

SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION

Thursday, June 6, 2024

Meeting Minutes – Hybrid Live/Virtual Zoom Meeting

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 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, Natalie Pineiro, Robert Grundfest, Maritza Martinez, Marge Sullivan

Excused: Jonathan Hress

Absent: Edwin Scannell

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

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

Members of the Public: Don Esposito

Commissioner Liaison: Melonie Marano

IV. Approval of May 2, 2024, Minutes

Leslie Workman asked that the May 2, 2024, Minutes be amended to note that the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead Program entitled, “Celebrating Women Before, During and After the Revolutionary War” used County History Partnership Program Grant funds and that the Mayor of Bernards Township attended the Morristown Film Workshop as the first step towards becoming a film-ready town.

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

V. Correspondence

1. Staff received the Ocean County “Out and About” Magazine.
2. Staff received the Archaeology and Historic Preservation postcard.
3. Staff received correspondence dated May 6, 2024, from Paul Soltis of the Wallace House and Old Dutch Parsonage State Historic Site showing their participation in commemorating the Boston Tea Party. In August 2023, the Wallace House put up a broadside which was first signed by County Commissioner Douglas Singleterry followed by many more signatures and sent up to Boston. The Wallace House received a Certificate and a picture of the boats participating in the reenactment of the Tea Party, copies of which were included with the letter from Paul. Paul also expressed his appreciation to the County Cultural and Heritage Commission for supporting the Wallace House and Old Dutch Parsonage.
4. Staff received two Section 106 letters and one cell tower notification.
 - Staff received a letter from NJ DOT regarding the replacement of the County Route 514 (Amwell Road) Bridge over the Delaware & Raritan Canal. This project involves the addition of a shoulder, moving the water main that runs along the bridge, and a new driveway for the East Millstone First Aid Squad. The proximity of this project to the East Millstone Historic District, and its many historic resources such as the Franklin Inn, are recognized thanks to the Section 106 process. An intensive archaeological investigation and architectural survey is required.

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- Staff received notice of a cell tower proposed to sit on top of the building at 50 Division Street, Somerville, across from the Post Office. Staff responded to the letter recognizing that there is no direct impact on the historic resources around the building, but that the landscape of historic Main Street must be taken into consideration.
- Staff received a letter from Richard Grubb & Associates regarding a Phase 1A Historical and Archaeological Survey in Bernards Township due to the replacement of the existing crossing over the stream at Pleasant Valley Park. The new crossing would accommodate rising water levels during increased storm events. The current structure itself is not historic, but its setting is vulnerable to archaeological potential. The project area is in close proximity to the Lyons Veterans Administration Hospital Historic District.

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. Staff are scheduling virtual interim discussions with all 15 organizations to take place throughout June and July.

2025 Grant. Staff are updating applications for the 2025 Grant round. Suggested changes were discussed in new business.

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.

2024 Grant. Interim reports were released on June 4 and are due on June 17. Three organizations will be piloting a digital interim report via iON Contracts.

2025 Grant. Staff are updating applications for the 2025 Grant round. Suggested changes were discussed in new business.

Historic Preservation Grant Program. The 2024 Somerset County Historic Preservation Grant applications are due on June 14, 2024. Two technical assistance workshops were offered on May 7th and May 10th to review the revised guidelines and application and provide an opportunity for applicants to ask questions. Staff are planning for the review of the applications to take place in July.

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.

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2024 Grant. In late April, print ads were sent to Bucks County Magazine and Edible Jersey for their Summer issues, which should be releasing soon. Digital ads were sent to Edible Jersey and Hudson Valley Magazine and will run closer to this year's Journey.

2025 Grant. Staff submitted the Declaration of Intent and are working on the necessary documents for the 2025 Grant Application, which is due on June 12.

