



America250 PA Chester County Commission Minutes of 9/7/23
Remote Meeting via Zoom
MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: David Blackburn, Mary Sue Boyle, Barbara Cohen, Jane Dorchester, Fernando Fonseca, James Garrison, Conor Hepp, Paul Kahan, MaryFrances McGarrity, Winifred Moran Sebastian, Bruce Mowday, Beverly Sheppard, Mark Slouf, Randell Spackman, Robert Williams

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: James Christ, Nicole Flamer, Susan Hamley, Commissioner Michelle Kichline, Brian O’Leary, Cliff Parker, Krystine Sipple, James Ziegler

CC 250 MANAGEMENT TEAM PRESENT: Karen Simmons, Heather Reiffer, Beth Krallis, Malcolm Johnstone, Corrine Sylvia, Angela Scully

CCPC STAFF PRESENT: William Deguffroy, Gene Huller

VISITORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Brandi Levine, Gene Pisasale, Matthew Roberson, Wade Catts, Dr. Tonya Thames-Taylor

1. CALL TO ORDER:

A. WELCOME

The America250PA Chester County (CC250) Commission Meeting, held via Zoom on Thursday, September 7, 2023, was called to order at 4:03 PM by Chair Blackburn. It was noted that the meeting was moved to 100% remote due to an unexpected escaped fugitive press conference at the Government Services Building.

2. ACTION ITEMS:

A. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Blackburn asked for comments or corrections of the minutes from the Commission’s Meeting of July 6, 2023. Dorchester requested that typos be corrected.

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE JULY 6, 2023 MEETING OF THE AMERICA250PA CHESTER COUNTY COMMISSION IN CONCEPT, AS AMENDED WITH TYPO CORRECTIONS, WAS MADE BY BEVERLY SHEPPARD, SECONDED BY RANDELL SPACKMAN, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

B. APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Blackburn asked for a motion to accept the committee reports since the last meeting.

A MOTION TO APPROVE COMMITTEE REPORTS SINCE THE LAST MEETING WAS MADE BY BEVERLY SHEPPARD AND SECONDED BY MARYFRANCES MCGARRITY, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

C. APPROVAL OF DATES OF CY24 FULL COMMISSION MEETING:

Proposed meeting dates are 2/1/24, 4/4/24, 6/6/24, 9/5/24 and 11/7/24. Executive Committee meetings will take place during intervening months. There was a brief explanation regarding the need to approve and publish the dates of Commission meetings in compliance with Sunshine Laws. The Commission publishes the full calendar of dates once annually. Blackburn asked for a motion to approve the proposed meeting dates for 2024.

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED 2024 MEETING CALENDAR WAS MADE BY MARY SUE BOYLE, SECONDED BY BARBARA COHEN, AND PASSED BY A UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

3. REPORTING & DISCUSSION ITEMS:

A. Update from Chair

Blackburn noted that with the transition of CC250's management to the Chester County Community Foundation, CC250 Commission members who had served as volunteers resigned in light of their new paid roles: Karen Simmons, Heather Reiffer and Malcolm Johnstone. Also, the Commission was notified by Greg Thompson of Voices Underground that Alexander Parham was no longer affiliated with Voices Underground, and therefore would not be continuing with the Commission. Boyle asked whether resigning members could continue work on committees. Simmons assured her that the management team would be supporting each Committee's work.

Blackburn asked for a motion to accept the resignations of Simmons, Reiffer, Johnstone and Parham.

A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE RESIGNATIONS OF SIMMONS, REIFFER, JOHNSTONE AND PARHAM WAS MADE BY BEVERLY SHEPPARD AND SECONDED BY JANE DORCHESTER, AND PASSED BY A UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

Post meeting note: On 9/14/23, upon review of the minutes, Brian O'Leary clarified that the CC250 Commission technically cannot accept Voices Underground request for Alex Parham's resignation from CC250. Only Alex Parham can resign for himself; and Parham's resignation at this point would need to be accepted by Chester County Commissioners Moskowitz, Maxwell & Kichline.

