

**NEW JERSEY HISTORIC TRUST**  
**Wednesday, December 18, 2024, 10 AM**  
**Board of Trustees Quarterly Meeting**  
**Virtual**

**Call to Order:**

Mr. Lindsay called the meeting to order at 10:04 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 a quorum.

Trustees present: Lisa Easton, Janet Foster, Deborah Kelly , Peter Lindsay, Ken Miller, Troy Joseph Simmons, Linda Stender, Robert Tighue (Treasury), Kate Marcopul (DEP), Gina Fischetti (DCA)

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

**Present from the public**

Jody Alessandrine

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from September 25 were presented for approval and comment. Ms. Foster stated there was a wording issue, on page five and asked if the letter the Board gave approval to send to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation should be attached. Mr. Ceponis confirmed that we would include the Board approval letter. Ms. Stender asked if the Board would receive an update on the Board approval letter, and Dr. Marcopul confirmed they would when she gives her report.

Ms. Kelly moved, and Ms. Foster seconded the motion to approve the minutes with corrections. All voted in favor of approval.

**Public Comment**

No comment.

## **Communications**

Mr. Ceponis noted that all communications were included in the Board packet sent via email prior to the meeting. This included several new articles.

## **Reports of Officers**

### *Chair*

Mr. Lindsay stated that he attended the League of Municipalities in November and that many attendees knew of the Trust and worked with us. There were also some new people who came to our booth that hadn't worked with us before to get information about our programs. He added that our attendance at the League was positive. Mr. Lindsay thanked Ms. Foster, Ms. Kelly, and Ms. Stender for helping manage the booth along with the staff that assisted. Mr. Lindsay noted that the State does not reimburse staff for overnight stay so many of them made much longer trips than their average commute to support the booth.

Ms. Foster asked if, because the Trust is in but not of, can the Board put aside a defined amount of money for each staff person for situations like this where staying over would have been more helpful for staff members with the longer travel distances. Mr. Ceponis stated that DCA fiscal has already made comments stating that he would not allow us to use any state provided funds for that purpose. He added that we do have other sources of funding that could potentially be used, in part, for that purpose. He is also considering have a different staff person coming down each day so that they aren't having to do multiple trips. Ms. Foster thanked Dr. Marcopul for sharing her staff for the presentation. She thought it was very useful and successful and gave kudos to staff that was involved in the presentation.

Continuing his report, Mr. Lindsay stated that he attended the annual Cultural Trust meeting at Liberty Hall in Union. He added that they will be voting on the slate of projects being administered by the Arts Council at their virtual meeting in January. Mr. Lindsay stated that an ethics question came up during the Cultural Trust meeting regarding the acceptance of free tickets to events. The Cultural Trust Committee recommended and the Cultural Trust Board voted no to accepting free tickets since it would be an ethics violation.

Finally, Mr. Lindsay requested that if anyone wanted to be added to a committee, removed from a committee, or wanted to create a new committee to please reach out to him directly.

Mr. Lindsay formally welcomed Mr. Jody Alessandrine as a new board member. He served as a board member in the past and is returning as the eleventh citizen board member. Mr. Alessandrine introduced himself. He is currently the Director and CEO of Cape May MAC. When he previously served on the Trust board, he was chair of the education and outreach committee.

### *Vice-Chair*

No report.

### *Treasurer*

Mr. Miller went over the budget through second quarter and stated that we are well below budget, and well under in total employee expenses. Mr. Miller reported that there are about \$1.5 million remaining in our available CBT grant funds, if the 2024 grant round is fully drawn, which was about \$16.6 million. Mr. Miller specifically pointed out a graph showing the estimation of the Corporate Business Tax (CBT) moving forward. The graph shows that the fund is down a little over \$1 million from where the peak is. This means that the available funds in this next grant round will be slightly lower than last year. Mr. Ceponis stated that he would be providing an update from Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT) in his report.

Brief discussion regarding East Point Lighthouse ensued. Mr. Ceponis stated that he would also be providing an update in his report.

#### *Secretary*

Ms. Stender stated that our Appropriations Bill is finally being voted on. Otherwise, she had nothing else to report.

#### **Executive Director's Report**

Since it was previously brought up, Mr. Ceponis began his report by providing his updates regarding East Point Lighthouse. He stated that Dave Golden, the Assistant Commissioner at DEP, spoke at the GSPT meeting and mentioned that DEP is currently in the process of getting the County of Cumberland to hopefully take over at the lighthouse. At the very least, they would be responsible for programming and maintenance. He added that the County has already provided assistance at the lighthouse before and it appears that they will embrace this new role. Mr. Ceponis hopes that the historical society will still remain involved in a small capacity since they put money into the purchasing of furniture that is on exhibit there. He added that, according to Dave Golden, the historical society was offered a new lease with better terms, and they chose not to sign it. Mr. Lindsay was happy to hear that there was some motion and that it was moving in a positive direction.

