

America 250 | CT Commission Meeting
Minutes
Wednesday, October 18, 2023

Attendees

Commission Members

Hon. Denise W. Merrill, AM250 | CT Chair (In person)
Jason Mancini, AM250 | CT Vice-chair (In person)
Nicolas Angeli (Virtual)
Stephen Armstrong (In person)
Anthony Champalimaud (Virtual)
Steven Hernández (In person)
Andrew Horowitz (In person)
Catherine Labadia (In person)
Douglas Lord (In person)
Merle McGee (Virtual)
Arienne Orozco (designee of Hon. Stephanie Thomas) (In person)
Deborah Schander (In person)
Elizabeth Shapiro (In person)
Maisa Tisdale (Virtual)
Michael Werner (designee of Steven Hernandez) (In person)
Sally Whipple (In person)
Amrys Williams (In person)

CT Humanities (CTH) Staff

Dana Barcellos-Allen (In person)
Adrianna Chesnut (In person)
Cyndi Tolosa (In person)
Scott Wands (In person)

Guests of the Commission:

David Adams (Virtual)
Megan Baker (In person)
Joe Cunningham (Virtual)
Melvette Hill (Virtual)
Ashley Malcolm (Virtual)

Members of the Public

Lee McFadden (In person)
Alice Ridgway (In person)
Sylvester Salcedo (In person)
George Slate (In person)
Gioia Zack (In person)

This meeting was livestreamed with the help of CT Democracy Center. The recording can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nu3OC8cRIo0>

The meeting began at 10:05 a.m.

AM250 | CT Chair, Denise Merrill, welcomed all to the meeting and emphasized that now, more than ever, it is important to recommit to the ideals of the founders of the United States.

Gratitude was given to Sally Whipple, Executive Director of Connecticut's Old State House (OSH), and OSH Staff for hosting today's meeting.

Minutes Approval

Motion: To approve the AM250 | CT Commission Meeting Minutes from July 12, 2023.

Yes: 15; **No:** 0; **Abstain:** 1

The motion passed with one abstention.

Presentation by David Adams of The Urban Assembly

[David Adams](#), Chief Executive Officer at [The Urban Assembly](#), was invited to speak at today's meeting. David A.'s presentation encouraged listeners to reflect on the promise of democracy and to recommit to the idea of a "collective good" that is grounded in justice for all.

To access this presentation, please fast forward to minute-mark 4:40 of the recording.

National/Regional Update

American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)

AASLH is still taking a leadership role in convening states and having important conversations. Select CTH Staff and AM250 | CT Commissioners attended AASLH's 2023 Annual Conference in Boise, Idaho.

AASLH currently has out a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the next big project that they are undertaking – a handbook for smaller history organizations. Work on this initiative is set to begin in November with a prospective national roll-out date of early 2024.

State Rebranding and Commission Logo

State Rebranding

The state of Connecticut has undergone rebranding. For more information on this new campaign, you can view the press release from the office of Governor Ned Lamont at the following link:

[Governor Lamont Unveils New Connecticut Branding and Marketing Campaign](#)

Commission Logo

The AM250 | CT logo concepts that were presented to the Commission were inspired by the new rebranding of Connecticut and ties directly into the new Connecticut state brand. The new logo was designed by Joe Cunningham, Visual Media Designer and Web Manager for Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), with guidance from Anthony Anthony, Chief Marketing Officer for Connecticut's Office of Tourism, and his team.

To access this presentation, please fast forward to minute-mark 24:52 of the recording.

Approvals

America 250 | CT Commission Bylaws

Creating bylaws for the AM250 | CT Commission was the main task that the Governance Subcommittee was charged with; these bylaws were presented at today's meeting for a vote from the Commission.

A couple of typos were found within the presented document. Addressing these typos will not change the message and content of the document up for approval so a vote was held.

Motion: To approve the AM250 | CT Commission Bylaws.

First: Cathy L.; **Second:** Doug L.

Yes: 16; **No:** 0; **Abstain:** 0

The motion passed unanimously.

Events Approval Process and Criteria

Discussion took place relating to the last two paragraphs of the document and amendments were made...

