

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY CULTURAL AND HERITAGE
COMMISSION MINUTES**

April 28, 2022

The regular meeting of the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission was held on Thursday, April 28, 2022, at 3:00p.m., via teleconference and/or in-person at All That Dance Studio located in Bridgeton, NJ.

Present: Robert Dragotta Suzanne Merighi
 Marianne Lods Maria Cerda-Moreno
 Yogesh Thakur

Commissioner Deputy Director Pearson, Commissioner Liaison

Linda Shaw, All That Dance Studio
Meredith Shaw, All That Dance Studio
Gil Walter, Bridgeton Main Street Association, Volunteer
Rosalinda Garcia, Bridgeton Main Street Association, Vice President
Omarey Williams, Shared Services Coordinator
Matt Pisarski, Department Head/Director
Wanda Riviera, Confidential Assistant
Matt Horowitz, Recording Secretary

Approval of Minutes – March 24, 2022

Omarey Williams indicated, following Roll Call, that a quorum was not met and the approval of the March 2022 Cultural & Heritage (C&H) Commission meeting minutes would be postponed until the following month's meeting.

Grantee Spotlight – All That Dance Studio

Mr. Williams thanked their host for the afternoon, Linda & Meredith Shaw from All That Dance Studio. Ms. Linda Shaw said they opened at a different location in 2001 as a for-profit dance studio and transitioned to acting as a non-profit in 2008. Ms. Shaw's daughter, Meredith, and her other daughter were both part of the business. Ms. Shaw said the dance studio had been prosperous through The Pandemic and was grateful for the funding they had received. Meredith was their Artistic Director and Ms. Shaw's other daughter was their Co-Artistic Director, as well as a high school dance teacher. Ms. Shaw said All That Dance Studio currently had 124 students, were still growing, and used to have 210. Ms. Shaw's students included Honor Roll students, aspiring college students, and birthed 10 professional dancers. The Commission asked what styles of dance All That Dance Studio offered, and Ms. Shaw explained they did Hip-Hop, Jazz, Tap, Ballet, Modern, Contemporary, Lyrical, African, and Irish, as well Pilates, Yoga, Aerial Silk Dance, pre-school "mini-motors" classes and ice-breaker/team-building exercises for local businesses. All That Dance Studio's staff said they host parties, as well as other various events, and do whatever they can to keep the youth happy, healthy, involved, and off the streets.

Discussion of Mural Projects – Hopewell, Bridgeton & Vineland

Mr. Williams explained there were a few mural projects currently in-the-works and going through various stages of development throughout the County. He said, one was the dedication of the Mexican Heritage Mural at 502. East Landis Avenue in Vineland. Mr. Williams stated it was done in concert with The Ave/Main Street Vineland, would be unveiled on May 5, 2022 (Cinco de Mayo,) and was painted by local tattoo artist Alfonzo Jimenez. Mr. Williams said he would send additional information and an event invite for those who may want to attend. Mr. Jimenez, who was a Grants Review panelist, was the muralist, Mr. Williams explained.

Mr. Williams said Sharon Kiefer from Gallery 50, Inc. had reached out to the Commission about possibly doing a mural at a private residence. Mr. Williams explained the mural program did not typically install murals at private residences, staff were working through the process, and he wanted to update the Commission on its status. Staff recommendation would be to support the project, so long as Ms. Kiefer was able to help do the legwork working with Hopewell Township, the homeowner, etc. Maria Cerda-Moreno asked what the importance or significance was of this site, to which Mr. Williams explained it located was in Roadstown and would be celebrating the Great Egret. Marianna Lods raised issue with the fact that said mural may not be available for public consumption and viewing. Mr. Williams agreed and said they were currently just at an information-gathering stage in the process.

Mr. Williams said the third mural project was for the Bridgeton Rotary Club. The proposed site was on the side of the CompleteCare building in Bridgeton and Mr. Williams stated design examples and ideas were included within the monthly meeting packets. Mr. Williams said when he received a final design from Bridgeton Rotary, Mark Wiley & Susan Daly, he would provide it to the Commission. Ms. Lods asked for the proposed size of the Rotary mural and Gil Walter (in attendance) said 4-feet x 8-feet, but Mr. Williams stated he would reach out to Rotary and follow up, via email. Mr. Williams said it was great to be able to help local organizations connect with muralists to do these sort of projects across the County.

