CAPITAL CITY REDEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' SPECIAL MEETING

This Meeting was held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

July 14, 2026 @ 11:00 AM

MEETING MINUTES:

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD PRESENT (VIRTUAL ONLY):
Jo-Ann Povia, Chair, Designee for State Treasurer Aaron Binder
Elvin Montero, Vice Chair
Jeffrey Laurenti, Board Secretary
Willard Stanback, Board Treasurer
Anthony Cimino
Joel Griffith
The Honorable Reed Gusciora
June Dowell–Burton
Michael Manzella representing DOT Commissioner Priya Jain
Robert Tessier representing DCA Commissioner Jacquelyn A. Suárez

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD ABSENT:
Rosa Rosado

OTHERS:
AG's Office: Christopher Kay, Counsel
AG's Office: Roza Dabaghyan, Counsel
GAU: Samuel Kovach-Orr, Sr. Special Counsel
CCRC: Nat Bottigheimer, Managing Director
Treasury: Julie Krause, Treasury
EDA: Danielle Esser, NJEDA
EDA: Hector Serrano, NJEDA
EDA: Drishti Chauhan, NJEDA Intern

CALL TO ORDER:
Chair Povia called the meeting to order at 11:05 am with a quorum of the Board members present.

ROLL CALL:
Ms. Esser performed the roll call of the Board.

READING OF PUBLIC NOTICE:
Ms. Esser read the Open Public Meetings announcement.

CHAIR'S REPORT:
Chair Povia thanked everyone who worked on the grant applications and reviews that constitute the main business of the day. She reported that the appropriations act just passed includes $750,000 in additional funding for CCRC.

MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT:
Managing Director Bottigheimer did not have a formal report.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
Chair Povia opened the floor for public comments on any items on the board agenda. Ms. Esser read the open public comment policy.

Mr. Brishen Miller, executive artistic director at Passage Theatre Company, thanked the Board and the committee that evaluated the grant applications. He said the Theatre has seen record-breaking attendance and revenues, and hopes to continue being the arts anchor downtown.

ACTIVATE DOWNTOWN TRENTON GRANT AWARDS AND DECLINATIONS:
Managing Director Bottigheimer walked through the Board and staff actions creating the Activate Downtown grant window with $1.25 million in funding and soliciting applications. Thirty-seven were submitted by the February deadline. In evaluating them, he said, the review committee was looking at three program goals: supporting Trenton's art and maker communities to spur increased visitation for local businesses; highlighting Trenton's notable contributions to history with new opportunities for civic and social events; and increasing street-level energy, comfort, and safety by activating ground-floor building spaces or by making placemaking investments. So the review committee was looking for proposals that would advance at least one of these program goals.

In scoring the proposals, the three-person review committee established a minimum score of 75 for an application to be eligible for funding, with scoring based on the following factors, for each of which up to 20 points could be earned: (1) the strength and clarity of the connection between the applicant's mission and our program goals; (2) the strength of organizational experience and the experience of the key personnel advancing the project; (3) the expected durability of the impact of the proposed project; (4) the potential magnitude of the impact; and (5) the feasibility of the proposed uses of the funds to achieve project goals and achieve Activate Downtown program objectives.

Noting the Board memo reporting that all of the recommended projects are to be completable within three years, Mr. Laurenti asked what is the disbursement plan for each – would each of these proposed grantees receive a one-time grant of $300,000 that can be spent over three years? Mr. Bottigheimer replied that there will be an initial allocation of 25 percent, with the balance subsequently paid on an invoice-based reimbursement process.

Mr. Montero noted that some of the applicant organizations on the declination list are not technically based within the CCRC district: Was location captured within the point scoring system, or were applicants informed their activity had to be targeted within the district? Mr. Bottigheimer answered that it was made very clear that projects had to be located within the district, and where that focus was unclear, it was reflected in the scoring.