1. In the second-to-last paragraph, the first sentence "Events shared by the Commission should be in line with the Commission's values statement..." was amended to "Events shared by the Commission shall be in line with the Commission's values statement..."
2. In the second-to-last paragraph, the second sentence "Events should be nonpartisan in nature and may be reviewed for accuracy of historical interpretation." was amended to "Events shall be nonpartisan in nature and historically accurate."
3. In the last paragraph, the word "endorsed" was amended to "promoted".

The final agreed upon language of the paragraphs in question is as follows:

“Events shared by the Commission shall be in line with the Commission’s values statement, must reasonably provide access (ADA compliant, or beyond), be equitable, inclusive, and support a broad diversity of voices and perspectives. Events shall be nonpartisan in nature and historically accurate. The America 250 | CT Commission may accept, reject, or reconsider a listing or partnership request in its sole discretion.

Groups/organizations seeking to have an event promoted by the Commission shall be required to submit a description of the proposed event, the audience served, and how the event addresses one or more of the goals or action steps in the Commission’s strategic plan. Please submit an event at least 6 weeks before it is scheduled to begin. All events will be reviewed by a subset of members of the America 250 | CT Commission (agendas and minutes will be shared here).”

Motion: To approve the “Events Approval Process and Criteria” document, with the aforementioned amendments, as the AM250 | CT Commission’s guideline for promoting events.

First: Deb S.; **Second:** Amrys W.

Yes: 16; **No:** 0; **Abstain:** 0

The motion passed unanimously.

2026 Summer Celebration Discussion

The AM250 | CT Commission is planning to host two signature commemorative events in 2026. To view the proposed outline, please visit the following link: [2026 Summer Celebration \(ct250.org\)](https://ct250.org) **Please note that this is a DRAFT outline and is subject to change.*

The Commission discussed additional suggestions for the 2026 Summer Celebration.

To learn more about the additional suggestions discussed, please fast forward to minute-mark 52:03 of the recording.

Subcommittee Action Plans

Each subcommittee presented a brief overview of their action plans. All available action plans are hyperlinked below.

Community & Organizational Engagement (COE)

Education – A written action plan has not yet been approved and submitted, but Education Subcommittee Chair, Stephen Armstrong, provided a verbal update. Highlights included:

- Bilal Sekou, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Hartford, will serve as Co-Chair of the Education Subcommittee
- Committee work will center around Kindergarten through University - “K-University”
- The committee will not create lesson plans
- The committee will let schools and universities know of events happening in their area
- The committee will provide resources that account for diverse perspectives
- The committee will provide ideas on how to use primary resources
- The committee hopes to provide opportunities for student engagement

The Education Subcommittee plans to approve and submit their written action plan in early November.

The importance of engaging Connecticut’s young residents was emphasized, and the Red, White & Blue (RWB) Schools program was discussed as a possible vehicle in aiding this effort. RWB Schools is a partnership program between the Connecticut Secretary of the State, the Connecticut

State Department of Education and the Connecticut Democracy Center at Connecticut's Old State House that recognizes schools and districts that do exemplary work in civics education. Please visit the following link for more information on the program: [Red White & Blue Schools – Connecticut's Old State House](#)

Governance

Marketing & Tourism – Highlights included:

- Frank Burns, Executive Director of the Connecticut Office of Tourism, will serve as Co-Chair of the Marketing & Tourism Subcommittee
- Rebranding effort is focused on the arts and cultural sector and positioning Connecticut as a place to come and experience those things; the brand is fluid and evolving

Commission members were encouraged to reach out to AM250 | CT Project Manager, Cyndi Tolosa (ctolosa@250.org), to discuss any comments, suggestions, and/or concerns for any of the action plans presented.

Public Comment

To access the public comments made during this meeting, please fast forward to minute-mark 1:43:53 of the recording.

Comments were made by George Slate of Windsor, CT, Alice Ridgeway of Litchfield, CT, Gioia Zack of Wethersfield, CT, Sylvester Salcedo of Orange, CT, and Lee McFadden of Bristol, CT.

AM250 | CT Commissioner, Cathy L., used this time to comment as a member of the public.

Next Meeting

TBC

Motion: To adjourn the October 18, 2023 AM250 | CT Commission Meeting.

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

Yes: 14*; **No:** 0; **Abstain:** 0

The motion passed.

**Members present during time of vote.*

The meeting ended at 12:01 p.m.