



America 250 | CT Commission
Education Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 28, 2024
3:30 p.m.

Attendees:

Subcommittee Members:

Steve Armstrong - Chair
Bilal Sekou - Co-Chair
Rebecca Gomez
Allison Norrie
Shaelyn Amaio
Tony Roy
Rebecca Taber
Ramona Riviere
Christine Jewell
Paula Mann-Agnew

CTH Staff:

Cyndi Tolosa
Jason Mancini

The meeting began at 3:30 p.m.

1. Overview of Agenda - Steve Armstrong
2. America 250 | CT Themes - Cyndi Tolosa
 - a. Review of themes for CT's commission, developed based on AASLH field guide. Ms. Tolosa shared links to themes & field guide in the meeting chat [links also available on ct250.org].
 - b. Mr. Armstrong requested clarification on what the commission is. Ms. Tolosa described the establishment of the commission & its stated goals.
3. America 250 | CT Plans for 2024-2025
 - a. Ms. Tolosa provided a funding update - limited funding from the State of CT has enabled the commission to do a few things, including hiring a new staff member. Beyond that, the commission is scaling back plans from its original proposed \$20 million budget. Realistic items that the commission is currently working towards include:
 - i. Manage calendar/website - basic website available this summer, with hopes of professionally developed website later this year/early 2025 created via in-kind donation.
 - ii. Statewide exhibition managed by State Historian Andy Horowitz
 - iii. Educational Resources/Digital Humanities - coordinating existing resources via TeachIT and others, tying in to new CT social studies standards

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- iv. *Request from Bilal Sekou to open conversation about fundraising, etc; Ms. Tolosa noted she would open the floor after review of plans
- v. Fellowships - encouraging scholarly research around the state
- vi. Engagement Subcommittee - developing toolkit for organizations to reference when planning events

4. Fundraising

- a. Ms. Tolosa requested that subcommittee members brainstorm potential connections/people/foundations/networks to approach who may be willing to donate.
- b. Mr. Sekou asked if subcommittee members should be reaching out to lawmakers to put funding behind this, and Mr. Armstrong requested that we speak on the bonding funds as well.
- c. Jason Mancini provided an update on progress and work with legislators - noting that legislators had supported and CT Humanities had advocated for legislation, in the end, bonding money was allocated to/through Good to Great fund with discretion to be used on 250th projects. One of the greatest challenges has been getting legislators on the same page, and America 250 | CT is not the highest priority in Hartford. The advocacy focus is now on getting into the Governor's priorities so funding is in his budget before it goes to the legislature.
- d. Mr. Sekou asked what can members of this committee do to help - should they be writing op eds, connecting with academics/historical societies to write letters? Mr. Armstrong requested some further clarification from Mr. Mancini on where he thinks the disconnect is between the commission and legislators/funding sources.
- e. Mr. Mancini noted that there have been moments of excitement but in the end, legislators were working for their own communities without strong direction from the governor's office and so ARPA funds that the commission had been hoping for went elsewhere.
- f. Christine Jewell noted that she recently accepted leadership of Washington Rochambeau Trail and recommended that subcommittee members begin to go to their towns and speak with them to get buy-in there for local commemorations.
- g. Mr. Armstrong asked what the subcommittee thinks is realistic to be able to do in light of the funding situation.
- h. Ramona Riviere noted that subcommittee members can collaborate to pull together existing resources - members come from varied backgrounds & can contribute resources from their own area of expertise.
- i. Mr. Mancini further noted that the subcommittee offers an opportunity to connect classroom educators with museum educators, university educators, and all can work to figure out what our communities want to/need to know.
- j. Paula Mann-Agnew noted that the subcommittee should also be thinking about how educators are currently teaching and what they might need to guide them to help be more inclusive in their teaching.
- k. Rebecca Gomez requested clarification on what area of history/where/when should we be focusing on. She noted that it's hard to find sources from that time period to teach from that are not focused solely on the founding fathers & create a more inclusive picture.

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- l. Mr. Mancini explained that the Commission's goal is to acknowledge a moment in history but not get stuck in that moment - talk about the "unfinished revolutions" that have been occurring since 1776. He suggested that this group can work on pinpointing moments that are under-studied and need to be highlighted.
 - m. Ms. Tolosa responded to a question in the chat, noting that we also don't want to limit to post-1776 - can look at pre- as well to ensure inclusivity of all groups.
 - n. Ms. Gomez added that the subcommittee should also be sure to connect beyond "traditional" K-12 teachers to get input from other educators and ensure that stories that aren't already being told get added.
 - o. Mr. Sekou expressed a desire to try to get subcommittee members re-engaged in gathering resources.
 - p. Rebecca Taber recommended that the subcommittee find a way to utilize projects that are being done in conjunction with other initiatives (for example, Rights and Responsibilities in 2025) to tie into this. Further consider doing an activity in the fall so the group can engage legislators when they aren't busy in budget season.
5. Resources
- a. Ms. Tolosa provided an update on the organization and structure of existing resources. She toured the ct250.org website and gave a brief overview of what is available there, as well as toured the Google Workspace that all subcommittee members should have access to and can work in documents together. Invited all subcommittee members to participate.
 - i. Link to the [CT250 Resources Website](#) here.
 - b. Mr. Armstrong asked what educators need - is there anything that needs to be created?
 - i. Ms. Gomez requested that the subcommittee make resource lists as accessible as possible.
 - ii. Ms. Norrie noted that "master lists" of resources can often be overwhelming - so ensure resources are easily accessible and useable (i.e., concise, quick to print, etc).
 - iii. Ms. Mann-Agnew expressed that it would also be helpful to find ways to connect the dots for teachers from resources to themes, present day topics, etc.
 - iv. Mr. Armstrong recommended that the subcommittee look at partnering with Red, White, and Blue Schools and other existing events to get 250th into schools.
 - v. In response to a question about tourism, Mr. Mancini noted that this sector could be a great opportunity as a motivator to get funding, but urgency isn't currently there with legislators. Requests for funding for items like tall ships have thus far been unsuccessful or less successful than the commission needs them to be.
 - vi. In that vein, Ms. Mann-Agnew informed the group that the Amistad is being requested for other states' 250th celebrations. She prefers to keep the ship in CT/be part of what the state feels proud about if at all possible.
6. Fundraising Pt. 2

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- a. Mr. Sekou and Ms. Tolosa brought the conversation back to any possible connections to funders - people who are interested in or connected to the themes that could be contacted. Mr. Sekou would like to consider some formal outreach to individual towns in this regard. Ms. Tolosa updated that CTH staff is doing outreach to towns & building a list of local committee contacts out on the website, as well as upcoming meetings with the mayors of New Haven and Hartford.
7. Mr. Armstrong noted that the subcommittee should have an assignment for the next meeting.
 - a. Mr. Mancini asked subcommittee members to think about the stories that they would like to ensure are included in the commemoration, as well as the new social studies standards and how those stories can be connected.

The meeting ended at 4:45 p.m.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, June 25, 2024, 3:30 p.m.