OCEAN COUNTY CULTURAL AND HERITAGE COMMISSION

a division of the Ocean County Department of Parks & Recreation

The Ocean County Cultural and Heritage Commission

Agency Plan 2011-2016

Adopted by the Ocean County Cultural & Heritage Commission: March 15, 2011

The Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders established the second oldest commission in New Jersey on October 16, 1968 and the commission organized on January 9, 1969. In more than forty years, the Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders has appointed 43 members to the nine member (five before 1972 - with two alternates after 2010) volunteer commission to five year rotating terms from representative Ocean County communities and backgrounds.

Mission Statement

By encouraging creative and cultural expressions through inclusiveness and education, the Ocean County Cultural and Heritage Commission promotes public interest in the arts and the preservation of culture and heritage.

Adopted: February 21, 2006.

Vision Statement

The Ocean County Cultural & Heritage Commission will be the primary leader and catalyst in promoting the arts and cultural heritage in Ocean County.

Adopted: November 20, 2001

Structure

The Ocean County Cultural & Heritage Commission is comprised of nine members and two alternates. Commission staff consists of four full-time and one part-time employee on site with an additional full time employee assigned to the Ocean County Historical Society as a museum assistant, acting as a registrar of historic documents and artifacts. The commission and staff are responsible for overall arts, heritage, history and cultural development for Ocean County. This county agency is a division under the Ocean County Department of Parks & Recreation and works with nonprofit organizations, individuals, communities and other government agencies, foundations, creative businesses and economic development entities to advocate and advance arts and heritage in the county. The commission works in concert with other county agencies that are also integral to arts and heritage development, bringing these agencies together in an interagency working group to address common needs and opportunities. Collaboration spans the responsibility and activities of the Ocean County Department of Parks and Recreation, the Ocean County Library System, the Ocean County Office of Public Affairs and Tourism, the Ocean County Department of Planning, the Ocean County Superintendent of Schools, the Ocean County Office of Aging, the Ocean County Human Services Department and many others.

Standing Responsibilities

A thoughtful plan must acknowledge the existing positive efforts as a basis for movement forward. The commission currently provides services in heritage and the arts ranging from grants and technical assistance to marketing and has consistently built upon accomplishments in providing higher levels of services for the residents and non-profits of Ocean County.

The commission's standing responsibilities include the following:

The Ocean County Cultural and Heritage Commission administers two annual grant programs: the Local History Program Grants and the Local Arts Program Grants. The staff produces and distributes the grant application and guidelines, provides workshops to potential grantees, facilitates the application process, manages evaluative procedures, and maintains detailed reporting on the grants, grantees, and the grants process. The Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders requires a precise and time consuming process of approvals and payment authorizations for these grants. Overall, the grants process is by far the largest time commitment of the commission and staff.

On behalf of the New Jersey Historical Commission, the Ocean Cultural & Heritage Commission administers both General Operating and Special Project grant funding to county-based heritage and history organizations through its Local History Program Grant. The Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders also provides support through direct, non-match required funding to four Ocean County historical institutions towards their general operations.

The commission provides funding to grassroots, county-based arts groups and projects through its annually administered Local Arts Program Grant. This grant program is made possible through grant funding awarded to the commission from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts (NJSCA). Approximately eighty percent of the grant funding awarded by NJSCA is earmarked by the commission

for re-granting through the Local Arts Program Grant. The remaining funds are designated for Local Arts Development or arts programs and services run directly by the commission.

Local Arts Program Grant funds are competitive and are awarded after a rigorous peer review and approval process administered by the commission. The grant is open to non-profit organizations, government entities, and institutions of higher learning who then match these funds to further local arts development. Funding is offered in three categories: general operating support (GOS), special project support (SPS), and special outreach project support (SORP).

The commission applies and receives funding from the NJ State Council of the Arts to carry out the grant program and to implement key art initiatives. The commission staff spends a great deal of time supporting the artistic activities of Ocean County organizations and residents, such as the Senior Citizen Art Show, the Ocean County Teen Arts Festival, the Toms River Business Improvement District, and others.

The Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders also provides direct general operating support to three Ocean County arts institutions. In addition to grant funding, the commission provides informal assistance to individual artists who seek to apply directly to the NJSCA. At this time, the commission has only informal relations with the five non-profits that receive direct grant assistance from NJSCA.

