



THE COUNTY OF CHESTER



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America250PA Chester County Commission
Chester County Government Service Center
Conference Room & Via Zoom

July 6, 2023

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Mary Sue Boyle, Jane Dorchester, Fernando Fonseca, James Garrison, Malcolm Johnstone, Brian O'Leary, Cliff Parker, Heather Reiffer, Mark Slouf, Robert Williams

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: James Christ, Barbara Cohen, Susan Hamley, Conor Hepp, The Honorable Michelle Kichline, Winifred Moran Sebastian, Karen Simmons, Krystine Sipple, Randell Spackman, James Ziegler

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: David Blackburn, Nicole Flamer, Paul Kahan; Mary Frances McGarrity, Alexander Parham, Beverly Sheppard

OTHERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Laura DeMatteo, Gene Huller, Brandi Levine, Sally Warren

VISITORS PRESENT IN PERSON: Greg O'Loughlin (SWELL), Staci Anderson (SWELL)

VISITORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Allen Cohen, Gene Pisasale, Mark Lanyon, Matthew Roberson, "Anonymous 149086"

1. CALL TO ORDER:

A. The America250PA Chester County Commission Meeting, held at the Chester County Government Services Center, Conference Room 351, and via Zoom on Thursday, July 6, 2023, was called to order at 4:04 PM by Second Vice-Chair, James Garrison.

2. ACTION ITEMS:

B. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

James Garrison asked for any comments or corrections of the minutes from the Commission's Working Meeting of June 1, 2023. Jane Dorchester brought up need to have minutes reflect a discussion of how to incorporate themes beyond the Philadelphia Campaign. Laura DeMatteo assured her that we could amend the minutes to reflect that discussion.

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE JUNE 1, 2023 WORKING MEETING OF THE AMERICA250PA CHESTER COUNTY COMMISSION, AS AMENDED TO REFLECT NEED TO EMPHASIZE OTHER THEMES BEYOND THE PHILADELPHIA CAMPAIGN WAS

MADE BY KAREN SIMMONS, SECONDED BY BRIAN O'LEARY, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

3. DISCUSSION AND INFORMATION ITEMS

C. Chair Update

Vice-Chair James Garrison shared that a small committee (David Blackburn, Jim Garrison, Susan Hamley, and Brian O'Leary) had reviewed the 2 proposals in response to the RFP for the management of management of the America 250 Commission and had conducted interviews. A unanimous decision had been made and will be taken up at the Chester County Commissioners' meeting on July 12, 2023. Brian O'Leary will be present at the meeting to answer questions.

D. America250/IIPC Funding Request

Laura DeMatteo shared that a request had been submitted to the Chester County Commissioners to submit a legacy grant application to the America 250 PA Infrastructure Committee. The request for approval to submit this application will be taken up at the Commissioners' Meeting on July 12, 2023. Laura DeMatteo shared that we would need to decide which hearing that we should plan to present at. There is one on August 15 (application due August 9) in Philadelphia, or one on August 29 (application due August 22) in Lehigh. DeMatteo also shared that there were plans to create a taskforce to develop the proposal, and invited Commission member participation. Brian O'Leary inquired about how many grants would be awarded. Laura shared that it is somewhat fluid right now, but indications are that it would be one per region. Brian O'Leary indicated that these grants will be somewhat politically motivated and will require advocacy.

Jane Dorchester offered to edit the application. Jim Garrison inquired how many regions there were in the grant process. DeMatteo responded that there were 6 regions, and that Chester County was in region 6. The application will be for infrastructural improvements for heritage centers. Karen Simmons asked whether there was a sense about which hearing we should present at: Philadelphia vs. Lehigh. Jim Garrison felt that because our project touches all parts of the county (42 municipalities), we'll have a strong case. Susan Hamley shared that she felt that the more we aligned ourselves with Philadelphia, the stronger the proposal would be. Mark Slouf also mentioned that overlap with Montgomery and Delaware County should be considered. It was asked who would make the pitch. Brian O'Leary shared that was a key decision that would need to be made. He stresses that the heritage centers have the opportunity to expand beyond the Brandywine story. O'Leary suggested that Susan Hamley might be a good person to make a pitch. Commissioner Kichline asked who would be reviewing the applications. Laura DeMatteo shared that it was a panel of state legislators. Commissioner Kichline asked for a list of the panelists to see if she could engage in advocacy for the project.

