

NEW JERSEY HISTORIC TRUST
Wednesday, June 25, 2025
Board of Trustees Quarterly Meeting
Minutes

Call to Order

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

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

Members of public present: Vonda Givens, Executive Director of The Stickley Museum at Craftsman Farms

Approval of Minutes

The March 2025 Minutes were presented to the Board for approval and comment. Ms. Easton requested that a number of typographical and grammatical errors be corrected. Ms. Foster requested that future minutes include page numbers to facilitate references for comments and edits.

Mr. Lindsay moved to approve the revised minutes. Mr. Miller seconded the motion and all voted in favor of approving the revised minutes.

Public Comment

Ms. Vonda Givens welcomed everyone to The Stickley Museum at Craftsman Farms and invited staff and board members to join her for a tour of the museum at the conclusion of the meeting. She also presented photos of the current building prior to its 2020 rehabilitation for comparison. Ms. Givens thanked the Trust for being a great resource for technical advice and as a source of funding for historic resources across New Jersey, including Craftsman Farms.

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. Lindsay mentioned that he saw a news article about one of our funded sites, the Jacobus Vanderveer House. In summarizing the article, he stated that the township, who's the owner of the property, recently evicted the non-profit friend's group from the site. Mr. Lindsay asked if this had any impact on their grant funding in any way since the friend's group is our grantee. Mr. Ceponis and Ms. Bremer stated that they were aware of the eviction and would provide an update when they heard more from the grantee. Ms. Bremer added that their scope of work was essentially complete pending the final review of their archaeological survey report.

Reports of Officers

Chair

Mr. Lindsay congratulated staff on a successful conference and thought there was an excellent turnout. He asked if any other states had organizations like ours that ran conferences. Mr. Ceponis detailed several other states that conduct similar conferences. Mr. Lindsay then asked about the visibility of the conference to county and state officials and legislators. Mr. Ceponis responded that the officials from Burlington County attended including County Commissioners. He further stated that State Senator Singleton and Assemblyman Singh attended. DCA's Chief of Staff spoke leading up to the conference keynote address. As part of the conference-related discussion, Mr. Miller inquired what percentage of attendees received AIA and AICP continuing education credits. Mr. Ceponis and Ms. Parker estimated around 10%.

Vice-chair

Ms. Easton thanked everyone for organizing another successful conference.

Treasurer

Mr. Miller thanked Ms. Hogan for generating all the numbers necessary for the Treasurer's Report. Mr. Miller reported that we were well within the bounds for this year's budget and will likely remain that way through the fiscal year. He added that the Corporate Business Tax (CBT) estimates are down \$4 million from last year's estimate, leaving around \$11-14 million available for grants. Mr. Ceponis added that while CBT is trending down, it's getting closer to what they expected when the fund was established. He added that the Executive Director of the Garden State Preservation Trust has been considering ways to secure additional funding for the Historic Trust.

There was some further discussion related to the allotment of funds, the process each year, and how we would spend any additional funds.

Secretary

No report.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Ceponis stated that the full staff report and Executive Director's report were provided with the board packet via email prior to the meeting. In the summary of his report, Mr. Ceponis reported that the Commissioner of DCA will be out on maternity leave so Ms. Kia King, her Chief of Staff, will be Acting DCA Commissioner during her absence. Several of our outstanding Trust-related bills in the legislature have not been fully voted upon. Mr. Ceponis stated that he has been working with the chief policy coordinator at DCA who is hoping to push both bills through in July when many bills get passed along with the State budget. One of those bills, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) training bill, is still awaiting full senate approval. Our updated regulations have been published so they are in good standing for the next five years.

Mr. Ceponis reported several staff updates. Ms. Tara Ritz is currently in London presenting her master's thesis at an international preservation conference. Ms. Kristin Downing is being promoted to Historic Preservation Specialist. Interviews have been completed for an additional Preservation Specialist with a job offer being sent out soon.

Mr. Ceponis gave a brief update on the current grant round, including the number of applications that were received. He also stated that the article staff wrote for the League of Municipalities' magazine was published and passed around a copy for the board members to read.

Mr. Ceponis explained that DCA and the Trust were being reviewed by the State Ethics Commission and will be meeting with them in September to go over the review. Ms. Foster asked if the ethics forms the board was asked to submit need to be submitted if they have no standing recusals. Mr. Ceponis stated that they should still be submitted so there is written record that they have no standing recusals. He added that he would resend all the necessary ethics forms to the board. Mr. Lindsay asked if anyone present had not completed the required ethics training. All board members present responded that they had completed their training.

Regarding the annual conference, Mr. Ceponis thanked staff for all their hard work on the conference. He stated that the Trust recently contracted with GravityWorks to redesign the conference website, making it more user friendly and easier for Trust staff to manage. He added that next year's conference was going to be held in Morris County due to its strong connections to the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. Among other conference discussion, Ms. Omogbai asked if there were any specific counties that tend to draw more conference attendees. Mr. Ceponis stated that our conference in Jersey City last year had a larger turnout compared to this year. He believes that attendance may be lower due to financial uncertainty at the national level regarding preservation, specifically related to funding and staffing cuts. There was some discussion regarding how location and dates affect attendance and how the location is chosen.

