

NEW JERSEY HISTORIC TRUST

Wednesday, June 3, 2026
Board of Trustees Quarterly Meeting
10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
Virtual

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: Peter Lindsay, Jody Alessandrino, Kate Marcopul (DEP), Lisa Easton, Keith White (Treasury), Troy Simmons, Linda Stender, Samuel Viavattine (DCA), Kenneth Miller, Chris Perks.

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

NJHT staff present: Glenn Ceponis, Judith Murphy, Carrie Hogan, Jennifer Boggs, Olivia Chaudhury, Ashley Parker, Stephanie Kraut, Shannon Bremer, Nan Wakefield

Public (usernames provided only): eblackman, tywhit

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from March 2026 were presented for approval. Ms. Easton requested five revisions to the current minutes. They are as follows:

- In the first paragraph of the Chair's report on page 2, Ms. Easton requested that the wording of the first sentence read "the Trust's capital grant round" instead of "capital round."
- In the second paragraph of the Chair's Report on page two, Ms. Easton requested that the wording of the second sentence be clarified. The sentence now reads, "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."
- In the second-to-last paragraph on page three, Ms. Easton requested that "all projects board members are involved in" be pluralized.
- Under the New Business section on page nine, Ms. Easton requested that the funding amounts referenced at the end of the paragraph be clarified as a range to read, "\$20 million to \$40 million" instead of "\$40 million, \$20 million."
- In the last sentence of the Public Comment, Ms. Easton requested that the word "attention" be replaced with "attendance."

With those revisions, the minutes from March 26 were presented for approval. Mr. Simmons motioned for approval, Ms. Easton seconded. All voted in approval.

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.

Mr. Lindsay and Ms. Marcopul offered additional comments regarding upcoming press releases pertaining to preservation funding in the state. Mr. Lindsay commended commissioners for their public activities in support of historic sites.

Reports of Officers

- **Chair**

Mr. Lindsay stated that he attended the recent 25th anniversary in-person board meeting of the New Jersey Cultural Trust. He noted the good attendance and reported on state officials' addresses given at the meeting.

Mr. Lindsay then summarized the Trust's upcoming schedule. The New Jersey History and Historic Preservation Conference will occur on June 17-18, and Preserve New Jersey 2026 grant evaluations are set for mid-September. Mr. Ceponis and Ms. Parker clarified that evaluator review meetings are scheduled for September 14, 15, and 16, with grant award recommendations by the Board of Trustees to occur at their fall meeting on September 30. Mr. Lindsay noted that the September 30 meeting will also include the election of new officers. Mr. Ceponis confirmed that the Board Retreat is scheduled for October 16, and he is working with Creative Capacity to finalize the location and agenda.

Mr. Ceponis welcomed Mr. Viavattine, Deputy Commissioner, who will be newly representing the Department of Community Affairs on the Board. Mr. Viavattine expressed his thanks.

- **Treasurer**

Mr. Miller thanked Ms. Hogan for putting together the numbers, and noted that next year's budget will need to be approved in September, with the Corporate Business Tax allocation predicted at around \$13 million on an annual basis. This should remain stable for the 2027 grants and allocations.

Mr. Miller acknowledged the need to fill staff positions, with current expenses \$260,000 below what's budgeted. Other overages are minor, so the Trust will close out the fiscal year in June ahead by approximately \$250,000 to \$260,000. Next year, the overall budget should be \$2.5 million, dropping to \$2 million if fully staffed. Mr. Miller noted this indicates that expenditures and budget are well balanced overall, and next year's grant round should fall in the range of \$10 million to \$13 million.

Mr. Ceponis clarified that variation in the CBT number comes from Treasury's 25 percent adjustments to their calculations in August, with a more accurate number known before application review meetings commence in September.

Mr. Miller referred to the memo for list of draws on outstanding grant rounds, highlighting the limited money currently available under the Emergency Mitigation Fund.

- **Vice-chair**

No report.

- **Secretary**

Mr. Simmons reported that the minutes were approved with changes per Ms. Stender.

