NEW JERSEY HISTORIC TRUST

Wednesday, March 18, 2025
Board of Trustees Quarterly Meeting
10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
Virtualhttps://zoom.us/j/96603207025?pwd=5aqrE8YZTk6dibWwzvZBJr9wCYYR4q.1

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order
Mr. Lindsay called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM

Open Public Meetings Act
Mr. Ceponis notified the Board that public notice of the meeting was made in accordance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act.

Roll Call
Mr. Ceponis called the roll and confirmed the meeting had quorum.

Trustees present: Jody Alessandrine, Janet Foster, Peter Lindsay, Lisa Easton, Gina Fischetti (DCA), Linda Stender, Deborah Kelly, Meme Omogbai, Kenneth Miller, Keith White (Treasury)

Other attendees: Erin Gilgen, Deputy Attorney General for the New Jersey Historic Trust

NJHT staff present: Glenn Ceponis, Judy Murphy, Carrie Hogan, Shannon Bremer, Alexis Alemy, Jennifer Boggs, Kristin Downing, Olivia Chaudhury, Ashley Parker, Stephanie Kraut, Tara Ritz, Nan Wakefield

Public: John Flanagan (consultant/contractor)

Approval of Minutes
The minutes from December 2025 were presented for approval. Ms. Foster expressed two comments: first, she requested that page numbers be included in all future minutes, and second, she requested a correction to the language of the first paragraph of the Executive Director's report. Ms. Foster explained that she did not comment on the bill that was discussed and asked that reference to her be stricken from the sentence.

With those revisions, the minutes from December 25 were presented for approval. Mr. Miller motioned for approval, Ms. Omogbai seconded. All voted in approval.

Mr. White, newly representing Treasury on the Board, was then introduced.

Public Comment
No public comment.

Communications
Mr. Ceponis stated that the communications were all placed within the Board Memo, and noted that there were a number of news articles.

Reports of Officers

- **Chair**

  Mr. Lindsay stated that he attended a recent virtual meeting of the Cultural Trust. He reported that the Trust's capital grant round being held in FY27 will have revised parameters.

  Mr. Ceponis summarized the new parameters. The Cultural Trust's original one-year grant period will now be expanded to a two-year grant period to reduce the number of extension requests. This opens the door for additional grant-period expansions in the future. Second, the Cultural Trust's grant cap has been raised from $40,000 to $80,000 based on predicted increases to incoming money as well as increases in construction costs. Mr. Ceponis noted that this change is particularly important for incentivizing small nonprofits with total project budgets less than $250,000, allowing a larger number of projects to receive enough funding. Third, the Cultural Trust has agreed to state the total money they will have available for grant award by July or August, before the New Jersey Historic Trust's annual September board meeting and while evaluators are reviewing applications. This will allow the Trust to vote without delays and minimize the need for additional meetings. Fourth, Cultural Trust grant types have now been altered so that up to 25 percent of funds can be used for non-construction costs. While the majority of the funds will continue to go toward capital work, the change allows smaller nonprofits to develop preservation plans and conditions assessments.

  Continuing his report, Mr. Lindsay noted that on February 12, the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation held their first board meeting under the current administration. Mr. Linsday detailed information about that meeting, particularly the ACHP's formation of a committee to revise Section 106. Mr. Lindsay then provided updates on the Trust's upcoming New Jersey History and Historic Preservation Conference, scheduled for June 17 and 18 at Saint Elizabeth University, noting that the board is still looking for board donations to the conference before March 31. Mr. Linsday also offered a hotel suggestion for those attending the conference.

  Additionally, Mr. Lindsay reported that the board is looking to schedule an off-site strategic planning meeting around October to complete early phases of development for the next strategic plan, due in 2028. Ms. Foster will coordinate that scheduling via a doodle poll recently sent out over email by Mr. Lindsay. Mr. Lindsay provided details on several upcoming webinars relevant to the work of the Trust. Mr. Ceponis reminded the board that financial disclosures will be sent out by the Ethics Commission on April 1 with a deadline of May 15.

- **Vice-chair**

  Ms. Stender did not have a report, but took an opportunity to welcome Mr. White to the board.

