

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY CULTURAL AND HERITAGE
COMMISSION MINUTES**

November 17, 2022

The regular meeting of the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission was held on Thursday, November 17, 2022, at 3:00p.m., via teleconference and/or in-person at The County Administration Building located in Bridgeton, NJ.

Present:	Michael Cagno	(January 2023)
	Robert Dragotta	(November 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)

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

Approval of Minutes – October 27, 2022

Mr. Cagno indicated, following Roll Call, that a quorum was met and would like to entertain a motion to approve the October 27, 2022 Cultural & Heritage (C&H) Commission meeting minutes. A motion to approve the October 27, 2022 meeting minutes was made by Mr. Dragotta, seconded by Ms. Merighi, and passed unanimously by the Commission.

Discussion of 2023 Re-grant Award Funding Recommendations

Mr. Cagno explained a document, as well as a revised document, was sent out by Mr. Williams detailing the 2023 Re-grant Award Funding Recommendations. Mr. Williams said 27 (an increase of three from 2022) Arts organizations had submitted applications and for History, eight (down two from 2022) applications were received. Mr. Williams said scores, synopses for each, award amounts for 2021 and 2022, the request amount for 2023, and the proposed award amounts for 2023 were provided for each organization. Mr. Williams mentioned the scoring was a little different this year when compared against years past with an overall score total being utilized now. Mr. Williams shared neighboring counties' grant review panels he had recently served on had been using 0-100 scoring systems, which he was considering putting into place for 2024.

Mr. Pisarski explained the maximum score was a 20 and a lowest score of -20 with each applicant scoring amidst a variety of categories a negative (-), a zero (0), or a plus (+). He said

this year, rather than averaging the scores, they were simply added together totaling from a 20 to -20 further detailing the meaning behind the +, 0, and - scores. Mr. Pisarski added because of an excess amount of funding, every application received some sort of increase, unless they asked for the same amount as last year. He mentioned parity was created to the extent possible amongst similarly minded organizations (ie: festivals, dance corporations, theater groups, etc.) It was widely expressed by the Commission members that the new scoring method was confusing and hard to understand, although everyone was happy with the funding amounts. Ms. Barnett inquired how organizations typically provided information on their services to “at-risk” and “under-served” populations. Mr. Pisarski explained there were different methods for each organization and said staff could provide summaries to the Commission for each organization. Ms. Barnett said she would be happy to help get the word out to the parents of students and the local school systems through the Class Dojo app.

Mr. Williams said the Budget Committee would discuss how to expend the available amounts of money and funding through the coming year. Mr. Cagno asked if anyone who received Special Request funding throughout 2022 applied into the Re-grant program; Mr. Williams said, yes, these organizations included ART-C and the Friends of India Society, as well as a brand new organization, Rair Causes Incorporated. A motion to approve the 2023 RE-grant Award Funding Recommendations was made by Ms. Lods, seconded by Ms. Watson, and approved unanimously by the Commission. Mr. Cagno delivered a special “thank you” to Messrs. Pisarski & Williams and Ms. Riviera for all of their hard work concerning these efforts.

2022 C&H Commissioner Liaison Assignment Draw

Mr. Williams explained underneath each of the organizations was an appointed C&H liaison for any specific needs, requests, questions, etc. Ms. Riviera proceeded to do an annual draw to help assign liaisons to each organization: Mr. Cagno was number twos, Mr. Dragotta, number fours, Ms. Cerda-Moreno, number ones, Ms. Lods, number fives, Ms. Merighi, number eights, Ms. Watson, number threes, Ms. Barnett, number sevens, and Mr. Thakur, number sixes. Mr. Williams further clarified staff would reach out following the day’s meeting with a list of organizations for each corresponding C&H commissioner/liaison.

Discussion of West Jersey Time Traveler Podcast – Trinity A.M.E. Church

Mr. Williams explained he had sent a digital audio file, via email, of Keith Wasserman’s latest West Jersey Time Travelers Podcast for the Trinity African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. He strongly urged the Commission members check out this latest podcast, as well as the rest of the West Jersey Time Travelers series. Ms. Barnett thought it was extremely well-done, Ms. Merighi felt as though it was very informative, and Mr. Cagno expressed it inspired him to get his organization, Stockton University, to start up their very own podcast series. Mr. Williams said he would re-send Mr. Wasserman’s Trinity A.M.E. podcast out to the Commission.

Mr. Pisarski said this latest podcast (now-completed) was Mr. Wasserman’s last one for the West Jersey Time Travelers Podcast project under his current contract. Following QR code sign installation for Trinity A.M.E. Church, Fairfield Presbyterian Church, Deerfield Presbyterian Church, and Landis School, Mr. Pisarski said staff would get a new quote from Mr. Wasserman to do a podcast for the humpback bridges in the Bridgeton City Park and a pre-production of the

East Point Lighthouse podcast, which had already been discussed and approved. Mr. Pisarski said another four to five podcasts could be contracted and produced, if the Commission were interested. The Bridgekeeper's Building on Route 49 and the history of the various bridges crossing the Cohansey River was discussed as topic of a future podcast.

