

SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION
Thursday, May 2, 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 7:04 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, Kathy Faulks, Robert Grundfest, Jonathan Hress, Marge Sullivan

Excused: Donnetta Bishop-Johnson, Natalie Pineiro, Maritza Martinez

Absent: Edwin Scannell

Staff: Kaitlin Bundy, Katie Himics, Robert Meyer, Tom Boccino, Josephine Taranto

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

Members of the Public: Jessie Havens, Sonya Geisel Hunt, Sarun Shrestha, Joseph Villuri, Olinda Young

Commissioner Liaison: Melonie Marano

IV. Approval of April 4, 2024, Minutes

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

V. Correspondence

1. It was reported that Special Projects Assistant Killian Mann submitted a letter of resignation effective May 18, 2024.
2. Staff received the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Spring 2024 edition of Preservation Magazine as well as the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey's April 2024 newsletter.
3. Staff also received a letter of welcome from RevolutionNJ, which stated that the Cultural & Heritage Commission is now a Proud Partner of the state and may use the RevNJ logo in marketing.
4. On April 10, 2024, staff received a request for a letter of support from the Franklin Inn-Van Liew Homestead Association, Inc. for their application to the 2024 Historic Site Management Grant from Preserve New Jersey's Historic Preservation Fund. Since the letter was needed by April 16th, with no flexibility in the deadline, the request was unable to be brought before the Commission. Staff reached out to Commission President Rory Britt, who recommended a staff letter of support which was submitted to the Franklin Inn-Van Liew Homestead Association on April 15th.

VI. Staff Reports/Old Business

Grants

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.

2024 Grant. All fifteen re-grant organizations' contracts have been received, reviewed, and finalized for release of first payment.

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County History Partnership Program 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 is in contact with this organization to finalize their final report and are awaiting one final deliverable before the grant can be closed out.

2024 Grant. Staff has received contracts from all seven 2024 re-grant organizations and have been releasing first payments as contracts are authorized by the County Commissioners.

Historic Preservation Grant Program.

2023 Grant. The 2023 Somerset County Historic Preservation Grant Program contracts have been executed by the Commissioner Director and initial payments will be released in the coming weeks. All organizations' contracts have been executed except for one, which is still under review with County Counsel. Staff are in communication with the organization.

2024 Grant. The 2024 Somerset County Historic Preservation Grant round was announced last week in a press release outlining the program's accomplishments in its 25 years of operation. The applications are due on or by June 14, 2024. Two technical assistance workshops are being offered to review the revised guidelines and application process and provide an opportunity for applicants to ask questions. These workshops will be held virtually on May 7th at 6:00pm and May 10th at 12:00pm. Registration information can be found on the Cultural & Heritage Commission's webpage.

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. The first ad was printed in the Hook Magazine's April/May/June issue, which was released in early April. On April 15th, our interim report for this grant was submitted to the Division of Travel and Tourism. In late April, print ads were sent to Bucks County Magazine and Edible Jersey for their Summer issues. Digital ads were sent to Edible Jersey and Hudson Valley Magazine and will run closer to this year's Journey.

2025 Grant. Staff are working to prepare the Declaration of Intent and necessary documents needed for the 2025 grant round. The application is due on June 12th, 2024.

Docent Training Program. 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 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. The selected consultant team, Ahali Consulting LLC, presented an initial proposal for a collaborative docent training program which would mix classroom-style learning and experience-based field

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learning to the Docent Training Advisory Committee at their last meeting, held on April 9th, 2024. The proposal was well received. Ahali collected feedback from the Committee, which consists of representatives from the Five Generals Houses, to continue to guide their development process. The Five Generals Houses also all participated in a Portrait of a Docent survey, which provided valuable insight into the houses' current needs; assessing each site's current volunteer program and their goals for the future. Results of this survey will be released to the Committee, as well as the next progress newsletter issue, in the coming week. The next meeting of the Committee is expected to occur in mid-to-late May. Lastly, Ahali is currently working with Cultural & Heritage staff to create a timeline for a second round of site visits to the Five Generals Houses so that representatives can be closely involved in the design and development of the volunteer training resources, which are referred to as Toolkits. These Toolkits will provide a great deal of information for the initial and continued education of quality docents.

County Historic Preservation Projects:

Van Horne House. Staff has been informed that there is approval to go out to bid, but there have been delays in this process and a date has not yet been provided.

First Dutch Reformed Church, Stained Glass Window Project. Engineering Staff and Preservation Planning Staff have received and reviewed an updated quote to complete this restoration project. We are hoping to complete the last remaining vertical panels, as well as the large rosette window. This restoration includes the removal, repair, restoration, and reinstallation of each panel, as well as a new Plexi-glass protective covering for the exterior.

County Historic Sites Assessment. Staff have received the final draft of the assessment and are reviewing the report, which includes case studies, recommendations, and proposed ideas for adaptive reuse of each historic structure within our County Parks.

Lord Stirling Park. There is no update to report on this project.

