

# CUMBERLAND COUNTY CULTURAL AND HERITAGE COMMISSION MINUTES

June 19, 2007  
3:00 pm

Freeholder meeting room in Bridgeton, NJ 08302

The regular meeting of the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission was held on Tuesday, June 19, 2007 at 3:00 PM., in the Freeholder meeting room in Bridgeton, New Jersey.

**Present:** Patricia Gale  
Marianne Lods  
Suzanne Merighi  
Jean Jones  
Flavia Alaya  
Roy Kaneshiki

Matthew Pisarski, Principal Planner  
Kim McCann, Recording Secretary  
Jill Swartz, Project Specialist  
Freeholder Director Douglas Rainear  
Freeholder Jane Christy

Special Guests: Nancy Moses

## **Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Pisarski noted that due to the shortage of staff, the minutes for May would be approved at next months meeting.

## **Historic Preservation Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel Discussion**

Mr. Pisarski discussed that at the last Freeholder Board Meeting, Freeholder Trout presented the results of the field trip to Morris County, recommending that Cumberland County pursue a Blue Ribbon Panel. This panel would do a feasibility analysis and propose rules and regulations for Historic Preservation Grants Programming for Cumberland County.

Mr. Pisarski noted the Freeholder Board approved the concept of a Blue Ribbon Panel. Mr. Pisarski will be working closely with Freeholder Trout to create a

resolution for consideration for establishment of the Blue Ribbon Panel. Mr. Pisarski stated there would be two resolutions: one will be the creation of the panel and the second resolution would appoint people to the panel.

### **Shared Services Discussion**

Freeholder Rainear mentioned that Mr. Pisarski and he recently had an informal discussion on a situation in Salem County that has been going on for quite some time but has recently been heightened due to the departure of the Director and Coordinator for the Salem County Cultural and Heritage Commission. Freeholder Rainear noted Salem County conditionally has not fared as well as Cumberland County in regards to funding and programming and mentioned that there has been some very informal discussions amongst some of the Freeholders of Salem and Cumberland County about doing a shared services program. The thought being, with the two counties working together in southern New Jersey, they could possibly get more positive attention from the State Council on the Arts.

Freeholder Rainear stated he wants the blessing from the Commission members before moving forward. Freeholder Rainear mentioned if the two counties were to enter into an agreement, he would recommend that Mr. Pisarski take on the overall administration of both Commissions.

Mr. Pisarski noted that he sees the situation in Salem County as an opportunity for Cumberland County. Mr. Pisarski stated that for years Salem County has not been a shining star in commission work. At the state level, they are viewed almost as a non-entity in the field, which creates a burden for Cumberland County. Mr. Pisarski suggested that the discussions that have taken place as part of the long-range planning process support an initiative such as this.

The Commission discussed some of their concerns with the shared services idea; some of those being staff constraints, and they would not want their Commission to weaken. The Commission asked if Salem County Cultural and Heritage was an active Commission. Mr. Pisarski replied Salem County does have a Commission similar to Cumberland County but his understanding is that they have difficulty in maintaining quorum and he did not know how often their Commission met. Mr. Pisarski stated he believes there is grant funding available through the state for feasibility analysis and those funds could be used to pay for the study.

A motion to proceed with a feasibility study was made by Suzanne Merighi. The motion was seconded by Roy Kaneshiki and passed unanimously.

## Long-Range Plan Discussion – Nancy Moses

Mr. Pisarski welcomed Nancy Moses to the meeting and stated Ms. Moses would be updating the Commission on the Long Range Plan. Ms. Moses mentioned the last time she met with the Commission the discussion was; where did the Commission want the county to be five years from now and how they would like it to be different.

Ms. Moses noted she has taken the exemplary standards along with the input from a number of organizations. Ms. Moses mentioned the recent workshop with the two focus groups that Mr. Pisarski had organized. Ms. Moses met with each of the groups for two hours and the discussions revolved around the issues most important to arts and history organizations in Cumberland County.

Ms. Moses mentioned the tremendous changes that are taking place in Cumberland County. Specifically she mentioned the influx of new residents and rapid commercial development. She also mentioned some of the threats to the county. Such as residential development threatening the agricultural beauty of the county and social issues, which come as a result of continued poverty within the county. Ms. Moses believes there is positive momentum underway in Cumberland County, but the challenges of very limited resources and a Commission budget of less than \$200,000.00 continue to be problems. The Commission also plays four roles in the county, which puts stress on its limits of staff. These roles are:

- **Funder** – how most organizations know the Commission
- **Educator** – education sessions for Cultural Organizations
- **Planner** – looking to future on issues such as open space & historic preservation
- **Events Producer** – three events per year

Ms. Moses stated if you were to look at just the events that the Commission does per year, they absorb somewhere between sixty- five and seventy percent of staff time and one event alone, the Teen Arts Festival, commands close to \$11,000.00 of the budget and only serves three hundred children.

