

**NEW JERSEY HISTORIC TRUST**  
**Wednesday, June 19, 2024, 10 AM**  
**Trenton Masonic Lodge, Mercer County**  
**(In-Person and Virtual Attendance)**

**Call to Order**

Mr. Lindsay called the meeting to order at 10:00 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: Deborah Kelly, Kenneth Miller, Peter Lindsay, Linda Stender, Janet Foster, Chris Perks, Deena Greble (representing Robert Tighue, Treasury), Troy Joseph Simmons (virtual), Gina Fishetti (DCA, virtual), Meme Omogbai (virtual)

NJHT staff present: Alexis Alemy, Judy Murphy, Stephanie Kraut, Shannon Bremer, Glenn Ceponis, Ashley Parker, Kristen Downing, Carrie Hogan, Jennifer Boggs

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the March 13 meeting were presented for approval and comment. Mr. Perks moved and Ms. Foster seconded the motion to approve the minutes from March 13. All voted in favor of approving the minutes.

**Public Comment**

No public present.

**Communications**

Mr. Ceponis noted that all communications were included in the Board packet sent via email prior to the meeting. This included several news articles. Mr. Ceponis called out two articles. The first was about the USS New Jersey's move back to Camden, scheduled for June 20. He informed the board of the staff's visit to the dry dock to see the exterior preservation work being performed on the ship's hull. The second was about the Franklin Street School's ribbon cutting ceremony in Cape May. Mr. Ceponis stated that the ceremony was very well done and that he spoke on behalf of the Trust. The completed project was very well done. There were over 200 people in attendance for the ceremony.

**Reports of Officers**

*Chair*

Mr. Lindsay reported that he attended the ribbon cutting at the Burlington County Prison and met several local and state politicians. He also attended a webinar sponsored by the Historical Commission

titled “Raising Public Awareness of the Public Value of History”. Mr. Lindsay stated that the webinar detailed plans for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Revolution.

Mr. Lindsay then thanked Ms. Foster, Mr. Perks, and Ms. Kelly for volunteering to serve on this year’s nominating committee. He also thanked Trust staff for their hard work and preparation for this year’s conference. He felt it was very well attended with excellent sessions and tours.

*Vice-Chair (Absent)*

No report.

*Treasurer*

Mr. Miller noted that there was 1 variance in the year-to-date budget with the charge account for IT being increased. When comparing the budget between FY23 and FY24, the only difference was a \$130,000 increase in staffing funds due to the increase in staff members as well as movements of some staff members from temporary to full-time. Ms. Hogan noted that fringe benefits also increased which impacted staffing funds.

Mr. Miller noted that the CBT availability for this grant round appears to be around \$13-13.5 million according to current projections.

*Secretary*

Ms. Stender did not have a report; however, she did extend her gratitude to the staff for organizing a successful conference.

### **Executive Director’s Report**

Mr. Ceponis reported that both his report and the staff report were included in the Board packet for the meeting.

Mr. Ceponis stated that the Acting Commissioner has now been confirmed as Commissioner. Our main liaison with her office is Deputy Commissioner Kate McDonnell. Mr. Ceponis has bi-weekly meetings with her. At the meetings, he provides her with updates on what is going on with the Trust.

Mr. Ceponis confirmed that our legislative liaison is keeping tabs on our bill which cleans up our enabling legislation and board member recommendations/appointments. The Senate and General Assembly are trying to move forward our current bill with the hopes of it being approved before the State budget passage and the recess for the summer. Mr. Ceponis is unsure if that will happen in that time frame. Mr. Ceponis also added that he spoke with Senator Singleton at the Burlington County Prison ribbon cutting about the clean-up bill. He stated that in their conversation, Senator Singleton expressed his support and advocacy for the bill. Our amended Revolving Loan regulations have made it through the comment period without comments. We are now in the process of completing the Notice of Readoption with Amendments with DCA legal.

Mr. Ceponis met with Mr. Jeffrey Everett, the new Executive Director of the Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT). Mr. Ceponis stated that Mr. Everett expressed interest in more collaboration between the various arms of GSPT including individual sites receiving support from multiple agencies to advance multiple goals the site may have. Mr. Ceponis alerted Mr. Everett to the fact that we regularly receive upwards of \$22 million in requests but currently can only grant out \$13 million every year. Mr. Ceponis is hopeful that having an Executive Director at GSPT will help with communications with Treasury including getting better and quicker updates on CBT funding numbers.

Mr. Ceponis reported that the staff has been incredibly busy with the present application season. He stated that staff levels have made this very challenging, especially with two vacancies. Mr. Ceponis stated that 9 applicants were contacted for interviews to fill the vacant positions. He hopes that the vacancies will be filled soon.

