

Committee Meeting

of

ASSEMBLY TOURISM AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE

*"Testimony about the Bayshore Discovery Project
and its tourism partner programs around the state"*

LOCATION: A.J. Meerwald
New Jersey Official Tall Ship

DATE: September 19, 2011
1:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblyman Matthew W. Milam, Chair
Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle
Assemblyman David W. Wolfe



ALSO PRESENT:

Amy Denholtz
*Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aide*

Jillian Dempsey
*Assembly Majority
Committee Aide*

***Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
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ASSEMBLYMAN MATTHEW W. MILAM (Chair): I want to call the Assembly Tourism Committee meeting--

Welcome to everyone who is here. It's a bit of an unusual type of Committee meeting. But as you know, if you've been following my chairmanship on the Tourism and Arts Committee, I wanted to do this. I wanted to kind of be on the road. And it's our continuing efforts of taking our Committee to the different sites, whether they're historic, or whether it's the arts, or whether it's just tourism. It is about being there, on hand, so we know what we have, what we have to offer here in the State of New Jersey. We're not going to see that sitting in committee rooms.

So with the support of the Speaker of the House -- and I thank her for allowing me to continue having our Committee on the road, to see all the things we have to be proud of as New Jerseyans -- what we have to offer in our tourism, our beautiful beaches and the things that go along with those; the arts that we have; and of course history goes along with the State of New Jersey. So I do want to thank the Speaker.

And, of course, I'd like to thank the Office of Legislative Services for kind of bearing with me and setting up wherever I want to be, whether it is at a theater like we visited -- Bergen PAC in Assemblywoman Huttel's district -- or being on a boat. And I'm very, very positive that they knew when they took the job at the Office of Legislative Services that they'd be setting up microphones on a boat. (laughter) But that's okay, because that's what it is about.

And I appreciate everyone who did come out today to see the official New Jersey Tall Ship, the A.J. Meerwald.

I have to do just a couple of little housekeeping items. I'm going to ask to have the attendance.

MS. DENHOLTZ (Committee Aide): Assemblyman Wolfe.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Here.

MS. DENHOLTZ: Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttle.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: Here.

MS. DENHOLTZ: And Chairman Milam.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Here, and thank you.

We have a number of people who are going to come before us and testify. First, we're going to invite our host, Executive Director of the Bayshore Discovery Project, which is the owner of the A.J. Meerwald, Meghan Wren. And, of course, the Captain -- the Captain of this great, beautiful ship, Jesse Briggs. And I want to welcome them as our host.

Thank you for having us. (applause)

Welcome. Just relax. This isn't like-- (laughter) We just want to thank you for hosting us today.

I do have the honor and pleasure-- I sit on the Board of the A.J. Meerwald and Bayshore Discovery Project. It's just a very proud thing that I get to be a small part of some of the things that happen with this Tall Ship. She is docked in my district as her home port, down in Bivalve, New Jersey. And I know a lot of people are saying, "Where?" (laughter) Just look on a map. You'll Google it.

Welcome, again -- and Jesse Briggs.

I don't know who wants to go first. But we just want to kind of thank you for being our host. I wanted to started off with you guys to just kind of welcome everyone here today.

JESSE BRIGGS: It's a pleasure for us to be here. I want to thank Mercer County -- their Parks and Rec Department -- that made it possible to tie up to the dock here. And I thank you all for coming out to help showcase our vessel here, and our programs, and some of what South Jersey has to offer, which is a lot.

We're pleased. I mean, very few people know about this dock facility here. And maybe we'll bring some more people up this way.

MEGHAN WREN: I want to add my voice of welcome and thank you, especially to our Chair for bringing the Committee meeting here.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: You're welcome.

MS. WREN: Thank you very much.

And thank you Assemblywoman and Assemblyman for joining us. I know it was a lot of effort and a lot of short notice. With the storm having just gone through, it was not until last week that we knew whether the dock was going to work for us or not. And I know Amy and Jillian were incredible in pulling all of this together on such short notice. So thanks to everybody who pulled it all together.

It's really a thrill to have so many folks on board who actually helped us to be where we are today. And you may know that the Meerwald was restored through support from the New Jersey Historic Trust and New Jersey DOT. And there was a letter-writing campaign with the hundreds and hundreds of school kids who come on board that convinced the Legislature to make us New Jersey's Official Tall Ship. And we're thrilled to have folks here who are so helpful in bringing all that together.

And you mentioned that this is the Tourism and Arts Committee. Well, as the Meerwald doesn't really fall into a particular

category easily-- We do environmental programs; we're a historic vessel on the National Register of Historic Places; we operate out of Bivalve, as the Chairman mentioned, out of another historic property; and we're one of the few historic properties in the state that can actually move from place to place. And we like to think of--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: Like our meetings. (laughter)

MS. WREN: Yes, exactly.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Wait until we untie this thing.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: I didn't mean to interrupt.

MS. WREN: No. We're thrilled. And as a representative of New Jersey tourism, we're thrilled to have representatives here today who help us do what we do, and we like to think of it as a partnership and think of New Jersey's Tall Ship as an avenue for showing off what New Jersey has.

And I spoke to someone today, who we worked with recently down in Bivalve, with the New Jersey Council for the Humanities. And she said she's been working in Trenton for a lot of years and had never seen this spot. I like to think that that's one of the Meerwald's roles -- is to let people step aboard and look back on the land, and look back on New Jersey and see it from so many different angles, and to experience it at, sort of, a slower pace. Someone asked how long it took us to get here. Well, from Bivalve it can be as long as a 14- to 16-hour journey to come up here. It slows down your pace a little bit, and it allows you to take time to really take in the things that are special here.

Thank you so much for sharing that with everybody. And welcome to the Meerwald, and thanks for being here.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: You're very welcome.

I always just open it up to the Committee for questions, but I just wanted to ask you a couple myself, just very quickly.

A vessel like this -- not when it's the winter, not on the maintenance side -- but just to do that sail you had mentioned -- the 14, 16 hours -- what is your normal crew number as far as, like, how many?

MS. WREN: Well, we're always prepared to do our education too, and so we have about 13 people who are attached to the ship. But we work seven days a week. So on any given day, a sail could have as few as seven, but there are as many as 13 people who are permanently attached to the ship.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: They sail with it and kind of maintain it as it's going. So you have your cook, and you have your captain, of course.