Randell Spackman shared that the Thornbury Farm CSA had a soft opening of its Heritage Center so they are getting up and running. Karen Simmons volunteered to serve on the application taskforce as Fundraising Committee chair.

E. Branding and Graphic Identity for Heritage Tourism Plan

Heather Reiffer, as a representative of Heritage Strategies, LLC, introduced Greg O'Laughlin and Staci Anderson of SWELL who will be developing the graphic identity and messaging with the goal of creating a loud, powerful story for Chester County that no one else can tell, and to create a sense of identity that supports the 250th and endures beyond that. They will create a brand promise with a purpose-driven public facing message, a campaign theme that ensures that will evolve beyond the 250th, and a toolkit with graphics, messaging, etc. that can be used by all

heritage organizations of all sizes within the county. They will be taking a tour of parts of Chester County tomorrow and then will set up work session with stakeholders as well as one-on-one interviews. The project is getting started now with the campaign completed by October and the toolkit completed by December. O'Loughlin then invited questions and comments. Mark Slouf inquired how the branding would work with various themes. O'Loughlin shared that the idea will be to create an overarching brand that allows various themes to plug into it. It will be intended to be flexible and will unify sites together. Rob Williams asked how sites, municipality and nonprofits will use this branding. Brian O'Leary asked Heather Reiffer if she had a sense of that. O'Loughlin interjected that this was really a branding question and that the goal would be to create something that unifies all sites and create a united presentation rather than to replace anything. The intention here is to give something that identifies heritage tourism that surrounds the 250th, and to amplify and enhance the messaging of the 250th. This branding will set Chester County's unique story apart. Jim Garrison shared that at a communications retreat in January that there was a report that included word associations regarding Chester County. O'Loughlin invited the Commission to forward that information.

F. Committee Reports

Vice-Chair Winnie Moran Sebastian joined the meeting, and James Garrison asked if she had anything to add to the Chair's Report. Moran-Sebastian shared that there was a need to diversify the commission and encouraged folks to submit nominees. Mary Sue Boyle suggested Dr. Tonya Thames-Taylor. Brian O'Leary shared that there are currently 2 openings. Nominees should submit applications through the website or send the Commission a resume and they will manually enter it. Susan Hamley pointed out that there are some commissioners that do not attend meetings or participate. Commissioner Kichline agreed that this was a problem and it was a bylaws issue. Winnie Moran Sebastian asked how we should approach non-attending Commission members about their lack of participation. Karen Simmons suggested that the bylaws be amended to reflect attendance requirements. This should be added to the objectives of a Governance Committee. Krys Sipple and Winnie Moran Sebastian are potential members in addition to Brian O'Leary and Karen Simmons. There was a discussion regarding how to bring the Commission in-line with the diversity of the county. Jim Garrison suggested that LCHC Foundation might be a good resource to talk to about how to engage southern Chester County's Hispanic community. Chester County's population has 7% Asian, 7% African American and 8% Hispanic with the Hispanic population in Kennett Square are being 50%.

Karen Simmons reiterated need to address this through the Governance Committee. She shared that she had recently sent out an email to the Commission asking everyone about what committees they would like to continue working on (or make changes), and shared that she felt this might be a good way to start conversations with non-participating Commission members – we should ask them if they would rather serve on a committee instead. This will help us create openings on the Commission to allow us to increase its diversity and to recruit committed members. Simmons suggested that this discussion be considered the Governance Committee's report and that she would add these action steps to the Governance section of the Strategic Plan.

1. Heritage Sites Legacy Projects Committee

Mark Slouf reviewed a written report. He made a request to the Commission that he feels that we can move beyond the Philadelphia Campaign and focus on Iron & Steel and the Pathway to Freedom (Underground Railroad). He also requested that Peter Benton be invited back to the September meeting to talk about other programs in the Heritage Tourism Plan including: Public Art Program, Traveling Exhibit Program, Step-On Guide Program, Living History Troupe, and Community Interpretation Program. Slouf shared details of the proposed heritage centers and sites. Gene Pisasale shared that he'd be happy to help with

content for the heritage sites. Heather Reiffer shared that with the exception of the Public Art Program, she had written the sections referenced and would be happy to share information on them, and will discuss with Peter Benton about his participation at the September meeting. She also inquired to Brian O’Leary and members of the Chester County Heritage Tourism Plan steering committee whether these pieces of the plan could be circulated. Brian O’Leary shared that sections of the plan can be circulated with the caveat that it is still a draft that has not been circulated or approved by the Commissioners, but could still serve as a working document to guide discussions.

