

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY CULTURAL AND HERITAGE
COMMISSION MINUTES**

April 22, 2021

The regular meeting of the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission was held on Thursday, April 22, 2021 at 4:00p.m., via teleconference.

Present: Suzanne Merighi Penny Watson
 Olive Doss Michael Cagno
 Robert Dragotta Sharon Yoshida

Commissioner Barber Commissioner Pearson

Matthew Pisarski, Planning Director
Omarey Williams, Shared Services Coordinator
Matt Horowitz, Recording Secretary

Guests:

Approval of Minutes – March 25, 2021

A number of corrections, comments, additions, deletions, etc. were made by a handful of Commission members. A motion to approve the March 25, 2021 minutes was made by Robert Dragotta. The motion was seconded by Olive Doss and passed unanimously by the Commission with the aforementioned corrections to be made.

Discussion of Statement of Inclusivity

Omarey Williams referenced the proposed Statement of Inclusivity included within the monthly meeting packet and extended his thanks to both the Commission members and Commissioners Pearson & Barber for their willingness to address this issue. Mr. Williams mentioned that two things were done: 1.) as a Commission, it was decided to put forth a Statement of Inclusivity, which he provided within the packet. 2.) The County Commissioners had adopted a resolution at their meeting that past Tuesday. If there were no corrections to be made to the Statement of Inclusivity, Mr. Williams stated he would like to entertain a motion to approve. Suzanne Merighi suggested adding a “The” before “Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission...” Commissioner Barber thanked the Commission, on behalf of herself and Commissioner Pearson, for bringing this issue to their attention. Commissioner Pearson reiterated her thanks on how quickly the Commission and County staff developed that very resolution to be passed along and, ultimately, approved by the Commissioners. Ms. Watson inquired as to how the resolution would be publicized and it was mentioned that there would be a press release or some sort of public unveiling, in addition to it being included within the minutes uploaded to the website. A motion to approve the proposed Statement of Inclusivity was made by Penny Watson, seconded by Michael Cagno, and passed unanimously by the Commission.

First (1st) Quarter Budget Review

Mr. Williams shared the 2021 First (1st) Quarter Budget on his screen, so all of those in attendance could see it, and it was also included in the meeting packet. Mr. Williams explained the first column is what was initially budgeted at the beginning of the year, in the middle was what had been expended so far in the 1st Quarter, and on the right-hand side was what funds were currently remaining. For the Marketing Services section, Mr. Williams explained, the Commission had initially budgeted \$4,150.00 with \$3,500.00 left after allotting for both the new logo design and new banners. Mr. Williams noted the Encore Awards had been canceled this year, so \$150.00 would be saved from this account. Regarding Promo of The Arts, Mr. Williams explained there was \$22,824.00 as a sub-total (not including the \$100,000.00 the Commission was re-granting out) with \$15,249.00 total remaining with \$5,424.00 in contingency for the rest of the calendar year. Mr. Williams made mention of the \$30,000.00 Line Item and what was budgeted for it with \$1,000.00 expended for the Millville Plein Air event; this bringing it down to \$29,000.00 total with \$12,100.00 in contingency. As a caveat, Mr. Williams added, last month, the Commission had approved \$500.00 towards the Capital Recovery mosaic project, but, to date, the artist has chosen to decline being compensated. Mr. Dragotta asked if the monetary award had gone out to Gallery 50, to which Mr. Williams explained they had not and there had been some issues with the County Purchasing Department that had delayed such payments for re-grantees thus far.

Discussion of Special Project Request: Millville Army Air Field Museum

Mr. Pisarski stated County staff had given this item some thought internally and the feeling was that Millville Army Air Field was already receiving a re-grant from the Commission and the funding for this purpose was based on a fundraising need. Mr. Pisarski felt as though the Commission did not need to be the sole funder, but they could help encourage participation by providing a seed amount of funding for the feasibility analysis study. Mr. Pisarski further explained that the staff recommendation would be for a maximum award of \$1,000.00 for this special request. Following a brief period of discussion, a motion to approve \$1,000.00 to be awarded to the Millville Army Air Field Museum was made by Robert Dragotta. It was, then, seconded by Olive Doss and approved unanimously by the Commission, with the exception of an abstention from Ms. Merighi.