The commission staff produces a number of independent art programs (e.g. the 2010 Kwanzaa program) and cooperative cultural programs (e.g. the Ocean County Library Film Festival). Independent of commission involvement, the Ocean County Library system and the Department of Parks and Recreation actually initiate, fund and administer the majority of arts programming conducted directly by Ocean County government

The commission serves as an advocate for arts and heritage within the county through its presence at public meetings and in working with other county agencies. The staff represents the county at state and regional meetings for the arts, cultural and heritage fields, and attends statewide conferences and workshops required for entities that re-grant state funds.

Through ***Out and About Ocean County***, available both online and in print quarterly, the commission provides marketing and information services. ***Out and About Ocean County*** is mailed and e-mailed directly to interested residents throughout the county and made available at various locations such as libraries, senior citizen developments, community centers, public art spaces, and many other public spaces. The publication can also be accessed as a page-turning version through a link on the OCCHC website (http://editions.us.com/outandabout_mar11/). ***Out and About Ocean County*** is an outgrowth of both the 2002-2007 plan and the START program.

The Ocean County Cultural Access Advisory Committee (CAAC) is a major new initiative by the commission in response to a suggestion by New Jersey Cultural Access Network at a quarterly C&H meeting to create a county- wide ADA advisory and grievance committee for county non-profits. CAAC provides technical support and assistance for non-profits and members of the Ocean County cultural community on removing barriers to participation, particularly for individuals with disabilities.

These non grant related activities are also on-going and time-consuming responsibilities.

Providing archival research and programming as well as exhibit assistance to various Ocean County agencies and departments, the commission is an active leader and resource for the heritage community. The commission is increasingly supportive of the Ocean County Department of Parks and Recreation in the restoration of the historic Cedar Bridge Tavern, Cloverdale County Park and other heritage sites throughout the county. Heritage-related tasks have become the primary focus of time for two full-time staff as the commission is engaged in archival and collections work, assists with interpretive signage and materials, and provides extensive assistance in heritage efforts throughout the county and in the state.

The commission supports the annual Ocean County Teen Arts Festival through the Ocean County College.

Changes in Ocean County since the 2002-2007 plan

Ten years ago, the Ocean County Cultural & Heritage Commission produced the 2002-2007 Ocean County Cultural Plan. In 2007, the commission staff developed a related agency plan. Since then, Ocean County arts and heritage organizations and the population they serve have changed. The commission's excellent record of work undertaken in response to the 2002-2007 Cultural Plan resulted in fewer constituency needs in some service areas. However, new needs have emerged and therefore ought to have prominence in the 2011-2016 plan.

Demographics

Ocean County has grown in population and diversity since the 2002-2007 Cultural Plan. The traditional senior population is increasingly balanced with a young adult and family population that is economically and ethnically more diverse. Whereas access for individuals with disabilities and the need to reach out to and serve an elderly population had been top issues in 2000, these are now tempered with additional priorities that have emerged with the younger population. For example in 2000, the call was for print publications in large type face legible for elderly readers and centrally located information centers easily accessible to this population. Today, there are as many calls for mobile app calendars and self-guided tours as the large print format. The commission is challenged not only to maintain marketing and access services targeted to the county's retiree population: it must in addition do more to work with families and youth, the young adult population that is growing county-wide, and the larger suburban family population.

Meanwhile, Ocean County has continued to grow in the number of gated, senior residential communities. Many of these new neighborhoods target an increasingly affluent retiree population and offer a full roster of activities, including arts and cultural classes and group tours. Activities are organized by paid activities coordinators, individuals, or ad hoc clubs. A full time staff member would be required to connect with these individuals, work to involve them in cultural activities outside of their own neighborhoods, and keep in contact with what can be a constantly changing cadre of activity leaders. The 2002-2007 Cultural Plan called for the commission to reach out and work to build relationships with the communities, which it has done for the past ten years, but roadblocks to effective communication and difficulty getting residents past their village gates remain major challenges.

