Meeting Minutes for the USA 250 Celebration Steering Committee

For the Wednesday, 5/04/2026 7:00 PM Special Meeting

In Meeting Room 2

Attendees:

Pam Champlin

Todd Gelston

Patrick Murray

Alan Ponanski

Karl Stofko

Susan Waide

Patti Lombardo

Evelyn Morgen

Kim Dodge

AGENDA

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance
2. Review of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes for Wednesday April 22, 2026 Special Meeting

4. Review the Plan for the July 11 Re-enactment of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence.
    - Summary Review of the Detailed Schedule for entire Event – See Meeting Minutes
    - Review of the Activities and Exhibits planned for the Old Town Meeting Hall and the Grange Hall
    - Scroll Sourcing for the Signing Scrolls
    - Flags, Buntings and Banners – Design, Size, Costs, Delivery Dates
    - Parking Plan, Police Plan, and DOT Status for Road Plan -
    - Publicity Plan – Latest Poster, Press Release, Articles, etc.
    - Food Truck Reservation Status, 10:30 AM Arrival Timing and location
    - Tables and Chairs for the Hospitality Tent
    - Tent Plan – 3 Tented Areas – Hospitality Tent, 1st Company Tent, Church Tent
    - Total Estimated Cost for the July 11 Event
    - Funding Plan –
    - Visit in-Town organizations for communication of Event
    - Meeting Scheduled for Volunteers and their task assignments
5. Memorial Day Parade Plans and what the other organizations are doing

6. Scholarship Enhancements and Communication
7. Review the status of other East Haddam 250th Anniversary Events
    - Potential Nathan Hale School House Exhibition
    - "Amistad" Visit Status
8. Other items as necessary
9. Public Comment
10. Adjournment

Participants unable to attend in person may also view the meeting on YouTube Live at the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLZq-CmatoKY6FW829c6mBA?view_as=subscriber

You may access the YouTube Live link from the Town's website:

www.easthaddam.org

Discussion

Todd Gelston called the Special Meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the 4/22/26 Meeting Minutes. Alan Ponanski moved that the 4/22/26 Meeting Minutes be approved. Pam Champlin seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Next, the attendees did a summary review of the detailed schedule as shown in the 4/22/26 meeting minutes. After a brief review of the schedule, there was one addition for the hours of closure for Town Street from Orchard Road to Deer Run. There were no other comments. The revised Schedule is shown below:

10:00 AM --- The Greeters arrive in costume to be ready for the visitors

10:00 AM --- The Moodus Drum & Fife starts playing their chosen score

10:30 AM --- The Steeple Bell Rings and Town Street is closed to Traffic

10:45 AM --- Presentation of Colors by the First Company Governor's Foot Guard

11:00 AM --- The First Company Governor's Foot Guard gets seated and/or stands in the Balcony

11:00 AM --- The Moodus Drum & Fife Corps plays the Star Spangled Banner

11:15 AM --- The First Company Governor's Foot Guard plays their chosen score.

11:30 AM --- Karl Stofko rings the School House Bell

11:35 AM --- From the High Pulpit 1st Selectman Todd Gelston reads the Welcome & Proclamation

11:45 AM --- Karl Stofko reads the history of this Declaration of Independence

12:00 Noon --- Three people (TBD) read the Declaration of Independence starting with a GOH Actor

12:30 PM --- Todd Gelston invites visitors to sign the parchment scroll, organ plays a selected score

12:30 PM --- Visitors can begin signing of the scroll and then begin walking to the food vendors.

12:30 PM – Town Street is re-opened to traffic with cones done the centerline of the Town Street.

1:00 PM --- Moodus Drum and Fife Corps performs their Concert.

1:00 PM --- Flyover at the start of the Moodus Drum and Fife Corps Concert Start.

2:00 PM --- The First Company Governor's Foot Guard performs their Concert.

3:00 PM --- Karl Stofko starts the Cemetery Tour with a map of the Revolutionary gravestones

3:00 PM --- Visitors tour the exhibits & displays in the Old Town Meeting Hall and the Grange Hall.