Mayor Gusciora expressed concern that $50,000 was being left on the table. Why wait on approving another prospective grant for another round when there are projects waiting in the queue? Mr. Bottigheimer said that their advice from counsel was that they would have to take the next-highest scoring application, but ask them to re-do their application for a $50,000 award and then re-score the smaller proposal. Mr. Cimino suggested the Board should want to have some funds available in this account – say, in case a grantee should need to come back for a few more dollars. Ms. Povia underscored that the money would not be lost, but be available for another round. Mr. Laurenti asked whether any applicant had offered a proposal requesting less than the $300,000 ceiling on awards – maybe even a proposal for $50,000. Mr. Bottigheimer replied that many applicants requested the maximum, but there were some for less than that.

At Chair Povia's invitation, Mr. Bottigheimer presented the following items for the Members' approval:

a. Approval of the Award of Activate Downtown Trenton Grant Program funds to Passage Theater*

Mr. Bottigheimer presented a request to board members to approve an award of $300,000 in Activate Downtown Trenton Grant Program funds to Passage Theatre Company. He noted that the Theater was the review committee's top scoring proposal, and that it has served Trenton as the city's sole professional theater for over 40 years, housed in the Mill Hill Playhouse. The grant would support the theater over the next three years to realize and sustain a "Trenton Makes" series of new plays written based on the lives of modern Trentonians. It will cover twenty new performances a year.

The proposal also includes marketing personnel and restaurant partnerships, so the award will go not just toward the development of new plays, community participation, and the production pipeline, but also for support personnel, marketing, and restaurant partnership coordination. The company has, he added, an active "dinner and a show" program -- so this proposal from a credible, capable organization is focused not just on its own mission but also on benefiting businesses in downtown. The applicant projects the increase in performance frequency will bring between one and two thousand additional theater goers to downtown Trenton annually.

Noting that CCRC is not an arts grantmaking organization, Mr. Laurenti inquired into the metrics that would show how supporting performances at the Passage Theater advances the redevelopment purposes of the Corporation, and particularly the goal of durability of impact. Mr. Bottigheimer responded that this proposal is closely connected to the goal of bringing people to the downtown in after-hours, promising a continuous level of added activity over the three-year period. The enhanced visibility of the theater would contribute to the durability of its impact. Additionally, he noted that the program would increase the sense of activity in the downtown at all hours and convince potential new residents that this was an attractive environment to move to and live in. Mr. Laurenti acknowledged the imminent opening of the Van Sciver's development that would presumably supply potential patrons to the theater, but he pressed for any evidence that patrons at Passage Theater events until now have frequented existing downtown eating establishments. Such data, Mr. Bottigheimer said, he did not have. Chair Povia added that art is a pillar of economic development more broadly, and that the EDA also provides grants for art-affiliated development.

MOTION TO APPROVE: Mr. Cimino **SECOND:** Mr. Manzella **AYES:** 8
***RESOLUTION ATTACHED AND MARKED EXHIBIT: 1**

Elvin Montero recused from voting given his role as a former Member of the Board of the Passage Theater.

Willard Stanback recused from voting as he has a current business relationship with Passage Theater.

b. Approval of the Award of Activate Downtown Trenton Grant Program funds to 120 East State Street*

Mr. Bottigheimer presented the grant proposal for 120 E. State Street (Steeple Center), a nonprofit adaptively reusing the former First Presbyterian Church as an ADA-accessible civic commons supporting economic/workforce development, heritage tourism, and cultural arts. The Steeple Center has secured $12 million in EDA tax credits and federal historic tax credits. The grant funds will be used for permits, financial/construction contract documents, exterior stairs/elevator tower design for ADA accessibility, interior redesign, and archaeological survey—all required for closing on tax credits and starting construction. The project is considered durable, with long-term investment in building, improved landscaping, connectivity, community kitchen, and meeting spaces that can support downtown activity and provide attractions to new residents.

Mr. Stanback asked about the inspection and permit approval process and whether the needed approvals are from State or City officials, raising concern about potential bottlenecks. Mr. Bottigheimer responded that the grant will support obtaining necessary permits and construction documents, which should facilitate approvals. Mr. Laurenti inquired whether this means the grant is for administrative support, or is it for capital work like that in the architect's rendering that shows a rooftop addition on the building annex? Mr. Bottigheimer confirmed the grant is for work needed to access tax credits, including construction documents and readiness for bidding. Mr. Tessier asked about the current use of the building, and Mr. Bottigheimer confirmed that the building is in use as a community meeting venue, that it has a commercial kitchen useful for events, and that the grant will significantly enhance operations.