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 quoting Ms. Salvatore, who regrettably must leave the Trust board and sent a note expressing her love for serving in the position. Because of this, the Trust currently has two vacancies on the board. Mr. Ceponis noted that three nominations for replacements have been provided to the governor through the Department of Community Affairs commissioner's office. Those people are currently under review, and the Trust is awaiting appointment. The previous governor's office approved those nominations, but the state legislature was unable to vote in time, so the process has been restarted under the current administration. They are also aware that some members continue to serve on expired terms.

Mr Ceponis attended the Garden State Preservation Trust spring quarterly meeting on May 28, where Green Acres put forth a resolution for \$90 million in appropriations, and SADC \$4 million in appropriations. These numbers are due to the higher percentage of funds dedicated to those programs through the Preserve New Jersey Fund. Secondly, the executive director of the Garden State Preservation Trust has requested that they themselves be audited, since this has not occurred since the start of the Preserve New Jersey fund in 2015. The audit began several days ago and will spend the summer examining how monies are spent by Green Acres, Farmland, and the Trust, wrapping up assessment by the fall.

Mr. Ceponis then provided updates to staffing at the Trust. Ms. Alemy has begun a new opportunity developing an archaeological museum for Passaic County. Job listings have been posted for one historic preservation specialist and for the Trust's vacant administrative position, and resumes are currently under review. The description for Ms. Alemy's staff archaeologist position will be updated and has not yet been posted, but Kristen Hohn at Monmouth County will fill in as the Trust's on-call archaeologist in the interim.

Mr. Ceponis also presented a summary of work with DCA's IT department to develop a new database management system. A potential outside vendor has been identified, and they are working on a proposal to complete the needed work within the Trust's available budget. The vendor comes highly recommended by other groups at the Department of Community Affairs, and will meet with Trust staff soon to showcase past examples of their work.

The Trust has also been monitoring progress on two bills currently under review by the State Legislature. The first bill was originally set to create an 250th Anniversary license plate for the state to support and preserve Revolutionary War sites. Following discussions with the Department of Community Affairs' legislative staff who are in communication with the bill's sponsors, the Trust has proposed an amendment that those funds be combined with the already extant Discover NJ license plate program, and requirements broadened to support heritage tourism sites in general across the state. That bill has passed the Assembly, it's waiting to go before the Senate's Budget and Appropriations Committee, and Mr. Ceponis hopes the amendment will be proposed before the Senate vote.

Second, regarding a bill for the development of a new travel and tourism website, the Trust submitted comments back highlighting the work done by Journey Through Jersey and the Historic Preservation Office's LUCY GIS system. The bill continues to move forward and has passed both votes in the Assembly and the Senate with some revision to ensure that signage markers comply with Transportation rules. Travel & Tourism will be required to coordinate website development in coordination with the Trust, the Department of Environmental Protection, and other state organizations. The Trust is ready to provide them with content on Journey Through Jersey, and respond to other requests as needed.

Mr. Ceponis then summarized a new, third bill that was not in the memo. Senate Bill 4376, Assembly Bill 2885 appropriates \$50 million to establish a grant program in Dept of State for the preservation of Revolutionary War sites. In 2022-23 and 2024-25, earlier versions never passed out of committee. It has currently been referred to the State Government, Wagering, Tourism & Historic Preservation Committee, and its progress will be monitored because the funds are likely to preserve sites eligible for Preserve New Jersey grants. The program will be run by the Department of State and without additional impacts to work by the Trust. Mr. Ceponis noted that the bill may impact the Historic Preservation Office, and Ms. Marcopul responded she also had not heard about the legislation.

Another bill, the creation of the Historic Preservation Commission training, is continuing in collaboration with the Historic Preservation Office to develop the curriculum and set of criteria for that work. Once finalized, Legislative Services at the Department of Community Affairs will post it and the Trust looks forward to receiving comments back on schedule for fall or early winter approval to move forward with trainings. Mr. Ceponis is scheduled to present on the topic at the upcoming New Jersey History and Historic Preservation Conference.

