

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY CULTURAL AND HERITAGE
COMMISSION MINUTES**

August 26, 2021

The regular meeting of the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission was held on Thursday, August 26, 2021 at 4:00p.m., via teleconference.

Present: Suzanne Merighi Maria Cerda-Moreno
 Yogesh Thakur Marianne Lods
 Michael Cagno Sharon Yoshida
 Robert Dragotta Penny Watson
 Olive Doss

Commissioner Pearson

Omarey Williams, Shared Services Coordinator
Matt Horowitz, Recording Secretary

Guests: Joe Zaccaria, GIS Specialist, III

Approval of Minutes – July 29, 2021

With one correction suggested by Sharon Yoshida, Marianne Lods made a motion to move to accept the July 29, 2021 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Michael Cagno and passed unanimously by the Commission.

Discussion of Annual Writing Competition

Omarey Williams introduced Joe Zaccaria, the GIS Specialist within his department. Messrs. Williams & Zaccaria had birthed an idea for an annual writing competition inspired by the lack of representation for creative writing within the County arts system, as well as the Teen Arts Festival. Mr. Williams said the proposed idea would be for a bi-annual writing competition: one in the fall based on either a place or “local legend” in Cumberland County, and another in the spring involving poetry or non-fiction writing. Mr. Williams, also, mentioned the idea of possibly joining forces with the local school districts for said short story competitions. The Commission members agreed it was a great idea and wondered why they had not organized such events in the past.

Mr. Zaccaria mentioned there would be different age categories, tentatively spanning from middle school through 18+/adult. Robert Dragotta mentioned the Bridgeton Public Library sponsored a similar writing competition within the last year and had a book full of submissions from high school and middle school students published. Mr. Dragotta said he possessed copies of the published book and could send them to Mr. Williams and any interested Commission members. Mr. Williams explained the competitions would be launched in 2022 and was still an early in-progress idea. Amongst conversation, it was mentioned to produce some sort of

published anthology, accept bilingual submissions, produce bilingual publications, choose judges, and produce a digital/online-accessible version. It was decided Messrs. Williams & Zaccaria and County staff would investigate the idea(s) a bit further and report back to the Commission. Sharon Yoshida suggested researching for plagiarism within submissions.

Discussion of Annual Music Compilation

Mr. Williams explained he and Matt Horowitz had recently come up with an idea for a music compilation entitled ‘The Sounds of Cumberland County’ based around local musicians, bands, and artists. Mr. Williams stated it would be a musical release (CD) boasting 15-20 tracks from Cumberland County-based artists of any genre with no more than three songs per genre/style. Mr. Horowitz explained the department was looking for new musical talent to play County events, which helped spawn this compilation idea. He said the CDs could come packaged in eco-friendly cardboard sleeves and they would like to upload the compilation digitally (for free,) if at all possible, as well as the County website. Mr. Horowitz mentioned any sales raised from digital platform streams could be donated back into the Cultural & Heritage Trust Account. Mr. Dragotta suggested some of the submissions could be lyrics/could be poetry and both the writing competition and music compilation could benefit. Mr. Williams added they were really looking to give great exposure to Cumberland County-based musical artists. The Commission members thought this was a great idea, as well, and urged Messrs. Williams & Horowitz to proceed with their idea. A handful of Commission members said they would send names and contacts to Mr. Williams.

Discussion of Summer Plein Air in Bridgeton – August 28, 2021

Mr. Williams stated that the upcoming Saturday, August 28, 2021, would be the Summer Plein Air Artist drop-off deadline. Included within each Commission members’ meeting packet was the event flyer, which had also been sent out and posted on Facebook with a significant amount of positive responses. Mr. Williams added that Matt Pisarski would be present at Gallery 50 for the artist drop-off and the awards reception/presentation would be held on Friday, September 3, 2021 at 6:00p.m. He invited all of the Commission members and County Commissioners to attend, if they were available. Ms. Merighi inquired about the required framing and matting for the artists’ newly created pieces of artwork and Mr. Williams said it was no problem for the artists in attendance at the Winter Plein Air he had attended the previous year.

Discussion of Grant Writing Workshop – September 9, 2021

Mr. Williams explained the Grant Writing Workshop would be held on Thursday, September 9, 2021 at 6:00p.m. He extended a huge thank you to Ms. Lods for hosting the event at the Renaissance Riverfront Center for The Arts (RRCA) in Millville. Mr. Williams was hoping to record the workshop and upload it to the Internet soon after the event. Mr. Williams added the applications would be due on October 15, 2021 and were currently available up on the Cultural & Heritage website under “Grants” with funding available for grantees and additional parties, as well. Mr. Williams thanked Ms. Lods for spreading it around to new parties throughout Millville. Mr. Williams explained he would reach out to past grantees, such as the Vineland Historical & Antiquarian Society. It was further explained Matt Pisarski would be leading this workshop.

Discussion of Mauricetown Artist Day – September 11, 2021

Mr. Williams explained this would be his first year being able to attend Mauricetown Artist Day, which he was very excited about. He added the department would have Citizens United (CU) Maurice River out at the event, who will be doing their programming. The event would also feature The Snake Brothers, Steve Byrne, Jim Albertson, and at least 12 artists the day-of. Mr. Williams had recently received a tour of the facilities thanks to Carol Perrelli. He invited the Commission members to Artist Day, although, knew there were many events planned for September 11th and the Commission members/Commissioners would be very busy.

County Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Pearson simply wanted to extend her thanks to Messrs. Pisarski & Williams and everyone behind-the-scenes with the Cultural & Heritage Commission for their continued help and support with the Prince Hall event. Commissioner Pearson explained the County had come up with the idea for an Underground Railroad tour and people planning to attend were very excited. Commissioner Pearson invited the Commission members and their families to attend the Prince Hall event (sponsored in conjunction with the City of Bridgeton) to be held at the Bridgeton Riverfront, as well as various events to be held all over the City.

Liaison Reports

Mr. Dragotta mentioned he had spoken to the staff at Gallery 50 and due to COVID-19, they had been struggling to maintain volunteers. Because of this, their hours of operation were going to be cut. Mr. Dragotta explained Sharon Kiefer was going to be submitting a budget to the Cultural & Heritage Commission. Messrs. Williams & Pisarski both shared they had recently spoken with Ms. Kiefer in reference to this issue. Ms. Lods shared there was a new non-profit to be opening soon in Millville on High Street called Hands Up Silent Theater. Ms. Lods explained they teach through American sign language children who are deaf or hearing-impaired about music, dance, choreography, etc. and put on musical plays annually. Mr. Williams added he was excited to help this new non-profit apply!

Other Old/New Business

Ms. Merighi asked if Mr. Williams had heard anything back from Christopher “Chris” Shrum regarding the Long Range Plan, to which Mr. Williams explained not yet. However, Mr. Williams stated he would be following up with Mr. Shrum, via email, following the meeting’s adjournment. It was assumed Mr. Shrum had yet to respond due to “summer vacation.”

Correspondence

Mr. Williams apologized to the Commission, as they had received a post card from Kelly Miletta, who was the Third-Place finisher in the Cumberland County On Canvas event, but it seemed that it was not contained within the meeting packet. Mr. Williams said he would send it out to the Commission, via email.

Adjourn

Ms. Merighi stated, with nothing else to tend to on the agenda, she would like to entertain one final motion. Thus, a motion to adjourn the August 26, 2021 Cultural & Heritage Commission meeting was made by Ms. Dragotta, seconded by Mr. Cagno, and passed unanimously by the Commission. Ms. Merighi thanked everyone in attendance and stated she loved hearing all of these new, great ideas.