- **Treasurer**

  Mr. Miller thanked Ms. Hogan for putting together the numbers. The Trust is currently under budget on staffing expenses, and slightly over budget in marketing. We are three-quarters of the way through the year and $160,000 ahead of budget. Current projected funding for next year stands at a total allocation, less appropriations of $10.6 million, with $7.5 million outstanding in potential multiyear draws, bringing the remaining balance to $3 million. Therefore, for the upcoming budget year of 2026 to 2027, $10 to 13 million is the expected

allocation, similar to past years. Mr. Miller noted that there is a list of draws for different funds. The oldest, Princeton Nurseries, hasn't drawn down money awarded in 2008.

- **Secretary**
  No report.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Ceponis stated that his report as well as the staff report were both included in the board packet distributed before the meeting. He began by reminding board members that financial disclosure statements are due again. The State Ethics Commission will send those out on April 1, and they are due back May 15. Late statements are fined per day, and the commission does follow through on that so he encouraged board members to return them as soon as possible.

Mr. Ceponis then congratulated Ms. Ritz on her new job in the private sector, and thanked her for her work at the Trust. Beyond that, staff are busy generating new grant agreements and managing open grants. Mr. Ceponis also stated that he has a scheduled, upcoming meeting with the commissioner to discuss updates on the COVID-19 funded projects.

Staff are currently considering options for replacing our database, a project that was previously begun by Ms. Guzzo. Working with the Department of Community Affairs' IT department, the Trust plans to bring in outside experts to assist with the transition by the end of the year. Staff have spent an increased amount of time troubleshooting the existing database, which is not surprising given its age.

Staff members also recently used personal time to go to Washington, DC for Advocacy Day. Alongside representatives from Preservation New Jersey and others, staff met with New Jersey's members of Congress to answer questions regarding historic preservation issues relevant to the state. The trip was taken without affiliation or funding from state agencies.

Registration is now live for our annual New Jersey History and Historic Preservation Conference, scheduled to take place on June 17 and 18 of this year. Friends of New Jersey Heritage is soliciting sponsorships, as the conference pays for itself and does not utilize additional state monies. Mr. Ceponis hopes all present at today's meeting will be able to attend and noted that June 18th will be the main day for sessions, keynote speakers, and the closing reception. He directed those present towards the new conference website to find all details on sessions and logistical information.

Mr. Linsday then asked if all board members are up to date on ethics training. Mr. Ceponis responded that they should be, but that he will double check his records. Mr. Ceponis added that he will send out the most recent copy of the ethics rules, along with the Ethics Commission's outside activity form to report all activity. He added that standing recusals, organizations, and all projects board members are involved in should go before the Ethics Commission.

Ms. Kelly asked about the status of current board appointments. Mr. Ceponis responded that three board members have been reappointed: Ms. Kelly, Mr. Miller, and Ms. Foster. Three additional were approved by the previous governor but not yet heard by judiciary so the appointments remain outstanding and the process will restart under the new governor. Over the next couple months, Mr. Ceponis plans to reach out to those appointed to begin resubmittal paperwork. Another person, who wasn't on the earlier list of appointments, is interested and their paperwork will be included as well. The Department of Community Affairs has been kept updated on this situation during Mr. Ceponis' weekly reports. All except four board members are currently sitting on expired terms.

Ms. Stender asked how the reception was for historic preservation in DC. Mr. Ceponis explained that those who went met with some of the members of Congress. Ms. Alemy described the broad bipartisan support staff encountered, with many of New Jersey's congressional members already co-signing or sponsoring bills relevant to historic preservation. Ms. Stender thanked the staff.

Report of Department of Community Affairs
Ms. Fischetti stated that she'd encountered an error with the conference website. Mr. Ceponis and Ms. Parker confirmed that it was an issue with DCA's servers and they have been working to rectify the problem. Ms. Fischetti stated that she has several new employees who are planning to attend the conference this year, and they might be able to provide additional assistance with tasks on those days.

Ms. Fischetti stated that Main Street New Jersey will open up another grant round on April 7, with funds available to Main Street New Jersey-designated districts only. Because funding was cut in half this fiscal year from $1.5 million to $750,000, they are offering grants using a tiered approach to evenly distribute funds. Grants of up to $100,000 will be available for those who did not receive grants last year, and up to $20,000 grants will be available to those who did receive funding last year.