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, has provided Cultural & Heritage staff with a draft report outlining the Docent Training Program's structure and content. It is proposed that this program will mix classroom-style learning and site-based experiences within a 3-month collaborative docent training program, which will be followed by a 3-month commitment to one or more of the Five Generals Houses for hands-on learning and service. The draft report is currently being reviewed by staff and then will be brought to the Docent Training Advisory Committee for further review and feedback. Over the next two weeks, Ahali Consulting will also be conducting a second round of in-person site visits to each of the Five Generals Houses. The purpose of these site-visits is to closely collaborate with the sites on the design and development of comprehensive volunteer training Toolkits. These Toolkits will provide detailed information for the initial and continued education of quality docents.

County Historic Preservation Projects:

Van Horne House. No update at this time.

First Dutch Reformed Church, Stained Glass Window Project. Staff are in communication with the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office and are planning for the restoration of the last four remaining windows.

County Owned Historic Sites Assessment. Staff have received the final draft of the assessment, and will be sharing it with County Administration.

Lord Stirling Park. Staff are expecting the draft of the Lord Stirling Park Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) report by mid-summer.

The Old Stone Arch Bridge. There are no updates to report on the Old Stone Arch Bridge acquisition project. Projected closing date is July 15, 2024.

C&H Gallery. On April 26, our 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 paints, photography, and watercolor. Our next gallery will feature artwork from the 2024 Teen Arts Festival and will open on June 14.

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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.

2024 Teen Arts Festival. The Somerset County 2024 Teen Arts Festival was held on Thursday, May 16, at Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC). This was 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. Roughly 800 students attended the Festival from 12 different schools across the County. Students had the opportunity to perform and present their creative work in seven different artistic disciplines and receive feedback and support from local professional artists. Throughout the day, there were 69 student performances and over 200 pieces of visual artwork displayed in the RVCC Art Gallery. Students also had the opportunity to attend 28 different workshops and masterclasses in various disciplines. Overall, 34 diverse and talented artists were engaged to critique student work or present workshops for the Festival. Staff would like to extend a sincere thank you to all those from the Commission who volunteered to help the day run smoothly. Staff is currently working with RVCC to determine the date for the 2025 Festival.

Journey Through the Past. Commitment forms for this years’ Journey Through the Past were due on June 3. Currently, we have 27 participating sites. If your site has not yet returned the commitment form, please do so as soon as possible. Guidebook pages have also been sent to participating sites, with updates due by June 28.

Juneteenth. Somerset County’s Juneteenth event will take place on Wednesday, June 19, 2024. The evening will kick off with music by DJ Brighter Daze and networking at 4:30pm with the formal program starting at 5:30pm on the Courthouse Green. The program will honor the 18 United States Colored Troops buried in Somerville’s New Cemetery. The program will feature a reading by Miss Olivia Altidor, performances by Antoinette Montague and will bestow the 2nd Annual Juneteenth Leadership Award to Somerville resident Arthur Adair.

History on the Green. The third annual History on the Green will take place on Saturday, July 20, 2024, at the Courthouse Green in Somerville from 10:00am to 4:00pm. This living history event will feature revolutionary war soldiers, a pop-up encampment, a variety of early American artisan demonstrations, colonial toys and games, colonial-era music, and more. Staff have also invited our local history and cultural organizations to table at the event and engage with the public. Invites were emailed out at the end of May, and completed participation commitment forms are due back on or before June 28.

Semiquincentennial – Interpretive Plan. The County continues to make progress on it’s 5-point plan for the 250th. In addition to the docent program update and preservation projects discussed earlier in

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the meeting, the County approved a contract with a consultant team to begin the interpretive plan for four sites at the May 28 County Commissioner's meeting. Once the contract has been signed, staff will be able to release more details about this project, but wanted to inform the Commission at this time, as no formal meeting of the Cultural & Heritage Commission will be held until September.

VII. New Business/Action Items

Revolutionary Revelry Night – TD Ball Park

Staff will be tabling at the Patriots Revolutionary Revelry night on Friday, June 7.

All Ages Art Adventure

The Cultural & Heritage Commission has partnered with the Somerset County Library System to offer arts outreach opportunities for library patrons. On July 9, 2024, from 6:00pm to 7:30pm, we will be hosting All Ages Art Adventure at the Bridgewater Library Branch. During this event, local artists will guide visitors through various creative projects exploring different art mediums and crafts. Registration is required and opens on June 18. To register, please visit the Somerset County Library System's website or visit your branch in-person.

