

**NEW JERSEY HISTORIC TRUST**  
**Wednesday, March 12, 2025**  
**Board of Trustees Quarterly Meeting**

**Virtual via Zoom**

**Call to Order**

Mr. Lindsay called the meeting to order at 10:02 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: Janet Foster, Peter Lindsay, Kate Marcopul (DEP), Ken Miller, Jody Alessandrine, Lisa Easton, Robert Tighue (Treasury), Gina Fischetti (DCA), Chris Perks, Deborah Kelly, Linda Stender, Meme Omogbai

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

**Approval of Minutes**

The December 2024 Minutes were presented to the Board for approval and comment. Ms. Foster moved to approve minutes and Ms. Stender seconded the motion. Mr. Alessandrine abstained from voting. All others voted in favor of approving the minutes.

**Public Comment**

No members from the public.

**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.

**Reports of Officers**

*Chair*

Mr. Lindsay reported that he and Mr. Ceponis were invited by the Governor and the First Lady to Drumthwacket for the kick-off of RevNJ 250<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Lindsay reported that he attended a ribbon cutting at the Trent House with Ms. Foster. He also attended a check-presentation at the Wallace House and Old Dutch Parsonage in Somerville with Ms. Stender. Mr. Lindsay noted that the architects had a very nice and technical presentation on the work to be done on the house.

Mr. Lindsay updated that he reached out to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) but will comment further when Dr. Marcopul presents the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Report.

*Vice-chair*

No report at this time.

*Treasurer*

Mr. Miller reports that we are well in budget. The State lowered estimate of benefits by 10% giving more flexibility in the annual budget; however, projections for the Corporate Business Tax are down 4% to \$13 million.

*Secretary*

No report at this time.

**Executive Director's Report**

Mr. Ceponis thanked the staff for their hard work and welcomed Mr. Alessandrine to the Board officially. The board congratulated Mr. Alessandrine.

Mr. Ceponis reported that staff has been very busy. The Governor signed the appropriation bill for the 2024 grant awards in late January so staff has been preparing grant agreements. They have also been occupied with conference planning and the COVID funding. Mr. Ceponis added that the staff have been running virtual workshops for applicants since we are starting a new grant application period.

Mr. Ceponis reported that there were outstanding Historic Trust-related bills in the legislature, one being the "clean up bill" that will take the New Jersey Historic Trust (NJHT) officially out of the Department of State, which had passed in the Senate and committees in Assembly but awaits a full Assembly vote. The other bill is the HPC Training Bill which passed in the Assembly and out of committee in the Senate and awaits a full Senate vote.

The Trust is working with Rutgers MARCH on a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) workshop which will be taking place on March 15th in Moorestown. There are 57 people signed up and NJHT staff member Judy Murphy will be presenting.

The League of Municipalities reached out to Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to do an issue on the 250<sup>th</sup>, and the Trust was asked to write an article. NJHT staff members wrote an article which is under review, and NJHT staff are hoping for it to be published. Trust staff hopes to present at November's League of Municipalities conference. The presentation topic is undecided, but some ideas include Main Street USA and a session to inform municipalities how historic preservation can benefit them. Mr. Ceponis asked the board if they are still in support of the Trust having their own booth at League of Municipalities. Ms. Kelly supported this and added that many board members attend the League of Municipalities as well. Other board members agreed and supported NJHT having an independent booth.

Historic Preservation Advocacy Day was a week ago, it was organized by Preservation NJ. Although typically in-person in Washington DC, the meetings were held virtually. Three Trust staff members took a day off of work to attend and advocate for historic preservation as private citizens. Staff member, Alexis Alemy, who was involved in the meetings stated that they received bipartisan support. Conversation ensued regarding concerns about the current Congress and how likely support is with budget cuts, hiring freezes, and staff cuts. Ms. Alemy stated that overall the meetings went well and seemed positive.

The Historic Preservation Office (HPO) provided a fact sheet showing impact of federal funding on preservation. Ms. Kelly asked if it could be uploaded to our website and shared on social media. Mr. Ceponis confirmed that the Trust would share on their website and socials.

Mr. Ceponis reminded the Board that they are to complete two trainings for the State Ethics Commission. He will be sending out links to the training to all Board members by the end of the week. Mr. Ceponis asked the Board to send certificates of completion from the trainings. All Board members were reminded to fill out and submit a Standard Recusal form to update the current record. The Board should be on the look out for the Financial Disclosure Statement from the State Ethics Commission as those need to be submitted by May 15<sup>th</sup>. This is a hard deadline and there is a \$50 per day fine for not completing it in time.

