



**America250 PA Chester County Commission
Meeting Minutes of 12/07/2023**

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Mary Sue Boyle, Jane Dorchester, Jim Garrison, Jennifer Green, Dr. Larycia Hawkins, Susan Hamley, Conor Hepp, Paul Kahan, Commissioner Michelle Kichline, MaryFrances McGarrity, Laura Manion, Winifred Moran Sebastian, Bruce Mowday, Dr. Jim Scanlon, Beverly Sheppard, Randell Spackman, Dr. tonya thames-taylor, Robert Williams, Jim Ziegler

MEMBERS PRESENT IN-PERSON: David Blackburn, Fernando Fonseca, Brian O’Leary, Mark Slouf

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Barbara Cohen, Nicole Flamer, Alex Parham

CC250 MANAGEMENT TEAM PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Malcolm Johnstone, Connie Carter, Angela Scully, Corrine Sylvia

CC250 MANAGEMENT TEAM PRESENT IN-PERSON: Heather Reiffer, Karen Simmons

CCPC STAFF PRESENT IN-PERSON: Richard Drake

CCPC STAFF PRESENT VIA ZOOM: William Deguffroy

INVITED GUESTS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Lisa Doan-Hawley, Malcolm Johnstone, Brandi Levine, Gene Pisasale,

Michelle Murphy of Valley Forge Park Alliance

Minutes corrected at the 2/1/2024 CC 250 Commission meeting to reflect that Cliff Parker was not absent, as he had submitted his written resignation on 12/4/2023.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

A. WELCOME

The America250PA Chester County (CC250) Commission Meeting, held via Zoom and in-person at the Chester County Government Services Building, Suite 270 on Thursday, December 7, 2023, was called to order at 4:02 PM by Chair David Blackburn.

Chair Blackburn asked the new Commission members to introduce themselves (Green, Hawkins, Manion, Scanlon, thames-taylor)

2. ACTION ITEMS:

A. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Blackburn asked for the approval of the meeting minutes, noting that a correction had been submitted and reflected that Jim Ziegler had been in attendance at the 10/5/2023 via Zoom.

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE OCTOBER 5, 2023 MEETING OF THE AMERICA250PA CHESTER COUNTY COMMISSION AS CORRECTED TO REFLECT ZIEGLER’S ATTENDANCE WAS MADE BY BRIAN O’LEARY, SECONDED BY MARY SUE BOYLE AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

B. APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE REPORTS:

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

A MOTION TO APPROVE COMMITTEE REPORTS SUBMITTED SINCE THE LAST MEETING WAS MADE BY RANDALL SPACKMAN AND SECONDED BY WINNIE MORAN-SEBASTIAN AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

3. REPORTING & DISCUSSION ITEMS:

A. Nominating/CC250 Commissioner Recruitment

O’Leary noted that four new Commission members had received orientation to the Commission by Simmons and O’Leary. Dr. Hawkins met with Simmons and Reiffer, and O’Leary will schedule a follow up orientation.

Blackburn reported that Cliff Parker has submitted his resignation from the CC250 Commission. He is, of course, still more than willing to help. Blackburn asked that Parker’s resignation be noted in the CC250 Commission minutes. O’Leary will send it to the Commissioners’ office for their acceptance.

O’Leary explained the need to form a Nominating Committee to determine a slate of officers to bring to the February CC250 Commission meeting for a vote. He noted that David Blackburn, in his new role as County Heritage Preservation Coordinator, needs to step down as Chair.

A MOTION TO CREATE A NOMINATING COMMITTEE WITH KRYS SIPPLE, RANDELL SPACKMAN AND BRIAN O'LEARY AS MEMBERS WAS MADE BY BRIAN O'LEARY, SECONDED BY WINNIE MORAN-SEBASTIAN, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

B. CC 250 Commission: Shifting Evolving Roles

Blackburn explained that with shifts over the past few months in paid personnel and operational details now being attended to on a daily basis, the Executive Committee has noted that CC250 Committee roles could benefit from review and reshaping. O'Leary added that the need for Commission members to more strongly serve as Outreach Ambassadors is growing more apparent, to supplement the work of paid personnel and media. Reiffer noted that Delaware County has restructured its 250 Commission and extended the model, as their needs have evolved over the past several months. The CC250 Executive Committee is considering modifications in light of the evolving 2024 workplans, to discuss at the February 1, 2024 Full Commission meeting. Mark Slouf said it is a great idea to have this discussion at this point in the Commission's evolution.