"No one is from here anymore," said one of the cultural plan participants. This describes many of the new bedroom communities that have continued to spring up along the Garden State Parkway. A major, emerging cultural change is the growing Orthodox Jewish community in Lakewood (the largest Orthodox

community outside of Brooklyn has grown to an estimated 50,000 individuals and is anticipated to become over 100,000 over the next few decades). In another demographic change, upscale residential developments flourished in Ocean County as the housing costs in the New York metro area continued to climb through the 2000s. These commuter families – larger households with school-aged children – have limited connection to Ocean County heritage and history. The many historical societies and heritage groups that have been the backbone of county heritage for decades have found it particularly difficult to connect with these newcomers. Moreover, teachers in the Ocean County schools who lead students through New Jersey history often know very little of Ocean County's story. These teachers can miss the opportunity to tell national stories with local history including the fierce civil war that raged during the American War for Independence, suffrage, slavery, industrialization and even the golden age of the robber barons.

The "no one is from here" issue is just as complex when it comes to the arts. Asked in the cultural survey to select the areas they associated with the arts, more residents picked Philadelphia or New York than Ocean County. This finding was predicted by the arts administrators who work to get residents to buy tickets to local events rather than drive two hours each way for exposure to the arts.

While these are all challenges, they are also exciting opportunities for the Cultural & Heritage Commission. Fresh from the process of convening focus groups and key informants for the 2011-2016 cultural plan, the commission is in a good position to continue dialogue with the full range of stakeholders who now define Ocean County. The commission can help bridge the old and new, the traditional and the change agents. The commission aspires to act as the cultural clearinghouse and catalyst for the county.

Changes in the Field

Just as the shifting demographic profile has impacted the work of the Cultural and Heritage Commission, so have changes in the field. As with the cultural field throughout New Jersey and nationally, the past few years have been difficult on Ocean County non-profit organizations. Financially, many Ocean County groups question how they will survive as their traditional funding base of individual support has dramatically diminished. As reported on the surveys completed by cultural organizations for the cultural plan, and discussed in-depth by cultural administrators and volunteers through the planning process, forty-three percent (43%) of Ocean County organizations are seeking ways to significantly reduce operating overhead and costs; thirty-six percent (36%) are seriously considering reducing programming or the days/hours they are open to the public. Twenty percent (20%) are concerned their organizations may close due to lack of funds.

According to the Ocean County Cultural Plan 2011-2016, eighty percent (80%) of the county's non-profit cultural organizations state a need to identify new revenue sources. The survey data confirmed that many groups identified that the long-time supporters of Ocean County's cultural organizations are becoming older with more restricted annual income. As a result, Ocean County non-profits need to gain new skills in seeking planned giving and bequests.

Many groups reported tension and challenges between volunteers who have contributed time for decades and new younger volunteers who have entirely different ideas on how to support the organization. The younger volunteers often feel unwelcome by the long time stalwarts. After an initial spurt of enthusiasm, they tend to leave the cultural organizations in favor of other (often social or health related) causes that can better assimilate these new Ocean County residents.

Ocean County groups reported that they need to rapidly learn new ways to market and develop audiences. The marketing techniques and styles that have remained prevalent in Ocean County, due to its older population, are more aligned to a world without internet, where people subscribe far in advance, get their tickets mailed to them, and read about events in their local newspapers. The widely distributed ***Out and About Ocean County*** is still a top source of cultural and heritage news for residents. However, the Ocean County community—including seniors well into their 80s—also utilitizes e-based information: e-mailed newsletters and reminders and continuously updated information about the organizations they like.

The artist and historian/preservationist community has changed. Individual artists have found the need and the opportunity to reach beyond the county boundaries; some to regional, national, or even international markets. Not so long ago, many of these artists were able to make their living through regional and local galleries, art shows and by teaching at area studios. For some, their virtual galleries and representation are more important than local shows. Artists and others in the cultural field increasingly see themselves as business entrepreneurs. Writers in the county self-publish and operate publishing start-ups as well as being writers. Painters and sculptors seek and reach international clients. Theater producers contract to produce shows for destinations beyond New Jersey. Some of these now operate "for profit" enterprises and yet remain deeply engaged in the cultural life of their community. Thus, the ways in which the commission offers support must evolve to include the needs of the cultural entrepreneurs.