Mr. Ceponis reported that the conference was very successful. He explained to the Board that there was a small snag on the second day because our keynote speaker was unable to attend in person due to flight cancellations. She was, however, able to attend virtually. The latest numbers reflected about 500 people in attendance. Mr. Ceponis stated that he felt like all the tours and sessions were well received by the attendees.

Mr. Ceponis further reported that the Trust has been continuously working with EDA, the Main Street New Jersey Program, and HPO. He added that HPO staff will be presenting alongside Trust staff at the League of Municipalities conference this upcoming November.

### **Report of Department of Community Affairs**

Ms. Fishetti reported that the Main Street New Jersey program is in the middle of a new district application round. They received 9 applications. She thanked Mr. Ceponis for being willing to serve on the subcommittee reviewing the applications. Ms. Fishetti believes that they will be announcing the new districts in July with each receiving a \$50,000 start-up grant. Ms. Fishetti added that they are anticipating being able to award large grants this upcoming fiscal year to Main Street New Jersey programs and they were able to provide a large amount of funding this fiscal year as well.

Currently, Ms. Fishetti and the Main Street New Jersey program are assisting with community development grants. They are working with Salem City on a Master Plan for the city as well as finishing up a report for Camden.

Ms. Fishetti also sits on the Capital City Reinvestment committee. She stated that more attention is being given to economic development, specifically of the downtown Trenton area. A report should be forthcoming.

### **Report of Department of Environmental Protection**

No report.

### **Report of Department of Treasury**

No report.

### **Reports of the Standing Committees**

- **Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee did not meet this last cycle.

- **Report from the Grants & Loans Committee**

Ms. Foster provided an update from the Grants & Loans Committee, including the following extension requests which are further detailed in the Grants & Loans Committee formal report. Ms. Foster asked if there were any recusals. Hearing none, Ms. Foster recommended that the extensions be approved.

*Requests for Extension:*

Grantee: Camden County Board of Commissioners  
Project: Ebenezer Hopkins House  
Grant Award No.: 2021.0088  
Municipality: Haddon Township  
County: Camden

Grantee: City of Jersey City  
Project: Fickens Warehouse (Ward F Survey)  
Grant Award No.: 2021.M077  
Municipality: Jersey City  
County: Hudson

Grantee: Morris County Historical Society  
Project: Jacob Ford Powder Mill Site  
Grant Award No.: 2018.0016  
Municipality: Morristown  
County: Morris

Grantee: Millstone Township Historic Preservation Commission  
Project: Clarksburg Methodist Episcopal Church  
Grant Award No.: 2021.H008  
Municipality: Millstone Township  
County: Monmouth

The committee recommend the extensions. The motion was seconded by Ms. Stender. All voted in favor of approving the extensions.

Mr. Ceponis provided an update on an open grant with Princeton Nurseries. He stated that pre-qualifications have been completed. The bid period was extended; however, the project should be awarded in the near future with the hope that construction can begin by September 1<sup>st</sup>. Ms. Stender asked what the project was. Mr. Ceponis gave a brief history of the nursery and explained the project is focused on the propagation house. There are a lot of structural issues as well as asbestos in the glazing which not only increased the prices but also presented the grantee with some big challenges.

*Discover New Jersey History License Plate*

Ms. Foster reported that three applications were submitted. The license plate grant subcommittee met and recommended the following project for funding.

Applicant: Borough of Tinton Falls Historic Preservation Commission  
Project: Interpretive Signage at the Historic Crawford House  
Recommendation: \$5,000

The Grants & Loans committee recommended funding the above application. Ms. Stender seconded the motion and all voted in favor of approving funding for the application.

Ms. Foster announced that we received 99 applications requesting nearly \$23 million with Capital Level 2 applications having the largest request amount with approximately \$18 million in

requests. Ms. Foster stated that there are a lot of important sites asking large grants. She added that evaluations would be taking place the week of September 9<sup>th</sup> if any board members were interested in attending to listen in on the evaluations.

Ms. Omogbai commended the staff on their ability to get as many applications as we did. She stated that in the past, there were years where we didn't receive a lot of applications. Receiving such a large amount this year says a lot about how much effort the staff has put into outreach and education.

