USA 250 Celebration Committee Meeting Minutes

Friday, 3/6/2026 10:00 AM Meeting

Attendees:

Forrest Anderson

Terri Anderson-Murray

Pam Champlin

Debbie Langdon

Patty Lombardo

Patrick Murray

Alan Ponanski

Susan Waide

Karl Stofko

AGENDA

- Review the Plan for the July 11 Re-enactment of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence.
    - Permissions from the First Church Congregational
    - Performers – Drum & Fife Corps, Governor's Foot Guard
    - Participants – Steering Committee and others
    - Audience – As many as possible
    - Re-enactment Event Plan
        - Schedule – 11:00 AM Start with a 4 to 5 PM Conclusion
        - Fixtures, Furnishings, and Equipment
            - Flags, Banners, and Buntings, etc.
            - Scrolls, Writing Pens, etc.
            - Microphones, Speakers, etc.
        - Food Truck Status
        - Parking Plan and Police
        - Publicity Plan – Articles in EHN, Advertising in Media
        - Portable Toilets
        - Potential Donors
        - Funding Sources
    - Potential other events across the street
    - Potential Events on other days

Discussion

Todd Gelston called the meeting to order at 10:01 AM. He reported that this USA 250 Celebration Committee was approved by the Board of Selectmen at their 3/4/26 Board of Selectmen Meeting. We now need to post a Meeting Notice with the Agenda at least 24 hours before our meeting. Also, we must start the camera and microphone recording before we start the meeting. And we must shutdown the camera and microphone after we end the meeting. Meeting Minutes must be distributed within 7 calendar days from the date of the meeting.

The Agenda's discussion now started with a detailed review of the Plan for the July 11 re-enactment Event of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence at the First Church Congregational on Town Street. Patty Lombardo reported that the Church has given permission for the re-enactment Event to occur in the Church Building and the surrounding property.

The Moodus Drum & Fife Corps will perform at least two different times during the day and in coordination with the Governor's Foot Guard. A more detailed and firm schedule will be determined later.

The Committee will be developing the Event's Schedule and enlisting volunteers on as needed basis to complete the Event.

The Pastor (Steve?) will read the Declaration of Independence and if necessary, use the Church's microphone and speakers.

A second pass at the Schedule has the Reading starting at 11:00 AM following by the start of the signing of the scroll by 11:30 AM which continues for the rest of the day as people come forward to sign.

Someone (perhaps Karl) will ring the Moodus Green Schoolhouse Bell to signal the start of the Reading re-enactment.

There will be only one Cemetery Tour which Karl Stofko will lead. It is anticipated that this Tour will begin in early afternoon after at least many people have signed the Scroll.

After hearing the Reading and signing the Scroll, the visitors can walk outside to the Food Trucks for food and beverage or go across Town Street to see the displays and exhibits in the Town Meeting Hall and the Grange Hall.

Next, the attendees reviewed the status of the Flags, Banners, and Buntings. Susan Waide reported on what she learned so far in designs, lead times, and cost. She needs to visit with Lauren P. to get EMP Apparel's input. She will have a report for our meeting next week. We need to order as soon as possible. After some discussion, it was decided that there should be no problem hanging flags, buntings, or banners inside the Church. However, hanging anything outside, we need to be careful and there probably are only two locations to hang anything outside.

The subject of tents came up. At a first look it appears there are two locations to erect tents. One is on the north side of the Church over the leaching field in order to prevent cars from parking there. And the other is on the south side of the Grange Hall where the Lions erect their Auction Tent. Pam volunteered to ask Scot Jezek about our use of the Lions Auction tent.

Next, the attendees discussed Food Trucks versus volunteers making the food and beverage on-site or off-site. After some discussion, the consensus was that we should stick with Food Trucks. These are the reasons: 1. We avoid Chatham Health concerns and permits.; 2. Food Trucks attract visitors; 3. One less activity we need to schedule, track, and cost out. We requested to add an Ice Cream Truck to the selection. Pam gave us names of Food Trucks and one Ice Cream Truck. The attendees came up with some names also. All of them are as follows: Frank's Catering, Oxen Bones, Twin Beaks, and Mama's Ice Cream.

The subject of Insurance for the Event came-up. Todd volunteered to ask if the Town could provide an Insurance Certificate. He also volunteered to lay-out a parking plan for both sides of Town Street and around the buildings. He had already talked to the East Haddam Police about controlling traffic. We need two officers with cruisers for the day. The total estimated cost for the two officers is less than $1500.00.

Next, the attendees discussed what is needed for publicity. At first, the plan was to send an invitation postcard to every post office address in East Haddam. However, this was estimated to cost $1700.00. The next suggestion was to put an insert in the East Haddam News. It is estimated that this would cost $650.00. Therefore, it was decided that the best advertisement action was to simply write an article about the Event and put that in the EHN for no cost. Susan Waide volunteered to write the first article.

Next, the attendees noted that if we are going to ask for donations, we need to have legitimate accounts in-place. Todd volunteered to create a Town sponsored account for this purpose.

Next, with the expectation to receive donations and grants, it was decided that there should be a submittal for a CT Humanities Quick Grant. A motion was made to submit a request for a CT Humanities Quick Grant on behalf of the First Church and the East Haddam Historical Society. Pam Champlin made the motion and Alan Ponanski seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

Next, with 100 to 500 people coming to this Event we need portable toilets. Todd volunteered to contact Jansky to schedule them and get a cost estimate.

Next, the attendees addressed the potential activities on the other (east) side of Town Street. Debbie described the potential activities that are both for adults, children and teenagers in the Old Town Meeting Hall. These can be hands-on activities for Kids or watching videos. All of which recount the history of the founding and growth of our country. The videos will be a minimum of a 20 minute loop. Debbie will provide more information in an email and at our next meeting.

Next, Todd distributed the latest Event Schedule and highlighted the changes in the schedule.

Lastly, the attendees agreed to meet next Friday at 10:00 AM.

Pam moved that we adjourn the meeting and Patrick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:16 AM.

Meeting Minutes written by Todd Gelston