs and other medical garments. The project began in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity for healthcare workers to tell their stories. Portions of the exhibit had been available online, but this is the first time the exhibit is displaying in person. On January 19th we will be opening two exhibits. The first is the Witness Stone Project from the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum. The second will highlight local artist Veronica Spruill.

Historic Preservation and History Awards. Nominations will open for the 2024 Historic Preservation and History Awards later this month and will be due by March 15th, 2024. Awardees will be notified in April, and a ceremony will be held in May. This year, nominations can be submitted online or through the traditional paper method. If you know any individuals or organizations that you think would be

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worthy of an award, please pass the information along to them. If you are unsure if they have already received an award, a list of all previous winners can be found on our website.

The following reports were made by Katie Himics:

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) American Rescue Plan (ARP) Sub-granting for Local Arts Agencies Grant. Funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 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. Final reports were sent to the six regrant organizations in late November and were due January 10th, 2024. Staff are in the process of reviewing these final reports. Once all final payments have been made, staff will begin the close out process for these grants and submit our final reporting to the NEA.

New Jersey Historical Commission Project Grant. The Cultural & Heritage Commission has been awarded \$18,500 through the New Jersey Historical Commission Project Grant to fund the design and development of a Docent Training Program. This is the first year that Cultural & Heritage has been awarded the New Jersey Historical Commission Project Grant. A formal Request for Proposals (RFP) for consulting services was released on Monday, October 2nd, and closed on November 9th, 2023. An evaluation committee was formed to review all proposals submitted. In late December, an award of contract was made to Ahali Consulting LLC. Ahali Consulting LLC is a small, certified minority women-owned consulting firm headquartered in Jersey City. Ahali brings together the expertise and experience of industry professionals with human-centered design practices to cultivate innovative community solutions. In early 2024, staff will be meeting with the consulting team to begin project activities.

Teen Arts Festival. The Somerset County 2024 Teen Arts Festival will be held on Thursday, May 16th, at Raritan Valley Community College. 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 arts. Program Coordinator, Katie Himics, has taken lead in coordinating this year's festival. Our annual School Participation Forms were made available to schools in early October, and they were due back December 15th. We currently have 12 schools with approximately 900 students expected to participate this year. Staff are now beginning to acquire a roster of talented, respected, and diverse artists in the various creative disciplines to offer workshops and masterclasses for our students, as well as critique student work and performances.

The following reports were made by Tom Boccino:

Historic Preservation Grant Program. The Historic Preservation Grant Program is part of the Somerset County Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund.

2023 Grant. County Counsel is currently reviewing the grant contracts for the 4 projects that were awarded a total of \$931,821.00, and they will be sent out to the recipients once approved. Staff is beginning to work on getting the 2024 grant round moving and is currently reviewing the guidelines and application form for possible edits and updates.

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County Historic Preservation Projects:

Van Horne House.

There is no update to report for the Van Horne House restoration. The County is still on track to begin the final phase of restoration this Spring.

County Court House, Façade Restoration Project.

The Courthouse Façade restoration project has been put on hold until next year. The consultants have inspected the building and had minor repairs made where necessary, so the building is structurally sound.

First Dutch Reformed Church, Stained Glass Window Project.

The Somerset County Engineering Department has gone out to bid for a maintenance contract, and once awarded the new contractor can begin work on the First Dutch Reformed Church stained glass repair project.

County Owned Historic Sites Assessment.

The consultant is finalizing the Historic Sites Assessment report which should be received by the County by the end of January. The case studies from neighboring County facility visits are also being finalized and will be a companion document to the full report.

The Old Stone Arch Bridge.

The closing for the Old Stone Arch Bridge property is scheduled for March 15th, 2024, and is still on track for that closing date. Middlesex County is contributing toward the purchase of the property and will be involved with Somerset County on the planning, archaeology, and development of the property. Somerset County staff has been working with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to address its inquiry into the purchase of the property and SHPO's involvement in the purchase. Information has been sent to SHPO for its review, and the County should be receiving a sign-off shortly.

IX. New Business/Action Items

2024 Meeting Dates. The Commission was asked to formally vote on the 2024 Meeting dates. Discussion led to the following proposal: Quarterly in person meetings in May, September, December of 2024 and January of 2025. Hybrid, in person and virtual, meetings in February, March, June, October and November of 2024. Meeting start time to be moved from 7:30pm to 7:00pm.
Motion to accept the proposed meeting schedule made by Kathy Faulks and seconded by Marge Sullivan. Passed.