MS. WREN: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Totally -- Bayshore Discovery Project, A.J. Meerwald -- employs how many, full and part?

MS. WREN: Full and part, we're at about 20.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: And they're 20 good -- I mean, they're paying jobs? (affirmative response) And they're seven days a week, so the people come on board-- Very good.

Assemblywoman Huttie, any questions, comments?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: Just a thank you for your hospitality. I did have the opportunity to be on this ship when you

were docked in Edgewater. I think it was about two years ago on the Hudson. I think at that time you had a program for-- You were sailing from Edgewater to Long Beach Island, I believe, that summer. And I think there was an opportunity for some school children to sail with you. I don't know if you still do those camping type of programs, or -- with the kids to, I guess, know what it's like to be out on the adventurous waters of the -- you know, of New Jersey rivers and go down to the ocean.

It's such a historic ship. I think the Chairman's right, and everyone here. I don't think-- I wish-- I would hope that more New Jersey residents had the opportunity to witness and see such an exceptional, historic ship. I just can't believe, you know, the history and how you can sail. Well then, again, I guess you do sail very slowly. (laughter)

So I did have the opportunity to visit. And I was just wondering if you are continuing those? I don't know if it was a camp program or a summer program back then. It was about two years ago.

MS. WREN: That would have been one of our maritime camps that we do each summer. And what we do, on a daily basis, is field trips with schools. And every summer we do a maritime camp, where kids get a chance to go for a full week on board. We also have day sails and day camps. So if they can't come aboard for a full week, they can come for a day and have a similar experience.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: I think that's so important. I wanted to highlight that. Thank you.

MS. WREN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Assemblyman Wolfe, any comments, questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Just a couple of comments.

I represent parts of Ocean County. And certainly being part of the Bay, we have a lot of generations of folks who are no longer able to make their livelihood from the Bay -- going back to even gunning, and duck hunting, and everything such as that.

And I never thought I would be sitting in the middle of the Delaware River as a legislator, but this is a first. And I first was made aware of what you really do through some documentaries on Channel 13 and Channel 23. I really appreciate it.

But I'm thinking-- I'm sitting here today, and-- This is an oyster-- What do you call it, oyster boat, ship? What's the term for it?

MS. WREN: Oyster schooner.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Schooner, okay.

My father would be very happy I'm sitting here. My dad passed away years ago, but he loved oysters. He lived in central Pennsylvania, and every Saturday morning he went down to Helmrich's Seafood store in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, which is in the middle of Pennsylvania, because they got fresh oysters every Saturday from Philadelphia, by the railroad. And we used to have oyster chowder and oyster stew every Saturday and Sunday. That brings back a lot of memories.

But I think it's very important -- the heritage that we represent here. And I'm sure that-- You know, we're here today. And I'm sure you've had to make a lot of modern changes due to Coast Guard regulations and things such as that. Are there still some things you need to have done

here that you need some money to be available for your upgrading of the vessel -- Federal requirements or State requirements?

MR. BRIGGS: Well, we're always looking, like most nonprofits, for money. One of the areas of restoration that we'd still like to complete is the installation of the oyster dredges, which would be right in the center area, where we're sitting right now, so that we could actually operate an oyster dredge.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Right. Do you get-- You have received grants from the State in the past?

MS. WREN: We receive -- or competitively apply for operating support from the New Jersey Historical Commission, and special project grants from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, and also the New Jersey Historic Trust and Cultural Trust. We also get support from-- Competitively we apply for support for our marketing -- for the tourism -- Division of Travel and Tourism.

But there's another-- We never-- We don't get support for maintenance, and operations, and kind of keeping the boat going -- the physical plant. And one of the things that is coming up in the very near future is needing to upgrade the engine. The EPA has concerns. We actually-- When we did the restorations, she was built with a salvaged engine from World War II. And so that's what we operate with right now -- is a Gray Marine diesel 671. And we are looking to get a greener engine.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: So it's probably what, 60 years old? How old is it?

MS. WREN: Yes, it's from the '40s. So we're looking at roughly \$60,000 to put a new, greener engine on board. So that's something that we're--

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Well, I'm just happy to be here. Hopefully, through the Chairman, I think publicity as a result of this hearing will be -- have the public more aware of some of your needs and hopefully contribute to your continuing service.

Thanks a lot.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Thank you, Assemblyman Wolfe.
How long are you here in Trenton for this port?

MS. WREN: We are leaving on Wednesday.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Okay.

MS. WREN: We have a public sail opportunity on Tuesday, 1:30 to 4:00.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Very good.

And just before I let you go, because of -- you know, you always want to make sure the Meerwald is flying the American flag. We did get the flag that flew over the State House on Friday, and we wanted to make sure we presented it to you folks so you could fly it proudly. This way you know it flew over the State House, and now it will fly over New Jersey's Official Tall Ship.

MS. WREN: Excellent.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Thank you for what you did.

MS. WREN: Thank you so much. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Next I want to call up -- and it's a great honor to have -- Grace Hanlon, Executive Director, New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism.

Grace, welcome.

G R A C E H A N L O N: Good morning, Chairman Milam, Committee members of the Assembly Tourism and the Arts Committee.

I'm Grace Hanlon, Executive Director of the Division of Travel and Tourism, and I would like to thank you for this opportunity to escape the 21st century and join the Committee aboard this magnificent vessel. It's absolutely beautiful. What a fabulous setting.

While I'm excited and honored to be here today, I do need to express regret on behalf of Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno; and Sara Cureton, the Department of State's Historical Commission Director.

The restoration efforts conducted by the Bayshore Discovery Project are very impressive for a ship this size and age, almost a century old. The educational programs aboard the A.J. Meerwald, docked either here or in Bivalve or other ports in the tri-state area, are impressive, and I applaud you.

Governor Christie and the Administration have made a commitment to promote tourism and culture, arts, and history programs in New Jersey. With the support of New Jersey's tourism-- With this support, New Jersey's tourism industry continues to provide positive results and great returns. Despite the challenging economic times we have been facing, tourism rose 1.1 percent between 2008 and 2010.