Mr. Pisarski indicated the intent had always been to make supplemental Spanish-language podcasts for the first 15. Mr. Pisarski said he hoped to get both the English & Spanish-language podcasts 100% completed and uploaded online by Summer 2023; following this, he said the Commission could talk about the next steps in the podcast program. Mr. Pisarski felt they would need to find a separate vendor in addition to Mr. Wasserman to do the proposed Spanish-language podcasts. Mr. Williams said Mr. Wasserman mentioned he would have to sub-contract the Spanish-language podcasts out to another vendor. After a period of discussion amongst staff and the Commission, it was agreed they could get a quote for bilingual podcasts from Mr. Wasserman. It was eventually agreed upon to get two quotes from Mr. Wasserman to field and find someone to sub-contract out to do Spanish-language podcasts. Mr. Williams said staff would do some research online to look for additional vendors, as well.

Election of 2023 Slate of Cultural & Heritage Commission Officers

Mr. Cagno explained the Nominations Committee—himself, Mr. Thakur, and Ms. Cerda-Moreno—had nominated the slate of Mr. Dragotta as Chairperson, Ms. Lods as Vice Chair, Ms. Cerda-Moreno as Secretary, and Mr. Thakur as Treasurer. Mr. Cagno asked for a motion to approve the Nominations Committee's recommended slate of officers for 2023. A motion was made to approve the slate of Robert Dragotta as Chairperson, Marianne Lods as Vice Chairperson, Maria Cerda-Moreno as Secretary, and Yogesh Thakur as Treasurer as Cultural & Heritage officers for 2023 was made by Ms. Barnett, seconded by Ms. Watson, and approved unanimously by the Commission. Messrs. Dragotta & Thakur and Mses. Lods & Cerda-Moreno all recused themselves from the voting process. Mr. Cagno congratulated the new officers!

Approval of 2023 C&H Commission Meeting Dates

A motion was made by Ms. Lods, seconded by Mr. Dragotta, and passed unanimously by the Commission to approve the list of 2023 Cultural & Heritage meeting dates. It was briefly noted the two dates (November & December 2023) noted with asterisks (*, **) were marked as such as to not conflict with observed holidays. Mr. Cagno explained all meetings for 2023 would be held in-person, as well as virtually, for those who may be unable to attend in-person.

Discussion of Music Licensing Agreements

Mr. Williams presented a letter he had received from BMI, which was one of three major music licensing organizations. Mr. Williams explained this query had arisen while staff was coordinating The First Annual The Sounds of Cumberland County music compilation, as to protect the participating artists, as well as the County itself. Mr. Williams said staff had been discussing this matter internally along with County Counsel. Mr. Williams explained these additional uses could be playing music at the County Fairgrounds, inside County-owned buildings, covers to be included within future The Sounds of Cumberland County music compilations, use across social media, etc. Mr. Pisarski explained such a BMI, ASCAP, SESAC,

etc. licensing agreement(s) would help cover future installments of the compilation, as well as assorted uses of music across the County. Legal counsel suggested it be researched and the C&H Commission come up with a definitive answer/solution. Following a brief period of discussion amongst the Commission members and staff, it was decided a member of County legal counsel staff would be invited to attend January 2023's C&H meeting to further discuss this issue.

Planning Department Update

Mr. Pisarski said he saw within the meeting minutes that Mr. Williams had spoken a bit about the consolidation and creation of the Division of 4-H & Agriculture Services under the Department of Planning, Tourism & Community Affairs. It was since approved by the Commissioners and Mr. Pisarski said the intent was to help build 4-H programming and make everything collaborative amongst the various Departmental boards. Mr. Pisarski added the County would be additionally expending funds to renovate the 4-H Building on Morton Avenue and when completed, the Planning Department would be moving there. Once moved to the new building, all Departmental board meetings would be held at 4-H. Mr. Pisarski said the move would not likely occur until the summer of 2023, roughly.

Mr. Pisarski said for December, there would be a combined luncheon held for all three boards, C&H, Tourism, and Recreation at Green Olive II in Vineland on December 13, 2022. RSVP's would soon be sent out to the board members. Ms. Merighi asked about the Master Gardener position, which Mr. Pisarski said was still open, but in regards to the move, said it would not affect an currently pre-existing programming.

Other Old/New Business

Mr. Dragotta said he was currently the president of the Bay Atlantic Symphony and they were, unfortunately, in some financial straits. He said Stockton University, who had long funded the music director, Jed Gaylin's salary, had recently pulled out of funding the programming. Mr. Dragotta stated funding was way down when compared against previous years. Mr. Dragotta asked if the County could be of any help. Mr. Pisarski said State Council for The Arts funding could not be used, however, County line item funding or a special request could be enacted for free or public programming. It was suggested Mr. Dragotta & The Bay Atlantic Symphony could apply for a Tourism marketing grant under their board's program for 2023. Mr. Williams said he would be in touch with Mr. Dragotta to help with the Tourism marketing grant.

Adjourn

Mr. Cagno asked for one final motion: a motion to adjourn the November 17, 2022 Cultural & Heritage Commission meeting. A motion to adjourn the November 17, 2022 Cultural & Heritage meeting was made by Ms. Barnett, seconded by Ms. Lods, and passed unanimously by the Commission. Mr. Williams, again, thanked everyone for their continued attendance and said he would see them at the December C&H, Tourism & Recreation combined holiday luncheon.