Approved Meeting Minutes for the USA 250 Celebration Steering Committee

For the Friday, 3/27/2026 10:00 AM Special Meeting

Attendees:

Todd Gelston

Alison Guinness

Debbie Langdon

Alan Ponanski

Karl Stofko

Susan Waide

Patti Lombardo - Guest

AGENDA

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes for Friday, March 20, 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
    - 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 – Yankee Cider Company will have a Booth
    - Tent Plan – 2 Tented Areas
    - Total Estimated Cost for the July 11 Event
    - Funding Plan – Visit all in-Town organizations asking for donations
    - Need to line-up volunteers - What are the tasks for the volunteers?
5. Memorial Day Parade Plans
6. Scholarship Enhancements
7. Updated Schedule for all Events
    A. Depth of Water at the Goodspeed Opera House Dock
    B. Other Items as necessary
8. Public Comment
9. Adjournment

Discussion

Todd Gelston called the Special Meeting to order at 10:05 AM.

The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the 3/20/26 Meeting Minutes. Susan Waide moved that the 3/20/26 Meeting Minutes be approved. Debbie Langdon seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Next, the attendees did a summary review of the detailed schedule as shown in the 3/20/26 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.

Todd Gelston informed the attendees that the VFW Post will erect a Booth (tent) on the "hill" south of the Grange Hall. Need to ask Forrest Anderson if the VFW will be selling any food, etc.

We need confirmation on the Tent availability. Particularly for the Lion's Club Tent. Todd Gelston volunteered to confirm.

Alan Ponanski suggested that the National Guard be asked if they want to supply a tent for between the driveways southeast of the Church Building.

Next, the attendees discussed what can be put in the Old Town Meeting Hall with the "Road to Liberty" by Prager University. It was suggested that a History of the United States in photographs, pictures and artifacts can be seen and observed as a visitor walks around the perimeter of the inside of the Old Town Meeting Hall. It was suggested that students from Hale-Ray can be invited to participate in the creation and construction of this display of history. Todd Gelston volunteered to contact the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools for student body participation. It was also suggested to contact the Eagle Scouts for possible projects for them by inviting the Scout Master to attend our meeting.

Next, Todd Gelston summarized the status of the Flags, Buntings, and Banners. The committee members questioned whether we should distribute the small flags with sticks because it would be difficult, if not dangerous, to carry those while walking around the grounds during the event. Patti Lombardo confirmed that we need 2 ft by 4 ft buntings for the interior of the Church. The 1 ft by 3 ft or 3 ft by 6 ft buntings do not fit. She also brought photos of the buntings sold by a company from South Carolina (American made). We decided that those are the buntings we need. The Banners, with our lettering and logo, can be purchased from EMP Apparel. After this meeting it was decided to purchase the buntings that we need.

Next, Todd Gelston reviewed the parking and traffic concerns. He needs to layout the parking plan. At first glance it appears that we need to arrange cars to park elsewhere and bus the visitors to the Church for the re-enactment and tour. We may need to ask the Mathiasen Company if we can park cars in their parking lots. These parking lots are about 0.4 mile south of the Grange. Todd Gelston needs to apply for permission to the DoT by April 12 to close Town Street.

Next, the attendees reviewed the latest poster advertising the July 11 Event. The attendees requested some text and picture changes to the Baseline Poster.

Next, the attendees addressed the avenues for the publicity plan of the July 11 Event. The poster is one of them. The other avenues are articles in the East Haddam News and Press Releases. Hearst Media Services wants to meet with us and show us what they can do. Other avenues such as Patch.com and HK Now were discussed.

Next, Grant submittals were reviewed. It was realized that the First Church is not the appropriate submitter for the CT-Humanities Quick Grants. The Town of East Haddam is a more appropriate submitter. Therefore, we need to work on completing a submittal for East Haddam as soon as possible. Susan Waide moved that the Board of Finance be asked to support submittal of a CT-Humanities Grant for the USA 250 East Haddam Celebrations. Allison Guinness seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Frank's Catering, OX-in-Bonz, and Mama's Ice Cream were reserved for our July 11 Event. NOTE: Since this 3/27/26 meeting, Frank's Catering has canceled.

We need 2 large tents for this Event. One on the grass south of the Grange Hall and the other southeast of the Church. Todd Gelston needs to check with Lion's Club and ask to use their large tent and placed south of the Grange Hall. We need to ask multiple sources for a tent southeast of the Church. It was suggested that we ask the Land Trust and Cave Hill if we can borrow their tents.

Todd Gelston reviewed a summary of the latest estimated total cost to produce the July 11 Event. The latest estimated cost is as follows:

Activity Supplies	$ 500
“Amistad”	$ 500
Buntings, Banners	$ 2000
Church	$ 500
Corps & Band	$ 1000
Goodspeed Opera House	$ 250
Hearst Media Services	$ 1500
Police	$ 1500
Poster	$ 500
Stage Show	$ 250
Shuttle Bus	$ 1000
Tent	$ 3000
Total Estimated Cost	$12500 plus 15% = $14,375

Next, the attendees discussed the need for donations. It was suggested that we visit all the in-town organizations to describe our Event and ask for donations. It was also suggested that we visit all the in-town businesses and ask for sponsorships.

Now, that we have a more detailed and confident Event Plan, it is time that we need to schedule a meeting for the rest of the volunteers and give each volunteer a specific assignment.

Next, the attendees quickly reviewed the Memorial Day Parade plan. It was agreed that our participation in the Parade will be two people carrying the USA 250 Banner and volunteers marching behind them.

The Scholarship Fund needs to be enhanced by money from the USA 250 donations. Alison Guinness is working to get that going.

Allan Ponanski moved to adjourn the meeting. Susan Waide seconded the motion which then passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 PM.

Meeting Minutes written by Todd Gelston