



# THE COUNTY OF CHESTER



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America250PA Chester County Commission  
Chester County Chamber of Business & Industry

October 6, 2022

## DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON: David Blackburn; James Christ; Nicole Flamer; Fernando Fonseca; James Garrison; Malcolm Johnstone; Winifred Moran Sebastian; Brian O'Leary; Cliff Parker; Karen Simmons; Mark Slouf; Robert Williams.

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Mary Sue Boyle; Barbara Cohen; Jane Dorchester; Susan Hamley; Randell Spackman.

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Kieran Francke; Conor Hepp; Ernie Holling; Paul Kahan; Michelle Kichline; MaryFrances McGarrity; Alexander Parham; Heather Reiffer; Beverly Sheppard; Barbara McIlvaine Smith; James Ziegler.

OTHERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Gene Huller; Beth Cunliffe; Nancy Shields; Benny Nein; Laura DeMatteo.

VISITORS PRESENT IN PERSON: Brandi Levine.

VISITORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Jay Byerly; Joe Pesce.

### CALL TO ORDER:

The America250PA Chester County Commission meeting, held at the Chester County Chamber of Business & Industry and via Zoom video/audio on Thursday, October 6, 2022, was called to order at 4:02 PM by Chair David Blackburn.

### ACTION ITEMS:

#### Approval of Meeting Minutes:

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE JULY 12, 2022 MEETING OF THE AMERICA250PA CHESTER COUNTY COMMISSION WAS MADE BY MR. O'LEARY, SECONDED BY MR. GARRISON, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

#### Approval of 2023 Meeting Dates and Locations:

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE 2023 MEETING DATES AND LOCATIONS WAS MADE BY MS. SEBASTIAN, SECONDED BY MR. CHRIST, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

### Appointment of Nominating Committee:

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF A THREE MEMBER NOMINATING COMMITTEE (BRIAN O'LEARY, KAREN SIMMONS, AND NICOLE FLAMER) WAS MADE BY MS. SIMMONS, SECONDED BY MS. SEBASTIAN, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

### DISCUSSION AND INFORMATION ITEMS:

#### Review of July Commission Meeting:

Mr. Blackburn summarized the July meeting noting the discussion of the Proposed Bylaws, the election of officers, and the creation of six committees.

#### Commission Communications

Mr. Blackburn introduced Laura DeMatteo, Chester County Heritage Preservation Coordinator. Ms. DeMatteo will be the liaison to the Chester County Planning Commission (CCPC) and she will also share information with commission members. Mr. Blackburn requested that committees send reports, notes, or any issues to both him and Ms. DeMatteo.

#### County Heritage Tourism Plan

Mr. O'Leary reported that the Chester County Heritage Tourism Plan RFP is located on Google Docs ([https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16t25ajiBW25ZIVaE\\_DL-euxIaUgjs6x](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16t25ajiBW25ZIVaE_DL-euxIaUgjs6x)). Mr. O'Leary noted that the purpose of the Heritage Tourism Plan is to strengthen heritage tourism sites and the heritage economy in Chester County and that it coincides with the establishment of the 250<sup>th</sup> Commission. Two proposals came in with the winning proposal from Heritage Strategies, Inc. The consultant team includes Peter Benton, Elizabeth Watson, and Heather Reiffer. The RFP had five key tasks: existing conditions analysis; interpretive framework; locational analysis, touring groups, and wayfinding; marketing plan; and visitation analysis. Part of the document will be a capacity building plan. Heritage Strategies will complete the County Heritage Tourism Plan by April 2023. SWELL, LLC will complete the branding and design element by May 2023. ConsultEcon, Inc will complete the visitor analysis and marketing plan by October 2023. Mr. O'Leary described the key differences between the Heritage Tourism Plan and the America250PA Chester County Commission's work. He noted that the Heritage Tourism Plan's focus is bringing tourists into Chester County while America250PA Chester County Commission's focus is celebrating our local history and our audience is our residents.

#### Development of Chester County Heritage Themes

Ms. DeMatteo presented a draft interpretive framework that the commission could use to develop commemorative programming for the Semiquincentennial in Chester County. The proposed themes were: American Revolution, Iron and Steel, Social Change, Transportation and Urbanization, Natural Resources, and Artistic Heritage. The heritage framework was derived from the historic themes identified in *Landscape3's* "Appreciate" goal, the Heritage Tourism Plan's RFP, and "[The Field Guide for the Semiquincentennial: Making History at 250](#)" from the American Association for State and Local History. Ms. DeMatteo reiterated Mr. O'Leary's note that America250PA Chester County Commission's focus is more local than that of the Heritage Tourism Plan, and the proposed heritage themes reflect this. Commissioners recommended inclusion of subthemes relating to the Chester County history of immigration, religion, Black artists, the mushroom industry, education, science, commerce, government, literature, music, and architecture, and broadening the geographic focus of the thematic framework. Mark Slouf noted that development of themes will lead to identification of heritage sites to host commemorative programming. Commissioners also stressed the importance of communication with neighboring

Counties' 250<sup>th</sup> commissions, as thematic overlap is likely, and efforts should be made to avoid duplicative programming. It was recommended that Ms. DeMatteo update the 250<sup>th</sup> thematic framework based on the commissioners' input, share the updated document with the Heritage Tourism Plan consultant team, and distribute the resulting framework to the America250PA Chester County Commission's committees.