Finally, Mr. Ceponis stated that he is working with Ms. Fischetti on planning a session for the League of Municipalities conference. They are waiting to hear back from the League on whether the session will be accepted. Ms. Kelly asked what the dates of the League conference are. Ms. Bremer stated that the conference is later than previous years and will be held on

November 18-20. Mr. Ceponis asked board members to volunteer to attend since we'll have a booth again.

Report of Department of Community Affairs

Ms. Fischetti reported that there had not been many updates since the March board meeting. She mentioned that Main Street was in the process of awarding the final few grants she referenced at the last meeting. Ms. Fischetti added that she was looking forward to presenting at the League with the Trust and hopes this will help them get better visibility at the League moving forward. Mr. Ceponis offered to share the Trust table since they are co-presenters of a session if she is interested. She added that Main Street will also be attending the Housing Conference in September.

Report of Department of Environmental Protection

Although Dr. Marcopul was absent from the meeting, she provided Mr. Ceponis with updates on preservation at the national level for him to share with the board. Her update was as follows:

- Staffing changes are occurring across the board affecting preservation-related agencies at the federal level. Many staffers have opted to take early retirement, taking many years of experience and knowledge with them.
- Grant management staff at the Department of Interior has been moved and many grants/grant programs have been cut.
- National Park Service (NPS) sites in New Jersey have been subjected to the consolidation. In particular, the superintendent of Great Falls in Paterson now is responsible for Morristown and Thomas Edison National Park Sites as well.
- State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) funding hasn't been released to states yet so some SHPOs across the country have been forced to lay off staff. Thankfully, New Jersey's SHPO has state funding as well as federal funding so they have not been impacted the way other states have. *[subsequently the funds have been released]*
- There has been a delay in the release of Certified Local Government funding.
- A vice chair has been named for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation so they are now able to conduct business.

Mr. Ceponis concluded Dr. Marcopul's update by stating that she hoped to gain more insight and information over the coming days since she is at the National Council for State Historic Preservation Office meeting.

Mr. Lindsay added that he resubmitted the board written letters regarding proposed changes to federal preservation to the Advisory Council and got confirmation that they have received our letters and will revisit them if it's reconsidered. He added that the Advisory Council makes it very hard for the public to attend meetings. Mr. Simmons provided some updates he was aware of regarding the superintendent at the Great Falls, Morristown, and Thomas Edison NPS sites. He emphasized that the park is severely understaffed with only one to two rangers in charge of almost six different sites across multiple counties. He asked if the Washington Association would be able to partner with the Trust to offer staffing grants. Mr. Ceponis stated

that the Trust regulations don't allow for our funds to be utilized for staffing costs; however, the Historical Commission may be able to help and encouraged him to reach out to them.

Report of Department of Treasury

Mr. Tighue reported that the restoration of the Old Barracks was moving forward with prequalification and bidding. He added that there are several projects related to the 250th anniversary of the Revolution and that all projects are expected to be completed on time and within budget.

Reports of the Standing Committees

- **Executive Committee**

A nominating committee was established for the election of officers. Ms. Kelly, Ms. Foster, and Mr. Allesandrino volunteered to be a part of the sub-committee.

Following the creation of the subcommittee, Mr. Ceponis recommended that the board take a five-minute break before the Grants & Loans Committee Report. The board adjourned for the break at 11:09 AM and returned at 11:15 AM.

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

Ms. Foster asked if there were any recusals related to the Grants & Loans discussion and voting. Hearing none, 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:** Roxbury Historical trust, Inc
Project: King Store and Homestead
Grant Award No.: 2020.2028*

***Grantee:** High Bridge Borough
Project: Solitude House
Grant Award No.: 2020.0087*

***Grantee:** Cumberland County Historical Society
Project: Greenwich Historic District (Log Granary)
Grant Award No.: 2022.0071*

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

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

***Grantee:** New Beginnings Behavioral Health
Project: Survey of Civil Rights Sites in Camden
Grant Award No.: 2022.S002*

With no further discussion, Ms. Foster motioned to approve all extensions. Mr. Simmons seconded the motion. All voted in favor of the extensions.

Ms. Foster asked if there were any recusals pertaining to the license plate applications. Hearing none, Ms. Foster presented the following awards for the NJ License Plate Fund.

***Applicant:** Montclair History Center*
***Project:** Black Heritage Trail Marker*
***Amount Requested:** \$5,000*

Ms. Foster stated that the committee reviewed four applications and recommended funding for the above project. Ms. Foster moved and Mr. Miller seconded the motion to approve funding for the project. All voted in favor of funding.