Mr. Ceponis stated that because the New Jersey Historic Trust's grants are limited to nonprofits and government-owned resources only, he would like to schedule a meeting with Ms. Fischetti to discuss Main Street's preservation work with privately owned buildings. Mr. Ceponis met with a representative from the Economic Development Authority yesterday and they would like to explore a possible connection between EDA, Main Street New Jersey, and the New Jersey Historic Trust. Ms. Fischetti agreed she is interested in cross-pollinating between the three programs. She explained that applicants are local nonprofits that run the Main Street program, downtown management organizations, and they disburse the awarded money out to the private organizations for façade, rehab work, and building purchases. That could be an arrangement that works for the NJHT as well. Ms. Fischetti would also like to discuss Main Street's façade improvement guidelines, a document appended to their application explaining SOI standards could use updating, and Mr. Ceponis agreed to help with that process.

Report of Department of Environmental Protection
No report.

Report of Department of Treasury
Mr. White stated he did not have a report for this quarter but can provide a more formal introduction. He is the assistant state treasurer. Mr. White described his past work with historic preservation and stated that he is honored to be on the board. He offered to contribute to the Main Street meetings, or anything else that he can do to help with funding concerns, ongoing work and new ideas. Mr. Ceponis offered to send him a copy of our bylaws and other background information on the New Jersey Historic Trust.

Some additional discussion occurred regarding Main Street funding.

Reports of the Standing Committees

- **Executive Committee**
  Mr. Lindsay summarized the topics discussed at the committee's most recent meeting: general staffing and staffing related to the conference.

- **Report from the Grants & Loans Committee**
  Ms. Foster welcomed Mr. White to the board. She then reviewed the Grants and Loans meeting memo in the packet to the Board. There were nine requests for extensions, all reviewed by the committee. Ms. Stender asked if she needed to recuse from Fanwood due to her previous work experience. Ms. Foster responded that she did not need to recuse as long as she is not presently involved in the project in any capacity. Ms. Foster presented the following requests for extensions and major changes:

  *Requests for Extension and Request for Major Change: **

  Grantee: Washington Township Land Trust of Morris County, Inc.
  Project: Obadiah LaTourette Grist & Sawmill (German Valley Historic District)
  Grant Award No.: 2021.0026, 2022.0020, & 2023.2063

  Grantee: Middlesex County Division of History and Historic Preservation
  Project: Cornelius Low House
  Grant Award No.: 2023.0083

  Grantee: Atlantic City
  Project: Atlantic City Fire Houses 6 and 9
  Grant Award No.: 2024.0011

  Grantee: Lower Township
  Project: Judge Nathaniel Foster House
  Grant Award No.: 2024.1030

  Grantee: High Bridge Borough
  Project: Solitude House
  Grant Award No.: 2023.0059

  Grantee: Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum
  Project: Reasoner-True House
  Grant Award No.: 2022.0002

  Grantee: City of Perth Amboy
  Project: Perth Amboy City Hall
  Grant Award No.: 2023.0029

  Grantee: Borough of Fanwood
  Project: Fanwood Railroad Station Complex
  Grant Award No.: 2022.0052

  Grantee: Mercer County Park Commission
  Project: Pleasant Valley Historic District (Howell Living History/Hunter Road Bridge)
  Grant Award No.: 2023.0077

  Following some discussion , all nine requests were recommended for approval by the Grants & Loans Committee. Ms. Kelly moved, Ms. Stender seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Foster then presented the following applications for the Discover New Jersey License Plate Grant funds.

*Discover NJ License Plate Grants**

Project: Millville Army Air Field Historic District
Applicant: Millville Army Air Field Museum
Recommended Award: $7,500

Project: Sandy Hook Lighthouse Keepers Quarters
Applicant: Sandy Hook Foundation, Inc.
Recommended Award: $7,500

Project: East Jersey Old Town Village
Applicant: Preservation New Jersey
Recommended Award: $7,500

Ms. Stender requested further information on the East Jersey Old Town Village. Ms. Stender then moved, and Ms. Fischetti seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Foster then presented the following Revolving Loan request:

*Revolving Loan Program**

Applicant: Monmouth Boat Club, Redbank, Monmouth County
Recommended Loan: $280,000