2. Regional 250 Opportunities Committee

Randell Spackman shared that we were able to get a grant for PA Day on July 20 to do work on Sandy Hollow Park to improve the viewsheds. through trail network in conjunction with Marquis de Lafayette Day on July 29th. Also working with the county on additional tree plantings to create lasting impressions for all municipalities between now and 2026. They are also looking at the Liberty Bell project down the line. Karen Simmons mentioned that someone forwarded the PA Volunteer Day on July 20 info via FB. Laura DeMatteo will share the link to the PA Volunteer Day registration. Heather Reiffer asked if anyone knew how to submit Chester County 250 press to America250PA for them to highlight. He invited everyone to register to volunteer.

3. Partnerships Committee

Karen Simmons shared that at the last meeting the committee had reviewed the Strategic Plan objectives for the Partnerships Committee and assigned names to the various action items in their work plan. She showed the action items and assignments on the screen. The “Star Spangled Invitation” was finalized and since circulated. The committee will work on a PowerPoint for everyone to use for the Star-Spangled Invitation.

Rob Williams asked how to access the full Strategic Plan so that other committees could update their work areas. Karen Simmons will resend it out to the Commission. Jim Garrison shared that he had already circulated the Star-Spangled Invitation out at the CCHPN dinner and to other municipal partners.

4. Communications Committee

Krys Sipple shared updates to their Committee’s workplan in the Strategic Plan. They have added dates to the workplan. They have approved a social media plan. She shared that the FaceBook page had been launched on July 4th and already has 550 followers. Susan Hamley suggested that everyone follow it @chesco250 and share it to spread its reach. Sipple also shared that the website was also under development with the america250chesco.org. That URL will not change with the new website. James Garrison is working on letterhead and the style guide has been approved. Susan Hamley will be speaking to the Longwood Rotary Club in August about Chesco 250. Sipple also shared responses to her poll (only 15) about taglines for Chesco 250 and expressed concern that there was not enough input. Sipple stressed that we need to come up with something, and that we would never get 100% agreement on it. Conor Hepp suggested that since the FaceBook page was up and running that we could put out a poll or contest to invite public participation, or student participation. Commissioner Kichline likes the idea of inviting public input via social media, but cautioned about keeping it too open for comment. Sipple will reach out to Beverly Sheppard about this idea. Sipple also shared that there will be an article about the Chesco 250 in the September *County Lines* issue.

5. Education Committee

No written report as Beverly Sheppard was absent. Laura DeMatteo shared that they had the first listening sessions in Phoenixville during the Juneteenth Celebration in partnership with

Dr. Charles Hardy and Andy Dinniman's office. Karen Simmons indicated that the listening sessions had to be cancelled due to a family issue. More listening sessions are planned. Brian O'Leary expressed that when new Commission members are recruited, there should be a focus on recruiting more members with education backgrounds and expertise. Commissioner Kichline suggested that a school superintendent in the county might be interested in participating. The names Jason Wingard, Jim Scanlon and Durell were suggested, as well as that of Barbara Allen of Lincoln University. Allen had previously not been interested.

6. Fundraising Committee

Karen Simmons referred to the Work Plan in the strategic plan regarding current plans for fundraising. Simmons has been identifying regional chairs to cultivate people in different areas. Simmons also shared a grassroots effort that Heather Reiffer had shared with her that asks for donations from the community. She is working up an appeal sheet adapted from the state's version.

7. Nominating Committee

See above re: Governance and Commission membership discussion.

Jim Garrison asked if there's any other comments from the Commission. Mark Slouf asked whether he could move forward with exploring other themes beyond the Philadelphia Campaign. It was felt by the Commission that no further approval was needed; that it was covered in the Strategic Plan and would just need more details fleshed out.

Krys Sipple mentioned that she thinks we're doing okay considering that the New York Times cited that the state with the first America 250 event is in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

G. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The next Commission working meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 7, 2023.

ADJOURNMENT:

A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 5:48 PM WAS MADE BY BRIAN O'LEARY AND SECONDED BY JANE DORCHESTER, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

Respectfully submitted,



Heather P. Reiffer, Secretary