

**SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION**

**Thursday, April 4th, 2024**

**Meeting Minutes – Hybrid Live/Virtual Zoom Meeting**

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**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 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, Jonathan Hress, Maritza Martinez, Marge Sullivan

**Excused:** Robert Grundfest

**Absent:** Natalie Pineiro, Edwin Scannell

**Staff:** Kaitlin Bundy, Robert Meyer, Tom Boccino, Josephine Taranto

**Advisory Members:** Aldo Adiazola, Sean Blinn, Brian Faulks, Leslie Workman

**Members of the Public:** Don Esposito, Jessie Havens, Olinda Young

**Commissioner Liaison:** Melonie Marano

**IV. Approval of March 7th, 2024, Minutes**

**Motion** to accept the minutes as amended to include Maritza Martinez in attendance made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Jonathan Hress. Passed.

**V. Correspondence**

1. Kaitlin Bundy displayed the booklet from the New Jersey Historical Commission's Tavern Talks program, which was held at Flounder Brewing Co. in Hillsborough on March 24th, 2024.
2. Josephine Taranto reported that staff received and responded to a section 106 letter for a proposed replacement of a bridge in Bound Brook.
3. Josephine also reported that staff received a newsletter from the Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance.

**VI. 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.

**2023 Grant.** Final payments have been released to all fifteen 2023 regrant organizations, officially closing out the 2023 grant year.

**2024 Grant.** Staff have received contracts from all fifteen 2024 re-grant organizations and have been releasing first payments as contracts are authorized by the County Commissioners. At the March 26th, 2024, County Commissioners meeting the 2024 re-grant organizations were presented with ceremonial checks for their grant awards. A small reception was held before the check presentation for all organizations to meet and mingle.

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**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 payments have been released to all six re-grant organizations. Staff is in the process of working with the County's finance department to submit final close out paperwork for this grant with the NEA.

**Docent Training Program.** The Cultural & Heritage Commission has been awarded a Project Grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission to fund the design and development of a Docent Training Program. This program, being piloted with the Five Generals Houses, intends to increase the historic sites' visitor readiness for the Semiquincentennial and improve their long-term sustainability. Ahali Consulting LLC has been conducting research into the best practices in the field of docentry and exploring successful models of docent training programs being used by historic sites across the country. Ahali and Cultural & Heritage staff have also been working closely with the Docent Training Program Advisory Committee, which consists of representatives from the Five Generals Houses, to gain insight into the houses' specific needs. From this research, Ahali has developed an initial proposal for a collaborative docent training program which would mix classroom-style learning and experience-based field learning to provide a well-rounded training program preparing docents to become volunteers at the Five Generals Houses. This proposal will be brought to the Committee for review at the next meeting on April 9th, 2024.

Update on Docent Training Program Items:

- Ahali Consulting LLC & SCC&HC Staff Initial Meeting – February 5th, 2024
- Ahali Consulting Visits all Five Generals Houses for In-Person Tours – February 20th & 24th, 2024
- 1st "Kick Off" Meeting of Docent Training Program Advisory Committee – March 1st, 2024
- Docent Training Program Newsletter Issue #1 Distributed – March 26th, 2024
- "Portrait of a Docent" Five Generals Houses Survey Distributed – March 26th, 2024
- Collaborative Docent Training Program Draft Proposal Provided to SCC&HC Staff by Ahali Consulting – March 26th, 2024
- 2nd Meeting of Docent Training Program Advisory Committee – Scheduled for April 9th, 2024

**Long Range Plan.** A public hearing of the Cultural & Heritage Commission's Long Range Plan for consideration of adoption into the County Master Plan was held during the Somerset County Planning Board's February 20th, 2024, meeting. Notice was sent out to all Somerset County municipal clerks and planning board secretaries. The public hearing was advertised, and staff sent out additional notice about the hearing to all local arts, history and cultural organizations. Public comment remained open through March 21st, 2024. Staff have compiled all comments into a singular chart and addressed all comments. All public comments received will be discussed at the April 16th, 2024, Somerset County Planning Board meeting. Following this presentation the Planning Board will vote on the adoption.

**2024 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

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celebrate their accomplishments in the arts. Staff have been working to acquire a roster of 30+ diverse and talented artists in the various creative disciplines to critique student work and performances, as well as offer a variety of workshops and masterclasses. A Call for Volunteers for the Teen Arts Festival was sent out to the Cultural & Heritage Commission and Advisory Members earlier this week. If you are interested in volunteering, please reach out to staff member Katie Himics by May 1st, 2024.

