

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY CULTURAL AND HERITAGE  
COMMISSION MINUTES**

**January 27, 2022**

The regular meeting of the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission was held on Thursday, January 27, 2022, at 3:00p.m., via teleconference and/or in-person at Gallery 50, Inc.

|                 |                    |                 |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Present:</b> | Michael Cagno      | Robert Dragotta |
|                 | Sharon Yoshida     | Suzanne Merighi |
|                 | Maria Cerda-Moreno | Penny Watson    |
|                 | Yogesh Thakur      |                 |

Commissioner Romero, Commissioner Liaison Alternate

Albert Porter, Vineland African American Community Development Corporation (VAACDC)

Omarey Williams, Shared Services Coordinator

Matt Pisarski, Department Head/Director

Wanda Riviera, Confidential Assistant

**Approval of Minutes – November 18, 2021**

Chairperson Michael Cagno mentioned the recent sudden passing of Commission member Olive Doss, who would be dearly missed. Mr. Cagno asked for a moment of silence in Ms. Doss' memory. Mr. Cagno asked for approval of the November 18, 2021, meeting minutes as presented. A motion to approve the November 18, 2021, Cultural & Heritage Commission meeting minutes was made by Suzanne Merighi, seconded by Robert Dragotta, and passed unanimously by the Commission.

**Welcome Commissioner Donna Pearson & Commissioner Antonio Romero as Liaisons**

Mr. Cagno welcomed back Deputy Commissioner Donna Pearson and newly elected Commissioner Antonio Romero as liaisons to the Commission. He thanked Commissioner Romero for his attendance and welcomed him to the Commission.

**Grantee Spotlight- Gallery 50, Inc.**

Mr. Cagno introduced Gallery 50 director Sharon Kiefer, the host for the afternoon meeting. Ms. Kiefer welcomed the Commission and was honored to have them in attendance. She thanked everyone for their support of the Gallery through the COVID-19 Pandemic. She stated the entries, including the winners, from the 4-color Winter Plein Air competition were on display around them. Mr. Cagno encouraged the Commission members to view the exhibit on display after the meeting.

**Special Request – Vineland African American Community Development Corporation**

Mr. Williams introduced and welcomed Albert Porter from the Vineland African American Community Development Corporation (VAACDC). Mr. Porter introduced the VAACDC's CEO, Reverend Scott, who was also present, via phone. Rev. Scott briefly explained the VAACDC's mission, purpose, and community-based goals. Mr. Porter then explained they were seeking out special request funding for their upcoming Dr. King Program Breakfast and Leading Men & Leading Women Gala events. Mr. Williams stated, due to his inexperience, he did not know an organization, such as the VAACDC, could split their grant request into two separate applications, and told Mr. Porter to submit it as one single application. Mr. Williams had since learned it might be better packaged as two separate applications and urged Mr. Porter to appear before the Commission for a special request. Matt Pisarski clarified that the re-grant was awarded under History and the VAACDC events would fall under Arts. Mr. Porter said he was asking for \$4,000.00 on behalf of the VAACDC primarily for performance costs. Following a brief period of discussion amongst Messrs. Williams & Pisarski and the Commission members, a motion was made by Marianne Lods to award \$4,000.00 to the Vineland African American Community Development Corporation. It was seconded by Ms. Merighi and passed unanimously by the Commission.

### **2021 Annual Report**

Mr. Williams briefly mentioned the 2021 Annual Report included information about the Long-range Plan, increases to Arts and History grants, programming held throughout the year, social media changes and upgrades, and financials. It was mentioned the financials were very hard to read and Mr. Williams said he would review and clarify that area. Mr. Pisarski said the 2021 Annual Report would be part of a Departmental Report to be presented to the County Commissioners. The Commission commended Messrs. Williams & Pisarski on a job well done. Maria Cerda-Moreno asked if the QR codes for the historical sites signage are currently working, to which Mr. Pisarski said, "yes." However, if the County website were moved to ExploreCumberlandNJ.com (mentioned within the 2022 Work Plan), the QR code stickers/decals on the signs would have to be updated and re-installed. Mr. Cagno inquired if staff were doing insight data on a month-to-month, yearly, etc. basis and Mr. Pisarski said they started tracking on both Facebook & Instagram.