Management of CC250 by the Chester County Community Foundation

Simmons noted that the transition of CC250's day-to-day operations to the Community Foundation officially commenced on August 15, 2023. She explained that she and Heather Reiffer would be coordinating with the Commission's Committees as follows: Communications – Karen Simmons & Beth Krallis; Heritage Sites Legacy and Regional 250 Opportunities – Heather Reiffer. Both will be working closely with Fundraising Team.

Reiffer reviewed a requested reporting schedule to help coordinate with the executive committee in planning agendas in compliance with County requirements. Committee reports and any requests for motions/resolutions should be submitted the 15th of each month to be discussed at executive committee meetings.

B. Nominating Committee

Simmons shared that the Executive Committee had reviewed the current make-up of the Commission membership to determine needs based on diversity, gender, geography, and representation among organization sectors. There are currently 4 slots open. Blackburn asked the Commission to take these considerations into account when suggesting potential candidates.

A question was raised about how to fill Simmons' and Reiffer's committee chair positions now that Simmons and Reiffer are not Commission members. Simmons noted that those vacancies are being addressed within the Committees.

Blackburn noted that the Officer position of Secretary needs to be filled and asked for nominations.

A MOTION TO APPOINT MARYFRANCES MCGARRITY AS SECRETARY OF THE AMERICA 250 CHESTER COUNTY COMMISSION WAS MADE BY RANDELL SPACKMAN, SECONDED BY JANE DORCHESTER, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE BY THE COMMISSION.

C. Ad Hoc Bylaws Task Force

Blackburn shared a request by Brian O'Leary for the Commission to establish an Ad hoc Bylaws Task Force to review the Commission bylaws and make recommendations for needed changes. He asked for Commission members to step forward to serve on this task force. Jane Dorchester, Winnie Moran-Sebastian, and David Blackburn indicated a willingness to serve on this task force. Karen Simmons will staff it.

D. Fundraising Committee Update

Status of PA 250 Infrastructure Proposal and Testimony – Brandi Levine shared that Conor Hepp and Commissioner Kichline “rocked” the Hearing in Lehigh. There was a shared feeling by hearing attendees that it was the best presentation focused on infrastructure and stood out because the proposal would have a county-wide impact, rather than just one organization or location. Simmons is working with Becky Brain at the Commissioner’s office to send thank-you letters to the panelists. The proposal will serve as the basis for a case statement to support additional Philadelphia Campaign fundraising. Blackburn thanked both Hepp and Commissioner Kichline for representing CC250 at the hearing.

Fundraising Consulting Team Intro & Role – Simmons introduced Corrine Sylvia and Angela Scully as two of the three paid fundraising consultants on the CC250 team. Connie Carter is the third consultant, but could not attend. The three consultants all have long histories raising funds and working with nonprofits in both Chester County and regionally. The fundraising team meets every other week to develop diversified fundraising plans and approaches, which will be brought to Commission meetings. Simmons noted that help will be needed from all CC250 Commissioners in opening doors and making asks.

Funder Collaborations - Rob Williams brought up that several foundations in Philadelphia have partnered in creating a America 250 fund. Simmons commented that those funds are intended primarily for Philadelphia-centered projects and programs. She share that she was working with Chester County funders to create a group that funds Chester County projects and will share more on that initiative as it develops.

E. Communications/Marketing Committee Update

Dorchester reported that the website is coming along. Simmons added that Carolyn Oakley of the CC Planning Commission has the majority of the website completed, and shared portions online. The significant piece remaining is working with CCCVB to add a “250 code” to identify events.

Dorchester also reported that FaceBook and Instagram are up and running. Simmons added that the Community Foundation has added LinkedIn and YouTube. Dochester also shared that the Committee has decided against the public tagline contest idea, and requested Commission members to suggested taglines by the Committee’s next meeting on 9/20/23. The Speaker’s Bureau initiative will be discussed at the Committee’s 9/20/23 meeting as well. Lastly, Dorchester noted that the Committee circulated a Style Sheet & Graphics Design Sheet to the full Commission for their use.