Everyone is well aware that tourism remains the lifeblood of the industry for New Jersey's larger prosperity and economic standing. In

2010, State tourism expenditures reached \$35.5 billion, supported nearly 310,000 jobs, provided over \$10 billion in wages and salaries, and generated \$7.2 billion in Federal, State tax -- Federal, State, and local tax revenue. If it was not for these tourism revenues, every New Jersey resident would have to pay an additional \$1,367 in taxes.

Promotion is critical for fueling the State's economic prosperity. New Jersey's year-round competitive edge has been the result of collaborative efforts from numerous outstanding travel and tourism partners in our great towns and cities. The Bayshore Discovery Project is one of them.

Administered by the New Jersey Business Action Center's Division of Travel and Tourism, the competitive -- and I stress competitive -- Cooperative Marketing Grant provides funding to promote and market tourism events, attractions, and activities throughout the state. The Division awards these grants to tourism organizations to provide critical promotional services and to promote New Jersey as a premier travel destination.

In Fiscal Year 2011, the Bayshore Discovery Project was awarded \$14,000 from a Cooperative Marketing Grant, to support their marketing campaign, from the Division of Travel and Tourism. The Cooperative Marketing Grant awarded to the Bayshore Discovery Project was instrumental in supporting their efforts to significantly enhance their web presence and to cover advertising and print costs.

In FY 2012, the Project was also awarded a \$62,000 -- a little bit over \$62,000 for a General Operating Support grant from the Historical Commission, a sister agency within the Department of State.

Through a peer-reviewed, competitive grant process, the Historical Commission provides critical operating support to history organizations of all sizes across New Jersey. To its credit, the Bayshore Discovery Project has received General Operating Support grants annually since FY 2003. These grants enable history organizations, like Bayshore, to care for priceless historical artifacts and documents, provide innovative educational programs for students, and develop engaging events and activities that attract visitors to our state. Serving over 50,000 annual visitors, passengers, and program participants from New Jersey and the Mid-Atlantic region, the shipboard programming is critical to maintaining the mission of the Bayshore Discovery Project.

I wish to congratulate Bayshore on successfully utilizing both grants to promote educational programming while maintaining this vessel's historic integrity.

On behalf of the Division of Travel and Tourism, we congratulate the Project for their commitment to New Jersey in preserving, promoting, and protecting this floating classroom we stand upon.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Thank you, Grace.

Also, thank you just for your energy, your enthusiasm since becoming the Executive Director of Travel and Tourism. It's very important to have someone like yourself, with the personality you have. And you get it. We've been together many times, different parts of the state, and you are there. You're out there, you're visible, and you're just showing you care about just continuing -- just by the sheer dollar numbers that you shared with us -- why it is so important and why-- There are many

people, maybe even here right now, who are going to hear me say this time and time again until I'm not able to say it publicly anymore -- it's just about marketing, and it's about the awareness to make sure that there are people who know what New Jersey has to sell. If we don't invest in capital in a business, your business isn't going to grow. If I don't invest in capital in my business it's not going to grow, I'm going to go stagnant. If we don't invest capital -- calling them *marketing dollars* and just *promotion dollars* -- we're going to go stagnant in the State of New Jersey. We have many things to offer, and we have many people to attract here.

And I always love to share the story-- There's nothing like sitting in your living room and watching a commercial about another state, whether it's Maryland, Pennsylvania. I mean, even as far as California now we're seeing commercials. They should be watching the State of New Jersey. And we should be able -- we should continue to promote this and just look for those dollars, as we continue forward, to start -- whether it's the fall campaign or it's the spring campaign. I like to call it just a year-round campaign. Let's just continually market that. And I know, through you, that will continue just because you do get it.

Thank you, again.

MS. HANLON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Assemblywoman Huttle, please.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: I'm so used to pressing a button. (referring to PA microphone) (laughter)

We talked about this, Chairman -- about naming our -- or adding a name to our Arts Committee. It's Tourism and Arts, and we were going to add Historical Preservation.

And I just noticed, Grace, the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism. And I don't know if you could add Heritage Tourism as well. That would be nice.

And I ask this only because I just want to bring up -- or ask a question dealing with historical sites. During the hurricane -- our friend Irene, as she visited the state -- any of our historical buildings -- were they -- was there any damage to that? And I ask that because I don't know how this ship -- or the vessel -- survived the hurricane. Obviously-- I don't know if you received any damage. But if there was any damage, are there extra dollars coming in to preserve any of the historical sites? I don't know if we -- if any of the historical sites were damaged.

I say this because coming from Bergen County -- and New Bridge Landing -- we've had some flooding, and we had some of the artifacts damaged during the prior -- Hurricane Floyd or one of the events -- weather events. So I don't know-- Someone asked me just the other day, "Was there any damage to any of the sites?" I really didn't have that answer. I don't know if you do.

MS. HANLON: Well, first of all, I can definitely get back to you with more specifics. Of course I reached out to the industry all over the United States for reports. And they didn't get into specifics. They were very general reports. And I think everybody's dusting off. But I can absolutely look into that for you.

And as far as opportunities for funding for a damaged historic site, again I want to make sure I give you the accurate information, and I will bring that question back to the Business Action Center to help you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: Yes, just something to give that -- pass that-- Because I don't know. Did we have--

Did you have damage on the ship?

MS. WREN: (speaking off microphone) Our biggest--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: I'm sorry, I have to pull you to the mike again. I'm sorry.

MS. WREN: We were in Cape May at the time, and the forecasts were pretty bad. And our biggest loss was actually loss of business. Leaving Cape May and going up the River, and getting stuck in Philadelphia, where you couldn't travel on the River any longer because of all the things coming -- you know, all the debris floating in the River. And down at Bivalve, we had some erosion in our parking lot area that will have to be fixed.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: So you were lucky.

MS. WREN: We were very luck. For everything that was predicted, it was mostly the preparation and the loss of business that was the issue, more than actual damage.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: Thank you.

MS. HANLON: For businesses-- And I guess Historic Trust -- they look at themselves as little businesses as well; they're trying to stay afloat.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: Of course.

MS. HANLON: We really were referring those questions to the Business Action Center for resources.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: Thank you.

MS. HANLON: My pleasure.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Thank you.

Assemblyman Wolfe, any comments, anything?

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: No, thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Grace, thank you again for being here. It's such a beautiful day, and we're glad you're able to join us and share all the information that you did.