The conference is scheduled for June 17th and 18th at Saint Elizabeth University in Morristown, Morris County. Mr. Viavattine will provide welcoming remarks after Keynote panel, and Stephen Shaw, a commissioner for Morris County, will make comments as well. Mr. Ceponis expressed excitement about the unusual format of presenting a keynote panel, and the timeliness of addressing federal developments that impact preservation work. The conference will offer a half day of workshops and tours on Day One, and a full day of educational sessions and exhibitors on Day Two. Registration and sponsorship are both on track, despite scheduling conflicts with the World Cup and events celebrating the 250th.

Report of Department of Community Affairs

Mr. Lindsay welcomed Mr. Viavattine to present his first report.

Mr. Viavattine offered that he plans to attend the conference later this month, and looks forward to meeting everyone in person. He began his presentation by introducing himself and summarizing the work that falls under his purview as the deputy commissioner at the Department of Community Affairs. He hopes he can offer perspectives on other areas within the department that could be useful to the Trust, and he is happy to respond to requests.

In his role, Mr. Viavattine supervises work by the Disaster Recovery, Urban Enterprise Zone Authority, the Government Records Council, the Historic Trust, and Division of Local Planning Services. A major priority for the Department of Community Affairs at the moment is to complete the successful expenditure of federal Covid funding through American Rescue Plan Act, as well as successful management of all federal investments. State Fiscal Recovery Funds have a deadline of December 31, 2026 deadline to expend all \$6 billion awarded. Mr. Ceponis has briefed him on the status of the portion of those funds administered by the Trust, and he is confident that work is on track to meet that deadline. The governor's office announced last month a commitment to transition away from advance

payments, and the Division of Disaster Recovery and Mitigation will work closely to adjust methods for disbursing funds as needed.

The department is also focused on Governor Sherrill's Executive Order 17 to accelerate housing production and access to affordable housing, with deadlines later this month to get information back to the governor's office. The Division of Disaster Recovery and Mitigation continues to administer long-term recovery and resiliency programs related to Superstorm Sandy and Tropical Storm Ida to reduce flood risk and strengthen communities. Mr. Viavattine acknowledged the need to balance resiliency goals with the preservation of historic resources and the value of their relationship and coordination with the state's Historic Preservation Office.

Mr. Viavattine thanked the board and asked for questions.

Ms. Stender inquired about the Main Street Program, and Mr. Viavattine confirmed that it is part of the Division of Local Planning Services and falls under his purview. He will coordinate information and updates with Ms. Stender, Ms. Fischetti and Mr. Ceponis.

Report of Department of Environmental Protection

Ms. Marcopul stated that the Department of Environmental Protection recently announced the REAL Rules' legacy provisions have been extended by a year. Changes to the rules were originally scheduled to go into effect in July, but that grandfather period has now been extended by a year to allow for additional discussion. All applications received and approved within the next year will be considered under the old set of rules.

Ms. Marcopul summarized the potential impact to historic properties as follows: The Resilient Environments and Landscapes (REAL) Rules are a suite of updates to existing rules and regulations that sought to build in resiliency to properties that were being built in coastal areas and on the flood plains, but they do not apply to existing structures including historic properties within these areas, they only apply to new structures being built or undergoing substantial improvement to a property, which could include historic resources. If a historic property meets the definition of substantial improvement and if meeting the requirements in the REAL Rules threatens their eligibility of listing NJ Register of Historic Places, that property can be granted an exemption. The impact on historic properties should therefore be minimal, but Ms. Marcopul will provide updates to the board as needed.

The Department of Environmental Protection is tracking projects funded at state-owned historic sites using semiquincentennial grants from the National Park Service and portions of the additional \$25 million allocated by Governor Murphy for improvements at state-owned historic sites in anticipation of the 250th celebrations. Those projects are now nearing completion, so expect to see public announcements of that work.

The Department of Environmental Protection has also been focused on permit streamlining, a priority of the current administration. In support of this, the Historic Preservation Office has been given three new staff positions. Those listings are publicly available and announcements close on Friday, so Ms. Marcopul encouraged efforts to raise awareness and refer as many qualified individuals as possible before the deadline.