Ms. Moses shared with the Commission the “heart of the strategic plan”, which is comprised of the exemplary standards: higher quality, better managed and effective cultural and heritage organizations and recognition as a thriving arts-heritage community. The Commission can connect the cultural sectors with the tourism industry, economic development agencies, business leadership and government cultural officials. Ms. Moses felt these standards are one’s the Commission could meet. The building blocks of the plan would be the objectives.

**Objective #1** – Expand financial and staff resources available to the cultural sector.

**Objective #2** – Re-align Commission investments to maximize impact.

Target for mini grants.

**Objective #3** – Help the cultural community mature. Help wean the grantees off county dollars and for the Commission to help expand its reach to more start-up groups.

**Objective #4** – Increase the visibility of cultural and heritage events and attractions. The groups need more visibility to build a more diverse audience and to increase its donors.

Ms. Moses stated the Commission is on the cusp of something major. Ms. Moses mentioned to the Commission that the Long Range Plan is due to them in a couple weeks and wanted to discuss with the Commission how they feel she has done up to this point. Freeholder Rainear noted that the vast majority of the population does not understand cultural and heritage events within the county. He stated it was not until becoming a Freeholder that he learned all the wonderful places Cumberland County has to offer. Flavia Alaya mentioned that since moving to Bridgeton her perspective is that people do not fully appreciate what is here in the county. Ms. Alaya noted the Nanticoke Indians, who performed in the park on a daily basis until someone complained about the noise. Ms. Alaya felt that people need to adjust their perspective and experience some of the cultural and heritage events that are offered throughout the county. Pat Gale felt the county does not have a cultural flair and noted the possibility to capitalize on more advertising. Freeholder Christy suggested the possibility of providing mini grants to some of the grantees, which would allow them to be more responsible for their own events, which would free up the administrative component of the Commission. Another suggestion was the possibility of offering a workshop to the re-grantees on strategic planning. Ms. Moses mentioned that during the focus group sessions, the grantees expanded on the thought of a strategic planning workshop. The grantees would like to have a whole day devoted to technical assistance; allowing them to come to a daylong workshop and to choose six or seven different sessions. Ms. Moses felt there would be more attendance as the grantees have mentioned the difficulty of attending the workshops in the evening.

Ms. Moses stated the Commission has three critical resources: a dynamic commission, the staff and the dollars. The trick over the next five years is to maximize the use of all critical resources and not to put anything on the plate unless something is taken off the plate. Ms. Moses stated the biggest single item that could be removed over time in terms of personnel focus would be events production. Ms. Moses noted the same suggestion was made in the two previous Long Range Plans that were written. Mr. Pisarski mentioned in regards to the topic on events that the Commission is increasing programming. Staff time would have to be committed and there has to be a way to administer the events the Commission sponsors in such a way as to reduce the burden on the staff. Mr. Pisarski felt that one of the projects in the Long Range Plan would be to do an analysis of the events to determine what the goals of the Commission are and whether or not the current events accomplish those goals.

The Commission discussed the different events and what could be done to expand the events. The possibility of using part of the funds that are used for Teen Arts and to help create an after school program for arts education that could serve more youths. Mr. Pisarski noted that Gloucester County did away with their Teen Arts and is now doing after school programming. Ms. Moses mentioned if the Teen Arts Festival is an event the Commission wants to continue, the possibility of using a youth services agency in this area could be pursued.

Ms. Moses concluded by letting everyone know that she would be giving to the Commission in detail, a reference back to the cultural plan with mutual goals laying steps out over five years and the rubrics allowing the Commission to know where they are along the way and whether or not they have been accomplished. Mr. Pisarski mentioned the dissatisfaction with the results of the previous Long Range Plan from the Commission. In those documents, it did not provide specific systematic suggestions to reach the goals and a time line. Mr. Pisarski has mentioned to Ms. Moses the importance of having standards and goals and a systematic guide to achieve those goals over a set period.

### **Correspondence**

Mr. Pisarski mentioned that in everyone's packet there is a letter from Misono Miller of Office on Aging detailing a list of ticket recipients for Older Americans month.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business a motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Flavia Alaya. The motion was seconded by Suzanne Merighi and passed unanimously.

The next regular meeting of the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission will be held on Tuesday, July 10, 2007 in the Freeholder Meeting Room in Bridgeton, New Jersey.