MS. HANLON: I'm honored to be here. Thank you.

And congratulations, again, on this wonderful vessel.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Thank you.

MS. HANLON: It's terrific.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: And because we actually have a timeframe here, because the boat actually does -- is in public sail mode -- we're going to run just a little tight. So we're just going to-- If I seem like I'm moving fast, I'm not, but I am. (laughter) Only because once this baby unties, we're all going. Whoever is on is on it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: Is it going north? Avoid the Turnpike.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Then you have to pay when you get off.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: You can help me avoid the traffic.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: I'm going to call our next testifier-- I'm going to call you up just two at a time.

Next, I want to call up Dorothy Guzzo, Executive Director of the New Jersey Historic Trust; and Diane Wieland, President, Southern Shore Tourism DMO. Welcome to you both, and thank you for joining us today.

D O R O T H Y P. G U Z Z O: Thank you for inviting me to this hearing.

I'm Dorothy Guzzo. I'm the Executive Director of the Historic Trust. The Historic Trust is affiliated with the Department of Community Affairs. And we're the entity that provides the matching grants for the rehabilitation of the State's historic sites. We fund nonprofit organizations and agencies of government, and our funding is part of the Open Space Farmland and Historic Preservation program, most recently using funds from the 2007 and 2009 bond referendums.

Since 1990, the Historic -- 1990 was the first year that we gave out grant money -- the Historic Trust has awarded \$135 million in 693 matching grants for the preservation of 477 landmark properties. Over the summer -- this past summer -- the Governor signed an appropriations bill for \$10.2 million which will provide matching grants to 58 historic resources. And I'd like to thank the members of this Committee for their support on this effort as well. That's from last spring.

Many of these sites that were included in the appropriations bill will become the anchors to attracting visitors and economic investment into the local community. The State's investment in our heritage leverages private investment. Since we are a reimbursement program, the private funding must be used first before the State's investment is allocated. And that helps to ensure that the dollars are not wasted and that we have a

quality preservation project. The investment is not only in the bricks and mortar aspect of the construction, and job creation. But long after the project is completed, visitors to these sites will continue to impact the local and regional economy.

As I'm sure the folks from Bivalve can attest, since the early -- since about 2000, \$1,437,500 has been invested from the Historic Trust in the shipping sheds and wharves in Cumberland County. And way, way back in 1992 -- which is why I gave you the '90 statistic -- \$265,000 was invested in this schooner. So that's about 20 years of continuous planning, restoration, and funding. And while it sounds like a long time, I don't think it's that unusual a timeframe for history to unfold.

The Trust funding helped to restore an important vestige of New Jersey's maritime heritage that could easily have been lost if it was not for the vision of a few small -- or not small people, but a few people and the support of hundreds. The Bayshore Discovery site, as well as this vessel, operate as an educational facility, successfully merging history, the environment, and tourism, drawing visitors and dollars from beyond the state's borders.

A year ago, the New Jersey Heritage Tourism Task Force created a Heritage Tourism Master Plan for the State. I've brought along the Executive Summary for the Committee. I think they were passed out. And the text for the full plan, as well as the supporting documentation -- including the economic impact study -- are linked to the Trust's website. As part of this effort, the Task Force surveyed over 1,800 historic sites in an attempt to identify those sites that were actually ready for visitors. The criteria was fairly basic. You needed to be open to the public on a regular

basis. The site needed to be actively promoted as a tourism attraction, and the site needed to support one of the six historic themes that were developed to best describe the significance of New Jersey's past. So over-- Out of the over 1,800 sites, about 102 were found to meet most of the visitor-ready criteria. So from that statistic alone we can see that we definitely have our work cut out for us.

So just-- I know that you're on a timeframe, so I will just tell you that the members of the Historic Trust Board are very proud of having played a small but important role in reinventing a new life for this old ship, as well as in transforming the shipping sheds for the next generation.

So I want to just thank the members of the Committee for allowing me to come and testify before you today. I'd be happy to answer any questions that you might have.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: And thank you for your testimony.

Just for the people in earshot: Meghan Wren, the Executive Director of this, never, ever, ever gives herself enough credit. And she knows I always do and just hates me for doing it (laughter). But it was about a vision. I mean Meghan saw this boat--

MS. GUZZO: Totally vision.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: And you've worked with her, and so you know her visions.

I'm sure there were so many naysayers down there in Bivalve and Port Norris, and just Commercial Township. They were like, "She's going to take this rotten old boat and do what? Who is this crazy lady?" (laughter) She did it though. She took that vision. She grouped people who were going to share it with her and continues to do so. And I just find

it exciting. And I love the time I'm able to spend -- which isn't much -- but I do like to just be that small part of it. And maybe someday, if I ever retire, I'll be painting the bottom of this thing sometime. But it's okay because it was one person's vision -- is what that boiled down to. And she knew who to get and who to garner together to make this. And it is about saving history.

Thank you for being a part of that as well.

MS. GUZZO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Assemblywoman Huttle?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Nothing?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: No, thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Assemblyman Wolfe? (no response)

Diane, please. Welcome.

DIANE F. WIELAND: Hi. Thank you for inviting me.

I'm Diane Wieland, and I'm the Chair of the Southern Shore DMO, Destination Marketing Organization.

We like to lay claim to this being our baby. The Southern Shore region is Cape May and Cumberland counties. And believe it or not, I've been working with Meghan since about 1989, when this was called the Delaware Bay Schooner Project. That was when the idea was there. Meghan, as the Chairman said, had this idea. And we all sat around at tourism meetings and listened, and listened, and listened (laughter). We agreed, but we weren't 100 percent sure it was going to happen.

If anyone knows how much hard work and perseverance has gone into this-- This is really proof that miracles can happen. This group of dedicated individuals have accomplished what many thought could never be done. The rising of the A.J. Meerwald from the bottom of the Delaware Bay was not only the beginning of an adventure, but it was the start of an exciting, and at times, difficult journey. Their faith never wavered. Through the work of the board, the crew, and countless others, this dream was realized. As we continue and move through to the next phase, we're working now -- at the end of this month will be the ribbon cutting of the shipping sheds, which is also another part of preserving the history.