Meeting the Challenge: Team Work and Prioritization

The 2011-2016 cultural planning process made clear that the Cultural and Heritage Commission cannot take on meeting all these challenges single-handedly or all at one time. Much of the commission's time is dedicated to the grant programs administered on behalf of New Jersey agencies of art and history; advocacy; and providing related public information. Given foreseeable economic conditions, the commission cannot realistically add staff positions or rapidly expand overhead to take on more comprehensive services and programs. Given the standing responsibilities and commitments of the commission, the goals stated here only address those portions or tasks from the Cultural Plan that may be appropriate for the commission to consider given .

This year is a time of challenge for the cultural community in Ocean County: a time for the commission to look ahead to new solutions and a new strength for culture and heritage. In aligning its work to these challenges, the commission seeks to be a leader, facilitator, convener, and partner to ensure that Ocean County benefits from outstanding arts and heritage.

Ocean County Cultural and Heritage Commission Goals for 2011-2016

1. Respond to the Cultural Plan by advancing efforts to stabilize and strengthen the cultural and heritage non-profits in Ocean County.
2. Provide funding to the cultural and heritage community in Ocean County.
3. Advance cultural and arts education for students throughout Ocean County.
4. Market Ocean County heritage and culture.
5. Continue to be a model of excellence to enhance Commission effectiveness.

"With a limited staff and budget, the commission should be prudent and take care not to 'bite off more than it can chew.' There is a temptation for others (in particular, arts and historical groups) to request more services than the Commission can successfully deliver. The cultural plan and the strategic agency plan must be realistic and reasonable blueprints for the future." – Participant, Cultural and Agency Planning Process, 2010.

The ACTION PLAN: Goals and Strategies

Goal 1. Respond to the Cultural Plan by advancing efforts to strengthen and stabilize the cultural and heritage non-profits in Ocean County.
Strategies
1.A. **Assess the fiscal strength and capacity of all Ocean County Arts and Heritage non-profit organizations (current grantee organizations**, former grantees, and organizations no longer applying for grants) to determine their actual working capital, cash reserves, and endowment by following the standard practices for capital and reserves as established by Charity Navigator and the Urban Institute.
i. **Share the findings, as appropriate, to shape advocacy for funding** from wide-ranging sources, public and private alike, and utilize it as a foundation for workshops and new training.
ii. Evaluate how to provide support, in the form of training and roundtables, that will benefit the field.
1.B**. Consider implementing a Cultural & Heritage Volunteer and Board Development Program**.
i. Identify planners and cultural agency specialists and consultants in the region and invite them to be listed on a roster (managed by the commission) of professionals providing technical assistance to cultural and heritage organizations needing to build volunteer corps and strengthen their boards.
ii. Develop a "**Best Practices and Resources**" section of the commission website to provide Ocean County cultural groups with information and resources in board and volunteer development.
1.C. **Evaluate how to provide the most needed shared services to the cultural and heritage communities**, implement as appropriate, and determine which of these shared services could best be managed by the commission.
1.D. Consider ways to help implement a **low interest revolving loan fund** to provide short term assistance for critical capital needs that will enable Ocean County cultural and heritage groups to increase their revenue.

Goal 2. **Provide funding to the cultural and heritage community in Ocean County.**

Strategies

2.A. **Continue offering grants programs to heritage and cultural organizations.**

2.B. **Evaluate the commission granting programs** and services to the field, considering how to achieve the highest impact through the available funding (size of grants/number of grants), and ways to leverage the current grants to create higher rates of match for grantees. **As appropriate, develop updated grant policies**.

2.C**.** If appropriate and based on specific opportunities, **consider seeking grants for programs and outreach to the field**. Evaluate, and if appropriate, apply to additional/new sources for grant support possibly requiring a 501(c)(3) fiscal partner that could match existing State re-grant funding. For example, Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation and other regional foundations and funders that do not currently fund in Ocean County could provide additional funding for culture and heritage organizations.

2.D. **Consider offering an Ocean County Cultural and Heritage Showcase and Booking Conference:** to stimulate area organizations and groups to utilize and contract with O.C. groups as performers for events; to utilize and book O.C. facilities as event venues; and to provide workshops for Business Improvement Districts (BID) and civic groups on how to best use the arts and heritage in shaping their celebrations, special events and downtown districts (e.g., "How to hold a successful monthly First Friday gallery night"). Likewise provide workshops for artists and cultural groups on marketing, contracting, working with sponsors, etc. Encourage organizations and artists to have booths/tables, and offer show-case style short performances.

i. Attend a showcase, such as the one sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, to observe and utilize the findings to format the Ocean County showcase.