#### *Cultural Trust*

Ms. Foster provided an update regarding future Cultural Trust funding. The Grants & Loans Committee decided that it would be best to wait until our next scheduled grant round (FY27) instead of running a supplemental round now using \$300,000 in Cultural Trust funds to close a funding gap between the Historic Trust allotment and the Historical Commission caused by a diversion of funds during the pandemic to the Historical Commission and add this amount to the total amount we can award during then. Mr. Ceponis explained that we had over \$1 million in requests last year so it would be a burden on the staff to take in this many applications, complete site visits, and end up only awarding around 10 grants. In addition, it would be unfair to the 30-40 applicants that we would likely get. With that being said, Mr. Ceponis and the Grants & Loans Committee believed that it would make more sense to apply it to our next round. Mr. Ceponis mentioned that it is variable how much we may have to make up so it could be more or less depending on what the Council on the Arts and the NJ Historical Commission award in their subsequent rounds.

#### *Revolving Loan Fund*

Mr. Ceponis stated that our regs expired in May; however, since they have been in the comment period, it extends the lifespan of the current regs until the fall. The amendments will even the playing field for non-profits and municipalities, making it more appealing to municipalities than in the past. The changes that have been made also update any fees and interest rate percentages. Since there were no comments, the paperwork has been submitted to DCA's legal department to publish them. The Board must vote on approval of the new regs before they can become active. Ms. Stender moved and Ms. Kelly seconded the motion to approve the updated regs. A poll vote was required:

Deborah Kelly- Yes  
Kenneth Miller- Yes  
Peter Lindsay- Yes  
Linda Stender- Yes  
Janet Foster- Yes  
Chris Perks- Yes  
Deena Greble (representing Robert Tighue, Treasury)- Yes  
Troy Joseph Simmons (virtual)- Yes  
Gina Fishetti (DCA, virtual)- Yes  
Meme Omogbai (virtual)- Yes

The following Trustees were absent: Kate Marcopul (HPO), Anne Salvator, Lisa Easton

After voting was completed, Ms. Foster noted that there has been a huge increase in site visitation due in part to the success of Journey Through Jersey's new advertising program. Ms. Parker will be meeting with the advertising team to go over a few small things as well as update the ads. Both Ms. Foster and Ms. Parker agreed that the marketing plan has made Journey Through Jersey more well-known and increased the total number of member sites to 200 sites. Ms. Stender asked what the nominating

process and criteria for listing on Journey Through Jersey are. Ms. Parker explained that the main criterion for listing is visitor readiness. She further added that organizations can either nominate themselves or the public can nominate a site. Maeve Kelly, who is working with Ms. Parker on the website, approves applications and then works on getting their information on the website.

In wrapping up her report, Ms. Foster thanked her fellow board members for sponsoring the conference and pointed out their ad in the program book. Mr. Ceponis distributed physical program books to each of the board members.

- **Acquisitions and Easements**

No report.

- **Legislation & Policy/Strategic Planning**

Ms. Stender reported that there were no huge updates since the last meeting except that we will hopefully have a date soon regarding the hearing of our bill. Mr. Ceponis asked if it would be helpful for the new DCA legislative liaisons to be involved. Ms. Stender stated that it would be extremely helpful and expressed that it will be great having another set of hands involved to push the legislation along.

No big updates since last meeting other than that they will have a date soon which is progress

- **Education and Outreach**

The Education and Outreach Committee submitted a written report. Mr. Lindsay summarized the report stating that the Committee has been working on the HPC trainings that they would like to hold in the future. Mr. Ceponis added that he met with Rutgers MARCH a few months ago and part of his discussions with them involved the possibility of co-hosting the HPC trainings. The hope is that we would be able to organize a virtual training for the fall and an in-person one organized for next spring.

- **Fiscal Oversight**

No report.

### **Unfinished Business**

None.

### **New Business**

Mr. Ceponis reminded the board that our annual meeting will be taking place on September 25. The location is still to be determined, but it would likely be a hybrid meeting since that is when we announce our grant awards.

Mr. Ceponis added that he was contacted by two people who let him know that they had been nominated by the Governor to fill our Board vacancies. He stated that it appears there may be more in progress as well. There were some concerns that there would potentially be another representative from Hunterdon County which would raise the total to three representatives from the county.

Mr. Ceponis provided an update regarding ethics training for the board members. He stated that the training can be completed either in-person after a board meeting or virtually. Some discussion occurred regarding the requirements, what was involved in the training, and how often it would need to be completed. Mr. Ceponis confirmed that it needed to be completed every 3 years; however, he is still trying to confirm with the Ethics Department if they can complete it on a virtual platform. The Board expressed their preference for virtual training.

Mr. Ceponis also reminded the board that we will be going over to the State House for a tour of the recently completed restoration after we adjourn.

**Public Comment**

None.

**Adjournment**

Mr. Perks moved and Mr. Miller seconded a motion to adjourn at 11:14 AM. The motion passed.