Mr. Ceponis reported on the annual New Jersey History and Historic Preservation Conference which will be held in Burlington County on June 4 and 5, 2025. Amy Bruni is the featured speaker for day one, and a session on day two will discuss paranormal aspects of historic sites, which is anticipated to have a good turn out and reach new audiences. Mr. Ceponis encouraged the board to reach out to people to see if anyone they know may be interested in sponsoring the conference. Mr. Ceponis asked if there are any questions. Seeing none, Mr. Ceponis thanked the staff and board.

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

Ms. Fischetti stated that DCA did not have any updates on general federal funding freezing but that they are concerned with funding for housing. Ms. Fischetti reported that Main Street New Jersey is in the middle of a new grant round that has received an allocation of \$1.5million. So far, they have received a good number of applications with the requests being close to the allocation limit. The grant round will close on March 17<sup>th</sup> and they are hoping to be able to fully fund all requests.

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

Dr. Marcopul updated the Board on Advocacy Week in Washington DC where she met with National Park Service (NPS), National Trust, and ACHP staff members. Two weeks ago the White House removed several members of the ACHP and several members resigned. Currently they do not have a Chair or a Vice Chair. This means they can't do anything that requires voting, they cannot make program comments, they cannot comment on termination or foreclosure situations under Section 106, and are very limited because of bylaws. The White House is working on appointments for the ACHP. Dr. Marcopul provided updates on the council on Environmental Quality rescinding the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) rules, so

each federal agency is looking at their own NEPA rules. Many agencies were concerned with how this will affect Section 106 since NEPA is considered the umbrella environmental policy legislation and Section 106 fits under that umbrella. Dr. Marcopul updated the Board that the ACHP Program Comment the Board had expressed concerns for did not have any agencies using the comment, but four federal agencies expressed interest in the comment. Dr. Marcopul stated she would advise the Board on the Program Comment if she hears anything further about it.

Dr. Marcopul stated that generally federal agencies are preparing for reductions in workforce and that all who attended Advocacy Week were concerned with the Federal funding freeze. Although the Historic Preservation Fund Grants that directly fund state historic preservation offices and tribal historic preservation offices were unfrozen. The NPS commented that they are preparing for significant cuts and lay-offs and provided more details into how they are reevaluating their budgets. Dr. Marcopul provided context on how the Executive Order cutting provisions of the National Energy Emergency could affect Section 106 regulations, which could result in seven-day turnarounds for HPO reports. There is a larger coalition that is supporting a tax credit enhancement bill which contains provisions to make it easier for smaller projects to work with the Federal Rehab Tax Credit changing it from a five-year period to a one-year period. Dr. Marcopul reported that reauthorization of the Preservation Fund was a main topic during Advocacy Week. The Preservation Fund provides funding to HPO's, certain grant programs, and tribal grants, but it expired in September.

Dr. Marcopul reported that the new administration in Washington has asked federal agencies to report on any public facing Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives or information. It was to the understanding of HPO that the administration used a certain AI keyword search to identify any material on their federal partners websites that fit within those DEI umbrella terms. That AI Keyword search had consequences such as terms like "biodiversity" or the "diversity of playground equipment" being flagged even though those projects do not fall under DEI specific projects. Dr. Marcopul advised that the NJHPO had begun an effort to harvest information that existed on federal websites prior to that information being purged, so if the Board is unable to find particular publications or guidance to reach out to her as HPO should have it saved and downloaded elsewhere.

The question was raised if this AI searching scan would be used on State websites and inquired if the NJHT should look at where targeted words appear in their materials and consider removing them or change them in advance. Board members made a point that this could have far larger consequences. Board members stated that in the NJHT grant program we look for underrepresented history and that has brought up great research. This view was shared by a number of Board members, stating that the NJHT's responsibility is to the State of New Jersey. It was strongly stated that NJHT must remain true to its purpose, ethics, mission, and the needs of the State, which should be the top priority, rather than appeasing political whims. The Board was reminded that New Jersey is in an election year and depending on who wins the Governor's race that the new Governor could choose to adhere to federal government directives. Ms. Easton asked how many people remain on the ACHP. Dr. Marcopul reported that

they have a quorum, but without a Chair and Vice Chair, they cannot vote. However, the ACHP will hold a business meeting in March.

Mr. Ceponis asked if the budget that was just passed included anything for preservation. Dr. Marcopul stated that they have not heard about what provisions the bill contains but expect an update within a few days.

