

AMERICA 250

CONNECTICUT

America 250 | CT Commission Meeting
Wednesday, April 15, 2026 at 10:00 AM
The Community Foundation of Greater New Britain Community Room
Southington Public Library
Minutes

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbLsh4-wZOo>

Attendees

Commissioners

Denise Merrill (Chair) (In Person)
Jason Mancini (Vice Chair) (In Person)
Stephanie Thomas (In Person)
Arienne Orozco (In Person)
Stephen Armstrong (In Person)
Margaret Khan (In Person)
Tom Scanlon (In Person)
Melvette Hill (In Person)
Andy Horowitz (In Person)
Deborah Schander (In Person)
Amyrs Williams (In Person)
Anthony Champalimaud (In Person)
Merle McGee (Virtual)
Ilene Frank (Virtual)
Cathy Labadia (Virtual)

Staff

Cyndi Tolosa (In Person)
Michael Werner (In Person)
Megan Baker (Virtual)

Guest Speakers

Christina Volpe (In Person)
Nadia Dillon (In Person)

Members of the Public

Jennifer Crookes (In Person)
Colin LaMontagne (In Person)

The meeting started at 10:04 a.m.

Welcome

Chair Denise Merrill opened the meeting with a welcome and a thank you to Southington Public Library for hosting.

Approval of Minutes from [January 21, 2026 meeting](#)

Motion: Steve Armstrong

Second: Melvette Hill

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes (10), No (-), Abstain (2)

D. Merrill welcomed Ilene Frank, who is joining the commission as the representative for the Connecticut Museum of History and Culture after Rob Kret's retirement.

Affiliate Update - Barnes Museum

This section begins at 4:24 in the recording.

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Nadia Dillon & Christina Volpe shared updates on The Barnes Museums' 250th work, including their new exhibit tied to the Revolutionary War, upcoming programs, and a partnership with the Daughters of the American Revolution.

National/Regional Update

This section begins at 12:21 in the recording.

Cyndi Tolosa shared an update on current federal initiatives and Connecticut's participation. See [slide 5](#) for a complete listing. Of note, Our American Story's travel trailer is planned to be in Connecticut at the end of April, and the national commission is seeking nominations for individuals to be interviewed. America Waves will bring a flag that is traveling to all the states, territories, and U.S. cemeteries around the world to Connecticut on a date to be determined, but prior to July 4. America's Time Capsule will be dedicated on July 2 in Philadelphia. All states and territories have been invited to submit objects and documents with specific criteria. Connecticut will be submitting archival copies of the 4 themes stickers, graphic notes from the first conference, and the America 250 | CT planning guide, as well as the CT250 lapel pin. There have not been any recent updates communicated to state commissions from the White House's Freedom250 group.

Merle McGee shared Everyday Democracy's new program, Our Next 250, which provides a toolkit for communities to host gatherings where they build connection, discuss a vision for a shared future, and practice democracy. The toolkit can be used in a variety of community settings, but they recommend connecting over a shared meal. The toolkit includes tips on planning, hosting, and facilitating conversation. More information on [slides 6 & 7](#).

C. Tolosa shared additional nationwide initiatives planned by nonprofit organizations and/or commissions from other states. Local committees in Connecticut are adopting many of these initiatives in a variety of ways. A full listing of initiatives on [slide 8](#).

Rachel Gonzalez shared a recap of the Northeast Regional Planners gathering, which we hosted in Ridgefield earlier this week. The gathering included representatives from most New England states and New York, as well as a handful of local committee and affiliate planners from Connecticut. Ridgefield Historical Society gave a tour of the Battle of Ridgefield archaeological site in the morning, followed by a meeting at the Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center which included a welcome from Secretary Thomas and presentations from each town in attendance.

Work Plan Updates

This section begins at 30:56 in the recording.

C. Tolosa shared that the Governor has appointed Frank Borges to assist with soliciting sponsorships and has met with success. [Slide 11](#) details a \$4.5 million budget including sponsorship dollars and grant funds that CT Humanities has already awarded/plans to award and the following slides provide further details of the line items. Jason Mancini and D. Merrill gave comment on the work that has been ongoing, and highlighted the work that has already been done, including the education curriculum that the subcommittee & CTH staff developed. D. Merrill noted that the biggest challenge moving forward will be marketing, and continued partnership with CT Visit, the Statewide Office of Marketing & Tourism, and the Governor's office will be important.

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C. Tolosa shared a request for commissioner support in a few areas, including outreach to the final 24 towns that have not designated a contact person, helping to publicize the final 2 affiliate application deadlines, introductions to potential funders, support and attend 250th events across the state, and volunteer in Hartford on July 4th.

Subcommittee Updates

This section begins at 50:45 in the recording.

- Education S. Armstrong
 - o [Local History Project](#) certificate - Deadline May 1, 2026
 - o opportunity

Arienne Orozco shared an update from the Governance subcommittee, which has primarily been focused on reviewing affiliate applications. Currently, there are 227 approved affiliates with a final application deadline of May 31, and we anticipate reaching the goal of 250 affiliates by July 4.

Amrys Williams shared the outstanding towns that have not yet shared a local contact ([slide 23](#)) and requested support from commissioners who have connections in any of the listed towns. She also shared that regional affiliate & local committee gatherings had taken place in March and early April and were a good opportunity for planners to connect and for staff to get a sense of what resources were needed. C. Tolosa noted that notes had been compiled into a complete [recap](#), which serves as the best way to review what was discussed.

Steve Armstrong shared that the deadline for educators to submit their students names to receive a certificate for completing a local history project is May 1. C. Tolosa shared details of the national [My America](#) initiative, which is free to educators. There was a brief conversation on connecting with colleges and universities and with continuing projects like Red White and Blue Schools beyond 2026.

Public Comment

This section begins at 1:07:24 in the recording.

Secretary Thomas shared the Secretary of the State's office's initiatives, including Flat Roger Sherman, which they are creating many versions of so everyone can see themselves as a potential civic leader.

Jennifer Crookes shared an update on Hartford Bonanza, which is produced by a nonprofit organization, First Night Hartford, and will be a free festival in Bushnell Park on July 4.

Colin Lamontagne introduced himself as an intern in the Secretary of the States' Office.

The meeting ended at 11:26 a.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, July 15, 2026
Location TBD