

America 250 | CT Commission Meeting
Minutes
Wednesday, July 12, 2023

Attendees

Commission Members

Hon. Denise W. Merrill, AM250 | CT Chair
Jason Mancini, AM250 | CT Vice-chair (virtual)
Nicolas Angeli (virtual)
Stephen Armstrong
Andrew Horowitz
Michael Kerner (designee of Steven Hernandez)
Robert Kret
Douglas Lord
Merle McGee (virtual)
Deborah Schander
Jonathan Slifka
Sally Whipple
Amrys Williams

CTH Staff

Mike Kemezis
Gregg Mangan
Sheldyn Oliver
Cyndi Tolosa
Emma Wiley

Members of the Public

Lee McFadden
Mark Pazniokas
Alice Ridgway

This meeting was livestreamed with the help of CT Democracy Center. The Facebook Live recording can be found at the following link: [Connecticut Semiquincentennial Commission Meeting | Join us for the fourth convening of the America 250 | CT Commission. | By Connecticut Humanities | Facebook](#)

The meeting began at 10:12 a.m.

AM250 | CT Chair, Denise Merrill, welcomed the commission to the meeting by reading a few words from [Executive Order 22-2](#).

The Commission has spent the last year raising awareness for the America 250 commemoration and has come up with four [themes](#) that will be the underpinning of many of the events that take place around the state in the spirit of America 250. The Commission is now ready to implement the action steps that have come out of the last years' worth of meetings. The Commission hopes America 250 is a locally-driven event and would like to help facilitate a network of people throughout the state (ideally one person from each town) to be a contact to come up with ideas around their reflections on what can be done for this commemoration.

The public can visit www.ct250.org for more information surrounding the commemoration of America 250.

Minutes Approval

Motion: To approve the AM250 | CT Commission Meeting Minutes from April 19, 2023.

First: Doug L.; **Second:** Deborah S.

Yes: 13; **No:** 0; **Abstain:** 0

The motion passed.

National/Regional Update

America 250 Foundation (Foundation)

The America 250 | CT Commission is charged with liaising with the national America 250 Foundation.

At the April America 250 | CT Commission meeting, concerns regarding the Foundation were raised relating to leadership and fiscal management. The CT Commission agreed to table the conversation to today's meeting as more information relating to "[America's Invitation](#)" would have been shared by the current chair of the national commission, Rosie Rios.

CT Humanities (CTH), along with representatives from the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), examined the contract proposal from the Foundation and found that reporting would be onerous for the \$10,000 award being offered. Ultimately, all parties felt that the American Association for State and Local History is offering much of the leadership, vision, and direction for the semiquincentennial, and "America's Invitation" did not offer a compelling reason to work with the America 250 Foundation.

Chair Denise Merrill and Vice Chair Jason Mancini recommend that the CT Commission maintain a liaison relationship but not sign on to a contract that binds the CT Commission to the national commission; this means that the CT Commission will not accept the \$10k nor will it continue to use the logo associated with the national commission. It was noted that a handful of other state commissions also declined the Foundation's proposal.

The CT Commission is in agreement with the aforementioned recommendation.

Regarding "America's Invitation" the CT Commission may decide to work toward contributing to this project in 2025; it was thought that notice was given a little late to fully participate for this year.

American Association of State and Local History

This organization has shown true leadership and guidance to smaller organizations and state commissions around the nation.

A Common Cause to All – Williamsburg Convening

This organization has shown true leadership in terms of its ideas, ideals and how to think about the past and the future. VA250 plans to host another event next spring (March 18-20, 2024).

Fort Ticonderoga

A gathering of New England + New York; both New York and Vermont had a very large tourism contingency present.

Local Outreach Update

The Fourth of July

The CT Commission distributed [informational rack cards](#) to towns throughout the state that are planning fourth of July parades.

Connecticut Site-visits

In the spirit of raising awareness across the state around the themes the CT Commission has put forth, CTH Staff began to do some site-visits with organizations to learn about what they are doing with respect to exhibits, public presentations, and engagement and to also learn what their needs are in terms of infrastructure and imagining what they could be contributing to America 250. CTH Staff started thinking more about ways to engage the public, members of the commission, and elected leaders over the course of this summer and fall and came up with a [list of sites](#) to visit.