Some discussion ensued around the reason for the request and the public accessibility of the resource, given that the club is a membership-only organization. Mr. Ceponis noted that the funds cannot be used as a match for the Trust's regular grant program. The money would be used to replace pilings in the river in order to raise the building. The scope of work has been reviewed by HPO, DEP, and the Trust and has been found to meet the standards. Ms. Stender proposed including language in the agreement that would require them to increase public accessibility after work is complete. Mr. Alessandrine requested evidence that public access has already been increased. Ms. Boggs noted that their $750,000 grant with the Trust includes an easement that will require 2 days per year of public engagement and monitoring by the Trust for the next 30 years. Ms. Foster offered that ramping up social media and advertising during their multiyear closure could protect current membership and build off on recent news coverage of the ice boat races they were able to offer due to this year's extended winter. Ms. Kelly mentioned offering local residents access to classes or other local events over the summer. Mr. Ceponis clarified that they already have some public access but need to be aware of the importance of public access to the Trust. The loan agreement will go through EDA so we could look into adding something to the agreement there. The boat club requested a 15-to-20-year loan; however, the Trust's loans are typically for 10 years. Mr. Ceponis encouraged approval of our standard loan timeline. Ms. Kelly and Ms. Foster agreed. Ms. Foster motioned for approval of the revolving loan, with a 10-year payback and a prime rate to be determined at the time that the deal is struck, half of prime or no more than 4 percent, which is the Trust's standard amount. Public outreach will be encouraged. Ms. Kelly seconded. All voted in favor.

- **Acquisitions and Easements**

  Mr. Miller stated that there were three applications for perpetual easements.

  - Boxwood Hall, 65 Haddon Ave, Haddonfield, Camden County

    Mr. Miller presented Boxwood Hall for approval and asked if there were any recusals. There were none. Mr. Miller made a motion to accept an easement on Boxwood Hall. He noted that because the recommendation for approval comes from the committee, no second is needed. All voted to accept the easement, no recusals. Motion passed.

  - 57 Market Street and 75 Carpenter Street, Salem, Salem County

    Mr. Miller presented the two properties in Salem City for approval.

    A discussion ensued about the City of Salem's status as a transitional city working with the Department of Community Affairs. The department had encouraged the city to sell off the properties. They have 30 or more sales planned that may be submitted to the Trust for easements in the future. Mr. Ceponis and Ms. Boggs will work with local government services to resolve issues governing the sale of properties. A second meeting is planned with the mayor of Salem to clarify state guidance. HPO has agreed that because this is a dense historic district, easements can be issued for facades only, leaving side and rear elevations open to modification as needed. Mr. Ceponis noted that a third easement submitted by the city is not being put up for a vote because its current conditions cannot be assessed at this time due to plant overgrowth on the lot. The two easements whose conditions were visible for assessment are presented here.

    Continuing his report, Mr. Miller raised the issue of single package endowment fees for multiple buildings, a recommendation of the committee. Discussion ensued over the relevance of buyers' eventual use of the properties, Salem's financial situation, buildings' proximity to one another, issues of easement compliance. $7,000 for two properties was proposed rather than $7,000 each. The flexibility of endowment fee details required by Trust guidelines, the City of Salem's relationships with developers, mechanics of fee payment, and the State of New Jersey's affordable housing requirements were then further discussed. Ms. Fischetti noted that her office is preparing a master plan for Salem, and also that the city is a Main Street District.

    Mr. Miller presented 57 Market Street and 75 Carpenter Street for approval with a single fee, easements covering the front facades only. Ms. Stender moved, Ms. Foster seconded. None recused, all voted in favor. Motion passed.

    Mr. Miller noted that the $100,000 purchase of an easement for Point Breeze from D&R Greenway is still out there, and they are waiting for other aspects of the project to close by end of year.

- **Legislation & Policy/Strategic Planning**
  Ms. Stender stated she has nothing to report at this time.