Discussion of Special Project Request: Vineland Historical & Antiquarian Society - A Trip Through Time: A (Slightly Inaccurate) Historic Tour of South Jersey Book

Mr. Williams explained this special project was discussed at last month's meeting amongst the Commission and Ms. Martinelli. Following said meeting, Mr. Williams sent the proposed book, A Trip Through Time: A (Slightly Inaccurate) Historic Tour of South Jersey, out to the Commission members for them to read, review, and enjoy. Due to the nature of the book, although not offensive, it was decided that a disclaimer was recommended. The disclaimer was developed and provided to the Commission and the Vineland Historical & Antiquarian Society's board. The Vineland Antiquarian Society agreed to print the book with the aforementioned disclaimer. Following a brief period of discussion, a motion to approve \$1,000.00 to the Vineland Historical Society for publication of A Trip Through Time: A (Slightly Inaccurate) Historic Tour of South Jersey book, along with the disclaimer was made by Mr. Cagno. It was

seconded by Ms. Watson and approved by the Commission unanimously.

Status Report On The West Jersey Time Traveler Podcasts

Mr. Williams provided an update on the West Jersey Time Traveler Podcast: Keith Wasserman had recently conducted two interviews with representatives from both Deerfield & Fairfield Presbyterian Churches. Mr. Wasserman told Mr. Williams these interviews “came out great” and he was looking forward to doing post-production to complete the podcasts. Mr. Wasserman hoped to have drafts of the podcasts to disseminate out to the Commission within a couple of weeks. Mr. Williams explained Mr. Wasserman had, also, gotten in touch with Dr. Gruccio, the Vineland Superintendent, whom he would be scheduling a podcast with on Landis School. Messrs. Williams & Wasserman had additionally made contact with Trinity African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church and its pastor, Pastor Keane, who was very excited about the project. Mr. Williams assured the Commission both sets of interviews would be scheduled and conducted within the next couple of weeks.

Recap of 2021 Teen Arts Festival

Ms. Merighi explained, next, was a recap on the 2021 Teen Arts Festival, which was just held the previous day at the time of this Commission meeting. Mr. Williams shared screenshots from his day at Teen Arts, which was spent helping moderate a selection of poetry classes. Mr. Williams shared his thoughts and explained it was a very good, enjoyable day. He added, due to the forethought of the Commission, all of the students who were winners had their fees to advance to the state competition fully covered by Cumberland & Cape May Counties. Mr. Williams sent a huge kudos to the Commission for their continued efforts and support of the arts County-wide. Mses. Merighi & Doss shared similar sentiments on how well-organized and enjoyable the 2021 Teen Arts Festival turned out. Commissioner Barber asked if citations had been given to the winners and Mr. Williams said he could easily follow-up, via email, with this information for the Commissioners. Mr. Williams extended his gratitude towards Katie Kiessling and her staff at the Levoy Theatre for hosting an all-around great event.

Long Term Plan Update

Very quickly, Mr. Williams explained, the Commission had given Chris Shrum a lot of feedback and a lot of things to work on regarding the Long Term Plan Draft. So, due to the amount of elements to be worked on, Mr. Williams had given Mr. Shrum until next month’s meeting to provide a fuller, stronger draft to the Commission. Mr. Williams added he appreciated all of the Commission members’ feedback and critical eye, as to give Mr. Shrum more direction.

Commissioner Liaison Reports

Ms. Merighi asked if any of the Commission members had liaison reports (a lot of which were sent out, via email, in advance) or anything else to add. Robert Dragotta stated Gallery 50 was planning their 20th anniversary celebration to be held this upcoming fall, which would most likely be held at his home. Mr. Dragotta added an exact date would be announced shortly, but it would probably be held during early October and it would be Great Gatsby-themed. Mr. Dragotta had, also, been in touch with the people at the Nail House Museum, who were currently

looking for an executive to help replace Dr. Flavia Alaya. Mr. Pisarski mentioned he had to leave to prepare for another meeting that evening, but his presentation for Citizens United on architecture in Cumberland County would be hosted online, if anyone wanted to tune in later.

Ms. Watson stated she had spoken with Jackie Sandro at Clay College, who was working on getting 700 bricks to be dispersed and painted throughout the County. Ms. Sandro was having trouble getting the bricks and, although she didn't need them until August, Ms. Watson told her, if need be, the County could play "bad cop" to help her attain them. Mr. Williams offered his help and negotiation tactics, if necessary. Ms. Watson inquired about the contact for the Vineland African-American Community Development Corporation. Mr. Williams said he would personally reach out to Albert Porter and make sure Ms. Watson had a contact there. Ms. Watson said she, also, had a hard time getting in contact with Project Inspiration and Mr. Williams said he would reach out to his contact there and have them reach out to Ms. Watson directly.

