

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY CULTURAL AND HERITAGE
COMMISSION MINUTES****June 24, 2021**

The regular meeting of the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission was held on Thursday, June 24, 2021 at 4:00p.m., via teleconference.

Present: Suzanne Merighi Maria Cerda-Moreno
 Marianne Lods Sharon Yoshida
 Penny Watson Olive Doss

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

Guests:**Approval of Minutes – May 27, 2021**

Matthew Pisarski made clarification that the corrections, comments, additions, edits, etc. should generally relate to the accuracy of the content of said minutes being proposed for approval. Marianne Lods made a motion to move to accept the May 27, 2021 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Penny Watson and passed unanimously by the Commission.

Discussion of Commission Long Range Plan

Omarey Williams explained that included within each Commission members' meeting packet was Chris Shrum's draft of the Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission Long-Range Plan 2021-2026. Mr. Williams explained this latest draft was made after Mr. Shrum attended last month's meeting and heard comments from the Commission. Mr. Williams explained he thought it might be prudent for the Commission and County staff to sit down and go through the Long-Range Plan together piece-by-piece (preferably, in-person or through a separate virtual meeting.) Mr. Williams mentioned various members' availabilities between July 9-12th. It was decided by the members in attendance to tentatively meet on July 12th in-person, if possible. Mr. Williams explained following the meeting, he would reach out to the full Commission, via email, to further discuss this potential meeting day and time.

Several corrections and comments were briefly discussed, which Mr. Williams assured he would send over to Mr. Shrum. As inquired by Suzanne Merighi, Mr. Pisarski explained a County-wide Cultural Master Plan was completed around 2000; although, it might not be applicable today, in regard to the Commission's impending Long-Range Plan. Ms. Lods suggested, along with the Commission's Mission Statement, she felt the new Diversity & Inclusion Statement should be included within the Plan, as well. Maria Cerda-Moreno mentioned that she wondered how the Commission stood with the Cumberland County Department of Planning, Tourism & Community Affairs regarding resources the Commission could count on being able to use.

Discussion of Americans 4 The Arts' Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 Study

Mr. Williams explained back in 2015, the Commission was able to partner with the Cumberland County Improvement Authority (now known as "The Authority") to fund their participation within the aforementioned study, which yielded many great results and useful information. He stated now would be the time to get involved for the next five years of the study. Mr. Williams explained in 2015, it had cost the Commission \$4,200.00, as well as another \$4,200.00 paid for by The Authority, for a total of \$8,500.00. However, now, it was up to \$9,000.00 and Mr. Williams had been discussing the topic with Dr. Kim Ayres at The Authority.

Mr. Williams & Dr. Ayres collectively concluded it might not be as valuable because the information would likely be skewed due to COVID-19. It might not be as accurate, if done again, and Mr. Williams further explained the 2015 data might still be very useful and relevant for the Commission's needs. Staff recommendation would be simply to forego the study this year and re-visit this matter within the next five years. Mr. Pisarski stated he would lean towards still using the 2015 data and pass on doing the study again this year. Mr. Williams said he would follow-up with The Authority to explain the Commission's position.

Discussion of NEA Local Arts Agency Subgranting Program

Mr. Williams stated this would be a tremendous opportunity for the Commission to receive another grant. He explained the Commission could receive anywhere from \$150,000-500,000.00 for said National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) American Rescue Plan Local Arts Agency Subgranting Guidelines grant to be re-granted out to local organizations. Mr. Williams explained he had signed up for a webinar to be held on June 29th to find out how to sign up for it. Mr. Williams stated he would work on the application with staff internally and have it submitted by or before the July 22, 2021 deadline. Mr. Pisarski further explained this grant would not restrict the Commission from giving money to organizations that already received direct funding from the State Council.

Discussion of Older Americans Month Exhibit & Competition

Mr. Williams made reference to two brochures contained within each Commission members' meeting packet regarding the Cumberland County Older Americans Art Exhibit & Competition. Mr. Williams explained the Competition would be held throughout the months of July, August & September and would be orchestrated in conjunction with the Cumberland County Office On Aging & Disability (OOAD.) Mr. Williams had a call into the OOAD regarding a presentation and awards ceremony and as soon as he learned more information, would pass it along to the Commission. Mr. Williams stated he would like to arrange various opportunities for the Commission members to get together and attend County events whenever possible, as COVID-19 restrictions were starting to be lifted and saw this as a great opportunity to do so. Ms. Merighi asked how exactly the event would "be held online..." as advertised. Mr. Williams stated he was unsure, as well, but would attain further clarification and let Ms. Merighi and the Commission know as soon as possible.