**Warren History Day.** The Cultural & Heritage Commission is supporting the Warren Township School District's History Day taking place on April 18th, 2024. During this event the middle school history club will act as docents as the district's 4th graders are brought to four local historic locations. Somerset County Commissioner Director Shanel Y. Robinson is scheduled to visit the event and speak with the students.

**Somerset County Public Art Policy.** In mid to late 2023, the Somerset County Park Commission reached out to the Cultural & Heritage Commission to request assistance in developing a set of guidelines for exhibiting public art in county parks. Staff conducted research into the best practices in the public art field and worked in close collaboration with the New Jersey State Council on the Arts to develop a Public Art Policy. This resulting policy provides goals to be achieved and objective criteria to be followed to guide the selection, installation, and maintenance of artwork to be displayed in county parks. The Public Art Policy was adopted via resolution at the Somerset County Park Commission's regularly scheduled March 21st, 2024, meeting. This policy will assist Somerset County and the Park Commission in creatively enhancing our county-owned public open spaces.

### **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.** Payments have been released for all but one of the 2023 CHPP re-grantees. Staff are in contact with this organization to finalize their final report.

**2024 Grant.** Staff have received contracts from all seven 2024 re-grant organizations and have been releasing first payments as contracts are authorized by the County Commissioners. At the March 26th, 2024, County Commissioners meeting the 2024 re-grant organizations were presented with ceremonial checks for their grant awards. A small reception was held before the check presentation for all organizations to meet and mingle.

**Cooperative Marketing 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.

**2024 Grant.** Our 2024 grant was approved in the amount of \$12,450. The first ad has been submitted to Hook Magazine and will run in their April/May/June issue. Additional print ads will follow in Bucks

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County Magazine and Edible Jersey. Digital ads will run with Edible Jersey and Hudson Valley Magazine closer to this year's Journey.

**Gallery.** On March 8th, 2024, the Art Access Program at Matheny exhibit officially opened. This exhibit features 43 pieces from Matheny Medical and Educational Center's Arts Access Program and will run through April 22nd, 2024. The Matheny Medical and Educational Center is a special hospital for individuals of all ages with medically complex developmental disabilities. Their Arts Access Program is designed specifically to inspire, uplift, and encourage the aspirations of artists with disabilities. The program allows these artists to explore a variety of disciplines, including dance, creative writing, drama, and visual art, and create works that are distinctly their own. This gallery opening also coincided with Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, which is observed annually each March.

**2024 Technical Assistance Workshops.** Throughout 2024, a selection of professionally-led technical assistance workshops will be offered to benefit our local non-profit organizations. On March 19th, 2024, a technical assistance workshop titled "The ADA and Removing Access Barriers" was held, which was a successful event. 30 individuals attended, representing 24 arts, history, and cultural organizations from throughout Somerset, Union, and Hunterdon counties. The next technical assistance workshop, titled "Do-It-Yourself Strategic Planning" will be held on June 11th, 2024, from 10:00am to 12:00pm at the Hillsborough Township Municipal Building. This workshop is being offered jointly with the Hunterdon County Cultural & Heritage Commission. During this workshop, participants will learn to think strategically about their organization's future and develop effective long-range or strategic plans to guide their organization's goals. This workshop will be hosted by Allison Trimarco, the owner of Creative Capacity LLC, which works with nonprofits to develop creative solutions to their management challenges. Registration information will be coming out soon.

**The following reports were made by Josephine Taranto:**

**Historic Preservation Grant Program.** The 2023 Somerset County Historic Preservation Grant Program awarded four sites a total of \$931,821.00 in October. The 2024 grant round is being announced this month and celebrates the 25th Anniversary of the program, which has awarded over fifty historic sites a total of \$23 million in its 25 years.

**County Historic Preservation Projects:**

**First Dutch Reformed Church, Stained Glass Window Project.** Engineering Staff and Preservation Planning Staff are waiting to receive an updated quote to complete this restoration project. Staff are hoping to complete the last remaining vertical panels, as well as the large rosette window this year.

**County Historic Sites Assessment.** Staff have received the final draft of the assessment and are reviewing the document, which will act as a guide for the restoration of several county-owned sites in need of restoration. An innovative adaptive-reuse guide has been created for each site.

**Lord Stirling Park.** As a part of the celebration leading up to the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution, the County hired Hunter Research to do an archaeological investigation of Lord Stirling

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Park. Staff are waiting for the report on this project and are excited to update the site's National Register of Historic Places nomination as a result.

