

America 250 | CT Commission Meeting
Minutes
Wednesday, January 17, 2024

Attendees

Commission Members

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

CTH Staff

Dana Barcellos-Allen
Sheldyn Oliver (virtual)
Cyndi Tolosa
Scott Wands

Members of the Public

Sylvester Salcedo

This meeting was livestreamed with the help of CT Democracy Center. The Facebook Live recording can be found at the following link: [Livestream Commission Meeting Jan. 17 2024 \(youtube.com\)](#)

The meeting began at 10:11 a.m.

AM250 | CT Chair, Denise Merrill, welcomed all to the meeting and thanked the group for their participation – noting this meeting as the first meeting of 2024. At the end of the month, the commission will present its annual report to the governor.

Minutes Approval

Motion: To approve the AM250 | CT Commission Meeting Minutes from October 18, 2023.

First: Steve A.; **Second:** Steven H.

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

The motion passed unanimously.

***Members present during the vote.**

Presentation by Cynthia Parzych, author of *Connecticut Made*

In trying to figure out how best to amplify and share the stories of Connecticut's residents, communities and towns, in relation to the 250th anniversary of America, AM250 | CT Commission member Steven Hernández invited author Cynthia Parzych to talk about examples of people who live in, are from, and do and make in Connecticut as captured by Cynthia's book, *Connecticut Made*.

To access this conversation, please fast forward to minute-mark 18:00 of the recording.

National/Regional Update

America 250 Commission

The National Commission has revamped its agreement with states

- Offering more in terms of logo recognition and website
- Will be releasing a list of national programs they are hoping to launch (hoping state commissions will help promote those programs)
- Putting together a funding directory (asking for state programs that may be of interest to national funders) **Clarification was made to note that no funding would be coming from the National Commission.*

American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)

250th programming handbook is currently in progress:

- As a reminder, this handbook is meant for small to mid-size organizations with low-cost programs that are high impact to communities
- AASLH hired Kristin Gallas to work on this project
- Advisory Committee with people from across the country (CTH Deputy Director of Grants and Programs, Scott Wands, was asked to sit on this committee)
- Timeline established is to have a DRAFT of the handbook by the end of January and the FINAL handbook finished and launched before Memorial Day in May 2024

Virtual Summits

- February 8–9, 2024 – Doing History in Polarized Times

AASLH Conference

- Mobile, Alabama – September 11–14, 2024
- They will continue to offer opportunities for folks who are joining and working on 250th in their states

Common Cause for All

Convening in Colonial Williamsburg, VA - hosted by the Virginia 250 Commission for commission members and related staff. This year's convening will take place March 18-20, 2024.

If interested in learning more, or attending this event, please contact AM250 | CT Project Manager, Cyndi Tolosa (ctolosa@cthumanities.org)

Annual Report to the Governor

The AM250 | CT Commission is required to submit a report to the governor once a year. A lot of work has been done. Discussions will not take place at today's meeting, but if any commissioner has any feedback, please send it to Cyndi T., via email, by Tuesday, January 23. The submission deadline to the governor's office is Wednesday, January 31.

In relation to outreach and fundraising work taking place behind-the-scenes – CTH established a 250th Leadership Committee, co-chaired by Jonathan Harries (Eversource) and Sarah Harris (Mohegan Tribe) and have been instrumental in helping to conduct outreach to municipal

leaders, legislative outreach, connecting with various corporate and foundation contacts throughout the state. That work is ongoing, and it is hopeful that through these efforts, \$5M will be secured in private funding, as well as funding secured by the state, to bring to life the dreams this commission has had.

To date, \$11K has been secured by two individual private donors.

To date, \$135K has been secured by two private foundations.

The commission members were asked to share any connections that could help to expand these efforts and build new relationships.

For a brief run-down of subcommittee workplans, please fast forward to minute-mark 49:15 of the recording.

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) Discussion

2023 Progress

During this part of the meeting, reflections were shared in relation to IDEA efforts. There is a recognition of how difficult it can be to see things when people are not looking for them and people may miss opportunities to reflect. Oftentimes, challenge/tension presents itself around the ideas of what one wants vs. what one has; however, there is promise within that distance of where the commission currently is and where it hopes to go.

IDEA Co-chair, Merle M., invited commission members into a simple one-and-a-half-minute reflection on the following prompt:

“Reflecting on the work of the commission and your subcommittee over the last year, evaluate on a scale of 1 to 5 the specific progress made on IDEA work. If you are not rating a 5, what commitments are you going to make to get to that point?”

The goal of this reflection was to self-reflect on the prompt as well as lean into the fact that the commission is lacking in racial diversity and has not had a lot of conversation about what accessibility means or looks like for community members for people with disabilities.

Five minutes were then given to commission members to pair-share their reflections with a near partner and discuss their curiosities around this opportunity and to what they are willing to commit their time and energy.

Reflections were then shared with the group-at-large. To access the reflection group-share, please fast forward to minute-mark 1:11:11.

2024 Goals

- 1-2 people within each subcommittee to represent IDEA and regularly engage with the IDEA Subcommittee
- How can the commission transform its own thinking around IDEA to be more effective in its efforts to create the kind of celebration and commemoration that all have signed on to?
- Documents to be distributed to the commission
 - Sample metrics to measure subcommittee efforts

- Outline for what would be considerations to assess any proposals we receive from community members looking for endorsement/resources

An invitation was given to the commission to engage with the above documents and offer feedback by Friday, January 26.

Declaring Freedom Conference

- Education Conference that is being put together by Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) history professor Matt Warshauer
- Not an AM250 | CT Commission event, but commission members are encouraged to attend
- Funded by CTH
- 4-day event; day 3 will involve the AM250 | CT Commission

The commission members were asked to share suggestions for panel speakers for this conference and feedback on the DRAFT plan presented with Cyndi T., via email, by Friday, January 19.

Subcommittee Reports

Community & Organizational Engagement (COE)

- Putting together framework for spreadsheet with organizational contacts to help facilitate CTH's outreach on the commission's behalf
- In light of today's conversation, thinking that the current framework and messaging may be a hindrance to connecting to communities-at-large

Education

- Take a curatorial role by providing teachers (K thru University) with materials
- Start with 1776 and how those ideas of 1776, constitution, and declaration have been affirmed or challenged over the course of American history.
- Strategizing to get students involved

The commission was asked to think about the ways in which it is preparing itself to address a range of responses to the aspect of inclusion within its messaging – particularly in the education space.

Marketing & Tourism

- Working with the state to redevelop the commission's website – focusing on the public facing parts of the website to make information easily accessible and upcoming events easily identifiable
- Thinking about how to best engage the business community to take advantage of this opportunity in relation to tourism

Public Comment

Comments were made by Sylvester Salcedo of Orange, CT.

To access this portion of the meeting, please fast forward to minute-mark 2:02:20 of the recording.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, April 17, 2024, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Connecticut's Old State House, 800 Main St., Hartford, CT 06103.

Motion: To adjourn the January 17, 2024 AM250 | CT Commission Meeting.

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

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

The motion passed.

**Members present during the vote.*

The meeting ended at 12:01 p.m.

DRAFT