Our connection with the Bayshore Discovery and with Cumberland County goes back many, many years. A little history: The Meerwald family, who -- from Dennis Township, in Cape May County -- commissioned the Charles H. Stowman & Sons shipyard, in Dorchester, in Cumberland County, to build the A.J. Meerwald in 1928. So that synergy has always been there. Cape May and Cumberland County continue to work well together.

While this was one of hundreds of ships of this type built along the Delaware Bayshore, this is the one that has a particular -- a very special, and interesting, and historic lifespan. She was worth saving before, and today she is worth supporting wholeheartedly. The opening of the shipping sheds in Bivalve on September 30 is just the next step in preserving the history of the oyster industry along the Delaware Bay. The Delaware Bay Museum documents the history of the Bay -- which is also part of their projects -- with artifacts and photographs depicting the rich maritime

history of the Delaware Bay region. Both exhibits of the schooner and the Museum are part of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail.

In 1995, the A.J. Meerwald was added to the National Register of Historic Places, and on Earth Day -- which was on Earth Day. And the A.J. Meerwald was designated New Jersey's Official Tall Ship by Governor Christine Whitman. Two years later, the Delaware Bay Schooner Project became known as the Delaware Bay Discovery Project, and they were on their way. From the inception, the A.J. Meerwald had one mission, and that was to motivate people to care for the environment, the history, and the culture of the Delaware Bayshore region, through education, preservation, and example. And they continue to do that every day.

If anyone has worked with the Board of Directors of the Bayshore Discovery Project and witnessed the drive and dedication of Meghan Wren and her team, they would understand the important work of this organization, and stand in awe of what has been accomplished by so few people in a relatively short time. The work required to fulfill the mission is arduous and never ending. They have managed to stay on course and create programs that motivate people to better understand the environment, the history, and the culture of one of New Jersey's gems, the Delaware Bay.

The A.J. Meerwald in full sail stands as the symbol of an idea that was well ahead of its time. The Delaware Bay had been the lifeline of the region long before the area was first settled in the 1600s. They became the stewards of the environment before it was popular, and are doing their part to maintain the health of the Bay and help preserve the economy of a vibrant commercial fishing and tourism industry.

This vessel serves in many capacities, but most importantly in the tourism industry; it is an icon of hard work and determination necessary to become a leader in marketing a cleaner and greener New Jersey and Southern Shore. The Bayshore Discovery Project, and each member of the A.J. Meerwald crew, teaches a strong environmental message while educating and entertaining every passengers as it sails throughout New Jersey along the Delaware Bay, Atlantic Ocean, and inland waterways.

The Official Tall Ship of New Jersey designation, as well as being on the National Register of Historic Places, is nice, and it puts the A.J. Meerwald in a special class among other ships. But it's the work of the crew that sets this vessel apart and makes them stand out among other attractions in New Jersey.

There is no special funding for the A.J. Meerwald. They are very fortunate to receive donations and also competitive grants. And that's only a sign of their success and hard work.

She sails from April through October, throughout the Mid-Atlantic region, serving as New Jersey's Ambassador, spreading the word about the incredible assets of the state. There is never a doubt that the crew will perform their duties for the love of the job and the good of the environment. Each day on the water is different, and everything that happens becomes a teachable moment. I've been on the boat, I've seen a lot of different activities that they perform. And it's just always a good experience and a fun time. They take the job seriously and operate the ship in a safe way while educating visitors about the unique environment and history of the Delaware Bay. Through their efforts, they are helping to change New Jersey's image one port at a time.

The A.J. Meerwald's schedule takes the vessel from its dock at Bivalve on the Delaware Bay to ports in Philadelphia, Salem, Burlington, Edgewater, Beach Haven, Atlantic City, Greenwich, Cape May, and Trenton in New Jersey. She docks at Liberty State Park and hosts special sails, tours, and maritime camps for children. Special trips and sails to Lewes, Delaware; Baltimore and Chestertown, Maryland; and Portsmouth, Virginia are all part of the schedule. When the Tall Ships are in regional ports, the A.J. Meerwald is there, proudly representing New Jersey.

Educational environmental classes take place each day aboard the vessel if it's docked or if it's sailing. As part of their outreach program, special schools -- special classes are performed for the children and include tours and sails for elementary to high school children. Everyone on board gets hands-on experience in sailing. Knowing that saving the Delaware Bay begins with our children, the A.J. Meerwald hosts sailing camps for young sailors from ages 13 to 17, and these week-long maritime camps provide overnight accommodations aboard the vessel and teach them to work together, from hauling sails aloft to working in the galley. In addition to giving students real-life lessons in team building, self-discipline, and leadership, they are trained in environmental science, species identification, water quality testing.

There is no other attraction that can tell a more important story about New Jersey. The SSRDMO understands the value and the work of the Bayshore Discovery Project and uses the image of the A.J. Meerwald in their advertising and marketing. The A.J. Meerwald ties history, culture, and tourism into one neat little attraction, and it takes the message beyond New Jersey to attract, entertain, and educate visitors.

We encourage the State to support this effort in every way. We need to work together to help them be ambassadors by providing marketing material and mobile information kiosks that can be displayed when they're docked -- while they're docked, right here, to have something that they can put right out -- not take a lot of room, because you can tell there's not a whole lot left over -- but be able to tell the message. And they'll let people know while they're out there about all the assets of New Jersey. We think that they did the heavy lifting to get the oyster schooner from the bottom of the Delaware Bay and restore it to its present glory. It's all of our jobs to provide them with the tools to spread the message of this great State of New Jersey.

Thank you to the Bayshore Discovery Project for a job well done. And thank you Assembly Tourism Committee members for allowing me to comment on one of our best tourism attractions in the region.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Thank you, Diane.

And I always like to highlight Diane's involvement in the Cape and even the Cumberland side. As she mentioned in her testimony, just the energy that happens there with tourism, about getting the people here-- Diane and her staff spend the winter just traveling the United States to attract people to New Jersey -- we thank you for that -- Canada being a new market that she's tapped into. She goes up to those trade shows in Canada and sells what New Jersey has. And it's proving -- it's proving that we're having more Canadian visitors visit.

And you are out selling the story for New Jersey. Thank you for doing that.

And thank you both for testifying today.

MS. GUZZO: Thank you.

MS. WIELAND: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: You're welcome.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Can I ask a question?

