

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY CULTURAL AND HERITAGE
COMMISSION MINUTES**

August 25, 2022

The regular meeting of the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission was held on Thursday, August 25, 2022, at 3:00p.m., via teleconference and/or in-person at The County Administration Building located in Bridgeton, NJ.

Present: Michael Cagno Robert Dragotta
Suzanne Merighi Marianne Lods
Penny Watson

Commissioner Deputy Director Pearson, Commissioner Liaison
Commissioner Antonio Romero, Commissioner Alternate

Omarey Williams, Shared Services Coordinator
Matt Pisarski, Department Head/Director
Wanda Riviera, Confidential Assistant
Matt Horowitz, Recording Secretary

Approval of Minutes – July 28, 2022

Mr. Cagno indicated, following Roll Call, that a quorum was met and would like to entertain a motion to approve the July 28, 2022 Cultural & Heritage (C&H) Commission meeting minutes. A motion to approve the July 28, 2022 meeting minutes was made by Ms. Lods, seconded by Ms. Merighi, and passed unanimously by the Commission. Ms. Watson inquired about the additional discussions on-site at Potter's Tavern and if they should be included within the minutes, but Mr. Pisarski said the problem was it was mentioned after the meeting had been adjourned and could be brought up today under the Other Old/New Businesses agenda item.

Budget Review

Mr. Pisarski said there was \$100,000.00 of unspent funds in Promo of The Arts, as well as additional unspent funds in Marketing and the Budget Line Item. Mr. Pisarski noted the expenses that had come out, so far, this year within the 2022 Actual column, including special requests, Teen Arts, and various murals. Mr. Pisarski proposed providing a supplemental award to this year's re-grantees whose primary mission was arts. Staff recommendation was providing an additional \$10,000.00 to each of these (eight) organizations: All That Dance Studio, The Barn Studio of Art, Clay College, The Cumberland Players, Gallery 50, Hands Up Silent Theatre, The Off Broad Street Players, and Vineland Regional Dance Company. Mr. Pisarski said all of these organizations would be eligible to use the money for operating costs. It would require a supplemental resolution from The County Commissioners. Omarey Williams further explained this was funding from The State Council for The Arts' Block Grant, which awarded \$365,922.00 this year and would be awarding \$365,900.00 in 2023, as well. Following a brief period of

discussion amongst staff and the Commission, a motion to award an additional \$10,000.00 each to eight arts organizations for operating expenses was made by Ms. Lods, seconded by Mr. Dragotta, and passed unanimously by the Commission.

Discussion of Upcoming Mural Projects

Mr. Williams said Bridgeton Rotary's mural was currently in-process, permits had been secured from The City of Bridgeton, and they would just need approval from the Historic Preservation group that the mural design was historically accurate to the City. Mr. Pisarski had mentioned within an email because of the additional funds, upping the typical mural awards from \$7,500.00 to \$10,000.00 (this including an additional \$2,500.00 for Rotary.) It was suggested the \$2,500.00 could go towards lighting for the mural, but it would be left up to their own discretion. Mr. Pisarski explained within the meeting packet, there were requests for two new murals: Holly City Development Corporation in Millville and Urban Canvases on The Ave in Vineland.

Ms. Lods stated the location for the Holly City Development Corporation was Glasstown Plaza and, although, the design had not yet been finalized, it would be replacing an old deteriorating mural. She said the new mural would be applied to a much more durable material, but this would ultimately be decided through the Request for Quotation (RFQ) process. Mr. Pisarski said The Ave's project would be located at The Boulevards on the Northern side opposite of the existing Veterans mural on Landis Avenue. It would be children-oriented and Russell "Russ" Swanson and his staff were hoping to make it interactive for photo opportunities for visitors. A motion to approve an additional \$22,500.00 total to allot towards murals for Holly City Development Corporation, The Ave, and Bridgeton Rotary was made by Mr. Dragotta, seconded by Ms. Watson, and passed unanimously by the Commission.