Mr. Ceponis stated that we have three bills in legislature: our clean up bill, the HPC training bill, and our most recent appropriation bill. The Appropriations Bill has gone through the committees and is being voted on by the Senate and Assembly on December 19. Once it passes, we will only be waiting on Governor Murphy's signature. When we have that, staff will be able to begin the grant agreement process. The clean up bill has been reported out of committee in Assembly, and it's had its second reading. It is now waiting to go to the full Assembly for their vote. Mr. Ceponis stated his appreciation for Leah Couch, DCA's legislative liaison, because she has been working diligently to make sure bills are being posted as well as pushed forward. The HPC training bill has gone through committees in both the Assembly and the Senate. Mr. Ceponis thanked Ms. Stender for working with Assemblyman Kennedy as the primary sponsor in the Assembly. It will be up for vote in the full Assembly on December 19. Mr. Ceponis expressed that this bill is going to make a huge difference when it passes because it will provide proper training to all HPCs in the state. Mr. Ceponis added that he will be working with Ms. Fischetti and Local Planning Services at DCA to assist in defining the rules since it will be based on the required training for Planning Board Members. Ms. Stender asked for clarification on who the sponsors were and what the bill numbers were so she can follow up with her contacts

in the legislature. Ms. Foster asked for clarity on what the clean up bill is. Mr. Ceponis explained that the purpose of the clean up bill is to formally place us in DCA and allows for less restriction regarding the appointment of board members. The bill will also allow us to roll over money that may be leftover from our conference instead of it going into the general fund.

Mr. Ceponis mentioned that new ruling on the grant funding of churches. The conversation that followed mentioned that Morris County does not accept any applications from religious entities, and when the Trust receives applications for grants on religious properties they quote back the State Supreme Court ruling that while we cannot fund religious properties, we cannot deny them from applying. The Federal Supreme Court injunction has some leeway, brings issues between state and federal and brings up the question of whether this breaches the US Constitution. Mr. Ceponis stated that this could have huge implications for next grant round and that the Trust would need clarification from the Deputy Attorney General. The Board discussed the Plain Language of State Constitution, which is ruling. Over history of the Trust, 141 sites and funds of about \$19 million have gone to houses of worship.

Mr. Ceponis briefed the Board on his meeting with GSPT. He stated that the new executive director has been doing a deep dive into GSPT, Preserve New Jersey funding, and the Corporate Business Tax. He believes that he's found about \$500 million of potential funding. How the funds would get divided is unclear at this time. Presently, the executive director and board chair are discussing increasing the Trust's percentage of the funding which would require a change in legislation. Currently the Trust receives 7%, but it could be raised an additional 3% to 10% of the overall total. Mr. Ceponis does not have a timeline for this, but it is something GSPT is exploring and discussing. GSPT is exploring a lot of creative ways to spend the money such as having direct funding to state-owned historic sites and allowing for more flexibility in Open Space funding to name a few. Mr. Ceponis is hopeful that even though we may see a decrease in CBT funding this year, it can change in the future. Ms. Kelly reminded everyone that we have traditionally been part of the Keep It Green coalition which has been the main advocacy group for the CBT percentages. She encouraged more board members to get involved since staff members are not allowed to be a part of it.

Mr. Ceponis stated that the Staff memo is also included in the board packet. He thanked staff for all of their hard work. He added that Trust staff is awaiting the signing of the Appropriations Bill before they can start generating grant agreements for the 2024 projects. He added that, in the meantime, staff is working on the upcoming grant round applications and workshops. Staff is also busy evaluating applications for the Federal COVID Funds. Mr. Ceponis added that staff from the Trust and HPO presented at the League and the room was filled. He is hopeful that we will be able to present again next year and in the future. Mr. Ceponis thanked the board members who volunteered their time for helping with the booth.

Mr. Ceponis provided the Board with update on the annual New Jersey History and Historic Preservation Conference. Mr. Ceponis briefly described some details as well as the currently planned tours that would be occurring at the conference. The committee met to select sessions and we're awaiting confirmation of Amy Bruni of Kindred Spirits and Liz Waytkus of

DOCOMOMO to be featured speakers. Amy Bruni would be discussing the ethics of paranormal studies and the advantages and disadvantages of paranormal events as heritage tourism.

Mr. Ceponis reminded the board about their ethics training and stated that he would be reaching out to the State Ethics Commission to make sure that is the only training board members need to complete. It is only required every three years. Mr. Ceponis requested that board members send him certification of completion once they finish the training.

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

Ms. Fischetti started by noting that Mount Holly is one of the Main Street districts. She recommended that Mr. Ceponis reach out to the local representatives because they would probably love to be included in the Conference. Mr. Ceponis replied that he would follow up on that. Ms. Fischetti stated that there were four new districts added to Main Street New Jersey: Princeton, Haddonfield, Plainfield, and Millburn/Short Hills. They will be starting a new grant round with the 28 districts across the state soon. Ms. Fischetti stated that some of the districts are really underperforming right now and they may be reevaluating their ability to participate in the program due to lack of organizational capacity.

Ms. Fischetti added that she participated in a panel on downtown resources and ways to assist small businesses with a focus on how Main Street can help.