At the federal level, there are currently ongoing conversations about streamlining and efficiency in federal review processes, there is a bipartisan effort to develop historic preservation-related legislation. The text of that proposed legislation has not yet been released for review, but Congress plans to vote on it this summer. Ms. Marcopul hopes to review it once released and anticipates impacts to Section 106 processes and other historic preservation considerations under federal law.

Additionally on the federal side, earlier this year, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation adopted a program comment for the Department of the Army for warfighting readiness activities. There is a preservation concern that provisions of program comment eliminate the potential for state and local entities to comment on what the Department of the Army will be doing within their jurisdictions. This change eliminates the ability to raise concerns about impacts to historic properties due to military activities, undermining the spirit and intent of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Since Ms. Marcopul was unable to attend the March board meeting of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Mr. Lindsay summarized a recorded video of the March board meeting, where a committee was established to review Section 106 rules. The next board meeting will be livestreamed tomorrow, and should include an update from that committee.

Ms. Marcopul stated that she's a board member of the National Conference for State Historic Preservation Officers, and they have a representative serving on the Advisory Council. The National Conference for State Historic Preservation Officers is additionally part of the Section 106 working group, but has not been named by the chair as included on the formal committee examining those changes. Mr. Lindsay and Ms. Marcopul will both update the committee as more becomes known. Mr. Ceponis inquired how this work will align with the anticipated Section 106 legislation under development in Congress, and Ms. Marcopul responded that the content of the legislation and its alignment with the Advisory Council's work will remain unknown until the language is released publicly, but it is suspected that it may establish new timeframes for Section 106 processes. That change will be subject to public comment, but appears to be on a very fast track.

Report of Department of Treasury

Mr. White was unable to report due to technical difficulties. Following the meeting, he submitted in writing that he was in attendance for the entire meeting and voted yes on all motions. He apologized for the technical difficulties.

Mr. White also submitted the Treasury report in writing after the meeting. He confirmed Mr. Miller's assessment that CBT targets are on track with 27 days to go, and \$10 to 13 million is a safe range. The Board of Trustees' three new nominations will begin moving at the governor's office once all the new administration's cabinet-level positions have been confirmed. On the human resources side, Treasury is also working to fill vacancies. Legislatively, they are focused on the Appropriations Act and completing all required accompanying legislation.

Reports of the Standing Committees

- **Executive Committee**

Mr. Lindsay reported that the committee's most recent meeting focused on general staffing and board seats that are currently open, already summarized in the executive director report submitted by Mr. Ceponis.

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

In the absence of Ms. Foster, Vice Chair of the Committee Mr. Simmons made the committee report. He began by reviewing the Grants and Loans meeting memo in the packet to the Board. There were six requests for extensions, all reviewed by the committee. Mr. Alessandrine recused from Cape May Lighthouse since he serves as executive director of the organization that operates the lighthouse. Ms. Easton recused from the Westfield Survey since her firm is

associated with the project. Mr. Simmons confirmed the board still has quorum. He then presented the following requests for extensions and major changes:

Requests for Extension and/or Request for Major Change:

Grantee: Ocean County Board of Commissioners

Project: Mary Etta Cox House

Grant Award Number: 2020.2009

Grant Award: \$750,000

Municipality: Barnegat Township

Grantee: Ocean County Board of Commissioners

Project: Mary Etta Cox House

Grant Award Number: 2021.2069

Grant Award: \$518,645

Municipality: Barnegat Township

Grantee: Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts

Project: Cape May Lighthouse

Grant Award Number: 2024.1012

Grant Award: \$23,166

Municipality: Lower Township

Grantee: Towns of Westfield

Project: Westfield Survey

Grant Award Number: 2022.M048

Grant Award: \$45,000

Municipality: Westfield

Grantee: Palisades Interstate Park Commission

Project: Palisades Interstate Park

Grant Award Number: 2022.0075

Grant Award: \$71,686

Municipality: Alpine Borough

Grantee: Liberty Hall Museum

Project: Liberty Hall

Grant Award Number: 2021.1015

Grant Award: \$110,004

Municipality: Union

Mr. Ceponis offered a correction to a typo, that both the work period and grant agreement period for Mary Etta Cox House's 2021.2069 grant award should be set to June 30 of 2027. Ms. Bremer offered a correction to a typo, that Liberty Hall requests approval of an extension for their work period and not their agreement period. Following some discussion, all six requests were recommended for approval by the Grants & Loans Committee. For the four requests with no recusals, Mr. Alessandrine moved, and Mr. Simmons seconded. All were in favor. For the Cape May Lighthouse with Mr. Alessandrine recused, Ms. Easton moved, Ms. Stender seconded. All were in favor. For the Westfield Survey with Ms. Easton recused, Mr. Perks moved, Mr. Simmons seconded. All were in favor.

Some discussion ensued regarding updates on past grants that remain open. Mr. Simmons highlighted that 247 Preserve New Jersey grants are currently open out of a total of 577 awarded since 2015.

Mr. Simmons then presented for the board a summary of 2026 Preserve New Jersey grant applications. The Trust received a total of 126 applications requesting \$26.7 million, far larger than the total funds available – total requested increases to \$31 million when multiphase grant funds are included in the calculation. Mr. Ceponis provided an assessment of the applications received from places of worship, since they are newly eligible for the program due to recent court decisions: planning applications are not an issue, and it seems that the capital applications received do not deal with religious iconography, so all applications should follow the Trust's standard assessment process. Mr. Simmons then summarized the breakdown of application types across the Preserve New Jersey 2026 grant round. Mr. Ceponis reported that Trust staff have already met with outside evaluators, and they are beginning to review applications now. Board members, especially those serving on Grants & Loans, are encouraged to attend the evaluators' meetings in September.

Mr. Simmons then continued his report. All 2023 Cultural Trust-funded projects are projected to be completed by December 31, 2026. Trust staff are now preparing for the next round of grants, which will occur in 2027 with some revisions. The Cultural Trust Board approved our recommendations including extending the length of the grant term from one to two years; raising the maximum grant award from \$40,000 to \$80,000 for capital grants; and allowing up to 25% of the overall funding to be used for planning grants. The Cultural Trust will also provide the Historic Trust with the amount available for award in August so that the Historic Trust can make grant-award recommendations at its September board meeting.

1772 Foundation's final grant round occurred in 2019, 29 have been closed and one project remains active. There is a total of \$117,828 remaining in the fund that was intended to cover administrative costs, as well as project remittances. Mr. Ceponis suggested that use of these funds will be discussed by the board at the upcoming October retreat. Because this money came from a private foundation, its use is subject to different requirements and will likely be redirected towards other administrative needs of the Trust.

Mr. Simmons then presented the following application for the Discover New Jersey License Plate Grant funds. There were no recusals.

*Discover NJ License Plate Grants**

Applicant: 120 East State: A Non-profit Corporation

Project: First Presbyterian Church and Cemetery

Grant Award: \$7,000

Municipality: Trenton

Ms. Stender requested further information on the location of the cemetery. She then moved, and Mr. Simmons seconded. All voted in favor.

There are no new Revolving Loan requests. Mr. Ceponis presented updates on the work of Monmouth Boat Club. They are currently working with two state legislators on the passage of the legislation necessary to formally award the loan funds. The Trust, meanwhile, is working with the Economic Development Authority, who will manage the open loan once awarded.

Mr. Simmons then summarized the Grants & Loans memo's update on Emergency Intervention Grant Program funds. There are two open grants, and no new applications at this time.

Regarding Capital Funding from NJ State Council on the Arts, projects under open grants are moving forward without issue. Mr. Ceponis clarified that Ms. Kraut at the Trust manages those grants pertaining to historic properties on behalf of the Council, a partnership under an MOU that may continue in future years.

Journey Through Jersey continues to accept nominations to the website, with four new listings added. Visitors are up 220% to the website since last quarter due to the Trust's marketing strategy. Two context studies are under way to identify visitor-ready sites. Ms. Parker confirmed the campaign has been performing well and growth is not yet plateauing. Mr. Simmons commended the work of Journey Through Jersey and its impact raising the visibility of the Trust.