3:30 PM --- Volunteers clear the Hall in preparation for the Nathan Hale Recital.

4:00 PM --- Kandie Carle begins her Nathan Hale Recital.

5:00 PM --- Event Exhibits and Activities cease.

The attendees emphasized that we need to keep things simple.

Next, Todd Gelston read Debbie Langdon's status of the Fixtures for the Old Town Meeting Hall and the Grange Hall. Many objects are in process as was explained at our last meeting. Detail work needs to be done to construct the panels.

Next, the sourcing for the signing scrolls was discussed. As in the previous meeting it was suggested that Goodspeed Station (Lauren P.) is a good source for the scrolls. Need to order soon. It is planned that at least several scrolls will be used concurrently.

Next, the attendees reviewed the Bunting and Banner Status. Patti displayed one of the 2 ft by 4 ft buntings. The bunting is very nice. Patti had ordered and received 2X4 buntings for the Church and the other selected buildings in Town. We need to define the bunting plan for the other buildings.

Todd Gelston reported that he is working on the Banner for the Memorial Day Parade. It will probably measure 8 ft by 3 ft with a pocket for the carrying pole. The carrying pole can be bamboo. A different banner for the stationary locations is in process.

Next, a short discussion started with what is the seating capacity of the Church. Answer: 250 people on the first floor and 100 people in the balcony. Where is the 1st Company Governor's Foot Guard Band going to sit? Where are the people in wheelchairs going to sit and park their cars? It was suggested that the southwest corner of the Church parking lot be reserved for the handicapped parking.

With parking at the High School, it was requested that we put at least one portable toilet at the parking lot. Todd Gelston that we need to advertise that the Event starts at 10:00 AM with the hope that everyone arrives and parks between 9:30 AM and 10:00 AM. This gives them between 30 minutes and 60 minutes to get to the venue by bus. Therefore, we need six 50 passenger buses to move between 300 and 500 people from the parking lot to the venue in time for a 10:30 AM Event official start.

Susan Waide has a press release for the Memorial Day Parade. We need to make sure that more people can march behind our banner in the Parade.

We also need to produce a poster distribution plan. Susan Waide has created a poster that we all like. Allan Ponanski moved that the presented poster be accepted and distributed. Pam Champlin seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Need to display the poster at the EHHS Museum and all of the local stores. The Museum prefers the 36 in. by 48 in. size.

Next, the attendees reviewed and discussed the Publicity Plan. The Chairman needs to approve all press releases, posters, articles, etc. before they are published/placed. We to clearly define the Plan.

The Food Trucks may need arrive earlier than 10:30 AM such 10:00 AM.

The Booth for Yankee Cider needs to be separate and located towards the back of the food area. We also need a Festival Permit for Yankee Cider. The Town of East Haddam needs to apply for the Permit. We also need a Certificate of Insurance to cover the use of the Church Building and Grounds.

An rough inventory of tables indicates that we should have plenty of tables for the Hospitality Tent. We have 8+ round tables (used from Senior Center) that hold 6 places and 18 rectangular tables (from EHHS Museum) that hold 8 people. The question is how many chairs do we need? Need to complete an inventory of available chairs. We may not need to rent any chairs.

During discussion it was realized that we need trash barrels and a regular means to empty them during the Event. We need a well-thought-out waste plan. Shall we ask the Boy Scouts for help?

Next, the attendees quickly reviewed the latest cost estimate. Currently, the estimated total is over $12,000.00. However, some new costs came in that might push it up to $14,000.00.

We need more volunteers. For the volunteers that we do have, we are ready to make assignments. The Chairman was asked to schedule a meeting soon just for the volunteers.

Pam Champlin reminded us that the East Haddam Historical Society Museum has scheduled an Open Reception for Friday, 5/15/26, at 7:00 PM. Please attend.

Evelyn Morgen reported that their Library sponsored American Music History Event went very well and was attended by at least 60 people.

There was no Public Comment.

Allan Ponanski moved that the meeting be adjourned. Pam Champlin seconded. Motion passed unanimously. The Meeting was adjourned at 8:28 PM.

Meeting Minutes written by Todd Gelston.