2.E. **Compose organizational and individual practitioner rosters** to help organizations and practitioners gain visibility and connect to business opportunities.

2.F. **Encourage dialogue in the community on sources of dedicated revenue** for culture and heritage and pursue opportunities and options.

Goal 3. Advance cultural and arts education for students throughout Ocean County.
Strategies
3.A. **Maintain commitment to the Ocean County Teen Arts Festival and work to publicize the event and featured teens as broadly as possible.**
3.B. **Evaluate establishing a corollary to the Teen Arts annual event, such as a Teen History Heritage Symposium or Festival**, showcasing research or preservation work undertaken by teens or classes.
3.C. **Consider developing a standing Ocean County Cultural Education Partnership** open to all Ocean County school districts, appointing a leadership team to evaluate best ways to stimulate lasting curriculum-based partnerships between area cultural organizations and artists and schools. Over time, work to build the partnership into a visible entity that can attract funding for arts and heritage partnerships with area schools.
3.D. **Consider identifying funding for and facilitating the development of an annual professional development** symposium: demonstrating various ways that local cultural institutions, local history and heritage, and local artistic traditions can be resources for teaching.
3.E. **Encourage an on-line roster of artists and cultural organizations** to be used as a resource by schools throughout the county for bus tours, residencies, and other events.

Goal 4. Market Ocean County heritage and culture.
Strategies
4.A. **Maintain commitment to the *Out and About Ocean County*** while evaluating options for streamlining the amount of staff time required and responding to residents' increasing use of web-based sources for calendar and entertainment information.
4.B. **Consider options for a single, consolidated on-line calendar and information source,** with related print copies, as well as opportunities for sponsorship marketing, advertising, and other revenue. As appropriate and possible, confer with others who have developed or used top platforms, or attend a user group conference. Evaluate ways to cost-share between agencies and implement in ways that reduce the workload placed on the commission staff. (For example, require that all data input be done directly by participating groups or individuals.)
4.C**. Consider ways to enhance the marketing of heritage and culture in all** government and private sector entities involved in promoting Ocean County. Consider ways to enhance the marketing of heritage and culture in all public and private sector entities involved in promoting Ocean County. Bring them together with area ad agencies and marketers to identify key attributes for a new brand image and message that successfully describe Ocean County culture and heritage both visually and verbally.
4.D. **Evaluate publishing an annual guide to Ocean County culture** that includes a map of all destinations and events, suggested self-guided tours, ads and destination information and links. Distribute the links widely on-line.
4.E. **Work with all cultural and heritage organizations and destinations to utilize standardized messages** and visuals to strengthen marketing for culture and heritage in the county.
4.F. **Work with the county and municipalities to develop and implement standardized way-finding and informational signage**.
4.G. **Develop an annual program of** h**onors and awards** for Ocean County artists, preservationists and cultural and heritage organizations. Recognize volunteers and local business supporters, cultural educators, and lifetime achievement. Host an annual program or special event that features the awards and recognition.
4.H. **Provide marketing workshops** for artists and cultural organizations, including development of web pages, use of video (You Tube), understanding how to use social media (Facebook) and other "new marketing" topics and best practices.
4.I. **Participate in tourism sales conferences** that market Ocean County as a destination by representing and promoting Ocean County cultural destinations for tour groups.
4.J. **Publish an on-line and print annual review of progress and accomplishments** that recognizes the work of all county cultural development agencies.

Gal 5. Continue to be a model of excellence to enhance commission effectiveness.
Strategies
5.A. **Maintain ongoing capacity to manage current programs and services as well as undertake new ones.**
5.B. **Annually review use of staff time and priorities** and realign to meet annual objectives. Identify ways to streamline current and standing programs and operations for best use of staff and time.
5.B. Consistently work to **maximize impact and effectiveness** of the grant programs through user-friendly enhancements.
5.C**. Develop policies for commission membership and responsibilities** such as expectations of members' participation, representation of geography and interests, rotations, length of service. Also develop advisory panels and other ad hoc groups to provide the commission with fresh insight and information.