

CUMBERLAND COUNTY CULTURAL AND HERITAGE COMMISSION MINUTES

December 15, 2009
3:30 pm

Freeholder meeting room in Bridgeton, NJ 08302

The regular meeting of the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission was held on Tuesday, December 15, 2009 at 3:30 PM., in the Freeholder Meeting room in Bridgeton, New Jersey.

Present: Marianne Lods Patricia Gale
Roy Kaneshiki Flavia Alaya
Suzanne Merighi Penny Watson
John Garrison Ella Boykin

Matthew Pisarski, Principal Planner
Kim McCann, Recording Secretary
James Dunkins, Freeholder Liaison

Approval of Minutes – November 17, 2009

A motion to approve the minutes from November 17, 2009 was made by Patricia Gale. The motion was seconded by Roy Kaneshiki and passed unanimously.

2010 Cultural & Heritage Commission Regrant Award Recommendations

Mr. Pisarski noted that he and Freeholder Dunkins met with Freeholder Director Magazzu to review the grant panel recommendations for the regrant awards. He said this has been a very difficult year due to cuts made by the State. Mr. Pisarski provided a handout to the Commission with the grant recommendation chart that shows two numbers. The top number in the 2010 award column is the recommendation from the grants review panel. Mr. Pisarski noted there are several zeroes, some major cuts, and a few places where additional funding was provided. The second number is the 2009 award minus 14.29% which is the amount the regrant funds were cut. Freeholder Dunkins said he has attended several meetings at the state level and the state funding is not in good shape right now especially with the new governor transition. He noted it will be some time before anyone will know exactly when funds will be released. Freeholder Dunkins felt that everyone has a good argument as to what they expect in funding and how it is contributing to Cumberland County. After careful consideration it was decided that the organizations funded in the 2009 round should all be cut by the same percentage for the 2010 funding round.

Patricia Gale asked Mr. Pisarski why Cumberland Players got zero funding. Mr. Pisarski replied that their application was inadequate; they were the only organization this year that did not have a complete application. Penny Watson noted the only other organizations that got zero funding were municipalities. Mr. Pisarski said that is correct and it was the panel's recommendation not to fund the municipalities, reasoning that in contrast with the other organizations the municipalities would be able to continue without relying on the grant funding. Roy Kaneshiki asked if a follow up letter might be sent to the regrantees with an explanation for the reduction in funding. Mr. Pisarski noted the organizations will still receive the comments from the panel explaining what areas are in need of improvement.

Mr. Pisarski noted this past weekend that Jean Jones did an article in the Bridgeton News on the issue of the state funding freeze. He said knowing this article would be in the paper, he sent an e-mail to all of the regrantees on Friday December 11th saying the regrants were impacted by the state freeze and the funds would not be issued until there is a resolution by the state.

A motion to approve the Regrant recommendations as amended was made by Roy Kaneshiki. The motion was seconded by Flavia Alaya and passed unanimously.

2010 State Council on the Arts funding freeze discussion

Mr. Pisarski mentioned Art Pride is trying to keep everyone informed statewide. He also said for Cumberland County the Commission could play a role in getting the word out and one of the ways this can be done is to send out personal letters to the Legislature, making sure that the Freeholder Board is copied on those letters. Marianne Lods noted that last week Art Pride ran a two-and-a-half day survey from arts and cultural organizations to see what the freeze's immediate effect would be. From the calculations of the survey, forty percent said it would have an immediate impact on their organizations with layoffs and the possibility of closing their doors if nothing was done until January. Flavia Alaya thought we should be emphasizing job impact not just on the arts community but on the wider community. Ms. Lods mentioned the letter she sent through Art Pride's website to the Legislatures, Governor, Governor Elect; she will copy the Commission on the letter tomorrow. The letter emphasizes the economic impact proposed cuts would have on the Millville Arts District. In 2009 alone there were eighty-five new jobs created in a six-block area of the downtown.

Freeholder Dunkins asked in past practice which legislators have shown they are advocates for the Arts? Mr. Pisarski replied that locally it would be the 1st Legislative District who has always been very supportive. Freeholder Dunkins said maybe they could generate a Resolution at the next Freeholder meeting.

Nominations Committee Recommendations

Suzanne Merighi reported the recommendation for Officers on behalf of the subcommittee.

Suzanne Merighi made a motion to accept the proposed slate of officers for 2010. Those Officers would be Chairperson – Roy Kaneshiki, Vice-Chairperson Flavia Alaya, Treasurer – John Garrison and Secretary – Ella Boykin. The motion was seconded by Penny Watson and passed unanimously.

Flavia Alaya made a motion to thank Marianne Lods for being president for 2009. The motion was seconded by Roy Kaneshiki.

Liaison Reports

Roy Kaneshiki asked Mr. Pisarski if the Jewish Federation of Cumberland County and the Jewish Historical Society are the same organization. He noted that for the liaison reports he has one and John Garrison has the other, and asked if there should not be a single source for liaisons. Mr. Pisarski replied yes that should be the case. He noted in January the Commission will pick new organizations so they can have new organizations for the New Year. Patricia Gale asked Mr. Pisarski if they would have an opportunity to pick the organizations they may have an interest or affiliation with, as she is involved with drama and would really like to have Off Broad Street Players as one of her organizations. Mr. Pisarski said he would like to diversify and to let everyone pick from the hat, versus assigning organizations to the members. Mr. Pisarski noted this does not limit any member from following a particular organization and if you would like to attend an event or communicate with an organization you are welcome to do so.

Ella Boykin mentioned the Vineland Regional Dance Company is holding their annual Nutcracker Performance this Saturday at 1:00 and 5:00 p.m. and Sunday at 2:00 p.m.

Suzanne Merighi attended the Celebrating the Oyster program at Clay College which she said was wonderful and that Roy Kaneshiki did an excellent job opening fresh oysters. Ms. Merighi also attended the Bridgeton Holiday House Tour on December 5, 2009, and said it was wonderful. She was able to visit eight homes that were on the tour. John Garrison noted that Flavia Alaya did a wonderful job with this year's tour. Flavia said at next month's meeting she would bring some of the brochures from the house tour.

Other Old/New Business

Mr. Pisarski asked Flavia Alaya and Penny Watson how the dinner was they attended that was hosted by the Disabled Advisory Council. Ms. Alaya said she and Ms. Watson went and enjoyed themselves very much. She said there was an issue that was brought up at the table and it was that Bridgeton is the only city in the county that has not provided a playground accessible for disabled or handicapped children. Ms. Watson noted the city administration has shown absolutely no interest to provide one. The Disabled Advisory Council had sent a video to the city of Bridgeton and it was sent back to them and was not viewed. Ms. Alaya asked if there can be a gentle letter sent by the Commission to the Mayor.

Flavia Alaya made a motion to draft a letter to the city of Bridgeton. The motion was seconded by John Garrison and passed unanimously.

Correspondence

Mr. Pisarski provided in everyone's packet a copy of a thank you letter to the Jewish Federation, sent for the Sheva Kotok Award and reception, which was very nice.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

The next regular meeting of the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission will be held on Tuesday, January 20, 2010, in the Freeholder Meeting Room in Bridgeton, New Jersey.