Ms. Merighi shared the Vineland Regional Dance Company would be holding their 41st annual spring concert that coming Sunday, which would be held outdoors. Ms. Merighi explained they sent her two tickets as the liaison and she would only be using one, kindly offering it up to her fellow Commissioners, if anyone wanted to attend, as well. Ms. Doss added the Seabrook Educational & Cultural Center (SECC) would be holding a meeting on the 29th and that was all.

County Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Pearson stated she had, basically, already said what she wanted to say, but she was glad everyone was able to participate in helping get the aforementioned resolution passed. Commissioner Pearson said it was "a big deal" and was happy with the way everything worked out. Commissioner Barber added there was discussion at the County Commissioners' meeting regarding Freedom of Speech and whether by moving the resolution, would they be interfering with that... but, ultimately, the resolution was passed! Commissioners Barber & Pearson extended their thanks to Mr. Pisarski and County staff for their continued efforts.

Tourism Advisory Council/Recreation Commission Comments – Kimberly Gauntt

With Kim Gauntt not present at the Commission meeting, Mr. Williams stated that county staff were very excited about the 39th Annual Bob Busnardo Kids' Fishing Derby that was coming up on Sunday, May 2, 2021. Mr. Williams had sent out the flyer to the Commission members and welcomed their attendance. Mr. Williams and some of his co-workers would be in attendance at the Kids' Fishing Derby, as well, to help Ms. Gauntt tend to the event.

Other Old/New Business

Ms. Watson stated she would like to quickly share some more information about the SECC, who were working on a project to broaden and re-image the scope of what the Museum stands for and exhibits. Ms. Watson explained they had had one public meeting earlier that month and the second one would be held on Thursday, April 29th at 7:00p.m. Ms. Watson stated the first meeting went very well and a person who was in charge of Asian-American exhibits at the Smithsonian was in attendance, as well as people who grew up in the Village. Ms. Watson urged anyone who was able to attend the second meeting to, please, try to do it, if at all possible. Ms.

Watson said if anyone needed the meeting/invite information, she would be more than happy to personally get them in touch with event organizer, Andy Urban. Mr. Williams said if Ms. Watson sent him the meeting invite, he could easily send it out to the whole Commission. Commenting on the burial project, Ms. Watson stated that her team was assembled at last month's Commission meeting and had already started working on it. Ms. Watson explained she had a ZOOM meeting with Mses. Merighi & Cerda-Moreno and still had to make contact with Ms. Doss. Ms. Merighi added, interestingly enough, that the Philip Nutt book the Vineland Historical Society was going to publish had some information present within that was otherwise missing from some of the other research sources she had found.

Mr. Dragotta explained there was a book Mr. Nutt had done on tombstones and he had a copy within his own personal collection. Mr. Dragotta added he would work with the Historical Society to try to get those working on the burial grounds project a copy. Mr. Nutt was Mr. Dragotta's great-uncle and was a dance instructor, President of The American Dance Academy in New York City, and a well-known watercolor artist. Mr. Dragotta said Mr. Nutt had painted a portrait of his great-grandmother that was in need of repair and was currently hidden within the boughs of the Vineland Historical & Antiquarian Society. A self-portrait of Mr. Nutt himself was, also, hanging within the Historical Society in Vineland. Mr. Dragotta, unfortunately, did not know Mr. Nutt, as he passed away in 1948, but has always heard many great stories about his great-uncle.

Ms. Doss inquired as to whether there was any criteria for the artwork to be re-wrapped onto the County bus or if that matter had already been settled. Mr. Williams explained, at the time of last month's meeting, it was decided to assemble an ad-hoc committee. Although, since last month's meeting, Mr. Pisarski had decided, maybe, there was no need for a committee, as he just wanted to gather everyone's opinions, via email. Mr. Williams explained, he thought, for the time being, it was kind of at a stand-still because Mr. Pisarski was waiting for recommendations, graphic designers, and price estimates. It would, then, be brought back before the Commission to approve a certain dollar amount of money. Ms. Merighi thanked all of the Commissioners for their comments and input sent, via email, as well.

Adjourn

Ms. Merighi stated, with nothing else to tend to on the agenda, she would like to entertain one more motion: a motion to adjourn. Thus, a motion to adjourn the April 22, 2021 Cultural & Heritage Commission meeting was made by Sharon Yoshida, seconded by Michael Cagno, and passed unanimously by the Commission. Ms. Merighi thanked everyone again for their attendance.