Mr. Ceponis thanked Mr. Viavattine for summarizing COVID-19 funding and upcoming deadlines during the Department of Community Affairs report; grants are well under way and we are keeping close tabs on spending money and returning paperwork in time for December's closeout deadline. The \$750,000 cap per grant was lifted primarily to help one very large project.

Mr. Simmons then continued his report. Wind farm mitigation funding is focused on three identified projects, contacted in April. No communication received to date, but the Trust is likely to manage these funds. Ms. Stender asked if federal support continues for wind projects, and Mr. Ceponis responded that these three projects are too far along for cancellation and with relatively small budgets totaling \$365,000. There may be additional projects and funding available, but discussion is ongoing. New Jersey coastal projects are on hold and under litigation.

- **Acquisitions and Easements**

Mr. Miller stated that there is nothing to be voted on this quarter, so this will be an update on past projects. Salem City was awarded two easements in March with their third application, for an easement at 69 ½ Carpenter Street, held in abeyance at that time pending further information. The committee met last week and concluded that the application for an easement should not be accepted. This is due to a lack of information on the condition of the property. The building appears to be of standard early-1900s construction and is not a key contributing building to the district. The committee has passed the information back to the State Historic Preservation Office.

Mr. Miller then discussed two potential perpetual easement requests: McNeil Mansion suffered significant fires twice, with extensive interior and roof damage but retaining some distinguishing features on the facade. Saxtonville Tavern in Hunterdon County appears to be intact, owned by NJ Department of Environmental Protection. This may sell to a private owner, and would then require an easement. Mr. Ceponis stated that Ms. Boggs will visit that site today with the Historic Preservation Office to determine further details about the site.

No major additional updates. The two Salem City easements are with the city for signature and recording. Boxwood Hall is under review, including tax appraisal. Exempt farm in Jersey City is waiting for signature and recording with the city. Mr. Ceponis plans to check in with the head of D&R Greenway, no updates yet but working on it.

- **Legislation & Policy/Strategic Planning**

Ms. Stender stated that the legislation summarized by Mr. Ceponis is moving. Nothing further to report at this time.

- **Education and Outreach**

Mr. Alessandrine stated that, following last meeting's report, Historic Preservation Committee training and Trust staff are developing a new training approach broken into modules, and that work is scheduled to be finalized sometime after the conference. Education and Outreach will meet sometime before September. Mr. Alessandrine would like to propose a League session for 2027, since it has been found fruitful in the past. He will report on that more fully at the board's next quarterly meeting.

- **Fiscal Oversight**

Nothing to report.

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

Mr. Lindsay stated the need to form a Nominating Committee for the election of NJ Historic Trust Officers. After some discussion, Mr. Perks and Ms. Easton were found eligible and volunteered to join. Since three is the preferred number of volunteers, Mr. Lindsay will reach out to other qualified board members and this will be left open to additional volunteers until July.

Public Comment

No comment.

Adjournment

Mr. Perks stated that the Camden County Historical Society is set to open the American Revolution Museum of Southern New Jersey at the Benjamin Cooper House, a project that has received considerable grant support from the Trust. The museum is set to open on June 27 at 10 AM, with a June 28 marker unveiling from the New Jersey Historical Commission. That day will also feature a Tavern Talk, as well as a Colonial Taverns Day hosted by three historic taverns in the area. Ms. Stender congratulated Mr. Perks on the project.

Mr. Alessandrine thanked staff of the Historic Preservation Office for help with recent work on behalf of Cape May MAC, Megan Berretta for quickly producing letters for a congressional spending ask, and Kinney Clark for help partnering with the City of Cape May on work to honor the city's major milestone anniversaries, 175 years incorporated and 50 as a National Historic Landmark city. Ms. Marcopul thanked Mr. Alessandrine.

Mr. Miller moved to adjourn. Mr. Lindsay seconded. All were in favor. The meeting stood adjourned at 11:44 AM.

**Next Meeting Date & Location:
September 30, 2026 (Hybrid, Location TBD)**

****Denotes items for Board vote***