



America 250 | CT Commission
Community & Organizational Engagement Subcommittee Meeting
Tuesday, August 12, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. via Zoom
Minutes

[Watch the Recording](#)

Attendees

Subcommittee

Amrys Williams (Chair)
Cathy Labadia
Margaret Khan
Tom Scanlon
Andy Horowitz
Jonathan Slifka
Liz Shapiro
Melvette Hill

CTH Staff

Cyndi Tolosa
Rachel Gonzalez
Sudiksha (Governor's Office)

The meeting started at 2:03.

1. Welcome & Updates

Introductions - Tom Scanlon introduced Sudiksha, who is a fellow in the Governor's office working on youth engagement. All subcommittee members briefly introduced themselves.

*check Google account for email groups - update if needed

- a. National Convening
 - i. Great American State Fair on the National Mall
 - ii. America Prays
 - iii. Our American Story
- b. How do we tie these into our Commission's work?
 - i. Example: Updating Declaration of Independence reading to be broader

Rachel Gonzalez offered a brief recap of the recent America 250 convening in Washington, D.C., & potentially relevant initiatives spearheaded by the national commission and White House Task Force 250. It was noted that for many of the national initiatives, more details are needed before the commission can plan its participation. One for which there are more details is "Our American Story," which officially launched on the National Mall the week of the convening. Amrys Williams confirmed that recordings from this initiative will be preserved by the Library of Congress. Cyndi Tolosa asked the group to consider how the commission can adapt/adopt national initiatives to ensure they feel more relevant to Connecticut's work - the commission can and should share out information about national initiatives, but many organizations have expressed misgivings about the national commission's work.

There was discussion on ways to connect to Our American Story via Fiona Vernal & TheirStory. Andy Horowitz volunteered to look into whether there was a similar initiative during the bicentennial if yes, what questions were asked to tie in & track through time. Liz Shapiro recommended connecting with influencers & local TV stations to amplify any project being done in Connecticut - they are already looking for this kind of content to begin with and might be willing to participate. A. Horowitz recommended confirming the purpose of the project before moving forward with plans to ensure that the product will be usable for the intended purpose.

Melvette Hill and L. Shapiro expressed potential concerns with the integrity of the data collected by the national commission - whether we can expect that all recorded stories will be transferred to the Library of Congress, whether the recordings will be used for purposes other than those stated, and whether the safety of participants can be guaranteed. A. Horowitz noted that it may be possible to simply create a guide for use of TheirStory, as Connecticut already owns the license. Rather than make it an involved project, F. Vernal could potentially record a training (or use one that was already given) so organizations around the state could access and manage their own projects. Margaret Khan recommended that in addition to museums & historical societies, libraries would likely participate.

A. Williams raised a concern about sharing America Prays - there is a website published by an evangelical group by the same name. This does not appear to be connected to the White House initiative, but it should be noted if and when the initiative is shared more widely.

The national commission will likely have a presence at The Big E. Tom Scanlon will connect with the Department of Agriculture to confirm if they are working with the national commission on plans. Once more information is available, the commission will be able to confirm if and how we will have a presence at this year's Big E.

M. Hill requested information about the state commission's plans for Hartford in July 2026, as the Capitol is scheduled to be under construction next summer. C. Tolosa shared an overview of the plans for Hartford on July 4, 2026, which include two ceremonies at the Capitol followed by Bonanza and fireworks at Bushnell Park. M. Hill will put in a request to delay construction until after the fourth if possible.

A. Horowitz noted that if there are concerns about staffing a booth in D.C. for the Great American State Fair, one option might be to connect with our Congressional delegation to request support from their staff.

2. Local Committee Outreach

a. Outstanding towns

- i. [Contact List](#)
- ii. [Email Template](#)

R. Gonzalez shared that we currently have contacts for 122 towns, and that the contact list for outstanding towns has been updated. C. Tolosa requested that subcommittee members conduct outreach to their assigned towns prior to September 12.

3. Code of Conduct

a. [Draft](#)

C. Tolosa shared the draft of the code of conduct, which will be adopted for future commission-sponsored meetings and events. Subcommittee members shared feedback to be incorporated into the code and recommended that it be reviewed by a lawyer prior to adoption. T. Scanlon offered to connect with the legal team in the Governor's office to request review.

4. Other Business

No other business.

The meeting ended at 3:10 p.m.