Discussion of Annual Writing Competition

Mr. Williams said he had included the Cumberland County Writing Competition flyer now available on the County's website, as well as the Annual Writing Contest Guidelines. It had already been submitted to Millville and Mr. Williams said it would have to be submitted to other local schools, as well. Stories would be due by September 23, 2022 and staff were hoping to get a published anthology printed up with the Top 20 submissions. Mr. Dragotta mentioned getting his associate Greg D'Alessandro, the CEO of Weekly World News, involved in some capacity. Mr. Cagno suggested reaching out to private, home schooled, and technical education school students of high school age for the competition, as well. Commissioner Donna Pearson suggested sending out hard copies of flyers and information to the participating schools, too.

Discussion of Annual Music Compilation (The Sounds of Cumberland County)

Mr. Williams said the flyer for The First Annual The Sounds of Cumberland County Music Compilation was included within the meeting packet, as well, along with an informational fact sheet and timeline roll-out plan. Staff were looking for 15-18 tracks from Cumberland County-based artists and local musicians. Mr. Williams stated submissions would be due in by September 30, 2022 and that details would be released to the public the following morning. Mr. Pisarski added the waiver had been reviewed and approved with County legal counsel. Mr. Williams said the musical submissions could be used for a wide variety of County purposes.

Matt Horowitz said each artist would be given a batch of the final printed compilation. Mr. Williams said the music compilation would be available for download online and CD's would be at future County events. Mr. Dragotta suggested holding a Sounds of Cumberland County concert could be held down the line, as well. The Commission approved the release of the music compilation flyer and information that had been provided.

Discussion of Special Request Grant Program

Mr. Pisarski stated Commission member Karen Barnett had recently given some feedback and would like a sub-committee to be established to look at reporting standards for special requests. Ms. Barnett's concern was that special requests were too easy and vague. Mr. Pisarski said he was not opposed to a sub-committee to further examine this; however, he felt the whole purpose of the special request program was to serve as a steppingstone for organizations to move into the re-grant process. Commissioner Pearson agreed with Ms. Barnett's viewpoint and thought it was a good idea. Mr. Cagno said if this would be done for the special requests, it would have to be done for the regular organizations receiving re-grants, as well.

Mr. Pisarski suggested staff could take a closer look at the guidelines and come up with recommendations for next month. Mr. Williams said the main thing from his perspective was maintaining reporting to the funder(s). Mr. Pisarski said there was often a lot of hand-holding from staff to help get some of these organizations to successful programming, especially, culturally-diverse organizations. Commissioner Pearson said she would be more than happy to serve on a sub-committee, if staff decided to do so and needed her help. Mr. Pisarski said, ideally, for special requests, he would want additional itemized detail on the use of the funds, how they marketed the event, and post-event, to see attendance figures.

Discussion of Americans for The Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 Project

Mr. Williams said The Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 (AEP6) Project survey was included within the meeting packet. Staff would be working along with all of their partners to ensure these surveys were being completed at all of the Department's upcoming events. They would have up until May 31, 2023 to get all of the required surveys fully completed. Mr. Williams said the surveys could be done in either hard copy or digitally. Last time, the Department did the AEP6 survey, Mr. Pisarski said staff worked in concert with WheatonArts and would work with such anchor institutions this time, as well. He mentioned he would reach out directly to WheatonArts, The Landis Theater, The Levoy Theatre, Gallery 50, and The Bay Atlantic Symphony. Mr. Pisarski said the surveys would have to be done in-person and elements such as QR codes and door prizes could not be utilized to achieve survey completion according to guidelines from Washington, D.C. Multiple ideas were suggested from the Commission members as to how to help complete the AEP6 surveys.

Discussion of The Website

Mr. Williams explained staff would be working with George Joyce at Joyce Media to start integrating the Explore Cumberland website with the CumberlandNJArt.org website's information, podcasts, grant information, the Cultural & Heritage Events Calendar, etc. Mr. Williams said Joyce Media, who had done the County Clerk's website, as well as other

municipal and local websites, had been recently selected as the vendor. He suggested checking out Joyce Media's website to see examples of their work in the meantime. Mr. Dragotta suggested doing a specific website for out-of-County guests to help visitors get around and meet their needs. Ultimately, Mr. Williams said the website would encompass arts and culture, tourism, and recreation all into one cohesive site to start off the New Year in 2023.