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

Mr. Tighue reported that the Department of Property Management and Construction is working on Revolutionary War sites. Those projects were reviewed by HPO. Some projects are the Old Barracks, Princeton Battlefield, the Proprietary House etc., but altogether there are nine properties and all have bids out. Those projects are estimated to be complete by mid 2025 to early 2026. The hope is for these sites to improve tourism in the state.

Mr. Tighue asked Mr. Ceponis if Morven had come in for a Trust grant. Mr. Ceponis stated that the Trust has worked with Morven in the past, but the 2025 grant applications remain open until the end of April.

Ms. Foster asked if all of the projects met Secretary of Interior (SOI) Standards. Mr. Tighue stated that all of the nine projects were reviewed by NJHPO, so they should be in compliance with the standards. Ms. Stender asked about the timeframe for each project. Mr. Tighue listed the nine projects and their projected completion dates.

Ms. Kelly asked if Washington's Crossing project is the Visitor's Center. Mr. Tighue clarified that the Washington's Crossing project is the Ferry House, so it is a historic structure and not the new Visitor's Center. Some conversation about the new Visitor's Center followed.

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

- **Executive Committee**

Mr. Lindsay stated that Mr. Ceponis had covered all topics in the Executive Director's Report. No comment from Mr. Lindsay.

- **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 report:

***Grantee: Town of Westfield***

***Project: Westfield Survey***

***Grant Award No.: 2022.M048***

***Grantee: Township of Berkeley***

***Project: Manitou Park School House***

***Grant Award No.: 2019.2012***

**Grantee:** *City of Burlington*  
**Project:** *William R Allen School*  
**Grant Award No.:** *2019.2037*

**Grantee:** *Crossroads of the American Revolution*  
**Project:** *Palisades Interstate Park*  
**Grant Award No.:** *2021.H028*

**Grantee:** *Friends of the Jacobus Vanderveer House*  
**Project:** *Vorhees Dutch Barn (Jacobus Vanderveer House)*  
**Grant Award No.:** *2018.0031*

**Grantee:** *Borough of Gibbsboro*  
**Project:** *John Lucas House*  
**Grant Award No.:** *2021.0040*

**Grantee:** *Save Ellis Island*  
**Project:** *Statue of Liberty National Monument, Ellis Island and Liberty Island*  
**Grant Award No.:** *2020.2057*

**Grantee:** *Friends of Historic Bernardsville*  
**Project:** *Dunster-Squibb House*  
**Grant Award No.:** *2019.2036*

**Grantee:** *Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary Frazee House, Inc.*  
**Project:** *Elizabeth and Gershom Frazee House*  
**Grant Award No.:** *2020.2056*

Ms. Foster presented NJ License Plate Fund:

**Applicant:** *Historical Society of Moorestown*  
**Project:** *Smith-Cadbury Mansion*  
**Amount Requested:** *\$4,278*

*Emergency Intervention Fund\**

**Applicant:** *Cape May County Historical and Genealogical Society*  
**Project:** *Smith Barn*  
**Amount Requested:** *\$25,300*

Ms. Foster stated that there are nine sites up for extensions and that all sites had good reason for extensions. Ms. Foster asked if there were any recusals. Ms. Easton recused herself from discussion and voting on the Westfield project. Ms. Foster moved for the Board to approve the extensions for all except Westfield. All voted in favor. Ms. Foster presented the motion to accept the extension for Westfield. Ms. Easton had recused herself from discussion and voting on this extension. All others voted in favor.

Ms. Foster reported on the Discover New Jersey License Plate Fund. The Smith Cadbury Mansion in Moorestown requested \$4,278 for vinyl banners to help promote and

commemorate the Semi-quincentennial. The committee recommended for approval. Ms. Foster asked if there were questions. Hearing none, Ms. Foster moved to approve this grant. All voted in favor.

Ms. Foster asked if Mr. Alessandrino would have conflict for the emergency intervention with the Cape May Historical and Genealogical Society. Mr. Alessandrino asked if Cape May Museum Arts Culture (MAC) board members being on the board of the Cape May Historical and Genealogical Society's board will affect him. Ms. Foster stated it would not. Mr. Alessandrino stated that he does not have any direct relationship with the project and does not need to recuse. Ms. Foster discussed the project plan and emphasized the urgency of this work. Ms. Foster asked if there were questions or if any staff had additional details the project? Mr. Ceponis stated that this request does meet requirements of the fund, and repeated it's urgency. Ms. Foster asked again if there were questions. Ms. Kelly moved for a motion to approve funding this project. Ms. Stender seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Foster asked Mr. Ceponis about the correspondence about Warren County's Bethel Meeting House and if they have received Covid money? Mr. Ceponis reported that Bethel Meeting House has been approved for Covid funding, but NJHT is working on the Grant Agreement, and the funds have not been released yet. Ms. Foster reported that there were six grant agreements of just under \$2mil approved. There are 21 applications of about \$7.8mil in applications remaining.

