

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY CULTURAL AND HERITAGE
COMMISSION MINUTES**

February 23, 2023

The regular meeting of the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission was held on Thursday, February 23, 2023, at 3:00p.m., via teleconference and/or in-person at The County Administration Building located in Bridgeton, NJ.

Present: Robert Dragotta * (November 2023)
Michael Cagno * (January 2023)
Suzanne Merighi * (November 2023)
Marianne Lods * (November 2026)
Maria Cerda-Moreno * (November 2025)
Penny Watson * (August 2025)
Karen Barnett * (August 2024)
Yogesh Thakur * (November 2026)

Commissioner Victoria Lods
Commissioner Doug Albrecht

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

Guests: Loren Dann, South Jersey Artist Collective
Danielle Cartier, D.C. Gallery & Studio

Note: Asterisk () indicates members present at the aforementioned meeting.*

Approval of Minutes – January 26, 2023

Mr. Williams indicated, following Roll Call, that a quorum was met and would like to entertain a motion to approve the January 26, 2023 Cultural & Heritage (C&H) Commission meeting minutes. Mr. Williams made note of one minor change: that Yogesh Thakur was present at the January 2023 meeting. Ms. Watson also made one more minor correction adding that each page after Page 1 was erroneously labeled as “Page 1.” A motion to approve the January 26, 2023 meeting minutes with the two corrections mentioned was made by Ms. Merighi, seconded by Ms. Watson, and passed unanimously by the Commission.

Special Request: South Jersey Artist Collective – Art for Everyone

Mr. Williams introduced Loren Dann and Danielle Cartier from the South Jersey Artist Collective (SJAC) and D.C. Gallery & Studio, respectively. Ms. Dann said the SJAC was a

collective of like-minded people banding together to help local artists get involved with their communities. Ms. Dann said last year, SJAC worked with the Gloucester County Cultural & Heritage Commission to receive a grant for “Art for Everyone”. Ms. Cartier said her studio was located on High Street and if approved, the program would serve the immediate Downtown Millville area. Ms. Dann explained it would be four classes, 25 people, and one artist, who would be paid a prep fee, a class fee, and provide money towards supplies. Ms. Cartier said she was a teacher at Stockton and Rowan Universities and is very passionate about getting the youth more involved in the arts in their immediate community. Ms. Dann said each class would get postcards printed and Facebook advertising started in March. Following a period of discussion and questioning amongst the Commission and Mses. Dann & Cartier, Mr. Williams thanked them for their Special Request submission. Mr. Williams said he would reach out about the Commission’s upcoming Grants program in the fall. It was decided that the SJAC’s Special Request would be reviewed by the Commission following the Discussion of The 2023 Budget.

Discussion of The 2023 Budget

Mr. Williams stated the Proposed 2023 Budget was included within the meeting packet and he wanted to quickly highlight a few items. Mr. Williams mentioned annual fees for the new website, the South Jersey Cultural Alliance (SJCA) for a culture connector, Facebook and Instagram boosting, the Teen Arts Festival, The Sounds of Cumberland County project, the Underground Railroad project, and the Collaborative Art project inspired by Andy Warhol/Jean-Michel Basquiat. New Initiatives would include the Poetry Trail project, the Underground Railroad project, and the Collaborative Art project. Mr. Williams further specified the Poetry Trail project would be placards throughout a nature trail, maybe, co-aligning with the Writing Competition. A motion to adopt the Proposed 2023 Budget as presented was made by Ms. Lods, seconded by Mr. Dragotta, and passed unanimously by the Commission. Mr. Williams added this approved Budget would include \$10,000.00 allotted for Special Requests.

Circling back to the South Jersey Artist Collective (SJAC’s) Special Request, Mr. Dragotta said the request would be 20% of the allotted \$10,000.00 from the Budget for Special Requests. Ms. Lods & Mr. Cagno agreed they felt it was somewhat problematic the SJAC was not located within Cumberland County even though Ms. Cartier’s D.C. Gallery & Studio was in Millville. Mr. Cagno also mentioned that Ms. Cartier was already getting funds from the Commission as a connector through the SJCA. Mr. Williams agreed with the Commission members’ qualms with the SJAC being located outside of the County, although, he felt there was a bit more leniency with it being a Special Request rather than a Re-grant application.