  Mr. Ceponis detailed two bills that the Trust was invited to comment on, also summarized in his quarterly report. First, New Jersey State Bill A2391, or S149, proposes to create a New Jersey state license plate honoring the nation's 250th anniversary. The primary sponsor, Assemblyman Moen, reached out to the DCA, who reached out to the Trust, who provided comment regarding concern over the relationship between the new plate and the already extant Discover NJ license plate. Discussion ensued over how funds raised by this new license plate would be used for "Revolutionary-era buildings." Historical Commission has provided comment that this funding for preservation work should not fall under them but instead should be overseen by the Trust. This could mean increased funding for heritage tourism, or another use. The bill is currently out of committee in the Assembly, and waiting to be heard by the Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism, and Historic Preservation Committee. The Trust has provided comments to the primary sponsor, and also through DCA to the governor's office. Regarding the second bill, New Jersey State Bill A2388, or S552, a proposal by the Department of Travel and Tourism to develop a new website listing all historic sites, districts, and historic markers in New Jersey. The Trust provided comment that our Journey Through Jersey website lists visitor-ready heritage sites, and HPO has their Lucy GIS mapping of all historic sites in the state. The majority of National Register-listed sites are privately owned and would likely not welcome public visitors, but perhaps the bill can be revised to complement existing websites.

  Ms. Stender asked for information on cosponsors of the two bills. Discussion ensued regarding updating the relationship between Travel & Tourism and Journey Through Jersey under the new administration. Ms. Stender proposed bill revisions requiring Travel & Tourism to link to our site, moving the bill without creating new administrative staffing layers. In previous discussion, Assemblyman Moen pointed out that Journey Through Jersey does not focus on upcoming events; the Trust lists events when provided. Ms. Foster pointed out that updating event listings will require staff dedicated to continuous dialogue with multiple agencies and organizations, quarterly updates to NRHP listed sites that currently aren't monitored beyond HPO. If there is legislative support for increasing staffing to track this information, that would be something new. Ms. Kelly expressed appreciation to the bill's sponsors for their support of historic preservation. Discussion ensued over additional ideas for cross-agency collaboration and publicity efforts that could be encouraged by the new administration, the need to get new staff up to speed on current agencies and functions. Mr. Ceponis will reach out to Travel and Tourism, and also to Assemblyman Moen's new chief of staff. Ms. Stender and Mr. White agreed to participate in the effort. Ms. Kelly and Mr. Alessandrine offered to attend heritage tourism meetings as well.

- **Education and Outreach**
  Mr. Alessandrine reported that a delay is expected with the new administration transition regarding the HPC commissioner's training bill status. Release of the new training plan is anticipated in the fall, and Mr. Ceponis is scheduled to meet with HPO in April to produce curriculum and rules for review by DCA's Legal. Local Planning Officials Group and Rutgers' Mid-Atlantic Center for the Humanities, MARCH program, will likely be providers of the course, among others. Local planning officials are currently offered online training 10 months per year plus one session in person at the League for Zoning and Planning Board member training courses. MARCH program offers similar HPC training that is affordable and popular. The Trust will be advocating to change that one-and-done requirement for training, and institute requirements for short refresher courses upon reappointment by any HPC.

Trust staff have suggested a revised approach to annual applicant workshops, replacing one comprehensive live workshop with a shortened live presentation of basic information, followed by individual pre-recorded modules covering information relevant to each of the different programs: MCRP, tourism, HSM, capital. Office hours will continue. This structure has been adopted by colleagues in Pennsylvania, and Trust staff conferred with them. Future ideas include potentially partnering with the League, an idea that will be revisited.

Ms. Foster thanked Mr. Alessandrine for his work and asked if any votes were needed. Mr. Alessandrine responded there are no votes at this time.

- **Fiscal Oversight**
  Nothing to report.

Unfinished Business
None.

New Business
Mr. Alessandrine reviewed recent congressionally directed federal spending, noting that in the past few years the House has not supported any historic preservation projects or museums, particularly anything of a commemorative nature. Federal matches for Trust funding could be run through New Jersey's two U.S. Senators, or through Housing and Urban Development for low- to moderate-income-relevant work in municipalities near historic sites. Most federal funding for historic preservation currently runs through the Department of the Interior, but annual total is capped at $500,000 while other types of programs receive $20 million to $40 million. Hopefully, that will change in the future.

Public Comment
One member of the public, John Flanagan, works for a company that received a grant this year. He had no comment. The board thanked him for his attendance.

Adjournment
Ms. Kelly thanked Ms. Ritz for her work at the Trust, Ms. Ritz thanked her. All on the Board wished her well.

Ms. Stender moved to adjourn. Mr. Miller seconded. All were in favor. The meeting stood adjourned at 11:39 AM.