

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY CULTURAL AND HERITAGE  
COMMISSION MINUTES**

**September 23, 2021**

The regular meeting of the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission was held on Thursday, September 23, 2021 at 4:00p.m., via teleconference.

**Present:** Suzanne Merighi Marianne Lods  
Michael Cagno Sharon Yoshida  
Robert Dragotta Penny Watson  
Olive Doss

Commissioner Barber  
Commissioner Pearson

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

**Guests:**

**Approval of Minutes – August 27, 2021**

With one correction suggested by Sharon Yoshida, Marianne Lods made a motion to move to accept the August 27, 2021 meeting minutes, as corrected. The motion was seconded by Robert Dragotta and passed unanimously by the Commission.

**Update on Strategic Plan**

Omarey Williams explained he had reached out to Christopher “Chris” Shrum earlier in the week, who stated he planned to work on the Long Range Plan throughout the week. Mr. Williams said Mr. Shrum hoped to have it completed either by the end of that week or the beginning of the following. Mr. Williams stated that he would send the Long Range Plan to the Commission for review as soon as it is received. Mr. Williams explained he hoped to have it approved by the Commission at the next month’s meeting. Mr. Williams did convey Mr. Shrum seemed to understand the corrections, concerns, etc., that were previously discussed by him and the Commission. Ms. Merighi thanked Mr. Williams for his continued efforts and persistence regarding the Commission’s Long Rang Plan.

**Review of 2021 Grants Review Panel & Grant Writing Workshop Discussion**

Mr. Williams explained all the Grants Review Panel apart from Debbie Oglesby and Alfonzo Jimenez would return. He said they were looking for two new panelists. He also stated that a few people were being considered but would like suggestions for candidates from the

Commission. Mr. Williams asked the Commission members to send him any suggestions by the following Monday. Penny Watson asked if there were any particular areas of expertise Mr. Williams may be looking for candidates to help fill the vacancies. Mr. Williams stated a person/persons with either a financial or historical background would be an asset, as well as ethnic diversity. Ms. Merighi inquired about the approximate number of hours someone would need to commit to said panel, to which Mr. Williams explained about 10 hours or less.

### **2021 Re-grant Application Due – October 15, 2021**

Mr. Williams stated the Re-grant applications were due on October 15, 2021. He knew they had at least one new applicant in Hands Up Silent Theatre and had spoken with Pat Martinelli at Vineland Historical & Antiquarian Society, who did not re-apply last year. Mr. Williams was still looking for other organizations and asked, if anyone had any suggestions to him and he would do outreach to the appropriate parties, if applicable.

### **2021 Budget Subcommittee Appointments**

Mr. Williams explained, when last brought up in July, Mike Cagno, Suzi Merighi, and Marianne Lods had all volunteered to serve on the Subcommittee, although it had never been memorialized with an official motion. Mr. Williams requested a formal motion be made if Mses. Merighi & Lods and Mr. Cagno still agree to serve on the Subcommittee. A motion was made by Ms. Yoshida to accept the proposed slate of Michael Cagno, Suzanne Merighi, and Marianne Lods for the 2021 Budget Subcommittee. It was seconded by Ms. Watson and approved by the Commission. Mr. Williams said he would soon reach out to those newly appointed to arrange a meeting to review the budget.

### **Cohansey Riverfest Plein Air Competition - Recap**

Mr. Williams stated the Riverfest Plein Air event was great and thanked the Commissioners who were able to come out. Mr. Williams thanked the staff at Gallery 50, for putting on a great exhibition. Mr. Williams further explained the exhibition would be closing soon and suggested anyone who had not attended, please, visit the Gallery at their earliest convenience. He explained it was a great collection of art and an extremely well-organized exhibit. Ms. Merighi said she and her husband stopped by and viewed the exhibit on 9/11 and very much enjoyed the artwork, as well as the framing. Mr. Williams extended his thanks to Commission members Mses. Cerda, Watson, and Yoshida for attending the Gallery opening.