F. Partnership Committee Update

Simmons reported that the “Star-Spangled Invitation” is now on the website with a link to a Google Form. Simmons previewed the website and shared the america250chesco.org/newdesign/index.cfm. Organizations are urged to sign up and Take the Pledge online, so they can be listed on the CC250 website and CC250 can begin co-promoting heritage/history/independence events. Simmons encouraged everyone on the Commission to take the pledge.

Simmons went on to share that one of the Partner group listed is Native Americans. Simmons, Nelson and Chief Adam Waterbear DePaul are meeting next week to see how the Lenape Nation of PA can be involved with CC250. The concern was raised that the Lenape Nation of PA was not federally recognized, and that partnerships should be looked at carefully. Simmons is familiar with the issue. Conor Hepp, Mark Slouf, as well as Peter Benton and Elizabeth Watson, can help navigate the Lenape co-promotion issue. David Blackburn suggested Doug Miller, the Site Administrator at Pennsbury Manor, is also a good resource.

G. Education Committee

Beverly Sheppard shared that there were no meetings in the past 2 months. She will be stepping back and suggests Jenn Green, Director of Education at CCHC, and Lisa Doan-Hardy, a retired teacher from Coatesville School District, serve as co-chairs. Sheppard has urged Jenn Green to submit her application for the CC250 Commission online. Simmons asked Brandi Levine and Beth Cunliffe to check and see whether Green’s application (any others) have been received by the County.

H. 250 Regional Initiatives Update

Spackman reported that the PA Day was a success in July with 30+ volunteers helping to clear battlefield trails, which helped prepare them for Lafayette Day, which was also successful. He is working with PHMC, DCNR and NPS to coordinate efforts in program development, as well as with the Brandywine Battlefield Task Force. Spackman, Brandi Levine and Reiffer are going to meet in the coming week for an update and to discuss next steps.

I. Heritage Sites Legacy Projects Committee Update

Mark Slouf shared that July and August were devoted to finalizing the Heritage Centers and Interpretive Sites proposed project and budget to support the PA Infrastructure grant application.

Now his main task is formulating a template to hone in on infrastructure needs at specific sites to set priorities for funding allocations.

Slouf, Jeannine Speirs, Randell Spackman and Rob Williams met with the Brandywine Battlefield Task Force last week and are working on priorities for both the Brandywine Battlefield and the Philadelphia Campaign.

Rob Williams has a meeting with the Valley Forge Alliance on September 28th to discuss Valley Forge's role as a Gateway for the Philadelphia Campaign.

Slouf shared that the Iron & Steel Heritage Partnership has a good deal of work completed already.

Slouf noted that he is working on creating a Pathway to Freedom Task Force with several stakeholders including Kennett Square Underground Railroad Center, Voices Underground, the Harriet Tubman Scenic Byway, Lincoln University and Longwood Gardens.

The topic of agriculture is also being explored by the Oxford Area Historical Association.

Spackman shared that he is working on a project with Susan Hamley, Nina Kelly and Bruce Mowday to create a video focusing on the Philadelphia Campaign. Filming will occur in October. There will be an Awards Dinner on October 26th at Thornbury Farm for the Brandywine Battlefield Task Force.

4. Chester County Heritage Tourism Plan

No report at this time.

5. Public Comment

David Blackburn asked for Public Comment. No public comments.

6. Announcements

No Announcements.

7. Meeting Adjourned

David Blackburn asked for a motion to adjourned.

A MOTION TO ADJOURN WAS MADE BY MARYFRANCES MCGARRITY, SECONDED BY RANDELL SPACKMAN, AND PASSED BY A UNANIMOUS VOTE BY THE COMMISSION.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Heather P. Reiffer, CC250 Administrator, 9/8/23

Approved by: MaryFrances McGarrity, Secretary, CC250 Commission, as of 10/10/2023