The Old Stone Arch Bridge. There are no updates to report on the Old Stone Arch Bridge acquisition project. Projected closing date is still scheduled for July 15th, 2024. The Battle of Bound Brook was commemorated on April 13th at the site.

Gallery. On April 26th, the Myriad of Local Artists exhibit opened. This gallery features pieces by four talented local artists who work in a variety of different mediums, including felting, oil paint, digital photography, and watercolor. Our next gallery will feature artwork from the 2024 Teen Arts Festival and will open on June 14th.

Long Range Plan. At the regularly scheduled April 16th, 2024, Somerset County Planning Board meeting, the Board formally voted on and adopted the Cultural & Heritage Long Range Plan as part of the County Master Plan. Staff are working to finalize the document as adopted and will make the document available online shortly.

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2024 Technical Assistance Workshops. Throughout 2024, a selection of professionally-led technical assistance workshops will be offered to benefit our local non-profit organizations. The next technical assistance workshop, titled “Do-It-Yourself Strategic Planning” will be held on June 11, 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 for this workshop is available on our website.

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 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. In April, a Call for Volunteers for the Teen Arts Festival was sent out to the Cultural & Heritage Commission, Advisory Members, and all Somerset County employees. If you are interested in volunteering, please let Katie Himics know as soon as possible.

Journey Through the Past. Staff sent out commitment forms to sites for this years’ Journey Through the Past in an email encouraging everyone to sign up. Staff asked the Commission and Advisory Board to encourage their local historic organizations and sites to participate in the 2024 event. This year’s commitment forms are due back on or before June 3rd. Staff reminded the Board that encouraging sites to confirm their participation by the deadline helps staff produce the print materials in a timely manner in preparation for the event.

Warren History Day. The Cultural & Heritage Commission supported the Warren Township School District’s History Day event, which took place on April 23rd, 2024. During this event, the middle school history club acted as docents for the district’s 4th graders as they were brought around to four local historic sites. Commissioner Singleterry visited the Kirch-Ford-Terrill House during History Day to see the student docents hard at work.

Historic Preservation and History Awards. The History Award Committee has selected the winners for the 2024 Historic Preservation and History Awards. The winners are:

- Davie-Lyn Jones-Evans for the publication of “At Home with History” and;
- Friends of the Abraham Staats House and South Bound Brook School District, Robert Morris School for We Were Here – The Enslaved People of Colonial America: An Inclusive History Partnership Project

The presentation of awards will take place on May 14, 2024, at 6:00pm at the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners meeting in the County Administration Building with a reception beforehand at 5:00pm. Invitations and RSVP information were emailed out to all Cultural & Heritage Commissioners and Advisory members.

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Historic Preservation Month. In honor of Historic Preservation Month, the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners will be announcing a formal proclamation at their May 14th, 2024, meeting. Commissioners and Advisory members are encouraged to attend. Additionally, staff are working with the County's Public Information Office to help share the variety of Historic Preservation highlights throughout the County. This includes the History Award Presentations, the proclamation, the County's investment in the Warren Township School Districts' History Day, and the County's participation in National Historic Marker Day.

National Historic Marker Day. Staff are excited to announce that as part of the County's Historic Preservation month activities the County participated in the celebration of National Historic Marker Day on April 26th. This day is meant for cleaning and caring for historical markers. Commissioner Singleterry and Commissioner Marano participated in the event by cleaning the Court House Green historical marker and the Nevius Street Bridge historical marker.

VII. New Business/Action Items

Juneteenth

Staff are working with Somerset County Chief Communications Officer, Brad Fay, and Assistant to the Administrator, Shelly Bell, on the Somerset County Juneteenth event, which will take place on Wednesday, June 19th, 2024, starting at 5:30pm on the Courthouse Green.

History on the Green

The third annual History on the Green will take place on Saturday, July 20th, 2024, at the Courthouse Green in Somerville from 10:00am to 4:00pm. Staff are working to organize event participants and will be sending out information about tabling opportunities to our local organizations shortly.

Aging Well Expo

On Saturday, May 18th, 2024, staff will be tabling at the Office on Aging & Disability Services' Aging Well Expo at the Bridgewater Senior Center from 1:00pm to 4:00pm.

Hooray for May

The Cultural & Heritage Commission will be tabling and offering arts activities at the Center for Contemporary Art's Hooray for May event on Sunday, May 5th, from 1:00pm to 4:00pm. This event will be a free, family arts day that will feature arts activities and performances at their Bedminster location, rain or shine. We hope you will come visit The Center for Hooray for May!

VIII. Somerset County Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Liaison Melonie Marano

1. Commissioner Melonie Marano announced that the budget was introduced at the April 23rd Somerset County Board of County Commissioners' meeting; to be adopted on May 14th, 2024.