Denise M. and AM250 | CT Vice-chair, Jason M., will attend “[Digging through History](#)” at Bolton Heritage Farm on Friday, July 14.

Litchfield Historical Society will be hosting a resource/research training session on September 12.

Workspace Walk-through

CT Commission members can fast forward to the 52:30 minute-mark on the Facebook Live recording to review the walk-through presentation.

Connecticut Resources Database Prototype

CTH Staff is currently working on creating an AM250 Resources Database. It is currently a prototype but will be shared with the public when ready.

Commission Approvals Process Discussion

Updated Commission Information

After discussion, the CT Commission voted to approve the “Commission Information Summer 2023” document. This document includes the [mission, vision, values statement](#), and themes.

Motion: To approve the “Commission Information Summer 2023” document.

First: Amrys W.; **Second:** Doug L.

Yes: 13; **No:** 0; **Abstain:** 0

The motion passed.

The “Commission Information 2023” document will become a public document for which the CT Commission will use in outreach efforts.

Approvals Process Criteria

After discussion, the CT Commission decided to spend more time revising the “Approvals Process Criteria” document. Discussion topics included, but were not limited to, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), advocacy, reallocation of resources, expansion of tourism in Connecticut, etc., in relation to enhancing organizations throughout the state in connection to commemorating America 250.

When the document is ready for a vote, the Commission will carry out an electronic vote.

Subcommittee Reports

Community & Organizational Engagement (COE)

- Goal 1: Promote an expansive and inclusive sense of America 250.
 - Action Step 1: Listening sessions (held in spring '23)
 - Action Step 2: IDEA workshop (held in spring '23)
 - Action Step 3: Meet with legislators, municipal leaders and funding organizations to share the work of the commission to encourage events and activities that are consistent with the commission's guiding values, i.e., work directly with legislative caucuses, host listening sessions – potentially at a diverse set of sites around the state, developing a presentation for council of government/municipal groups to take on the road as needed, continue to field inquiries and input from community members about their goals and ambitions for America 250
 - Action Step 4: Develop a workflow for inquiries and input
- Goal 2: Create community-based structure that can be used for commission work moving forward
 - Action step 1: Identify and utilize existing trusted networks to do broad outreach across the state
 - Action step 2: Encourage wide collaboration and inclusion across the state from multiple networks

Education

Still wrestling with the question of whether the CT Commission is looking at education through the K-12 lens or community-at-large; also wrestling with what the scope of an education subcommittee looks like. This will be determined by the subcommittee as it forms an action plan.

Governance

Discussed a possible bylaws structure for the CT Commission and will use the bylaws of Rhode Island and Vermont's commissions as guidance. Discussed the possibility of creating a bylaws structure that can model how to engage in dialogue with one another, i.e., the benefits of collaboration, learning and democracy as well as reimagining and reifying the social contract. The bylaws will be attentive to principles relating to inclusion, diversity, equity, and access. Language will include guidelines for any relationships or partnerships in which the CT Commission may enter. The structure of the CT Commission will be laid out in a way that is open and transparent, i.e., the nature of the commission as a whole, subcommittees (working groups), advisory council (scholars to inform the work of the commission) and the newly created CTH 250th Leadership Ad Hoc Committee (responsible for fundraising from private and corporate sources).

At the governance subcommittee meeting, Steven Hernández proposed inviting [David Adams from Urban Assembly](#) to address our group at the October 2023 Commission meeting.

Marketing & Tourism

Based on today's earlier discussion, the Marketing & Tourism Subcommittee will work to connect with New York and Vermont to see how they are interacting with their tourism departments.

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, & Access (IDEA)

Working on a set of tools which includes a rubric for IDEA (assessment tool) as well as an outline for an IDEA toolkit to support groups who are looking to ensure their events are more inclusive.

Came up with language and framework around the expansion of the IDEA Subcommittee.

Public Comment

N/A

Next Meeting

October 18, 2023 – 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Connecticut’s Old State House, 800 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06103.

Motion: To adjourn the July 12, 2023 AM250 | CT Commission Meeting.

First: Jason M.; **Second:** S. Armstrong

Yes: 13; **No:** 0; **Abstain:** 0

The motion passed.