MOTION TO APPROVE: Mr. Laurenti **SECOND:** Mr. Tessier **AYES:** 10
***RESOLUTION ATTACHED AND MARKED EXHIBIT: 2**

c. Approval of the Award of Activate Downtown Trenton Grant Program funds to the Trenton Center for American Pottery (TCAP)*
Mr. Bottigheimer presented the grant proposal for the Trenton Center for American Pottery, a new 501(c)(3) entity dedicated to Trenton's ceramics and pottery history. The Center will offer pottery/ceramics classes, studio/workspace for local artists, retail space for selling products, and exhibit galleries for new and historic Trenton pottery. The Center has purchased two long-vacant buildings at 23 and 25 East State Street. The CCRC grant will fund phase one: full exterior renovation of both properties, interior renovation of 23 East State Street, creation of studio space on the third floor, and gallery/visitor space on the first floor. The project aims to visibly improve the streetscape, increase downtown activity, and provide a home for local artists, with sponsors' longstanding involvement in Trenton giving confidence in durability and fit.

Mr. Stanback asked about other resources for the project or whether CCRC is the group's first line of funding. Mr. Bottigheimer replied that the total cost of the first phase is $355,000, with $55,000 provided by the sponsors from Clark, Caton; fundraising for subsequent phases, he added, will presumably flow from accomplishments from this first phase. Mr. Stanback then asked about the total budget to launch the Center -- is CCRC's grant a 50% share of the total, or 12%, or what?. Mr. Bottigheimer said he did not have a cost estimate for the total project, but thought that CCRC's grant could well be roughly 50% of the total.

Mr. Laurenti asked about the two seemingly historical buildings that are to house the Center – one of red brick and the other Art Deco stone – will be a museum or multi-use space including street level retail? Mr. Bottigheimer confirmed that the two buildings will provide studio, gallery, retail, and exhibit space for working artists as well as historical displays of Trenton's industrial history -- not primarily a museum but a working space with exhibit areas. Mr. Laurenti asked about the applicants' funding source for purchasing the buildings. Mr. Bottigheimer said he believed it came from their personal funds, but underscored that the Center is constituted as a nonprofit.

Mr. Griffith asked if the Center is related to a pre-existing Pottery of Trenton Society and about the timeline for accomplishing this Phase One. Mr. Bottigheimer described a 13-month timeline: 2 months after receipt of CCRC funding for construction documents, 4 months for permit review and final pricing with contractors, then months 5 to 12 for construction, studio leasing, and equipment purchase, and month 13 for the opening of Phase One at 23 East State. As for the relationship to the other organization Mr. Griffith had cited, Mr. Bottigheimer was unaware.

Mr. Stanback sought to confirm that, as with the other Activate Downtown awards, the grant is paid as reimbursement after the work is performed, with awardees paying costs and then filing for reimbursement. Mr. Bottigheimer confirmed that this is the system, except for the initial 25% disbursement to help get the project started. Mr. Stanback asked if awardees must show their spending conforms to their application, which Mr. Bottigheimer confirmed.

MOTION TO APPROVE: Mr. Cimino **SECOND:** Ms. Dowell–Burton **AYES:** 10
***RESOLUTION ATTACHED AND MARKED EXHIBIT: 3**

d. Approval of the Award of Activate Downtown Trenton grant program funds to Isles*
Mr. Bottigheimer presented the grant proposal for Isles, a nonprofit community development organization with 45 years of experience in Trenton whose application proposes a multi-year basket of diverse activities around the downtown, and not specific to a single address: art studio support, pop-up activations, events, artist storefront opportunities, storefront refreshes, business mentorship, and marketing support. The program is broad, distributed throughout downtown, and considered the "glue" for activity, leveraging Isles's long experience and many partnerships. Mr. Tessier asked if the proposed activities are one-off, and how the program would be sustainable. Mr. Bottigheimer noted that the activities would be repeated over the three years, and conceded that after that, renewed funding would be needed. He added that this is an investment in building the community and its businesses, whose durability lies in branding the downtown and the lasting impact it is expected to have on the artists, organizations, and businesses.