Discussion of Cumberland County On Canvas – July 16, 2021

Mr. Williams explained County staff were very excited about the upcoming Cumberland County On Canvas event, for which details were currently being finalized. Mr. Williams mentioned there would be food at the reception to be held on Friday, July 16th at the Riverfront Renaissance Center for The Arts (RRCA.) He invited the Commission members to attend the gallery opening and stated he could send out posters individually to be dispersed to potential artists and participants. Beaming with excitement, Mr. Williams stated he and staff at RRCA were eagerly awaiting the event, reception, and award ceremony. Sharon Yoshida offered a suggestion to Mr. Williams, regarding the poster, to include an address, contact number, etc. for the gallery itself.

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

Mr. Williams explained, last year due to COVID-19-related restrictions, the Commission was unable to have a Summer Plein Air and just had the Winter competition, and this would be the return of the Summer event. Mr. Williams said it would be co-hosted along with Gallery 50; artists would get their medium of choice stamped on August 28th and go out and paint during the day. Mr. Williams added between 5-6:00p.m., the artists would return and turn in their pieces of art. An awards presentation would be held on Friday, September 3rd over Labor Day Weekend and the exhibit would be on display at Gallery 50 until September 25th, Mr. Williams stated.

Discussion of Mauricetown Artist Day – September 11, 2021

Mr. Williams explained this would be his first Mauricetown Artist Day (again, due to COVID-19) and he was very excited. Mr. Williams said Mr. Pisarski had told him there was a stipend offered for artists who wanted to participate. He wanted to let the Commission members know now, in case they knew of any artists, who might be interested in participating in Artist Day. Mr. Williams added he would greatly appreciate any artist contact the Commission members were willing and able to help him make through their pre-established connections.

Liaison Reports

Sharon Yoshida shared she attended the Millville Public Library Opening Ceremony dedicating their new extension (not as a liaison) and saw Ms. Merighi there in attendance, as well. Ms. Merighi added “it was a happy event.” Ms. Cerda-Moreno was at the Bayshore Center about two weeks ago and was pleasantly surprised to see so many people having such a great time there. Ms. Cerda-Moreno said there was an exhibit there that day, as well as many people preparing to take a ride on the A.J. Meerwald. Ms. Merighi stated the Festival Puertorriqueño in Vineland had been canceled again due to the pandemic. Olive Doss said she received an email from Greg Gallo at the City of Vineland regarding 14 Senior Citizen art classes that had been scheduled. Mr. Williams stated Robert Dragotta was unable to attend today’s meeting, but emailed his liaison reports saying Gallery 50 was continuing their First Friday events. Mr. Dragotta shared last month, they hosted the Bay Girls’ annual show. Center for Historic American Building Arts (CHABA) were continuing to try to find a replacement for Dr. Flavia Alaya to ensure their succession plan and the Bridgeton Nail House was hoping to re-open soon, Mr. Williams shared on Mr. Dragotta’s behalf.

Tourism Advisory Council/Recreation Commission Comments – Kimberly Gauntt

Mr. Williams said Kim Gauntt was unable to attend the Commission meeting, but explained she conveyed there were not any pressing updates to share with the Commission members regarding the Tourism Advisory Council/Recreation Commission.

Other Old/New Business

Ms. Lods shared, regarding the Tourism Advisory Council/Recreation Commission Comments, the annual Vacationer magazine was published and distributed by Ms. Gauntt & Mr. Williams, as well as many being direct mailed to those who wanted to visit the County's Southern Shore region. Ms. Merighi inquired about the recent Juneteenth event, which Mr. Williams said he did attend and had plenty of pictures he would be happy to share with the Commission. Mr. Williams shared it was a great, fun, educational, and well-attended event, as well as many speakers. Ms. Doss asked Ms. Watson if she had heard anything else about from Andy Urban at Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center and both responded they had not. Ms. Watson & Merighi shared they had been "hitting the pavement," so to say, doing research on the burial grounds project on Back Neck Road. Ms. Merighi stated she was looking for another presumed African-American burial ground located off of North Lincoln Avenue/Wheat Road in Vineland, but was going to wait for better weather in the fall to explore. Mr. Williams offered The Cumberland County Department of Planning, Tourism & Community Affairs' drone, if need be.

Correspondence

Mr. Williams made mention of a short letter from Lisa Jester on behalf of The Millville Army Air Field Museum (MAAFM) expressing their appreciation for the donation from the Commission to help with their Feasibility Study. Mr. Williams thanked the Commission members for their donation to the MAAFM, as well.

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 June 24, 2021 Cultural & Heritage Commission meeting was made by Ms. Lods, seconded by Ms. Watson, and passed unanimously by the Commission. Ms. Merighi wished everyone a very happy and safe Fourth of July holiday.