Marketing Plan Contract Extension
***Project:** Journey Through Jersey Media Marketing Plan*
***Contract Amount:** \$155,620*

An extension of the marketing plan contract with Advanced Media for Journey Through Jersey was presented. Ms. Foster explained that this will continue the work they've been doing with Journey Through Jersey and that the project has already been budgeted for. Both Mr. Ceponis and Ms. Parker added that this will continue to grow Journey Through Jersey's social media presence, especially since the extended contract will include an influencers program that will work on advertisements for the 250th celebrations with RevNJ. Ms. Easton stated that it sounded like an excellent plan. Ms. Foster motioned from the committee to approve the extension of the contract. Mr. Lindsay seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Emergency Intervention Fund
***Applicant:** Bethel AME Church*
***Project:** Carpenter Street School*
***Amount Requested:** \$10,500*

An emergency application for the Carpenter Street School was submitted for review by the Grants & Loans Committee. At the Grants & Loans Committee meeting, the committee asked for revisions to be made to the application request because the scope of work included items that exceeded the purpose of the Emergency Intervention Program. Yesterday, the architect overseeing the application for Bethel AME Church sent revisions that incorporated Trust comments and the Committee's recommendations. Ms. Foster presented the revised proposal for review.

Mr. Ceponis stated that the Carpenter Street School received funding in the late 1990s or early 2000s for the replacement of the wood shingle roof. The roof is now beyond its useful life. Due to large-scale changes with congregational leadership, caused mainly by COVID-19, the Carpenter Street School fell into disrepair. The original \$14,000 requested included the removal of a number of trees as well as partial in-kind replacement of the wood shingles where there were large holes. The applicant was asked by the Trust to limit the scope of work to more

temporary roof measures and limit tree work to limb removal rather than full tree removal. The revised proposal totaled \$10,500 and met all the Emergency Intervention Fund guidelines. If funded, this project would allow the applicant time to raise funds and apply for a Preserve New Jersey Capital grant in 2026 while preventing further deterioration to the building. Mr. Miller asked if this was an active house of worship. Mr. Ceponis clarified that although the congregation is active and owns the property, the Carpenter Street School itself was used as a community center before falling into disrepair and never used for religious worship. The Bethel AME Church plans to continue using the building as a community center once it is preserved. Ms. Foster stated that the Emergency Intervention Fund budget still has funds remaining so we have the ability to fund it. Mr. Simmons added that this would be an excellent opportunity to formally bring the organization and the resource back into the fold. Mr. Miller motioned to accept the Emergency Intervention Fund application for the roof repairs at the Carpenter Street School. Mr. Simmons seconded the motion and all voted in favor of funding.

Mr. Ceponis provided an update on the COVID-19 funding. He stated that the \$750,000 maximum request put on awards was going to be released since we did not receive any more applications. Those who requested over \$750,000 and were eligible for more, will receive additional funding.

Mr. Ceponis asked if the board was willing to make a broad statement to grantees that the Trust will work with grantees to the extent that it can during these challenging and uncertain times to bring their projects to successful completion. The board unanimously agreed to the statement.

Mr. Ceponis provided a brief update regarding the current application round. He stated that we did get one application from an applicant for work on an active house of worship. He stated that the application is currently being reviewed by the Deputy Attorney General's office regarding current case law.

- **Acquisitions and Easements**

- Donation of a Perpetual Easement*

- Applicant:** *Mays Landing School District*

- Property:** *Mays Landing High School (Duberson School) and Mays Landing Water Works*

Mr. Miller presented the donation of a perpetual easement. He explained that SHPO is requiring an easement be placed on the Mays Landing High School and Mays Landing Water Works as a condition of sale to a private owner. Mr. Ceponis added that SHPO and the developer are okay with the easement being placed on the building and Ms. Boggs has been helping draft the easement. Mr. Miller made a motion from committee and Mr. Lindsay seconded the motion to accept the donation of the perpetual easement for the referenced property. All voted in favor of approval.

Mr. Miller provided an update on the Point Breeze easement and stated that it was going to be purchased sometime in the next six months. Mr. Ceponis added that Ms. Alemy has been working with them regarding archaeological compliance and recommendations.

Mr. Miller stated that there were several conversations and discussions related to new easements, including a house in Swedesboro and Stratton Hall. There was some additional discussion regarding a possible easement on the Findlay House; however, Mr. Miller stated that would likely not happen.

- **Legislation & Policy/Strategic Planning**

All legislation and policy updates were provided during the Executive Director's Report.

- **Education and Outreach**

No report.

- **Fiscal Oversight**

No report.

Unfinished Business

Ms. Bremer provided a brief update on the Jacobus Vanderveer House which was discussed earlier in the meeting. Some discussion ensued related to whether the property had an easement. Mr. Ceponis clarified that it is municipally owned so it's protected under the New Jersey Register Act.

New Business

None.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Mr. Simmons moved and Ms. Foster seconded a motion to adjourn. All voted in favor of adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 11:57 AM.