**The Old Stone Arch Bridge.** The County of Somerset has partnered with Middlesex County to acquire the Old Stone Arch Bridge, a buried piece of Revolutionary War and transportation history that has been preserved with a layer of asphalt paving for a warehouse on site. The Counties hope to create a “pocket park” with an interpretation and excavation of the bridge. Our projected closing date is July 15th, 2024.

### Other:

**March 2024 Events.** March was an eventful month for history in Somerset County, including the Middlebrook Symposium on March 16th, with a full house of attendees at the event at Raritan Valley Community College. The sold-out Travels with Darley Preview took place at Flounder's Brewing Co. on March 19th, showcasing the PBS episode featuring Somerset County. The event also featured a panel discussion with Darley Newman, star of Travels with Darley, Somerset County Administrator Colleen Mahr, Cultural & Heritage Commissioner Natalie Pinerio, and Dr. Iris de Rode, a Dutch historian who specializes in the French participation in the American Revolution. One of the New Jersey Historical Commission's Tavern Talks also took place at Flounder Brewing Co. on March 24<sup>th</sup>.

**East Millstone Historical Society Presentation.** On Sunday, March 24th, 2024, Historic Preservation Staff attended the East Millstone Historical Society's annual meeting and gave a presentation on the Fleischmann Carriage House, a county-owned historic resource located in Colonial Park. Members of the society were very excited about the future restoration of the site and provided many stories and anecdotes about the Fleischmann / Mettler families and the overall property.

## VII. New Business/Action Items

### **Historic Preservation Grant Guidelines**

A motion was requested to accept and approve edits and additions made to the 2024 Historic Preservation Grant Guidelines and Application so that staff can proceed with the 2024 Historic Preservation Grant round. **Motion** made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Kathy Faulks. Passed.

### **Letter of Support – Old Dutch Parsonage**

Paul Soltis, Resource Interpretive Specialist for the Wallace House & Old Dutch Parsonage, requested a letter of support from the Commission to support a grant application to the New Jersey Historic Trust for a preservation plan for the Old Dutch Parsonage. **Motion** made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Jonathan Hress. Passed.

### **Historic Preservation and History Awards**

Two nominations were received for the Historic Preservation and History Awards. It was suggested that the awards, should they be recommended by the Awards Committee, be presented during a Board of County Commissioners' Meeting similar to the LAP or CHPP grant awards with a small reception beforehand. The presentation of awards would be part of Somerset County's plans for celebrating

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Historic Preservation Month in May. Additional plans were also discussed: Somerset County plans to participate in National Historic Marker Day on April 26th, 2024; The Somerset County Board of County Commissioners will make a Proclamation that May is Historic Preservation Month; An initiative to encourage people to take pictures documenting 25 years of the Historic Preservation Grant Program; Two county-owned historic markers have been uncovered in a warehouse are planned to be installed. **Motion** to support a change in programming for the 2024 Historic Preservation and History Awards, to present the awards during a County Commissioners' Meeting with a small reception beforehand, made by Kathy Faulks and seconded by Maritza Martinez. Passed.

### VIII. Somerset County Commissioner Comments

#### Commissioner Liaison Melonie Marano

1. Commissioner Marano announced that the county budget will be introduced at the April 9th, 2024, Somerset County Board of Commissioners' Meeting to be adopted on May 14th, 2024. She also congratulated Kaitlin Bundy on her upcoming wedding on April 12th, 2024, and noted Kaitlin would be out of the office for two weeks.
2. Commissioner Marano praised Kaitlin Bundy and Cultural & Heritage staff for their work obtaining and executing the NEA-ARP Grant, noting the impact it's had on the six sub-awardees in Somerset County. Advisory Member Sean Blinn seconded this sentiment as a board member of the Center for Contemporary Art, one of the sub-awardees, and attested to the grant's positive impact.

### IX. Cultural & Heritage Commissioner Comments

1. Marge Sullivan attended the "Middlebrook Symposium: Why Washington Chose Middlebrook: Geography and Logistics" on Saturday, March 16th, 2024, at Raritan Valley Community College. The event was well attended and very successful, with increased attendance from the previous Symposium. A highlight was Reenactor Noah Lewis, portraying a Colonial teamster, engaging the audience in his performance and discussing the many African Americans who held that position. The proceedings book will be available for purchase through online booksellers soon.
2. Rory Britt also attended the "Middlebrook Symposium" and expressed that the combination of presentations were all varied on the same subject and very enjoyable. Rory also congratulated Kaitlin on her upcoming wedding.
3. Jonathan Hress noted that he attended the "William Clark and Meriwether Lewis: The Expedition of 1804" program at the Manville Library, which saw a good turn out with many families.
4. Kathy Faulks announced the upcoming Battle of Bound Brook Weekend would be held April 12th through 14th, 2024. Events are to be kicked off on Friday, April 12th, from 6:00pm to 8:00pm, with Heritage Trail's Annual Fundraiser, featuring a special unveiling of historic items related to Philip Van Horne. County Commissioner Melonie Marano will also be speaking at the event. Additional events during the Battle of Bound Brook Weekend include:
  - Saturday, April 13th:
    - 10:30am, Street Battle #1 Re-enactment at Old Stone Arch Bridge in Bound Brook.