Ms. Foster asked Mr. Ceponis if he would like to talk about the potential special project. Mr. Ceponis reported on his visit to Asheville and the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. Mr. Ceponis attended a talk on how the city is planning for disasters and the clean up after natural disasters. Mr. Ceponis asked whether NJHT or NJHPO could award grant funds to preservation consultants for projects addressing disaster planning and post-disaster response. Ms. Stender asked if historic structures that have been placed on the register have special designation as historic assets that include any plans for natural disaster preparedness or clean-up as part of insurance? Mr. Ceponis stated he did not think that there are specific requirements from insurance companies, but some insurance focuses specifically on historic homes. Some discussion about insurance occurred. Mr. Ceponis stated he believed this type of project could help all of those who own historic properties, even those the NJHT does not interact with through grants or easements. Ms. Kelly stated that the initial contact of those facing disaster recovery would be with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) so we should alert them to what those conversations could consist of. Mr. Miller agreed that this would be very helpful and brought up the disaster the State of New Jersey faced after Hurricane Sandy hit. Ms. Foster asked if Mr. Ceponis wanted the board to approve this? Mr. Ceponis stated he would like board approval or consensus. Ms. Omogbai stated that this is a wonderful idea and thanked Mr. Ceponis for putting thought into creating a program that would be beneficial to the State. Ms. Foster asked if there were anymore questions and asked if the board approves this. Although the board does not need a vote as it is a plan, the board approved this initiative.

- **Acquisitions and Easements**

No Comment from Mr. Miller.

- **Legislation & Policy/Strategic Planning**

Ms. Stender reported that they spoke with Assemblyman Kennedy's Chief of Staff, who then reached out to Senator McKeon's office regarding the Historic Preservation Committee Training Bill and Assemblyman Lopez's office regarding the Cleanup Bill. Ms. Stender reported that they are making requests to move forward with the State Senate bill on the Historic Preservation Committee Training. Ms. Stender is still awaiting a direct answer, but states that the Senate's voting session is on March 24th. Ms. Stender is awaiting the decision of the Senate and Assembly.

- **Education and Outreach**

Mr. Lindsay welcomed Mr. Alessandrine as the newest member of the Education and Outreach Committee. Ms. Easton welcomed Mr. Alessandrine informed that there are no new reports, but the MARCH program is going forward and meeting the weekend of March 15th. Ms. Easton stated that a main focus should be outreach in order to get the word out on preservation education and the 250 celebrations.

- **Fiscal Oversight**

No comment from Mr. Miller.

### **Unfinished Business**

Ms. Easton asked if there are any effects on Certified Local Government (CLG) funding due to what is happening at the federal level. Dr. Marcopul reported that there were no updates for fiscal year 2025, but there are 2024 CLG grants that HPO is moving forward with. Dr. Marcopul reported that on Friday the resolution expires, but that legislation to fund the government and Historic Preservation fund will be voted on. Dr. Marcopul hopes to see the funds appropriated.

### **New Business**

Mr. Lindsay reminded the board about the *Readoption of N.J.A.C. 5:101 - Garden State Historic Preservation Trust Fund Grants Program*. Mr. Ceponis stated that the Trust amended the rules in 2023, but the same expiration date was kept so the current rules expire on June 5<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Ceponis recommend adopting the rules without amendments since amendments have already been made. If other amendments are needed in the future, that will not stop the board from doing so. Mr. Miller moved and Ms. Easton seconded the motion to approve the readoption of N.J.A.C. 5:101 - Garden State Historic Preservation Trust Fund Grants Program. All vote in favor. Mr. Lindsay checked to see if there was public comment, but no members from the public were present to comment. Mr. Lindsay reminded the board that the next meeting is June 25<sup>th</sup> and will be a hybrid meeting. Mr. Lindsay asked if a place has been selected to host the meeting. Mr. Ceponis stated NJHT have been talking with Craftsman Farms about hosting.

### **Public Comment**

No public comment.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Lindsay made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Ms. Foster seconded. The meeting adjourned at 11:22 AM.