C. Ad Hoc Bylaws Task Force

Blackburn indicated that the Bylaws had been reviewed by the Solicitor with final edits and were ready for approval by the Commission. Jane Dorchester asked whether the final edits had been reviewed by the Commissioners. O'Leary explained that he did not reshare the bylaws with the Commissioners because the final version was within the Solicitor's recommendations. Commissioner Kichline added that as long as the Solicitor approves of the changes to the Bylaws, they are fine from the perspective of the Commissioners. Blackburn asked for a motion to approve the bylaws.

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE UPDATED AND AMENDED BYLAWS AS REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE CHESTER COUNTY SOLICITOR WAS MADE BY BEVERLY SHEPPARD, SECONDED BY DR. LARYCIA HAWKINS AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

D. PA250 Regional Initiatives Committee

Randell Spackman and Heather Reiffer presented the slate of PA250 Initiatives from the Commonwealth, to solicit Commission feedback and confirm our level of participation. The CC250 Commission discussed and agreed to the following:

- **Pennsylvania Day (July 20)** – Continue annual participation. Determine coordination and local volunteer initiatives.
- **PA250 Liberty Trees** – Continue participation. Ceremony expected in Fall 2024 at Sandy Hollow; need status update from PA250 in 2024.
- **PA250 Bells Across PA** – Fiberglass Bells – Co-promote initiative to Chester County artists via social media & press release.
- **PA250 Podcast Series** – CC250 has its own Share Your Story/Our History link on our website, so that people can transmit their heritage and independence stories via photo, video and in writing to CC250. We promote this on social media & press releases, monitor entries, and share the stories in our promotional initiatives. When the PA250 Podcast link is operational, we can post it on our website.
- **PA250 Keystone Classroom Initiative (grades K-4) School Visit**– Co-promote to Chester County schools. Explore how to strengthen Chester County heritage site/education partnerships, such as by compiling CC online resource guide, working with CCIU to better tie into schools.
- **PA250 Young Heroes Outreach Program** – Civics Education in partnership with National Liberty Museum in Philadelphia, on a limited fee basis. Focus on replicating in Chester County through our institutions, the CCIU and schools.
- **PA250 Proud Service Member Spotlight**– Promote PA250 program to Chester County veteran groups, cross-post if Chesco resident is featured. Replicate in CC in partnership with local veteran groups.
- **PA250 Memorial Day Flag Initiative** to place flags on veteran grave sites – Focus on local partnerships with VFW, American Legion, Sons of Liberty and other groups to accomplish in Chester County.
- **PA250 Road to 2026** (PA 250 run/walk fundraiser)– Do not pursue through PA250. Focus on urging current Chester County runs, walks, thons, etc to include 250 themes in 2026. CC250 will co-promote.

- **PA250 Direct Effect Innovation Challenge** (university marketing competition) – WCU is aware and has participated in the past. Forward information to Chester County colleges and universities annually as it becomes available, but do not pursue aggressively.
- **Semiquincentennial Bells** (Bronze bells) – Do not pursue PA250 bronze bell for \$15,000. Instead, Commissioner Kichline suggested we consider create a Chester County art-based initiative.

David Blackburn asked for a motion to approve participation in PA250 initiatives at the levels agreed upon.

A MOTION TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE COMMISSION HAS REVIEWED AND APPROVE PARTICIPATION IN PA250 INITIATIVES AT THE LEVELS DISCUSSED AND AGREED UPON WAS MADE BY RANDELL SPACKMAN, SECONDED BY BRIAN O’LEARY, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

E. Partnership Outreach Committee

On behalf of the Partnership Committee, Simmons noted that the CC250 powerpoint presentation is available online, and that we have conducted a dozen “250 is Coming” awareness forums to spread the word. Reiffer also gave boxes of CC250 Info Cards to Commission members present in-person, to spread the word.

The Partnership Committee needs help from Commission members to extend its reach throughout the County, starting with Information/Awareness discussions; encouraging people to Take the Pledge/sign up for the electronic notices; followed by Engagement/Involvement idea discussions.

An “Army of Ambassadors” is needed to spread the word. As such, Simmons circulated a worksheet listing the 30 Partnership target markets to involve, and asked Commission members to email her a list of groups/people they are willing to reach out to. Staff will call each Commission member to follow up.