### **Artists' Day in Mauricetown - Recap**

Mr. Williams said Artists' Day In Mauricetown was a very successful event. He extended feelings of thanks to The Mauricetown Historical Society, Citizens United (CU) Maurice River, The Snake Brothers, Jim Albertson, and Steve Bryne. Mr. Williams expressed how much he enjoyed the music, happenings, and artwork painted by 10 participating artists. He thanked those on the Commission who attended Artists' Day. For the next year's event, Mr. Williams expressed that he had some ideas for marketing and promotion to help increase the event's annual attendance. Mr. Williams asked the Commission members to follow the Explore Cumberland NJ Instagram and Facebook pages for event updates and recaps. Ms. Merighi said

the Prince Hall event seemed to have been very well-attended and very well-organized and people loved the event's Underground Railroad tour.

### **County Commissioner Liaison Reports**

Commissioner Pearson shared how amazing and well-attended the Prince Hall event was, as well. Event organizers had stopped counting attendees at 1,400 with mass amounts of people in and out of the event all day long. Commissioner Pearson thanked Messrs. Williams & Pisarski, Ms. Hirata, and the Cultural & Heritage Commission for their work on the Underground Railroad component of the event. Commissioner Pearson was excited about how ecstatic those in attendance were about the Underground Railroad tours. Commissioner Pearson mentioned she had spoken with the County Commissioner Director Joe Derella about making Cumberland County a heritage destination, including the Underground Railroad.

Commissioner Barber shared that she believed 9/11 was a great day as well, with all the County-wide events, 9/11 remembrance events, a football field opening, etc. Commissioner Barber sent her thanks to Messrs. Pisarski & Williams and their staff. Commissioner Barber shared she believed the Department had had one of the most popular booths at events recently attended. Mr. Pisarski added upcoming events would include the Greenwich Craft Fair; the Hispanic Heritage Parade in Millville; the Tea Burner 5K Run & 1-mile Walk in Greenwich; the Siloam Cemetery's National Register Dedication; the Plein Air event in Millville; and with more events to follow. Mr. Pisarski asked those attending events and taking photographs to send them to him or Mr. Williams. Commissioner Barber shared that she believed the State was starting to recognize Cumberland County and that an upcoming parade would be attended by Governor Murphy. Ms. Merighi complimented the new wrap on the County Outreach bus.

### **Planning Department Update – Matt Pisarski**

Mr. Pisarski introduced Wanda Riviera, the newest member of the Department of Planning, Tourism & Community Affairs. Recently hired, Ms. Riviera would be assisting Mr. Williams with Cultural & Heritage, Tourism and Recreation. Ms. Riviera stated that she loves working with the people and she is happy to meet members of the community to share details regarding events, services, etc., which may be unfamiliar to them. Ms. Merighi welcomed Ms. Riviera on behalf of the Commissioners. Mr. Pisarski added Mr. Williams was being advanced, not only to handle Cultural & Heritage, but also Recreation & Tourism with Ms. Riviera assisting. As with everything within the Department, it would be a team effort, but Mr. Williams would be taking the lead. Members of the Commission extended their congratulations to Mr. Williams.

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

Mr. Williams indicated Robert Dragotta had reached out to him regarding the Seabrook film. In Mr. Dragotta's temporary absence, Mr. Williams explained Helga Merits was working on a film about Seabrook. They had had some difficulties completing said film and were requesting \$2,000.00 (\$500.00 for a researcher and \$1,500.00 for a local cameraperson.) Ms. Watson added some additional details, explaining Ms. Merits was unable to travel and would be doing interviews remotely with a cameraperson on-site. It was explained that several older interview subjects had already been lost due to delays because of COVID-19. A motion to approve

\$2,000,00 for Helga Merits' Seabrook film was made by Mike Cagno, seconded by Ms. Watson, and approved unanimously by the Commission.

**Adjourn**

Ms. Merighi thanked those in attendance for their participation asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion to adjourn the September 23, 2021 Cultural & Heritage meeting was made by Ms. Watson, seconded by Ms. Lods, and passed unanimously by the Commission.