Approved Meeting Minutes for the USA 250 Celebration Steering Committee

For the Tuesday, 4/14/2026 6:00 PM Special Meeting

Attendees:

Terri Anderson-Murray

Pam Champlin

Todd Gelston

Alison Guinness

Debbie Langdon

Patrick Murray

Alan Ponanski

Karl Stofko

Susan Waide

AGENDA

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes for Friday, March 27, 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 & the Grange Hall
    - Flags, Buntings and Banners – Size, Costs, Delivery Dates
    - Parking Plan, Police Plan, and Road Plan -
    - Publicity Plan – Latest Poster, Press Release, Articles, etc.
    - Grant Submittal Status
    - Food Truck Reservation Status, Timing and location
    - Tent Plan – 2 Tented Areas
    - Total Estimated Cost for the July 11 Event
    - Funding Plan – Visit all in-Town organizations asking for donations
    - Task Assignments for Volunteers
5. Review the status of other East Haddam 250th Anniversary Events
    - Potential Nathan Hale School House Exhibition
    - "Amistad" Visit Status
6. Memorial Day Parade Plans
7. Scholarship Enhancements
8. Other items as necessary
9. Public Comment
10. Adjournment

Discussion

Todd Gelston called the Special Meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the 3/27/26 Meeting Minutes. Pam Champlin moved that the 3/27/26 Meeting Minutes be approved. Terri Anderson-Murphy seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Next, the attendees did a summary review of the detailed schedule as shown in the 3/27/26 meeting minutes. After a brief review of the schedule, the discussion agreed with the sequence and thought that it would move along more rapidly than listed. The 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

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 began signing of the scroll and then begin walking to the food vendors.

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

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 .

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

The attendees emphasized that we need to keep things simple.

Next, Debbie Langdon reviewed the recreation of the Assembly Room, including the furniture and various artifacts. Also, a sealing wax kit for kid's activities. There may be a clip from the 1776 Musical that was produced by the Goodspeed Opera House that we can play in Old Town Meeting Hall.

A recent theatrical event at the Grange Hall had a 60 seat attendance. This attendance provides an idea of the Grange Hall's seating capacity.

We probably need more bunting. When we have a count on the number and size of buntings needed for the Old Town Meeting Hall, the Grange Hall, the Goodspeed Opera House, and the Gelston House, we will then order more buntings. Todd Gelston is also working on banners.

Todd Gelston is also working on the Parking Plan for the performers, vendors, volunteers, and visitors. It appears that we need to park visitors in the High School Parking Lot and Shuttle Bus people to and from the Re-enactment venue.

Next, the attendees reviewed and discussed publicity. Essex Printing is working on the Poster. After completion it needs to be put on the Town website and Patch.com. Essex Printing can also do lawn signs. The attendees agreed that we need to advertise our 7/11/26 Event on Patch.com. We can also put the poster in the East Haddam News as an advertisement.

A Grant Submittal is being worked for the $20K Grant with a submittal due date of 6/2/26.

We currently have 1 food truck (barbeque) and 1 ice cream truck. We need another food truck.

The First Church Congregational has purchased a Tent for July 11 and Alan Ponanski is loaning us his Tent for the July 11 Event. With these two tents our need for tents is satisfied.

The latest total estimated cost is $12,250 +/- 25%.

What do we have in mind for a gift for the donors?

We need to begin assigning specific tasks to volunteers.

I plan to schedule a meeting with Tim Burke to review the condition of the Nathan Hale Schoolhouse to understand what is needed for repairs.

The “Amistad” is sending a technical representative to the Opera House Dock to check on docking capability for the “Amistad”.

Our Memorial Day Plan is to march with the USA 250 Banner being held by 2 people dressed in period clothing. It would be wonderful to have at least a dozen people marching behind the banner.

Alison Guinness and Todd Gelston plan to meet later in the week to discuss improvements to the America 250 Scholarship Fund.

There was no Public Comment.

Alan Ponanski moved to adjourn the meeting. Alison Guinness seconded the motion which then passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Meeting Minutes written by Todd Gelston