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IX. Cultural & Heritage Commissioner Comments

1. Robert Grundfest stated that he is looking forward to attending some of the upcoming events.
2. Marge Sullivan requested that the Cultural & Heritage Meeting Minutes reflect the agenda in order of reporting.
3. Kathy Faulks thanked everyone who supported the Battle of Bound Brook weekend on April 13th and 14th, 2024. It was another successful event with Ashton Brewing hosting a Beer Garden with tastings of the Staats Pilsner and sale of closed containers. Kathy also reported that the Abraham Staats House participated in National Historic Marker Day on April 26th. Kathy announced the upcoming “Ghost is Clear” Paranormal Fundraising Event for the Abraham Staats House on Saturday, May 5th, 2024, from 6:30pm to 9:00pm. Tickets on Eventbrite are \$50 in advance and \$60 at door. www.staatshouse.org
4. Jonathan Hress wished staff luck with the upcoming Somerset County Teen Arts Festival.

X. Advisory Committee Comments

1. Aldo Adiazola announced that the Andrew Ten Eyck House is holding an Open House on Sunday, May 5th, 2024, from 1:00pm to 4:00pm. <https://visitsomersetnj.org/fun-somerset-nj/andrew-ten-eyck-house/>. Aldo also announced the annual Branchburg Food Truck and Music Festival will be held on May 11th, from 11:00am to 7:00pm in White Oak Park. www.justjerseyfest.com
2. Leslie Workman announced that the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead will host the Potters’ Guild of New Jersey Annual Show & Sale, with over 40 artists, on May 4th-5th. The Farmstead will be attending the annual Charter Day celebration on May 18th and will have two tables which will be shared with a theater group. The Farmstead’s new program, entitled “Celebrating Women Before, During and After the Revolutionary War,” will be held on May 19th. This program is funded, in part, by the County History Partnership Program Grant. The Mayor of Bernards Township attended the Morristown Film Workshop as the first step towards becoming a Film Ready town. www.farmsteadartscenter.org.
3. Margareta Warlick stated that it was exciting to see the kids talk about the history of the town on Warren History Day. The Warren Historic Sites Committee will open the historic Kirch-Ford-Terrill House every other Sunday.
4. Sean Blinn announced that The Center for Contemporary Art is hosting the Hooray for May – Free Family Arts Day on May 5th, 2024, from 1:00pm to 4:00pm. <https://ccabedminster.org>. The Friends of the Jacobus Vanderveer House will host their 9th Annual Field of Honor at River Road Park in Bedminster from Saturday, May 18th, 2024, to Saturday, July 13th, 2024. <https://jvanderveerhouse.org/field-of-honor-2024>. Sean announced that the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) is interested in hearing what the needs are for local history organizations regarding preparations for the 250th. If you are part of, or know of, an organization that would like to share their needs with AASLH, or have any questions, please reach out to Cultural & Heritage Advisory Member Sean Blinn at seanblinn@gmail.com
5. Rikki Massand announced that the book *Bridgetender's Boy* by Linda J. Barth, an illustrated children's book that tells the story of the son of a bridgetender on the Delaware and Raritan Canal, has been made into a movie and was shown on April 13th as part of a celebration of the Delaware

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and Raritan Canal. Rikki also announced that Montgomery Township’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee is working with a non-profit to recognize Asian Americans and what they can do to celebrate Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month in May. Montgomery Township’s 3rd Annual Spring Fling Festival of Colors will take place on May 4th, from 2:00pm to 4:00pm at Montgomery High School. Please reach out to the Recreation Department with additional questions. <https://www.montgomerynj.gov/about/page/spring-fling>

The New York Historical Society is hosting a two-day conference on May 3rd-4th, entitled “Slavery in New Netherland and the Dutch Atlantic World.”

<https://www.nyhistory.org/programs/slavery-in-new-netherland-and-the-dutch-atlantic-world-day-1>

The Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum’s third annual Juneteenth celebration, Freedom Forward, will be held on Saturday, June 15th, from 12:00pm to 4:00pm at the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum in Skillman. Tickets are \$15 to \$30.

<https://www.ssaamuseum.org/juneteenth-2024>

Rikki also shared an article from the May 1st issue of the Hunterdon Review by staff writer Marin Resnick; a book review of “Colonial Taverns of New Jersey, Libations, Liberty & Revolution.”

XI. Public Comments

1. Olinda Young discussed the Van Veghten House Wetlands Mitigation Project. She reported that there seems to be movement at the state level.
2. Jessie Havens noted that the Van Horne House needs three small replica matching brass fire pieces for their front lawn. Jessie also discussed the repairs made to the Rock Brook Bridge and stated that the changes made do not reflect the original version of the bridge. The Van Harlingen Historical Society will hold their Annual Fundraiser, May in Montgomery: A Step Back in Time, on Saturday, May 4th, 2024. <http://vanharlingen.org/may-in-montgomery-a-step-back-in-time/>

Announcements/Other News:

The next SCC&HC meeting will be hybrid, in person and virtual, on Thursday, June 6th, 2024.

XII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Robert Grundfest and seconded by Jonathan Hress. Passed.

Adjournment 8:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Faulks, Secretary

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