MOTION TO APPROVE: Mr. Laurenti **SECOND:** Mr. Griffith **AYES:** 7
***RESOLUTION ATTACHED AND MARKED EXHIBIT: 4**

June Dowell–Burton recused from voting as her daughter is employed by Isles.

Anthony Cimino recused from voting as he consults for NJ Future which is part of the Isles team.

Willard Stanback recused from voting as he has a financial relationship with the applicant.

Chair Povia recused herself on the next agenda item, leaving Mr. Laurenti to chair the meeting.

e. Approval of Declination of Activate Downtown Trenton Grant Program funds for applicants that did not meet the minimum score*
Mr. Bottigheimer explained the need for formal board action to decline grant applicants that did not meet the minimum score threshold (75). Attachment 1 of the memo lists organizations that the review committee scored below the threshold for grant approval and that are recommended for declination. Mr. Laurenti asked why a motion to decline is needed. Mr. Bottigheimer and legal counsel clarified it is required for competitive, discretionary grant programs to close out applications that are not accepted, and that in establishing the funding program the Board did not delegate to the staff the authority to decline them. Mr. Tessier and Mr. Cimino questioned the process, suggesting future delegation or procedural changes that could avoid the Board having to take formal declination votes. Counsel noted that declinations are standard for competitive grants that do not make the cut, but future board decisions could alter this. Mr. Laurenti raised concerns about wiping out applications if new funding becomes available, suggesting holding them as pending. Mr. Bottigheimer clarified that the various proposals to be declined by this resolution were

those that did not meet the review committee's standard as fundable anyway.

MOTION TO APPROVE: Mr. Cimino **SECOND:** Mr. Griffith **AYES:** 6
***RESOLUTION ATTACHED AND MARKED EXHIBIT: 5**

Jo-Ann Povia recused from voting as she is the Treasury representative on the Board of Directors of the Trenton Downtown Association (an applicant).

Willard Stanback recused from voting as he has a relationship with two of the organizations on the list to be declined.

Mayor Gusciora and June Dowell-Burton abstained from voting.

Jo-Ann Povia returned to chairing the meeting.

f. Approval of Declination of Activate Downtown Trenton Grant Program funds for applicants that scored above the minimum but must be declined to lack of availability of funding*
Mr. Bottigheimer presented a list of non-profit organizations that scored above the minimum to qualify but that must be declined due to insufficient funds to accommodate them all, almost all of which were requesting in the vicinity of $300,000. Mr. Laurenti suggested not acting on this declination, stating that while the proposals would not be funded at the moment but could be kept pending in the event new funding is available to the Board. Mr. Kay (attorney-general's office) stated that the typical process in the event of additional funding becoming available would be to issue a new notice of funding availability (NOFA) which would require a new application process. Ms. Dabaghyan (attorney-general's office) added that the current NOFA would not be recurring so a new project would require new funding and new applications. Chair Povia inquired about the possibility of future grants having the availability of a recurring fund. Ms. Dabaghyan affirmed it would be possible to do so on future notices, but not the NOFA currently being discussed as it was now closed. Mr. Tessier suggested that the Board consider looking into other modifications for future NOFAs to avoid such complications. Mr. Montero sought assurance that these organizations would be allowed to resubmit material from their now declined applications to future notices under the guidelines of the new program, which Mr. Bottigheimer confirmed.

MOTION TO APPROVE: Mr. Cimino **SECOND:** Mr. Tessier **AYES:** 6
***RESOLUTION ATTACHED AND MARKED EXHIBIT: 6**

Willard Stanback recused from voting due to an affiliation with Artworks (an applicant).

Mr. Laurenti, Mayor Gusciora and June Dowell-Burton abstained from voting.