X. Somerset County Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Liaison Melonie Marano

1. Commissioner Marano read the following message from Raritan Councilman Adam Armhizer:
"Good Afternoon Commissioner Marano, I wanted to let you know that we located the Treaty of Raritan (Knox-Porter Resolution) and have the first scanned copy (to my knowledge) that anyone

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in Raritan has seen in more than 102 years ! If we can't get the original document back, myself and members of Raritan's Historic Committee are planning to go down to DC to see the document in person and retrieve a replica. We will be further honoring the event with a formal display at the Historic Museum being established on Anderson Street in Raritan. More updates to come- just wanted to let you know we've located the treaty and have scans of the document!"

XI. Cultural & Heritage Commissioner Comments

1. Marge Sullivan stated the group from the 2023 Middlebrook Symposium will be publishing their collective papers soon. The 2024 Middlebrook Symposium is progressing and is scheduled for Saturday, March 16th, 2024. Marge also noted that the annual Five Generals Tour will be held on Sunday, February 18th, 2024. Tickets are available at: <https://heritagetrail.org/>.
2. Robert Grundfest expressed that serving for a year as Commissioner has solidified his commitment to the Cultural & Heritage Commission.
3. Donnetta Bishop-Johnson encouraged people to visit the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum website to see upcoming events. Their Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration will be held on January 15th, 2024, from 10:00am to 2:00pm and will feature live theater performances, videos and featured speakers including Commission President Rory Britt. Donnetta also encouraged all to see the Witness Stones Project exhibit. February programming can be found at: <https://www.ssaamuseum.org>
4. Kathy Faulks thanked the County Commissioners and the Cultural & Heritage Commission on behalf of the Friends of Abraham Staats House, Inc. for awarding them 2024 CHPP and 2024 LAP grants.

XII. Advisory Committee Comments

1. Sean Blinn thanked the County Commissioners and the Cultural & Heritage Commission on behalf of the Jacobus Vanderveer House for the 2024 CHPP Grant award. The Center for Contemporary Art's 2024 International Juried Exhibition will be running from January 19th through May 17th with an Opening Reception on Friday, January 26th, 2024, from 6:00pm to 8:00pm: <https://ccabedminster.org>.
The American Association for State and Local History will be holding a virtual summit titled "Doing History in Polarized Times" on February 8th and 9th, 2024: <https://aaslh.org/annualconference/doing-history-summit/>.
The Northern Slave Collective will hold their annual conference on Monday, February 5th, 2024: <https://dyckmanfarmhouse.org/initiatives/northern-slavery-collective/>.
2. Rikki Massand thanked everyone for supporting the Montgomery Landmarks Commission's ceremony honoring Jessie Havens and Liz Palius and thanked Commissioner Melanie Marano for her great comments. Rikki noted that Dorothy Guzzo, Executive Director of the New Jersey Historic Trust, is retiring in the coming week and that new Executive Director will be Glenn Ceponis. Rikki also congratulated Neena Singh, the first Sikh Mayor of Montgomery Township.
3. Leslie Workman announced that Farmstead Arts' new website is live and encouraged everyone to visit it, noting that the website was funded by a 2023 CHPP grant. Leslie also stated that registration is now open for the Farmstead Arts Center's Winter Art Classes. On Saturday, January 14th, 2024, the Farmstead Arts Center will host a live concert titled "Simple Music for

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Difficult People” from 1:00pm to 4:00pm. The Farmstead Arts Center, in partnership with the New Jersey Highlands Coalition, will be hosting “Entr’Exhibit: Visions for the Next Decade & Beyond” from January 7th to February 26th, 2024, with an artists’ reception on Sunday, January 21st, 2024. <https://farmsteadarts.org/>

XIII. Public Comments

1. Jessie Havens thanked the County Commissioners and the Cultural & Heritage Commission on behalf of the Van Harlingen Historical Society for awarding them a 2024 CHPP Grant. Jessie requested a better sound system for the public Cultural & Heritage Commission meetings. Jessie noted that the Washington Wells Farm will be coming before the Montgomery Township Landmarks Commission. Washington’s troops passed this farm on the way to Valley Forge and “drank the well dry”. Donnetta Bishop-Johnson noted that the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum is planning to move the split-shingled enslaved persons’ quarters to the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum site.

Announcements/Other News:

The next SCC&HC meeting will be hybrid, in person and virtual, on Thursday, February 1st, 2024.

XIV. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Robert Grundfest and seconded by Jonathan Hress. Passed.
Adjournment 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Faulks, Secretary

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