4-H Fair

The Somerset County 4-H Fair will take place August 7, 8 and 9 from 10:00am to 10:00pm. Staff expects to have a table in the County government tent and to provide various arts and history demonstrations throughout the fair. Commission and Advisory members will be invited and encouraged to volunteer at the Cultural & Heritage table during the fair. This allows for engagement with the public focused on the Commission itself. Local nonprofit arts and history organizations are allowed to send brochures and fliers to display at the table. More information about the fair will be provided in late June or July.

2025 LAP and CHPP Grant Applications

Staff are preparing the applications for the 2025 Local Arts Program and County History Partnership Program Grant programs. Kaitlin asked the Commission to make a motion on two requested changes staff presented regarding the 2025 grant applications which would limit the amount organizations could request for Special Project support. Kaitlin asked the Commission to make a motion on match requirements for the 2025 grant round, as currently State guidelines allow the Commission to make the determination to have a match requirement or not.

Motion to accept the proposed language pertaining to the 2025 grant applications made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Natalie Pinero. Passed.

Motion to continue to not require a match for the 2025 grant applications made by Kathy Faulks and seconded by Marge Sullivan. Passed.

VIII. Somerset County Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Liaison Melonie Marano

1. Commissioner Melonie Marano announced that June is Pride Month. Somerville Pride will be held on June 27 from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. The event is a collaborative effort by the LBGTQ+ Advisory

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Board and the Downtown Somerville Alliance.

IX. Cultural & Heritage Commissioner Comments

1. Maritza Martinez asked if it would be possible to create a page on Facebook to post events. Kaitlin explained that events are promoted through Somerset County Tourism, that the County is revamping the website, and that the Somerset County Public Information Office manages County social media accounts.
2. Donnetta Bishop-Johnson stated that the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum (SSAAM) will be holding their annual Juneteenth celebration on Saturday, June 15, 2024, at the Museum. There will be shuttle busses from Montgomery High School. The event will feature live music, food, and artist workshops. www.ssaamuseum.org
3. Kathy Faulks announced “Flag Retirement Day” on Friday, June 14, 2024, at 6:00pm at the Abraham Staats House, courtesy of the Boy Scouts. The event is free. www.staatshouse.org
4. Marge Sullivan asked if the Somerville Elks were holding an immigration ceremony on Flag Day, June 14, 2024, as they usually do. Staff was unsure, as they had not heard anything about the event.

X. Advisory Committee Comments

1. Leslie Workman announced that the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead was #90 out of 99 applications to the New Jersey Historic Trust and their application was deemed complete. They are currently awaiting a site inspection by the Historic Trust. The Farmstead will be hosting “The Wisdom of Eve” on June 7, 8, 14, and 15 at 7:30pm, with matinee performances on June 9 and 15. There will be a free Father’s Day concert by Brasswork on Sunday, June 16 at 2:00pm. A free Album Release Concert will be held on June 29 at 4:00pm, launching the career of Harper Lovely and the Waitlist. www.farmsteadartscenter.org.
2. Rikki Massand announced that SSAAM is fundraising on August 30, 2024, with the Somerset Patriots honoring black baseball players at TD Ball Park in Bridgewater. Tickets are available on SSAAM’s website and the Somerset Patriot’s website. www.ssaamuseum.org
3. Margareta Warlick announced that the historic Kirch-Ford-Terrill House will be open on Sunday, June 9, 2024, with spinning demonstrations and a small talk at 2:00pm on the “Importance of Colonial Tea.” There will be light refreshments.

XI. Public Comments

1. Don Esposito expressed condolences regarding the passing of former Freeholder Patrick Fittipaldi, who had been a strong supporter of the Commission over the years. Don also announced a lecture, “Colonial Taverns: Seabed of America” at the Raritan Library, June 27 at 6:30pm. Online registration required.

Announcements/Other News:

The next SCC&HC meeting will be in person and virtual, on Thursday, September 5, 2024.

XII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Natalie Pineiro. Passed.
Adjournment 8:04 pm.

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Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Faulks, Secretary

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