Simmons also noted that per the Outreach plan, Zoom sessions will be held the last Friday monthly, beginning January 26, 2024 at noon. The format at this point is envisioned to be:

Beginning: An Awareness presentation, explaining, “250 is Coming, here’s generally how you can be involved.”

Middle: Feature a Best Practice individual or panel, highlighting ideas of how their 250 plans are proceeding and sharing ideas on what they are aiming to do

End: Q&A. Anyone with more detailed questions can stay on the zoom after 1pm for continued discussion.

These zoom sessions pave the way for in-person 250 Forums slated for late June 2024, 2025 & 2026 in each major borough/city of Chester County.

The sessions evolved from discussions various CC250 Commission members have had with Superintendent Rose Fennell of Valley Forge National Historical Park, realizing her inspirational ideas should be shared with not just our CC250 Commission but also heritage groups, parks and municipalities.

F. Education Committee

New Education Co-Chair Jenn Green introduced fellow co-chair Lisa Doan-Harley, and how they were getting started with the committee, with a focus on life-long learning. They see opportunities in libraries and senior centers. Green thanked Beverly Sheppard for laying the groundwork for this committee’s work.

G. Fundraising Committee

O’Leary reported that there have been no new developments related to the PA250 Infrastructure Grant Proposal submitted. Reiffer thanked Slouf, Hamley, O’Leary, Levine and Scully for all their contributions to getting the recent PA DCED Local Shares grant completed and submitted to support regional kiosks. Slouf thanked Reiffer for her efforts to bring it together. Simmons, Scully and Nelson are meeting up with regional elected officials to promote CC250 awareness, partnerships, and explore funding possibilities. The fundraising team is also compiling a list of foundations for CC250 to approach, and will post the list the CC250 website for nonprofits to use as well. Simmons thanked Commissioner Kichline for her willingness to serve as Honorary Fundraising Chair in the new year.

H. Marketing/Communications Committee

Blackburn thanked the Marketing/Communications Committee for laying the groundwork for CC250 messaging. Jane Dorchester noted that the Committee submitted a letter requesting Committee dissolution.

I. Chester County Heritage Tourism Plan

Reiffer reported that Heritage Strategies is finalizing its plan by 12/31/23, for submission to the Chester County Commissioners in January. O’Leary added that there will be a public presentation meeting in early 2024.

J. Heritage Sites Legacy Projects Committee

Slouf’s new info on the 4 Themes:

1. Iron & Steel: David Blackburn will help.
2. Agriculture: Slouf asked for assistance; O’Leary & Dorchester expressed interest in helping
3. Philadelphia Campaign, the focus is on the following:
 - a. Get more refined plan for Thornbury, Sandy Hollow & Birmingham Hill
 - b. Coordinate with Brandywine Battlefield Park to encourage visitor and interpretation upgrades
 - c. Develop the network of heritage centers
 - d. Encourage more interpretation of the Philadelphia Campaign at the Valley Forge Park.
4. Pathway to Freedom: Slouf noted that the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway received funding via the Planning Commission to develop an Interpretation Plan. Slouf also reported there is an exciting evolving new initiative at Longwood Gardens involving Lincoln University (Dr. Larycia Hawkins).

4. FUTURE MEETING DATES: 2/1/24 and 4/4/24 and 6/6/24 and 9/5/24 and 11/7/24

Immediately following this meeting, the Officers will finalize meeting sites, distribute to Commission members, and advertise per Sunshine by 1/1/24.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

David Blackburn asked for public comment. No public comments.

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS

David Blackburn asked if for announcements.

Bruce Mowday has secured a publisher for his book about Chester County’s escaped prisoner, Danilo Cavalcante. Jim Christ shared that on December 16 at 11 am, Paoli Battlefield will participate in “Wreaths Across America.” Brandywine Battlefield also participates.

7. MEETING ADJOURNED

Blackburn asked for a motion to adjourn.

A MOTION TO ADJOURN WAS MADE BY BRIAN O’LEARY, SECONDED BY WINNIE MORAN-SEBASTIAN, AND PASSED BY A UNANIMOUS VOTE BY THE COMMISSION.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Heather P. Reiffer, Senior Program Associate,
CC 250 Management Team 12/12/2023

Correction noted on 2/2/2024 based on the 2/1/2024 Commission Meeting.

Approved by: MaryFrances McGarrity, Secretary/Parliamentarian, CC250 Commission, as of 2/5/2024