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

Dr. Marcopul updated the Board on the proposed program comment from the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation and stated that 30 other state Historic Preservation offices expressed concerns about proposed program comment. The conversation discussed the ACHP review of comments from SHPOs and issued revised draft on November 15<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Marcopul addressed the concerns about the ACHP program comment such as the concerning provisions, issues with limiting input from states on federal projects, tightened language on exemptions, and overall Section 106 review process. Ms. Bronin, the Chair of the ACHP, has stated that she intends to pass the comment by the end of this month. Mr. Lindsay asked if the Board would like to send an amended letter. Dr. Marcopul stated that she would send an amended letter to the ACHP on behalf of the NJHPO. Mr. Lindsay stated that he would draft a new letter to the Chair of the ACHP as well.

Dr. Marcopul mentioned that Advocacy Week is set for March 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>.

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

No report.

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

- **Executive Committee**

No report.

- **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:** Washington Township Land Trust  
**Project:** Obadiah La Tourette Grist and Saw Mill  
**Grant Award No.:** 2021.0026

**Grantee:** Washington Township Land Trust  
**Project:** Obadiah La Tourette Grist and Saw Mill  
**Grant Award No.:** 2022.0020

**Grantee:** Borough of High Bridge  
**Project:** Solitude House  
**Grant Award No.:** 2022.0029

**Grantee:** Hamilton Partnership  
**Project:** Paterson Great Falls  
**Grant Award No.:** 2022.H074

**Grantee:** City of Atlantic City  
**Project:** Fire Station #4  
**Grant Award No.:** 2022.0007

**Grantee:** New Jersey Community Development Corporation  
**Project:** First Presbyterian Church of Paterson  
**Grant Award No.:** 2020.2073

**Grantee:** Allaire Village, Inc.  
**Project:** Deserted Village of Allaire  
**Grant Award No.:** 2019.1020

**Grantee:** Monmouth County Historical Association  
**Project:** Allen House  
**Grant Award No.:** 2022.0043

**Grantee:** Gloucester County Historical Society  
**Project:** Moravian Church  
**Grant Award No.:** 2019.1009

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

**Grantee:** Liberty Hall Museum, Inc.

**Project:** Liberty Hall  
**Grant Award No.:** 2022.0050

**Grantee:** City of Trenton  
**Project:** Mansion House (Ellarslie)  
**Grant Award No.:** 2022.0078

Ms. Foster asked if there were any recusals. Mr. Lindsay recused from Roebling Museum. Ms. Easton recused from AC Firehouse 4, bundled rest for approval and save AC for end. Ms. Foster moved for the Committee for approval, second made by Mr. Lindsay, all in favor  
Ms. Foster moved to vote on AC Firehouse 4, second made by Mrs. Kelly, all in favor.

Ms. Foster introduced the Emergency Intervention Grant, for the Roebling Museum's 101 Second Ave. row home, that has a leaking roof and Trust is currently funding a preservation plan. A replacement slate roof has been recommended to replace current asphalt shingle roofing, and the Grants and Loans Committee would like to vote to approve \$8700 for a new asphalt roof to temporarily be placed on the site until they come in for a grant in 2025 round to do the proper slate roof. Ms. Foster, recommended this project for funding, second made from Mr. Miller, all in favor.

Ms. Foster updated the Board on the emergency funding which is now about \$128K.

Ms. Foster discussed the Federal Covid 19 funding. The following conversation stated that this funding is good for two years, the clock is ticking on applications to receive funding, and that \$750K is cut off for each grantee.

- **Acquisitions and Easements**

Mr. Miller stated that Point Breeze and D&R Greenway are still working with Green Acres, and that the John Rulinghouse Estate Plan left the house to the historical society who would be reaching out to Trust for an easement.

- **Legislation & Policy/Strategic Planning**

No report.

- **Education and Outreach**

Ms. Easton stated that the training session workshops for HPC members would be on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at the Castle in Morristown.

- **Fiscal Oversight**

No report.

### **Unfinished Business**

No comments.

### **New Business**

Mr. Lindsay discussed the affiliate of the Star Ledger, NJ.COM and recent articles. Mr. Ceponis said he would look into recent articles.

#### **Adoption of 2025 Meeting Dates**

Ms. Foster commented that the September 25<sup>th</sup> Board meeting should be held in a place with good internet connectivity as that is the meeting where the grants are approved. Mr. Simmons commented that the September 25<sup>th</sup> date should also be held in a silent room. Ms. Easton stated that she has a conflict with the December 17<sup>th</sup> date, and all agreed to move that meeting to Thursday, December 18<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Kelly suggested that Hinchliff Stadium could be a great place in north Jersey for the June 25<sup>th</sup> meeting. The following meeting dates were approved:

March 12

June 25

September 25 (Annual Meeting)

December 18

Next Meeting Date & Location: March 12, 2025, Virtual

#### **Public Comment**

No comment.

#### **Adjournment**

Mr. Lindsay presented a motion to adjourn at 12:17pm. Ms. Foster moves, Ms. Kelly seconded the motion, all in favor of adjournment.