

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY CULTURAL AND HERITAGE
COMMISSION MINUTES****March 24, 2022**

The regular meeting of the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission was held on Thursday, March 24, 2022, at 3:00p.m., via teleconference and/or in-person at The Boys & Girls Club of Cumberland County.

Present: Michael Cagno Robert Dragotta
Suzanne Merighi Marianne Lods
Penny Watson Yogesh Thakur
Karen Barnett

Commissioner Deputy Director Pearson, Commissioner Liaison

Chris Volker, The Boys & Girls Club Executive Director
Joe DeLuca, The Cumberland County Historical Society
Dorothy DeLuca
Omarey Williams, Shared Services Coordinator
Matt Pisarski, Department Head/Director
Wanda Riviera, Confidential Assistant

Approval of Minutes – February 24, 2022

Omarey Williams said he wanted to welcome the Commission's newest member, Karen Barnett, joining the meeting online. Chairman Michael Cagno asked for approval of the February 24, 2022 meeting minutes. A motion to approve the February 24, 2022 Cultural & Heritage Commission meeting minutes was made by Robert Dragotta, seconded by Marianne Lods, and passed unanimously by the Commission.

Grantee Spotlight – The Boys & Girls Club of Cumberland County

Mr. Williams thanked their host for the afternoon Executive Director Chris Volker and The Boys & Girls Club. Mr. Volker said the Club had been active for 18 years having been housed at multiple locations, but moved to their current location in 2007. Mr. Volker explained this site and another had murals funded by the Cultural & Heritage Commission. He thanked the Commission for their funding for the past decade or more. Mr. Volker mentioned one extremely talented student named Najee Wilson, who had unfortunately passed away in 2016. Mr. Volker said she took singing lessons at the Club and was cast in a movie called Standing Ovation: Dance Sing Dream. Her son now attends The Boys & Girls Club of Cumberland County, as well. He mentioned The Boys & Girls Club doing a Claymation/visual arts program with the funding received from the Commission. Mr. Volker said they hoped to soon open up a Club in Seabrook. Mr. Pisarski mentioned he had heard the Club would be doing some LGBTQIA+ outreach. Mr. Volker said there would be an upcoming Trans Awareness Day and invited the Commission members, County Commissioners, and staff to attend the event.

Historic Signs for Charles E. Hires & Gov. Richard Howell

Mr. Williams introduced Joe DeLuca from The Cumberland County Historical Society, who wanted to speak about some historical figures within the County they thought should be memorialized with adequate signage. Mr. DeLuca discussed Richard Howell, the third Governor of New Jersey, a seven-time Governor. He lived on a farm existing right near the line in-between Shiloh Borough/Stow Creek Township. Secondly, Mr. DeLuca mentioned Charles E. Hires, born on a farm in Stow Creek, who invented a formula for root beer, started Hires Root Beer, and was a close friend of Dr. Thomas Bramwell Welch. Mr. DeLuca said the Historical Society thought it would be great to have signage commemorating both Richard Howell & Charles E. Hires' connections to the County.

Other famous persons with County connections Mr. DeLuca mentioned were Major League Baseball players Leon Allen "Goose" Goslin & Reuben "Rube" Henry Oldring (both with signs at the firehouse in Roadstown,) Deborah Swiney, Thomas Whitaker Trencher, Sylvia Beach, James Galanos, Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus "L.Q.C." Elmer, and Elias Seeley. Mr. DeLuca suggested a brochure/map with locations for all of the aforementioned people. It was asked if Mr. DeLuca was looking for something like the New Jersey Traveler Podcast/QR code signs. Mr. Pisarski suggested some sort of online resource cataloging said historical figures or starting a separate podcast program. It was suggested getting local Societies involved and rolling out such a project in phases with both online and physical components.

2022 Teen Arts Festival

Mr. Williams explained Teen Arts Festival was returning once more this year and would be in-person again. It would be hosted at The Levoy Theatre on April 6, 2022 from 9:00a.m. until 2:00p.m. Mr. Williams said there would be multiple opportunities for the Commission members to get involved, if they so wished: they were actively looking for both volunteers to help facilitate classes on the day-of and guides to help show participants around the City of Millville. Mr. Williams said he would have more information following a meeting the following day, but 557 students were expected to attend this year's Teen Arts festivities. There would also be a celebration at The Levoy the day after Teen Arts for students who would be moving on to States. Mr. Pisarski suggested following Mr. Williams' meeting, sending an email out to the County Commissioners requesting their attendance, as well.

State Historic Preservation Office Grant Opportunity

Mr. Pisarski said he had received a call from Andrea Tingey at the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) alerting him of a new grant opportunity that would soon be opening. It would be for up to \$400,000.00 specifically for "survey work." Mr. Pisarski explained "survey work" would be if someone thought they had resources related to a particular history, but were unsure of what they were or where they were located; such a survey would be done first to research that period of history within a certain geographic area to help identify physical resources associated with it. Ms. Tingey had recommended Mr. Pisarski and the Commission actively prepare two projects ahead of time for the grant to submit ASAP once it opened. Mr. Pisarski suggested 20th Century Hispanic heritage in Cumberland County and the Underground Railroad/African-

American Civil Rights through the 1960-70's (including The Rams Inn listed within The Green Book.) A brief discussion amongst Mr. Pisarski and select Commission members ensued.