Ms. Watson added it was good the event(s) would be happening within Cumberland County. Ms. Merighi felt the people of Millville and surrounding areas would only benefit from said programming. It was decided that the Commission would fund one of Mses. Dann & Cartier’s classes with the prerequisite that the artist must be from Cumberland County with as many participants as possible from Cumberland, as well. Mr. Williams suggested sponsoring specifically one event with the above-mentioned specifications. A motion to allocate \$500.00 towards one of the SJAC’s classes with a Cumberland County-based artist and primarily Cumberland County participants was made by Ms. Watson, seconded by Ms. Merighi, and passed by a majority vote of 5-3 Commission members. Mr. Williams stated he would follow-up with an email to Ms. Dann & Cartier outlining the various reasons for opposition. It was agreed

that the SJAC and involved parties would have to agree to the stipulations before accepting any funds directly from the Commission. It was added that any future requests would have to go through the Re-grant program, if the organization itself was brought into Cumberland County.

Music Licensing Agreements

Mr. Williams said everything for the Local Government Music License(s) was included within the monthly meeting packet. He added Assistant County Counsel Jumba Mugwanya had done a great job with his presentation to the Commission the previous month. Mr. Williams expressed his thanks towards the Budget Committee (Mses. Cerda-Moreno & Lods and Mr. Cagno) for getting together and helping iron out the Budget. Mr. Williams stated \$6,000.00 had been allotted for Music Licensing with one costing about \$2,000.00 and \$1,700.00 for the other license. A motion to approve the Music Licensing, if the amounts came back in under the budgeted amount, was made by Mr. Cagno. It was seconded by Ms. Lods and passed unanimously by the Commission.

Discussion of The ExploreCumberland Website

Mr. Williams explained the last big item to be discussed was the website. He asked if anyone who had looked over the new website re-design had any particular comments, changes, feedback, etc. to share with the Commission. Ms. Lods said she had noticed a lot of things, but would email the specific details to Mr. Williams directly. Mr. Cagno agreed with Ms. Lods, but had some additional points he said he would email to Mr. Williams, as well. Ms. Barnett thanked Mr. Cagno & Ms. Lods for their additional information on the SJAC/D.C. Gallery and the involved parties. She also mentioned she felt the Commission should so a workshop on how to be culturally responsive to art education without biases and getting in touch with the youth. Mr. Williams asked Ms. Barnett to, please, email him some specific links to the trainers she mentioned. Ms. Barnett added she enjoyed the website and felt it was very easy to navigate.

Ms. Cerda-Moreno said she had not yet had a chance to look over the website, but would do so soon and send Mr. Williams feedback, if any. Mr. Thakur thought the website was much, much better than what the Commission had had before. He liked the color combinations, but felt the descriptions were too wordy and needed more pictures to help break everything up a little bit. Ms. Merighi enjoyed looking over the website and felt as though the photography was beautiful, which made Cumberland look so attractive and appealing. She loved the Google Maps identifications for the various cultural sites. Ms. Merighi thought it was very user-friendly, too. Ms. Watson had not looked over the website, but would do so as soon as possible and send Mr. Williams her feedback. Mr. Dragotta expressed he thought the site needed a map of where people could go to view the attractions. He wanted more information about diverse sites and areas of the County's history, especially Gouldtown and the Underground Railroad, across the new website. Mr. Dragotta felt as though the interesting, diverse history of the County needed to be identified in a stronger manner on the website. Ms. Lods mentioned the size, print, and backgrounds on the website needed more contrast to be more in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

Planning Department Update

Mr. Williams explained in Mr. Pisarski's absence, he would just quickly share that Mr. Pisarski was currently working on about four different grants; one was for a roughly \$1 million grant for an all-inclusive playground within the County under the recently passed Jake's Law. Mr. Williams shared Mr. Pisarski would also want to mention the Tourism Advisory Council was currently working on a Cumberland County Farmers' Market to be held within a storefront inside the Cumberland Mall from May through October every Saturday and Sunday.

Other Old/New Business

Mr. Dragotta briefly mentioned the correspondence from All That Dance Studio included within the meeting packet, as well as flyers from the Millville Public Library. Mr. Williams explained they were both included solely for informational purposes. Mr. Cagno thanked Mr. Williams for including the flyers he had submitted over within the meeting packet.

Adjourn

Finally, Mr. Dragotta asked for one final motion: a motion to adjourn the February 23, 2023 Cultural & Heritage Commission meeting. A motion to adjourn the February 23, 2023 Cultural & Heritage meeting was made by Ms. Merighi, seconded by Ms. Barnett, and passed unanimously by the Commission. Mr. Williams, again, thanked everyone for their continued attendance, wished them a great month, and said he would see them all in March.