#### Stakeholder List for Legacy Caucus Funding

Mr. Blackburn reported that America250PA has requested that Pennsylvania's 250<sup>th</sup> county commissions each create lists of 30-50 stakeholders who will be able to submit 250<sup>th</sup> programming and infrastructure project proposals to a bipartisan America250PA Legacy Caucus composed of 24 Pennsylvania legislators. There will be six regions, with one project funded per region. Chester County is in Region 6, which also includes Berks, Bucks, Delaware, Lancaster, Lehigh, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties. America250PA recommended that stakeholder lists include leaders from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors and create opportunities for public/private partnerships. The Legacy Caucus will conduct 12 hearings in 2023, with 2 taking place in each of the six regions.

#### Engaging Potential Committee Members

Mr. Blackburn discussed the issue of engaging potential committee members, acknowledging that committees will be critical to the work of the commission. The goal is to create a consistent process across all of the committees that defines how to bring in members from the community.

Mr. Slouf asked if people of interest for committees can be approached. Mr. Blackburn said that with the Semiquincentennial, he wants the commission to be more inclusive than those that were formed for the bicentennial or the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the country's founding. How are we going to reach out to communities and what are the methodologies we will use? How do we cast a wider net to be more inclusive in this work? Mr. Blackburn advised that we do not pack the committees with friends and colleagues. He wants to start with people who have core knowledge of the key areas but said that the committees would need to branch out.

Mr. Slouf asked about what role the various historical commissions will play in this. The county's dozens of historical commissions are a valuable resource. Mr. Garrison answered that on the frontend, historical commissions know where everything is and have material to share. On the backend, with local celebrations and event planning, grassroots connections and boots on the ground will be essential. The Chester County Historic Preservation Network (CCHPN) will be an important coordinator because that is what their job is. Mr. O'Leary recommended that all America250PA Chester County Commission board members reach out to their respective historical commissions and inquire about their interest in participating in the county's America250 planning efforts. He also noted that the Chester County History Center is important for contacts with smaller sites and nonprofits. Ms. DeMatteo shared that there are spreadsheets for each of the six America250PA Chester County Commission committees and a committee task list that she will share with the entire commission to help people decide which committees they would like to join. It will be helpful for each committee to elect officers and prepare agendas for each meeting that will be shared with the entire commission for optimal communications. Mr. Blackburn added this will help avoid silos from the very beginning and encourage synchronicity. This will also encourage committee participation when people are interested in a particular topic or if an area of expertise is needed. Some committees may merge as we get a clearer understanding of what each committee's work will entail.

## Committee Reports

Mr. Blackburn noted that many of the committees had already met, although not all committee representatives were present. The six committees are:

1. Heritage Sites
2. Partnership
3. Communications & Marketing
4. Education
5. Program & Event
6. Development

Committee meeting notes were shared in the commission packets. Mr. Blackburn asked a representative of each committee to give a brief report. He would like the committees to select regular meeting dates for the year in advance, although location of meetings does not need to be settled right now.

### *Heritage Sites*

Mr. Slouf said that the committee identified a need to define the following terms: heritage sites, historical resources, cultural resources, and educational resources. The committee also discussed supportive agencies, who controls specific sites, and how sites relate to others in terms of themes, funding, etc. Mr. Slouf distributed a questionnaire during the committee's first meeting to help members develop a list of historical sites. Mr. Slouf was elected Chair, Randell Spackman is Vice Chair, and Cliff Parker may be secretary.

### *Partnership*

Ms. Simmons said that the committee consists of herself, Ms. Sebastian, and Heather Reiffer. They believe that the Partnership Committee should merge with the Heritage Sites Committee. Ms. Simmons had initially thought that non-heritage partners (e.g., arts, culture, music, theater, and dance organizations) would be the focus of this committee. Committee members did not know what constituted a heritage partner. Mr. O'Leary listed examples of existing heritage partnerships, such as the Iron & Steel Heritage Partnership, the Brandywine Battlefield Task Force, and municipal historical commissions. Ms. Simmons said that there could be a separate partnership committee for non-heritage groups, as this will reach residents who are unaware of heritage sites. Mr. Slouf said that his understanding was that the Heritage Sites Committee would map out sites and the Partnership Committee would work on the connections for that. It was agreed that the Partnership Committee's work will need to be closely connected to that of the Heritage Sites Committee.

Mr. Blackburn added that we need to start building a database of partnerships to include social justice groups, church groups, spiritual groups, businesses, etc., and to identify what can we do with these groups to link them to the county's America250 planning efforts. He noted that while the commission is introducing the themes, it will be looking for partners to carry programming to fruition. We are also helping groups to see connections between sites and events. Ms. Simmons asked how chambers of commerce could incorporate the themes into their programming. Mr. Blackburn responded that the themes link to the historic sites and the marketing can be developed through existing and future partnerships.