Penny Watson suggested Roosevelt Park, one of the first senior citizen communities, with involvement from Leon Henderson, Eleanor Roosevelt, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It was added this project would be better intended for a historic district, rather than thematic for the grant. Robert Dragotta mentioned how his great-uncle Philip P. Nutt spoke about the local Native American tribes within his book published back in 1935 and a potential connection to the African-American population/The Underground Railroad.

Community Art Day at 142 Vine St. Park

Mr. Williams explained there was a little County-owned mini-park that had fallen into disrepair on Vine Street. He said the Recreation Commission in concert with Bridgeton's City-wide Clean-up Day had decided to clean up this small park. Mr. Pisarski had come up with an idea for a community art project involving the cyclone fencing and colored plastic caps. He suggested the Commission purchase some of the colored caps, hire an artist, and get local children involved to help decorate the fence and spruce up the neighborhood. It would be an interim solution until the Commission & the County decided what to ultimately do with said mini-park. Mr. Pisarski stated staff would do research on pricing for the colored fence caps. Mr. Pisarski asked for suggestions of artists who were known to be good working with kids.

C&H Commissioner Reports

Mr. Dragotta mentioned Hands Up Silent Theatre, as well as Scott Brock, and a group of co-producers making a "zombie wedding" movie to be filmed within both Cumberland & Cape May Counties. One of the co-producers wanted to feature a hearing-impaired dance troupe number within the film. Mr. Williams offered up a contact for Kristy Whilden at Hands Up Silent Theatre. Ms. Watson said she had spoken to Nancy Patterson Tidy at East Point Lighthouse who mentioned events with The Easter Bunny & Santa Claus, as well as Bay Day, National Lighthouse Day, The New Jersey Lighthouse Challenge, and a Native American Festival with the Commission providing funds for live music for several of these events. Ms. Watson indicated Ms. Patterson Tidy voiced concerns about food trucks having difficulty attaining permits through the County Health Department for various events. Mr. Pisarski added Ms. Patterson Tidy had recently been appointed to the Tourism Advisory Council and could bring up this issue there. Ms. Watson said Ms. Patterson Tidy was currently archiving historical photographs of The Lighthouse. Ms. Merighi stated she would be attending a program that evening at The Millville Public Library focusing on the LGBTQIA+ community. It would be an arts program and Ms. Merighi said she would report on the event at the following month's meeting. Mr. Dragotta hoped to attend the event, as well.

County Commission Liaison Reports

Deputy Director Commissioner Pearson voiced her appreciation towards the Commission for providing such a wealth of great information, as always. Commissioner Pearson explained County Administrator Kim Wood would be effectively retiring as of April 1, 2022 and Deputy Administrator Jody Hirata would be stepping up to fill Ms. Wood's spot. Commissioner Pearson

added County Comptroller Jeff Ridgway would step in as Clerk to The Board. The 2022 Health & Addictions Resource Guide had also recently been updated and published and Commissioner Pearson said she would send the Commission a copy of an email containing the Guide.

Commissioner Pearson wanted to thank Messrs. Pisarski & Williams and their staff for doing such tremendous work across the County. Commissioner Pearson said Bethel A.M.E. Church in Springtown, Greenwich (near the site of The Underground Railroad) wanted to host a Juneteenth event this year and she suggested they contact Mr. Pisarski to figure out additional details. Commissioner Pearson welcomed Karen Barnett and thanked her for graciously accepting a previously open seat on the Commission.

Planning Department Update

Mr. Pisarski said he would like to speak about Artists' Day In Mauricetown; he had recently had a meeting with Carla Rossini at Citizens United Maurice River (CU MR) and asked if they could think about expanding the scope of the event to attract a larger audience. Mr. Pisarski mentioned including the Maurice River wild and scenic life and making it more of a Maurice River-centric event. It would stay headquartered in Mauricetown, but feature multiple viewing sites on the Maurice River, trail walks combining both nature and art, East Point Lighthouse, etc. in a sense, similar to Eagle Festival. Mr. Pisarski said Ms. Rossini indicated if the Commission were willing to do so, CU MR would help to organize the trail walks, viewing platforms, and nature elements to that effect. Mr. Pisarski said monarch butterfly programming, a charter boat, The A.J. Meerwald, The Bayshore Center at Bivalve, and similar entities could be involved, as well.

Other Old/New Business

Mr. Williams indicated with Sharon Yoshida retiring and Olive Doss' recent unexpected passing, there were vacancies on the Commission, not only for membership, but on the Executive Committee/Officers. Mr. Williams, too, thanked Ms. Barnett for filling a vacant seat and asked for nominations for the Nominating Committee to help appoint members to the open seats of Secretary & Treasurer. The Nominating Committee would be Suzanne Merighi, Marianne Lods, and Yogesh Thakur, who would soon receive an email from either Mr. Williams or Mr. Pisarski.

Adjourn

Mr. Cagno asked the Commission for one final motion. A motion to adjourn the March 24, 2022, Cultural & Heritage Commission meeting was made by Ms. Lods, seconded by Mr. Dragotta, and passed unanimously by the Commission. Mr. Cagno thanked everyone for their attendance.