APPROVED Meeting Minutes for the USA 250 Celebration Steering Committee

For the Thursday, 5/28/2026 7:00 PM Special Meeting

In Meeting Room 2

Attendees:

Forrest Anderson

Pam Champlin

Kim Dodge

Todd Gelston

Debbie Langdon

Alan Ponanski

Karl Stofko

Susan Waide

Patti Lombardo

Martha Nijssen

AGENDA

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance
2. Review of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes – None to approve, the 5/21/26 Meeting was cancelled due to a lack of Quorum
4. Review the Plan for the July 11 Re-enactment of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence.
    - Review of the Detailed Schedule for entire Event – See Meeting Minutes
        - Order and Timing of Music Performances
    - 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 –
        - Do we want to distribute small flags?
        - Buntings received and being placed, Do we need more Buntings?
        - Banners received and on order.
    - Parking Plan, Busing Plan, ADA Parking, Police Plan, Road Closure Plan -
    - Publicity Plan – Poster Placement, Press Releases, Articles, etc.
        - Where to place posters? In-town and out-of-town
    - Guide Map creation and review – Introduction and Actual Map
    - Food Truck Reservation Status, 10:00 AM Arrival Timing and location
        - Oz-N-Bones, Emily's, Moma's Ice cream
    - Festival Permit Status
    - Portable Toilets – Near the Grange, Near the Church, and one at the High School Parking Lot
    - Tables and Chairs for the Hospitality Tent
    - Tent Plan – 3 Tented Areas – Hospitality Tent, 1st Company Tent, Church Tents

- Trash Barrel Plan – 15 Barrels and a Dumpster
- Total Estimated Cost covered by a single donor – Consumer Reports – A Tremendous Gift
- One $750 Stipend from America CT 250 Commission
    - Need Volunteers to attend the Recommitment Ceremony on July 4
- Visit in-Town organizations for communication of Event
- Latest List of Volunteers and their assignments

5. Scholarship Enhancements and Communication

    - Fundraising Goal

6. Review the status of other East Haddam 250th Anniversary Events

    - Potential Nathan Hale School House Exhibition
    - "Amistad" has cancelled – Ship not ready to sail yet

7. Other items as necessary

8. Public Comment

9. Adjournment

Discussion

Todd Gelston called the Special Meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

The attendees did a summary review of the detailed schedule. There have been a few revisions since the last meeting and a few more since this 5/13/26 Meeting After a brief review of the schedule, it was decided to enhance the order for the 1st Company Band and the Drum & Fife Corps. We may need to put more detail in the schedule. The revised Schedule is shown below. Please note the changes in the timing of the Concerts for both the 1st Company Band and the Moodus Drum & Fife Corps:

10:00 AM --- The Moodus Drum & Fife playing in front of Meeting House entertaining guests as they arrive

10:15 AM --- The Church Steeple Bell Rings

10:30 AM --- Town Street is closed to Traffic

10:45 AM ---Ringing of School House Bell by Dr. Karl Stofko from center front doors of meeting house to alert guests the ceremony will be beginning soon (11:00 AM)

10:55 AM --- Todd, Karl and readers file into front of sanctuary to be seated and Todd goes up to the high pulpit.

11:00 AM --- Presentation of Colors by Moodus Drum & Fife. Marching in from Front Center Doors down center aisle to the altar.

11:05 AM --- Todd to ask everyone to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance

11:07 AM --- The Star-Spangled Banner performed by the Moodus Drum & Fife from the narthex. Color Guard to exit at end to drum beat.

11:10 AM --- Welcome & reading of the Proclamation from the high pulpit by East Haddam First Selectman Todd Gelston

11:15 AM --- The History of the Declaration of Independence by Karl Stofko

11:30 AM --- Reading of the Declaration of Independence – 3 Readers

11:55 AM --- Guests are asked to exit and join in signing of the Scroll to re-enact what our forefathers did in 1776 in the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Let us recommit ourselves to the timeless promise of Liberty and Justice for All.

Guests file out to sign scrolls on tables outside on 8 ft tables (placement TBD)

12:00 Noon --- God Bless America performed by the First Company Governor's Foot Guard with vocalist to begin their concert under the front tent.

1:00 PM --- Announce at end of the First Company Governor's Foot Guard concert that the Moodus Drum & Fife concert will begin at 1:15 PM near the big tent next to the Grange Hall. Food Trucks will be ready to serve; Old Town Hall and Grange Hall opened for guests. Announcement made that the cemetery tour will begin 3:00 PM and guests should be making their way over to the white shed along the stonewall towards the back of First Church parking lot 15 minutes prior. Remind guests that at 4:00 PM the Drama of Nathan Hale in movies & stage with Kandie Carle.

Debbie Langdon gave an overview with some detail of the sets and activities planned for the Old Town Meeting Hall and the Grange Hall. She described in more detail the activities for the Kids in the Grange Hall including letter wax stamping. There were a few questions.

Next, the use of scrolls was discussed and questions were raised. What type of material and what is the source. It was suggested that Goodspeed Station might be a source.

Next, the attendees reviewed the suggestions to buy small flags or tattoos. After some discussion, the strong consensus was to pursue the purchase of tattoos. They are much cheaper and safer.

We have received sixteen 3 by 6 Buntings. One was given to the First Church. The remaining 15 will hung on the Old Town Meeting Hall and the Grange Hall.

Three 7 by 3 Banners have been received and two 8 by 4 banners are on order with expected receipt by next Wednesday.

Next, Parking has hit a snag. It appears that the Softball Tournament is going to most if not all of the North Parking lot at the High School. The Parking Team is working on a Plan B. The Parking Team has met with the Police had worked a Traffic Plan would includes ordering more Traffic Cones. The Traffic Team is also working on signage.

Next, Publicity was discussed. The plan Is to use multiple mediums as much as possible. Susan Waide volunteered to work with the East Haddam Historical Society to laminate the Posters. It was also requested that something about the July 11 Event be in every issue of the EHN (5 issues) until the Event itself. After some discussion, there was a strong consensus that Susan Waide's Bookmark would be an excellent low cost ad in the EHN. Press Releases and articles are being written. The posters are going to be put on places like the Old Saybrook Train Station. A question was asked – Is the July 11 Event on Facebook? The answer was that Lauren P. put our Event on Facebook.

Next, the Guide Map was discussed. We are waiting for the illustrator to produce the first Draft. The Guide Map for the recent Town-wide Tag Sale was shown as an example of what our Guide Map could look like.

Next, it was requested that the Food Trucks be confirmed. Three Food Trucks – Oz-N-Bones, Emily's, and Moma's Ice Cream. Do we need a fourth Truck?

Forrest Anderson reminded us that the VFW together with the American Legion will have a Booth at the Event. It will include a Cornhole Set. They need a 35 Ft by 20 Ft space Total.

Next, the RTC wants to put their Memorial Day Float on Display at our Event.

Next, The Land Trust has requested a space for a Booth.

Next, Yankee Cider will have a booth. The Festival Permit application is in process. There will no alcohol on the Church side of Town Street.

Next, Safety Yellow vests will be provided for the Volunteers with DIY Name Tags.

Next, It was suggested that we can use a photographer to record the Event. Isabel Lovejoy was suggested for the role of photographer.

It was suggested that the Goal for the Scholarship should be $25K increase this year and another $25K increase for next year.

It was announced that on September 26 Mathilda Burke is performing an Event.

Motion to adjourn by Karl Stofko, Seconded by Susan Waide. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Meeting Minutes written by Todd Gelston.