Mr. Garrison added that controlling the message will be the glue that holds everything together. He added that unless we have a message in two or three sentences, we will not be effective. Mr. Garrison added that the *Landscapes3* goals of "Preserve," "Protect," and "Appreciate" are the foundations of Chester County as a place. Mr. Blackburn agreed that these goals will link all of

the commission's work together. Ms. Simmons said that "Liberty and Justice for All" is a good start as a theme.

### *Communications & Marketing*

Ms. Flamer reported that this committee met twice and created an action plan. Ms. Flamer is the Chair, Barbara McIlvaine Smith is the Vice Chair, and Joseph DiGiacomo is the secretary. Ms. McIlvaine Smith and Jane Dorchester came up with idea of a commission newsletter to be called "2026". The committee's current goals are to:

- 1) Raise public awareness of the events and programs of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration;
- 2) Promote the various heritage sites around the county;
- 3) Educate the public about the heritage sites and encourage them to visit them;
- 4) Educate the public about the relationship between land conservation and historic preservation; and
- 5) Obtain the America250PA Chester County Commissioners' approval before moving forward with its action plan.

The newsletter could be distributed in hard copy via mailings and/or electronically by email, but the committee would need to develop a budget. They discussed getting sponsors and advertisers to raise funds for the newsletter. Mr. Blackburn added that sponsorships will be an initial focus. Mr. O'Leary said a database of who will receive this newsletter is another task for this committee.

Ms. Flamer inquired about the commission's potential social media presence and website, and whether the committee would be able to post materials on [www.Chesco.org](http://www.Chesco.org) or if they would need to come up with a separate domain name. Mr. O'Leary responded that there are several resources available through CCPC. A URL is reserved ([america250chesco.org](http://america250chesco.org)), and an email address ([america250chesco@chesco.org](mailto:america250chesco@chesco.org)) is established for the America250PA Chester County Commission. Mr. Blackburn noted that TikTok cannot be used because of security issues. Beth Cunliffe, CCPC's Office & Communications Manager, added that Rebecca Brain, the County's Public Information Officer, is the lead on rules and procedures for social media engagement and Ms. Cunliffe and Ms. DeMatteo will reach out to her for clarification.

The next meeting of Communications & Marketing Committee will take place on October 13<sup>th</sup>. Ms. DeMatteo added that America250PA's Partnerships and Engagement team is putting together a marketing and communications toolkit that she will share as soon as it is released. Ms. Dorchester added that the Communications & Marketing Committee is seeking a volunteer graphics editor and copy editor. Mr. Blackburn suggested that graduate students at our local universities might be a good resource for finding volunteer graphics and content editors. He also noted the importance of making our principal communications bilingual or trilingual, and that the commission's social media channels should be highly accessible.

### *Education*

Ms. DeMatteo reported that the Education Committee has not yet met, but that committee organizer Beverly Sheppard has been in contact with current and potential committee members, including representatives from the Chester County Intermediate Unit, local educators, curriculum coordinators, school librarians, and educators from local heritage organizations. The Committee will hold its first meeting in the near future.

### *Program and Event*

Mr. Spackman was identified as the organizer for this committee but was no longer present at the time of committee reports.

*Development*

Ms. Simmons shared that when the Development Committee members looked at target markets, they realized that they would need to meet with the Communications & Marketing Committee to create unified messaging. Ms. Simmons asked who the local corporations are that are most passionate about Chester County and whose CEOs the committee members could approach to be honorary co-chairs of outreach and fundraising efforts. Committee members have not yet approached anyone, but Ms. Simmons noted that Chester County-based corporations could be sponsors of some of 250<sup>th</sup> events. She asked Mr. O’Leary about the governmental money for this, and he replied that the commission did not receive funding in the first round of Chester County American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocations, but he will be looking at other grants. Ms. Simmons said there is not a lot of foundation money in Chester County, although Chester County Community Foundation would be able to give some seed money. Ms. Simmons identified the following corporations as initial prospects: Vanguard, QVC, Herr Foods, A. Duie Pyle, CTDI, Krapf, and Bentley Systems. Mr. O’Leary said that we will need a proposed funding figure from the Program & Event Committee.

Ms. Simmons suggested the formation of a “Friends of America250PA Chester County” fund so that donations can be made directly to the cause and it can be filed in a provisional manner to allow donors to get tax receipts immediately. Mr. O’Leary added that the newsletter proposed by the Communications & Marketing Committee can be from the “Friends of” group so that donations, sponsorships, and advertising dollars can be sent directly to Friends group’s fund, separate from the main America250PA Chester County Commission. Ms. Simmons said that a donation portal can be set up soon.

Public Comment:

Mr. Jay Byerly noted that he would like to participate in this work as a member of the commission. Mr. Blackburn replied that we do not have the power or authority to appoint commission members, as that is a duty of the County Commissioners. Mr. Blackburn noted that while there is a vacancy, there has been a recommendation made to the commissioners. He advised Mr. Byerly to contact him or Ms. DeMatteo.

ADJOURNMENT:

A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 6:01 PM WAS MADE BY MS. SIMMONS, SECONDED BY MR. O’LEARY, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Reiffer, Secretary

HR/BNO/saw