Special Request – Friends of India Society: Kite & Color Festival

Mr. Williams introduced Yogesh Thakur (in attendance virtually) representing the Friends of India Society's Kite & Color Festival. Mr. Thakur thanked the Commission for their time and said he was returning with a special request because it was just decided about a month/month and a half ago to hold Kite & Color this year. He thanked Mr. Pisarski for renting out the Cumberland County Fairgrounds with the application still in-process. Mr. Thakur said this would be the fourth year holding Kite & Color at the County Fairgrounds and response from sponsors, so far, had been lukewarm. Mr. Thakur said the event was the combination of two Indian holidays: Kite Festival and Color (Holi) Festival. Mr. Thakur invited All That Dance Studio to perform at the Festival and said they were trying to expand it to other non-Indian members of the County this year, as well. Mr. Thakur said expenses for the Festival were very high; in 2019, the total expenses were somewhere around \$53,000.00 with ticket prices kept as low as possible.

Mr. Pisarski asked why Friends of India did not do a Re-grant application this year and Mr. Thakur said it was due to COVID-19 that they were unsure if the event would occur. Mr.

Pisarski explained their intent was to apply for a Re-grant next year, as to not have to ask for special request funding again. Following a series of questions from both staff and the Commission, Mr. Thakur said Friends of India Society was asking for special request funding within the neighborhood of \$3,000-4,000.00. Mr. Williams said there was no pre-assigned cap amount for special request funding, but there was \$15,000.00 in the account, plus \$10,000.00 still in contingency. Staff recommendation was to award the full \$4,000.00 ask from Friends of India Society. Mr. Thakur said he would send official invites to both the Commission members and County Commissioners. Mr. Williams said this agenda item would have to be tabled and could not receive a motion currently because Ms. Lods had lost her connection to the meeting.

Special Request – Upper Deerfield Township: Upper Deerfield Day

Mr. Williams said the Cumberland County Department of Planning, Tourism & Community affairs had had staff out at Upper Deerfield Day the previous Saturday. He said it was a great event with tons of cultural programming, including the Seabrook Educational & Cultural Center, as well as the Hidaka Drummers, in attendance. Mr. Williams said it was an important cultural event celebrating the 100th anniversary of Upper Deerfield and staff recommendation would be to support to help recoup some of the costs expended in some way. Ms. Cerda-Moreno said she and Penny Watson were in attendance and had a fantastic time there, as well! Mr. Pisarski pointed out Roy Spoltore had not indicated a specific special request amount, but Mr. Williams suggested \$2,000.00, unless the Commission wanted to award a higher amount. Following a brief period of discussion amongst staff and the Commission, it was decided a vote would be done via email because a quorum was not met within the meeting space. Mr. Pisarski said both this and the previous agenda item could be memorialized at the next month's meeting.

Special Request – Bridgeton Main Street Association: Cinco de Mayo

Mr. Williams introduced Gil Walter, a volunteer from the Bridgeton Main Street Association, and Rosalinda Garcia, the chairperson of their Cinco de Mayo Committee and Vice President of Bridgeton Main Street Association. Ms. Garcia said Bridgeton Main Street was a grantee for their Cinco de Mayo celebration in the past years. Ms. Garcia & Mr. Walter said Bridgeton Main Street was requesting a \$5,000.00 sponsorship. Following a brief period of discussion amongst the attendees, the Commission, and staff, staff kindly asked that Ms. Garcia & Mr. Walter temporarily excuse themselves from the meeting space. Mr. Pisarski suggested they not exceed what was provided to Friends of India (\$4,000.00) for Bridgeton Main Street. Mr. Pisarski said the \$4,000.00 award amounts could be confirmed via email and memorialized at the next meeting. A Tourism Advisory Council booth would be set up at the Cinco de Mayo event.

First Quarter Budget Review

Mr. Williams said the First Quarter Budget was included within the meeting packet, but not much had come out of it yet this year. He explained some of the items had been put in but had not yet been paid out; for example, Americans for The Arts & South Jersey Cultural Alliance had been put in, but had not yet gone all the way through the system and were not reflected within the budget. Mr. Williams added the Second Quarter Budget would be a little more reflective of such ongoing/in-process expenses. Mr. Williams said he wanted to draw the Commission's attention to a number of project amounts: Teen Arts Festival, a multi-cultural art exhibit

suggested by Michael “Mike” Cagno, and The Sounds of Cumberland County music project.

2022 Cultural & Heritage Commission Officers

Mr. Williams extended his thanks to the Nominating Committee: Yogesh Thakur, Suzanne Merighi, and Marianne Lods for meeting and giving their recommendations to the Commission to replace the two open officer positions. Mr. Williams said Treasurer & Secretary were open with the passing of Olive Doss and resignation of Sharon Yoshida. The Nominating Committee had recommended Maria Cerda-Moreno to serve as Treasurer and Marianne Lods to serve as Secretary. Mr. Williams said both Mses. Cerda-Moreno & Lods had agreed to serve these positions. Mr. Williams said these officer recommendations would also be memorialized at the following month’s meeting. He thanked Mses. Cerda-Moreno & Merighi for serving!