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: I'm sorry, Assemblyman Wolfe.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: I was just curious-- Maybe Ms. Wren might have said it; I might have not caught it. You're saying this ship was sunk, and that it was--

MS. WIELAND: It was submerged.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: For how long?

MS. WIELAND: What is--

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: You can whisper, and she can repeat it.

MS. WIELAND: She was sunk twice for, like, a week at a time. When they brought her up, she was in pretty bad shape. And that was when the idea was established to restore.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Very good. Okay, thanks very much.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Thank you, again, ladies.

Next, I want to call up Mary Rizzo, Interim Director, New Jersey Council for the Humanities; and Matt Pisarski, Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission.

Welcome to both of you. Thank you for joining us today.

M A R Y R I Z Z O: Thank you for inviting me here today. And I'm delighted to be here representing the New Jersey Council for the Humanities.

As you mentioned, I'm the Interim Executive Director. And the New Jersey Council for the Humanities is a private, nonprofit organization that was established in 1972 as a State partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Major funding for NJCH is provided through the NEH.

The mission of NJCH is to serve the people of New Jersey by developing, supporting, and promoting projects that explore and interpret the human experience, foster cross-cultural understanding, and engage people in dialogue about matters of individual choice and public responsibility.

We believe that the humanities, which are those disciplines like history, literature, philosophy, and religious studies, are fundamentally concerned with questions of what it means to be human, and are critically important to creating and ensuring an active and engaged citizenry. And we try to bring the riches of the humanities to the widest possible spectrum of the New Jersey population.

We fulfill our mission in two primary ways: one is grant-making. We give funds to nonprofit institutions throughout the State of New Jersey who are engaging in public humanities programs. Organizations that regularly receive grants from NJCH include colleges and universities, museums, historic societies, libraries, and so on. Projects can take many forms, but the most common are public lectures, conferences, oral histories,

archival projects, documentary films, websites, and audio and video podcasts.

We also fulfill our mission through a variety of programs that we manage through our very small office. These programs reach teachers, healthcare workers, older New Jerseyans, as well as the overall adult population of the state. Our programs take place in every county in the state, and we strive to reach the most diverse cross section of residents that we can.

We have worked with the Bayshore Discovery Project in both of these ways -- through grant funding and as a partner for a major program initiative this fall. And I hope the Committee will indulge me in discussing each of these briefly.

In 2010, the New Jersey Council for the Humanities awarded the Bayshore Discovery Project a major grant for its inaugural exhibition, called *The Abundant Oyster*, which would tell the story of the people of the Delaware Bay region, the historic place of the oyster industry in that region and in the growth of America's industrial power, and the role of African-Americans in shaping the region's culture and economy. This project showed the breadth of the humanities, connecting history and culture with science and technology, and was designed to be a permanent part of the Bayshore Discovery Project's space. Our board of trustees was impressed with the creativity of the project and its possibility for drawing visitors to a site where there is often little in the way of tourism. In addition to the exhibit itself, the grant also funded public programs which would bring the community into the Museum, hopefully creating a longstanding relationship. The stories being told in this exhibit are at once distinctly

local, but with lessons for our state and nation, especially as people everywhere are facing the question of how to handle limits on our natural resources.

That question spurred NJCH to partner with the Bayshore Discovery Project on a public forum earlier this month called Environment, Equity and American History: Sharing the Delaware Bay. NJCH, with funding from the We The People project of the National Endowment for the Humanities, brought together a panel of academic scholars and local watermen to examine how competition over the limited resources of the Delaware Bay has been managed historically and how that management has impacted people who live and work on the Bay. Held at the Bayshore Discovery Project, on its wharves, it was a lively discussion with an engaged audience who learned that policies and laws regulating resource use date back many decades, and that individuals have responded to these laws in a variety of ways that showed creativity and innovation.

I'll quote Dr. Michael Chiarrappa, historian at Quinnipiac University, who moderated our discussion. He said, "With the advent of recreational and back-to-nature movements, the Bay began attracting tourists, recreational fishers, and birders. This wide array of stakeholders, historical and contemporary, underscores the Bay's relevance as a diverse and dynamic venue, but such multi-faceted interests require us to ensure that the Bay's environment be equitably managed." Clearly, there are competing voices about what it means to *equitably manage* the Bay. Our forum raised these questions and gave the attendees more information, which hopefully will help them understand the issue in a holistic manner. We will be holding two additional forums this fall. Environment, Equity

and American History: Newark's Industrial Legacy, will take place on November 2 at the Newark Museum; while Environmental Justice Matters will be held on November 16 at the Trenton Marriott. All are invited to attend these free programs.

History is, of course, more than tourism, but it is impossible to look at New Jersey's rich, multilayered past -- as evidenced in material artifacts and places, like the Bayshore Discovery Project -- and not recognize that people are drawn to them to learn and to explore. A number of other NJCH projects have helped to create more engaging ways for tourists to connect with these places. Under the sponsorship of NJCH, the Smithsonian Institution travelling exhibit *New Harmonies: Celebrating America's Roots Music* has been touring six sites in the state over the past year. This tour gives the host sites the impetus to delve into their local history and culture, bringing attention to the unique stories in each town. Such efforts have been a great boon for tourism. During the six weeks that the exhibit was open at the Asbury Park Public Library, 14,006 visitors -- mostly from the tri-state region, but also including international travelers -- came to see it. And in addition, 48 classes of school-aged children visited as well. The tour will continue until December 2011.

On the other end of the state, the Salem County Cultural & Heritage Commission was recently awarded a grant from NJCH to produce a cell phone tour and website about the Underground Railroad in New Jersey. Interestingly, because Salem County is relatively rural, the landscape through which escaping slaves travelled to get to freedom 150 years ago is relatively undisturbed. Historic homes, too, in the area are still standing, and the documents housed in local archives prove their

importance to the Underground Railroad. This project, which also received funding from the Historical Commission, is a wonderful example of how historical research can be made relevant to the public. Myths abound about the Underground Railroad, but the documents that these audio tours utilize -- which include letters, diaries, and poetry by runaway slaves and the people who helped them -- are an extraordinary resource. NJCH was delighted to be able to support this project for these reasons.