Discussion of Grant Writing Workshop

Mr. Williams said the annual Grant Writing Workshop would be held on September 8, 2022 from 6-8:30p.m. and had included the flyer within the meeting packet. He thanked the Riverfront Renaissance Center for The Arts (RRCA) for being their host once more. Mr. Williams said he would additionally bring up the AEP6 survey, as well as the guidelines for the Arts & History Block Grants to those in attendance for the workshop. All of the current grantees, as well as four additional new organizations had been invited. Mr. Williams urged the Commission members to send out the information and flyer to anyone else they would think of, as well.

Discussion of A Day Along The Maurice River (Artist Day)

Mr. Williams said the A Day Along The Maurice River flyer was included at the end of the meeting packet. He explained this was a fantastic arts-based event, but over the last couple years, attendance had been a little bit lighter than staff had hoped. So, this year, they were joining forces with Citizens United (CU) Maurice River to offer trail walks, a speaker series, a historic house tour, and some arts and crafts elements for children. Mr. Williams said there would be paid advertising and promotional efforts. Marianne Lods offered to help out at the booth.

C& H Commissioner Reports

Ms. Merighi stated she had attended the programming on July 30, 2022 held at the Cumberland County Library. It was American Historical theatre production on Phillis Wheatley, the first African-American published poet. Ms. Merighi said it was top-notch. She added there would be another program at the Library on Saturday, September 17th at 2:00p.m. with Langston Hughes and Edgar Allan Poe on October 22nd just in time for Halloween. Mr. Cagno said the Greenwich Tea Burning Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, who would have their event on October 22nd. He was working with them on a press release and had given them all of his media contacts to utilize and trying to incorporate Stockton University in one way or another.

County Commissioner Liaison Reports

Commissioner Pearson had recently attended two festivals the previous weekend, which were both very nice! She said Mr. Williams and staff in attendance were doing a fantastic job manning the booths and tables at such events. Commissioner Pearson said the next upcoming event was the Overdose Awareness event to be held at the County Fairgrounds on Wednesday, August 31st starting at 6:00p.m., as well as Unity Day on September 3rd in Bridgeton. Commissioner Romero posed a question to Messrs. Pisarski & Williams concerning the funding for the Festival Puertorriqueno. Mr. Pisarski thoroughly explained the background and qualifiers of the two separate special request and re-grant funding/award programs.

Planning Department Update

Mr. Pisarski said the calendar of events for the coming weeks was very full and Departmental staff would be attending most events between the end of August through October. Mr. Pisarski stated there would be many opportunities to get the required AEP6 surveys filled out. Mr. Williams reminded everyone to check the website, as the Calendar of Events was being continually updated and was extremely full. He asked that they email him any additional events.

Other Old/New Business

Ms. Watson said during last month's visit to Potter's Tavern, one of the items that came up was that it would be great to attain an access easement to make the property handicapped-accessible. Ms. Watson mentioned utilizing the parking lot of what was once The Hillcrest Tavern. She added the roof did not look as bad as they had previously thought. Mr. Pisarski clarified the County owned Potter's Tavern and was working to help restore and maintain the property and the neighboring grounds and pocket park. Ms. Watson additionally mentioned Helga Merits' documentary film about Seabrook and that she could apply for up to \$25,000.00 from the New Jersey Historic Commission. Ms. Merits was trying to raise roughly \$100,000.00 for her film. It was suggested the Commission could help promote and premiere the film once it was completed.

Adjourn

Mr. Cagno asked for one final motion: a motion to adjourn the August 25, 2022 Cultural & Heritage Commission meeting. A motion to adjourn the August 25, 2022 Cultural & Heritage meeting was made by Mr. Dragotta, seconded by Ms. Watson, and passed unanimously by the Commission. Mr. Williams thanked everyone for the attendance.