<u>APPROVAL OF CCRC FY23 INDEPENDENT AUDIT:</u>
Mr. Bottigheimer presented the following item for the Members' approval:

Mr. Bottigheimer summarized that Mercadien, the auditor, presented the audit to the Audit Committee, which forwarded it for board acceptance. The detailed audit conversation occurred in committee, and the full audit report was shared with the Board. Acceptance of the audit would allow timely preparation for the FY24 audit, which is expected to be more complex due to increased financial activity. Mr. Stanback stated the committee was comfortable with the audit and that future audits would require more discussion as activity increases. Mr. Daly from Mercadien reported a clean, unmodified opinion for FY23, with no findings or recommendations, no internal control weaknesses.

Mr. Laurenti asked if FY22 and FY23 had no employee expenses. Mr. Daly and Mr. Bottigheimer confirmed, noting only $17,000 in expenses. Mr. Laurenti asked if future audits would reflect personnel costs. Mr. Daly confirmed, and Chair Povia explained that Treasury staff and EDA staff were not billed for their work, but expenses for attorneys and consultants would appear as activity increased. Mr. Laurenti asked if EDA services provided to the Board appeared in the audit. Chair Povia clarified that EDA used its procurement authority for outside professionals, and those costs were paid for. Ms. Esser noted an MOU between CCRC and EDA outlines which services require payment, and it is available on the CCRC website.

MOTION TO APPROVE: Mr. Laurenti **SECOND:** Mr. Tessier **AYES: 10**
***RESOLUTION ATTACHED AND MARKED EXHIBIT: 7**

CITY OF TRENTON UPDATE:
Mayor Gusciora noted that the Fourth of July parade was cancelled due to weather. However, the City did observe the semi-quincentennial July 4th with the Old Barracks reopening as well as the Memorial Wreath Laying at the Battle Monument. There are discussions about holding a makeup festival or some other observance. The City is prepared for its celebration during Patriot's week in December.

Mr. Laurenti added that the reading of Frederick Douglas's "What to the Slave is Your 4th of July" address took place at the Trent House on July 5th. He also inquired when the City's historical signs at the Battle Monument will be erected; Mayor Gusciora replied he will consult with Randy Baum and Paul Harris. Mr. Stanback asked the Mayor to comment on the city's July 8th event, a 250th anniversary reenactment of the reading of the Declaration of Independence on Warren Street. He noted that this event was helpful in making progress to attract not only residents, but also those residing outside the Capital City.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
Ms. Esser read the public comment policy.

Mr. Brishen Miller, the Executive Artistic Director at Passage Theatre Company, addressed concerns Board members had raised about the durability of its project by noting that the Theater sees about 15% of their audience taking advantage of downtown restaurant offerings. That would have been between 350 and 375 patrons in the most recent year. Of that number around 120 are people who are new to Passage Theatre and presumably new to the downtown Trenton restaurants. Additionally, about 20% of the personnel the Theater employs are Trenton or Mercer County residents, and they employ as many as 100 temporary artists yearly.

Mr. John Hatch, President of Board of the Trenton Center of American Pottery, noted that after Phase 1, the project will be up and running as a part of the building will be finished. The plan is that after Phase 1 there will be classes taking place, some exhibit space, and artist studio space on the upper floors. Phase 2 would expand the amenities as well as expand into the 25 East State Street location. He added that they have applied for additional funding, for instance, from the New Jersey Historic Trust to fund the Center as well.

Ms. Molly Dykstra, Acting Executive Director of 120 East State Street, clarified that the funding provided by the CCRC will be used to reach the closing on the tax credits. She stated that there are no operating expenses in the grant, and that it will be considered construction expense. They have solicitated other funds as well toward the same costs.

ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING:
There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Cimino, seconded by Mr. Laurenti, and approved by unanimous vote at 12:52 pm.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

The next regular meeting date for the Capital City Redevelopment Corporation is scheduled for Tuesday, September 22, 2026, at 10:00 AM

CERTIFICATION:

The foregoing and attachments represent a true and complete summary of the actions taken by the Capital City Redevelopment Corporation Board of Directors at its Board Meeting on July 14, 2026.

Jeffrey Laurenti

Jeffrey Laurenti, Secretary

Capital City Redevelopment Corporation