But NJCH does more than simply fund the development of what has been called *heritage* tourism. In the world of historians, heritage can be a dangerous word, as it often is used to validate myths and highlight certain stories at the expense of others. In April 2010, we funded a conference called Cultural Heritage Now: Prospects, Directions, Future -- A Public Conversation, which brought together scholars from New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, as well as the Chair of the NEH, Jim Leach, to discuss these issues. This conference examined the sometimes contentious and difficult issues surrounding the idea of cultural heritage by considering the role of museums, for example, in the display and construction of Native American histories or that of Chinese immigrants. Such a conference, which was attended by more than 100 people, shows that these conversations are necessary as we move into embracing the connection between history and tourism. This conversation would not have taken place without the support of the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, which considers creating opportunities for thoughtful public dialogue on potentially difficult issues a core aspect of its mission, values, and goals.

Thank you, again, for inviting me to speak to you today. I hope that I've given you a sense of the work that NJCH does and highlighted the connections we have made with the Bayshore Discovery Project. I believe that we are all working toward a goal of creating a vibrant New Jersey economy in which history and tourism play a role.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Mary, thank you for your testimony.

Any questions from the Committee? Assemblywoman, Assemblyman Wolfe, any? (negative responses)

Matt, welcome.

MATTHEW E. PISARSKI: Thank you.

My name is Matthew Pisarski. I am Principal Planner for the County of Cumberland and the Coordinator of the Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission. Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today on the Bayshore Discovery Project and the A.J. Meerwald, New Jersey's Official Tall Ship.

We in Cumberland County are honored that the Meerwald calls our county home. Cumberland County's history and heritage is long and diverse, and the National and State Registered Meerwald, along with the Bivalve shipping sheds -- also on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, the home port of the Meerwald -- are important resources in our collective history.

My purpose here today is to relay a challenge we in Cumberland County are facing in partnership with the Bayshore Discovery Project. Cumberland County actively participates in the State Council on

the Arts' Local Arts Programming (*sic*) grant. This grant is awarded to county cultural and heritage commissions, among others, for general operating support and, in the case of county commissions, for the purposes of regranting to cultural nonprofits within our counties. Let me say clearly that we in Cumberland County are extremely pleased with the staff and officers of the State Council on the Arts. The Council does a tremendous job in administering a variety of grants and other opportunities established to assist in expressing the diverse cultural communities which call New Jersey home.

This challenge we are facing is not due to anything the State Council is doing or not doing, but rather may be a statutory limitation with which this Committee may be able to provide assistance. Cumberland County, although more rural than much of the rest of the state, is surprisingly diverse and contains a plethora of cultural attractions and nonprofit organizations conducting numerous programs and events throughout the calendar year. State Council on the Arts grant funds are utilized to support over 30 individual cultural nonprofits in Cumberland County alone. One of these is the Bayshore Discovery Project.

In an effort to support the growth and evolution of Cumberland County's largest regrant recipients, in its last long-range plan it proposed the implementation of a process by which growing in-county cultural organizations with expanding audiences beyond the geographic borders of the county could be identified by the State of New Jersey as regional cultural entities. Such designated regional entities are eligible to receive grant funds directly through the State Council on the Arts -- do not have to go through the county's regranting program. This process would free up

regranted funds for use in fostering smaller, more fledgling, cultural nonprofits within the county. As these larger, regional cultural organizations grow, their funding needs grow beyond the ability of cultural and heritage commission regrant funds to adequately meet them. The system of identifying regional cultural entities and having them apply directly to the State Council, while the Commission and its regrant funds are directed to sub-regional nonprofits, is one that works quite well and efficiently.

However, in the case of the Bayshore Discovery Project, this system has created a challenge which we have been unable to resolve. The Bayshore Discovery Project has a diverse mission. It is an environmental organization, educating visitors on the delicate ecosystem of the Delaware Bayshore region. It is a historical organization, preserving historic resources, operating a museum, and educating visitors on the history of the bayshore. It is also a deeply cultural organization, conducting one of the largest cultural celebrations in southern New Jersey, Bay Days, and supporting a variety of artistic and cultural activities which express the lives of those along the bayshore. Meghan Wren, the Executive Director of the Bayshore Discovery Project, accurately structured the organization to encompass all of these critically important facets of the Bayshore region, recognizing that each was structurally important to the preservation and expression of what makes the Bayshore region of New Jersey so unique and interesting.

However, this mission results in funding challenges. The Bayshore Discovery Project, since it does not operate under an exclusively cultural mission, has not been able to secure grant funding directly from the

State Council on the Arts. Consequently, its cultural programming and events have been limited because it has only been able to rely on the limited funding available to it through the Cultural & Heritage Commission's regranteeing program.

New Jersey, as with the rest of the nation, is operating under reduced resources and budgetary challenges. We in government at all levels are working to build efficiencies, and create fair and level playing fields to encourage best practices and competition. What I am expressing today is an interest in building a mechanism in the statutory rules so that innovative and perhaps nontraditional nonprofits, such as the Bayshore Discovery Project, have the opportunity to compete for grant funds at the regional level through the State Council on the Arts. I have worked with Meghan Wren and the Bayshore Discovery Project for the past seven years, and I believe they are ready to compete at the State level if we can find a way to permit them to do so. We have a phenomenal resource in Cumberland County with Meghan Wren and her staff, and my interest is to see them succeed in all their many missions.

On behalf of the Board of Chosen Freeholders of Cumberland County and its officers and staff, thank you for convening this session aboard the A.J. Meerwald. Please call upon me and Cumberland County should you need our assistance with any of the many issues I am sure you are faced with daily as legislators.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Matt, thank you for your testimony. It's a very good point you brought up about trying to get her to

the next level of the funding. And that's -- it's always important, and it's all part of the vision as well. So it's a great thinking tool you've given us.

Any questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: A question, if I may.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Assemblywoman Huttle.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: How much funding are you looking for, and how much do you get presently from your County funding, through the Arts?

MR. PISARSKI: Cumberland County receives about \$105,000 annually from the State Council, and that's mostly regranted out. The requests made by the Bayshore Discovery Project each year, just for Bay Days, is in excess of \$50,000 for the entire event -- two-day event. We cannot fund even close to that. We typically fund in the \$6,000 to \$7,000 range. So there's a huge gap there.

Now, they would be eligible to receive more funding if they apply directly to the State Council. However, they just haven't been able to do that because of the statutory limitation of the mission requirement.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: Can I just follow up with that?