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- 11:30am, Commemoration Ceremony of the 247th “Battle of Bound Brook”, with the New Jersey Society of the Sons of the American Revolution Color Guard. [NJSSAR.org](http://NJSSAR.org)
- 12:30pm to 3:30pm, 6th Annual Battle & Brews Guided Historical Tour + Pub Crawl. Must be 21+ and register in advance.
- 1:30pm, Street Battle #2 Main Street, South Bound Brook.
- 7:00pm to 11:00pm, “Heritage Trail’s Colonial Tavern Night” at the Philip Van Horne House. [www.heritagetrail.org](http://www.heritagetrail.org)
- Sunday, April 14th:
  - 7:30am to 12:00pm, Breakfast Buffet at South Bound Brook Fire Company #1 Firehouse, 83 Edgewood Terrace, South Bound Brook. Free to registered re-enactors. Public: Adults: \$13; Seniors: \$11; under age ten: \$9; under 5: free. [www.sbbfd.com](http://www.sbbfd.com)
  - 12:30pm to 1:30pm, Esteemed Historian Mr. Joe Becton presents “African Americans During the Revolutionary War”- \$10 per person, 18 & Under: free.
  - 2:30pm to 3:30pm, Battle Re-enactment #3 on the grounds of the Abraham Staats House.
- On both days, Saturday, April 13th, and Sunday, April 14th, from 10:00am to 4:00pm, the Battle of Bound Brook Soldiers Encampment will be at the Abraham Staats House. Additionally, Ashton Brewing will be hosting a Beer Garden with beer tastings of the Staats Pilsner, \$8 for a pint and \$15 for a 6-pack. Must be 21+. [www.staatshouse.org](http://www.staatshouse.org)

### X. Advisory Committee Comments

1. Sean Blinn announced that the Center for Contemporary Art is hosting a Gallery Opening on Friday, April 5th, 2024, and they will host their Annual Art Throwdown on Sunday, April 21st, 2024. <https://ccabedminster.org>
2. Leslie Workman thanked Somerset County for writing the letter of support for the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead’s New Jersey Historic Trust capital grant application for the Wagon House. Leslie announced that Farmstead Arts has hired a new Marketing Director, Shaheed Shabazz. An art show by Ridge High School students entitled “Ghost Stories” is on display in the Farmstead Gallery. The gallery hours for April are Wednesday and Friday 11:00am to 2:00pm. The Farmstead Members Juried Art Show Opening Reception will be on Sunday, April 28th, 2024, from 1:00pm to 4:00pm. [www.farmsteadartscenter.org](http://www.farmsteadartscenter.org).  
Leslie noted there was a wind microburst that caused damage to one of the support beams in the barn. They are currently looking for a specialist in barn repair, preferably one that is local. The barn is not in any serious danger at this time.
3. Aldo Adiazola announced that the Andrew Ten Eyck House is holding an Open House on Sunday, April 21st, 2024, from 1:00pm to 4:00pm. <https://visitsomersetnj.org/fun-somerset-nj/andrew-ten-eyck-house/>

### XI. Public Comments

1. Don Esposito congratulated Kaitlin Bundy on her upcoming wedding.

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2. Jessie Havens noted that the Middlebrook Symposium was a success and provided excellent history programming. She noted that the county and volunteer enthusiasm should be captured and built upon for future events.
3. Olinda Young discussed the Van Veghten House Wetlands Mitigation Project. She reported that the Somerset County Park Commission has taken down dead trees and removed vines which had been growing on telephone poles. They are awaiting reports from the Army Corps of Engineers. Jessie Havens explained that the area in question is a natural meadow where hay was once grown. The river rose annually, and deposited silt noted as “unusual manuring of land,” which was of interest to the Dutch settlers. Don Esposito also noted that this was correct.

**Announcements/Other News:**

**The next SCC&HC meeting will be in person on Thursday, May 2nd, 2024.**

**XII. Adjournment**

**Motion** to adjourn made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Maritza Martinez. Passed.  
Adjournment 8:31 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathy Faulks, Secretary

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