Artist Day Special Committee

Mr. Williams said the Department was looking to do some changes and updates to their annual Artist Day In Mauricetown event. He said usually, the event was centered around the Mauricetown Historical Society with artists painting, live music, and demonstrations provided by Citizens United (CU) Maurice River. This year, they were looking to expand the event and have more programming. Mr. Pisarski said it would kind of be a combination of environmental and recreation events based on and around the Maurice River. He said staff would work with CU Maurice River & Carla Rossini to plan everything and it would still be headquartered at the Mauricetown Historical Society. Mr. Pisarski said a small events committee would be organized for this specific event and asked if anyone from the Commission would like to participate. Mr. Williams said Commission members could think about it and volunteer via email.

Pocket Park Project: Put-In-Cups

Mr. Williams made reference to a recent clean-up at a local pocket park near the Prosecutor’s Office in Downtown Bridgeton. Staff and local volunteers had cleaned up said park and now wanted to tend to the cyclone fencing surrounding it. Mr. Williams said there were pictures of the current state of the park, as well as the put-in-cups/caps staff were hoping to buy. They were looking to find a local artist, who was good with children, to help do a community art project. Mr. Williams stated staff would reach out to residents within a 4-5 block area to help try to get the youth involved to give a sense of ownership and pride. Mr. Williams was working with Public Works to replace a missing section of the cyclone fence and said the art day would not happen until the fence was repaired. Mr. Pisarski said staff would need about \$300.00 to purchase the right amount of cups and lunch supplies for the attendees of the art day event. Bob Dragotta suggested passing out flyers to students at the bus stop and Rosalinda Garcia suggested posting on a Facebook-like school app called Class Dojo. Sharon Kiefer and Linda Robinson were suggested and Mr. Williams said he would reach out to both parties.

Recap of The Teen Arts Festival 2022

Mr. Williams said Ms. Robinson did a scratch pad session at Teen Arts Festival. He added some of the break-out sessions were so cool. Mr. Williams said there were about 550 kids running around High Street in Millville participating in the arts programming. Mr. Williams said the

day's events took place nearby The Levoy Theatre, The Village On High, Hands Up Silent Theatre, The Arts & Innovation Center, and much more. He said there were sessions provided for video, painting, culinary arts, etc. Mr. Williams said, while it rained in the morning, a great time was had by all. He thanked Penny Watson for volunteering and helping out with this year's Teen Arts. Mr. Williams said he could re-send the link with pictures from the day's events for anyone who had not seen them yet. Mr. Williams said children who were able to make it to the State level would be going up to the State Teen Arts Festival, as well.

County Commissioner Liaison Reports

Ms. Merighi said she had attended the first of four get-togethers at the Millville Public Library. They were designed to reach out to the LGBTQIA+ community. She and Mr. Dragotta had attended and reported it was a percussion/drum session led by Tony Mascara, Jr. Ms. Merighi said it was a lot of fun and those in attendance seemed to thoroughly enjoy it. She said there was another such event that evening, which she might not be able to attend, but Ms. Merighi planned to attend the other events at the Millville Public Library. Mr. Dragotta said he really enjoyed the evening's events, as well, and learned a lot about percussion instruments. He had met with Kristy Whilden from Hands Up Silent Theatre and they would be holding events at The Levoy.

Other Old/New Business

Mr. Williams stated the Seabrook Buddhist Temple would be having their Cherry Blossom Festival that upcoming Saturday from 12-3:00p.m. if anyone was interested in attending. Mr. Williams was excited to attend in-person this year, as he had attended virtually the previous year. Mr. Thakur asked about the current status of his suggestion to involve college students within the promotional efforts of the Commission across social media. Mr. Pisarski explained he had no update on this matter just yet and would keep it in mind, but staff had just been bogged down with other thing. Ms. Garcia suggested a local social media influencer/YouTuber and said she would send his contact information to Mr. Williams.

Correspondence

Mr. Williams pointed out two pieces of correspondence he had included within the meeting packet purely for informational purposes for the Commission members.

Adjourn

A motion to adjourn the April 28, 2022 Cultural & Heritage Commission meeting was made by Ms. Merighi, seconded by Ms. Cerda-Moreno, and passed unanimously by the Commission. Mr. Williams invited everyone in attendance into an adjoining room for a special dance presentation from Meredith Shaw and her All That Dance Studio students.