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Please.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: So you need \$50,000? Is that how much you're looking for -- \$50,000?

MR. PISARSKI: Well, maybe Meghan-- Meghan actually creates the budget. I don't--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: But around that \$50,000 mark. And you're getting, from the County, \$7,000.

MR. PISARSKI: Give or take.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: And how do you get your other moneys then? Do you do private funding, private donations?

MR. PISARSKI: Do you want to--

We provide-- From the County, we provide the regrant funds.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: Right. That I got. Is it-- That's the number of \$7,000, about -- approximately.

MR. PISARSKI: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: And how do you get the rest of your moneys?

MS. WREN: We do get private sponsorship, and we also have some other -- well, mostly individuals and corporate donors that support Bay Day. We also sell-- We have a raw bar and sell seafood, and make some money at the event. But there are a number of activities through the Folk Life programming that we'd like to conduct that we just don't -- we don't spend as much as we've asked for, for both Bay Day and other cultural activities, that we've not received-- We do as much as we can, but there are things that we could do that we don't without the funding.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Assemblyman Wolfe.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: I was very impressed not only by your testimony, but by the other speakers. I think it's very obvious that

this is a unique part of our heritage that certainly needs to be preserved. And I think we have a job to find some money for these folks.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: It is. And I'm sure glad Grace stayed to hear the other testifiers as well. And I mentioned it when Grace was here, she gets it; she knows. And it is-- You know where we're at in the State, but it's still about -- if you don't invest in it, you're not going to be able to capitalize on it. And that's what we're going to continue to keep highlighting with folks like yourself and the other people who testified and actually stayed through to hear everyone.

It is the same story, but it also about support, and staying together, and everyone just working for that common cause. Because we have a lot of things to be proud of in the State of New Jersey.

Thank you to both of you for being here today.

And, of course, I just want to thank everyone -- the other testifiers and, of course, the folks who stayed through, and again our hosts.

I'm actually going to call Meghan up, just to kind of do a little closing if she wants to respond to any of the people who testified.

Meghan, welcome back. And thank you again, to yourself and Captain Briggs, for hosting us today.

MS. WREN: Thank you so much for being here.

I've heard my name a lot. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: In a very good way.

MS. WREN: But, again, I wouldn't be here, the ship wouldn't be here, and the organization wouldn't exist without the volunteers and all the support that we have as a grassroots organization and the hardworking-- We've always been really fortunate with the crew and staff that we've had.

So I want to give kudos to the volunteers. Over the years we've had hundreds of volunteers every year, and thousands and thousands -- 15,000 to 20,000 -- of hours in some of our peak years of volunteer effort that's been put into the organization. So I know that I'm at the head of it, and my name comes up, but there are so many good people who have worked to make all this happen. It's really a phenomenal thing in a place that-- Cumberland County is not one of the more prosperous regions of the community. So it's a lot of hard work by a lot of really incredibly hard-working people.

And I wanted to just mention a number of things. I know that Diane Wieland mentioned the idea of potentially being more of-- I mean, nobody gave us a list of what to do or how to be New Jersey's Official Tall Ship. And we've done everything we can think of. And when we go to ports throughout New Jersey that have been mentioned before, we always make sure that we have a free open house and encourage people to get on board and see this resource.

But we also have, I think, a missed opportunity where we're going to all these different ports, and we could be tourism -- almost like a traveling welcome center. And with just a small investment, we could do more for the State, I think. And that's something that we'd like to have a more, sort of, official dialogue and be able to figure out how to do that.

Of course, on the flip side of that, there are also times when we have unforeseen maintenance issues and things that come up. And it's a little bit scary to be, kind of, as a grassroots organization -- the way we operate -- if we have something that goes wrong with the Meerwald that needs major work, we're panicking, sending out appeals, trying to raise

enough money to fix something that needs fixing. And there is not any cushion, there's no assurance that we'll be able to sail the following season if something was to come up. And so having New Jersey's Tall Ship have that-- It doesn't come with something that guarantees that we'll have the maintenance there to keep her going. And so that's something that-- I know this is a rotten time to be bringing something like that up, but just putting that on the table.

And I think Matt mentioned the difficulty of finding our spot because we do so many different things. But I think there is such a link between tourism. And when you get people out to all the things that are special about the state -- and we have so many of them -- just how important it is to market those things and for us all to be proud of what we have. And also, that leads to taking care of what we have. So there is really-- To me, being involved in tourism, and conservation, and preservation -- to me, you can't really separate them. They're really all very much connected.

So we're really thrilled to be partners with the people who are trying to celebrate the things that are special about the state and, at the same time, take care of those things so that the next generation can also celebrate them and appreciate them.

And I think that's mostly what I wanted to say, except to invite you to Bivalve, which has been mentioned as if it's the end of the earth. (laughter) In some ways it is. But September 30 we are doing our ribbon cutting down at the shipping sheds that you've heard a lot about. I hope you will come down. And if you can't come on the 30th of September, come another time and check out what used to be the oyster capital of the

world. And today, if you can stay a little bit -- and, Assemblyman Wolfe, maybe you will appreciate that we have some oysters from Bivalve, which may be where those oysters came from that were delivered by rail. They could very well have been harvested in Bivalve and shipped from our shipping sheds to Philadelphia.

So we're going to bring out some oysters, and I hope you'll stay. And, again, our volunteers, and staff, and crew have put together some goodies that I hope you will stay and enjoy.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: Thank you, again, Meghan.

And thank you to the crew as well. I mean, it does take a lot of work; and especially when they got to this port, they had to do some different things here to get ready for this. I've seen them kind of milling around, and I just want to publicly thank the crew of this boat.

And I can't help but think of what Captain Briggs had said. It's a whole other view of New Jersey we haven't seen unless you're out on this. And he's exactly right. You're always from the land looking out. And when you get on the Meerwald, you're looking at her from another side.

It's a very good point you made, Captain. And thank you, again.

Thank you, everyone, for testifying. Please join us right under the tent here. We have to vacate this baby real quick before they untie it.
(laughter)

Thank you, again.

I just need a quick motion to close this.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VAINIERI HUTTLE: So moved.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Second.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILAM: And we are adjourned.

Thank you, everyone, again.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)