### **2022 Work Plan**

Mr. Williams explained the 2022 Work Plan highlighted goals such as further developing the departmental supply of marketing images and participating in the Americans for The Arts: Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 Study. Yogesh Thakur mentioned working with either local high school or college students to create Reels, videos, stories, etc. to help promote the Commission on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, etc., as part of a competition. Mr. Pisarski explained, through the Tourism Advisory Council & Recreation Commission, the County was recently able to engage with the New Jersey Film Commission about potential filming locations throughout Cumberland County. Mr. Pisarski had been in direct contact with executive director Joe Marra.

### **Discussion of 2022 Eagle Festival**

Mr. Pisarski explained that, unfortunately again, Eagle Fest had gone virtual. It would be a

hybrid event like last year, with presentations all-virtual through the Citizens United website and in-person trail walks outside, as well as a few staffed viewing sites. Mr. Pisarski added East Point Lighthouse would be open and the Bayshore Center at Bivalve would be holding their Souper-fest. It was more or less, the same programming, aside from the Firehall and interior exhibits. Mr. Pisarski stated the second page of the Eagle Fest flyer showcased discounts at local hotels for participants attending the event.

### **C&H Commissioner Reports**

Ms. Merighi explained she was assigned to both the Cumberland County & Millville Public Libraries. Cumberland County's Exploring the Arts programming would not be starting until the summer and Millville was reaching out to the LGBTQIA+ community for joint programming. Mr. Cagno shared All That Dance Studio were moving their Miss Cumberland County Pageant to March 12, 2022, and would soon be re-vamping their website and upping their social media presence. All That Dance were preparing for their 21<sup>st</sup> annual recital, which would be "Anything Goes." Mr. Cagno said the Puerto Rican Action Committee (PRAC) of Southern New Jersey were hosting programming in September at The Levoy Theatre and wanting to develop a small museum dedicated to Puerto Rican heritage. Mr. Cagno added the Greenwich Tea Burning said their project would not launch until November 2022, but they would keep him updated.

### **County Commissioner Liaison Reports**

Mr. Cagno welcomed Commissioner Romero to the Cultural & Heritage Commission. Commissioner Romero said he was happy to have been assigned to the Commission and had a strong personal connection to the Latino community. He suggested adding the Charlesworth to the list of hotels for Eagle Fest attendees next year, as to not leave anyone out. Commissioner Romero suggested Mr. Cagno mention to Mr. Padilla at PRAC to include the historical heritages of other members of the Latino community from across the County within the proposed museum.

### **Planning Department Update**

Mr. Pisarski mentioned the surveys on the tables within the meeting space and indicated the County owns Potter's Tavern, which was directly across from the Courthouse in Bridgeton. He stated adjacent to Potter's Tavern, there was a mini park, both of which were managed by the Cumberland County Historical Society. Mr. Pisarski asked for recommendations from the commission relative to maintenance of the sandstone wall being done while making the mini park/deck space more impactful for the community. He also asked for ideas for garnering more attention and community interest in the mini park. Mr. Pisarski suggested a sculpture garden and asked the Commission to think about it, as this item would remain on the meeting agendas for a few months until a decision was made. It was mentioned Potter's Tavern was also known for being the location of New Jersey's first newspaper, The Plain Dealer, which could be worked into the display somehow.

### **Other Old/New Business**

Penny Watson shared that she knew of an architectural historian in Rhode Island who had started a project cataloging the location of every establishment within The Green Book. Ms. Watson

mentioned the current location of Miss Inez Children's House on Bridgeton/Millville Pike (once known as The Ram's Inn) was one such location within Cumberland County. Miss Watson was doing some of her own research on the property but asked for the Commission's help in locating a good photograph of the old Ram's Inn. Mr. Williams suggested there were several local historical Facebook Groups to contact.

### **Correspondence**

Mr. Pisarski explained there was currently work being done on the bridge near Bostwick Lake and the Cultural & Heritage Commission was a commenting party on such matters handled by the State Historic Preservation office. Richard Grubb & Associates had identified a potential historic resource nearby and would be doing an architectural survey and analysis. Additionally, Mr. Cagno mentioned correspondence from Preservation New Jersey was included within the meeting packet thanking the Commission for their membership on behalf of Mr. Pisarski.

### **Adjourn**

Mr. Williams explained he and staff were playing it by ear, by quarter, but the plan was to again meet in-person next month, as well. February's meeting would be held at The Millville Army Air Field and The Boys & Girls Club in March. A motion to adjourn the January 27, 2022, Cultural & Heritage Commission meeting was made by Mr. Dragotta, seconded by Ms. Merighi, and passed unanimously by the Commission. Mr. Cagno thanked everyone for their attendance.