



Semiquincentennial

Middletown/Portland America's 250th 250th All-County Parade & Beautification Subcommittee

Friday, February 27, 2026 | 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Virtual meeting was held for public attendance via webex.

MEETING MINUTES

Present:

Sandra Russo Driska, Subcommittee Chair
Ken McClellan, Subcommittee Chair
Deborah Shapiro, Committee Vice Chair
Kisha M. Michael, Committee Chair

Also Present:

Marco Gaylord, MPS
Kimberly Rodriguez, MPS
Chief Erik Costa, Middletown PD
Chief David Albert, Middletown Fire

1) Call to Order

K. Michael, Chair called the meeting to order at 1:36 p.m.

2) Public Comment

No public attended.

3) Accept/Amend the Agenda

K. Michael entertained a motion to accept or amend the agenda; moved by D. Shapiro, seconded by S. Russo Driska, passed unanimously.

4) New Business

As an introduction for those in attendance, K Michael referenced an attachment to the agenda <https://middletownct.gov/1478/America-250>, and delivered a briefing of the 250th content as presented on the city's website. Staff presented the content on screen while navigating with the computers mouse icon to hover over where to find event, parade and committee info; along with state and national resources.

a) Meeting Dates

The committee would like to meet at least twice a month, establishing Fridays from 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm as a meeting block when the meeting is called.

b) General Briefing and Updates

K. Michael reported on the following:

- The city's website is updated daily,
- Staff is working with the Chamber and DBD to help distribute the publicity,
- Staff would like to ensure that info is reaching the whole community, to include MPS parents through "parent square",
- July 4th is expected to be a very busy day in 2026 across the country with parades happening simultaneously,



- K. McClellan gave a report on the following as he independently manages the Memorial Day Parade:
 - The July 4th parade will have the same process as the Memorial Day parade.
 - Durham has expressed interest along with car groups
 - Needs to coordinate the lineup area with both Chiefs
 - Request would be to utilize more of North Main Street, coming up Rome Ave; using Spring Street for larger vehicles to avoid 2 turns.
 - Chief Costa requesting clarification for the record if the parade would start on the Portland side of the bridge. K. Michael confirmed that although that was discussed that will not be happening.
 - 10:30 step off for July 4th parade, same as Memorial Day
 - D. Shapiro questioned if the horse group gets put at the end? K. McClellan stated with the order being veterans up front, youth groups, civic org, all else, then horses last. Would like to get riding groups/stables.
 - Chief Albert is working to get their old pumper (that use to be pulled by horses) to be pulled by horses for the parade to show the evolution of the fire truck from the pumper, to the old tiller, to the new truck.
 - D. Shapiro questioned how should groups from other towns be assembled? All agreed that marching as a town is the best option while holding a town banner.
 - Chief Costa questioned if invites can be extended to PD's across the state? Staff will share the all-county parade letter for them to send out.

c) Needs Assessment

Staff opened the floor to Middletown Public School (MPS) M. Gaylord and K. Rodriguez;

- students are interested in participating in July 4th parade
- jazz band will do the fireworks
- needs more info on flag raising
- Do the kids have to be in uniforms for 4th parade? Uniforms are too hot.
- Jazz Ensemble and MSB have collaborated in the past for this event and will do the same for this year while playing patriotic music over the fireworks display. Symphonic Band may march in parade on 4th of July.

Staff questions how do we include the businesses, and are there restaurants that we can encourage to cook in patio area?

- S. Russo Driska stated that based on messages businesses send her, most will not be open on this day and events with other food vendors hurt downtown businesses; however S. Russo Driska will send out an email of inquiry to ask for general participation as there may be interest from businesses like Perk on Main, as an example.
- K. McClellan shared the idea of having restaurants offer special menu items, as a suggestion.

d) Delegation of Tasks

- March 27th flags are purchased
- Chief Costa and Albert are invited to fold in their vision
- MPS will coordinate a small quartet for music
- K. Michael will give each student a certificate of appreciation
- K. McClellan to use memorial's application for both parades; and has about a dozen 6x9 flags to hang on city buildings
- Kisha will write up the press releases and proclamation
- CGI rep will be meeting with us next week to reach out to businesses
- The planters will be red, white and blue; pansies first.



- DBD invested \$5k to update 22 poles with photos.

Other

S. Russo Driska questioned if there was funding available for inquiries from ethnic groups that want to make floats. For example, the Melilli delegation is asking if there are funds for this effort. Staff stated for the record that for now we are utilizing the arts office's donation expenditure line *for the use of the promotion of arts and culture in the city of Middletown*. Staff made note that there is no funding from the top for this initiative. D. Shapiro suggests groups go to their fraternal orgs for support. S. Russo Driska spoke with "downtown decorations" and came up with a backup plan for the banners if they do not work out. K. McClellan stated that the Arrigoni bridge support structures are about 30 feet apart; you will need 30x50. What are we thinking about having the businesses decorate with flag or bunting? S. Russo Driska and K. Michael will work on businesses to bunt by purchasing ourselves and handing them out. Driska will do the district and Michael will do the North End.

5) Adjournment

K. Michael entertained a motion by D. Shapiro to close the meeting, seconded by S. Russo Driska, meeting adjourned unanimously at 2:23 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,
Kisha McWilliams Michael
Arts & Culture Coordinator

Attachments:

- <https://middletownct.gov/1478/America-250>
- [2025 Memorial Day Parade Orders](#)