



Semiquincentennial

Middletown/Portland America's 250th Committee

Monday, March 16, 2026 | 4:30 p.m.

Virtual meeting was held for public attendance via webex.

MEETING MINUTES

Present:

Mayor Gene Nocera
Councilmember Jeanette Blackwell
Rev. Robyn Anderson
Gary Wallace
Christine Marques
Sandra Russo Driska, Subcommittee Chair
Chief Erik Costa, Middletown PD
Chief David Albert, Middletown Fire
Ken McClellan, Subcommittee Chair
Deborah Shapiro, Committee Vice Chair
Kisha M. Michael, Committee Chair

Absent:

First Selectman Michael Pelton
Johanna Bond
Councilmember Linda Salafia
Dominick DeMartino
Robert Santangelo

Also Present:

Haley Stafford, MxChamber of Commerce
Maria Scarlett, Antiracism Taskforce, Staff
Councilmember Darnell Ford

1) **Call to Order**

K. Michael, Chair called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.

2) **Public Comment**

None comments from the public.

3) **Accept/Amend the Agenda**

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

4) **Accept/Amend the Minutes from January 12, 2026 and Special Meeting of February 5, 2026**

K. Michael entertained a motion to accept or amend the minutes from [January 12, 2026](#) and Special Meeting of [February 5, 2026](#); moved by Mayor Nocera, seconded by D, Shapiro, passed unanimously.

- *K. McClellan made notation regarding the 3/27 subcommittee meeting minutes paragraph 4d memorial day not memorial. This item and matter was noted and will be taken up in the next scheduled meeting of the subcommittee.*

5) **Remarks from the Chair**

K. Michael welcomed new members to the committee Chief Erik Costa, Middletown PD and Chief Dave Albert, Middletown Fire Department. Staff has made contact with Portland's committee chair by email and letter; minutes attached. Staff is currently in correspondence to meet to share calendar of 25th efforts.



6) Old Business

a) Briefing of developments

The committee is briefed on the upcoming 250th kick off Flag Raising on Friday, March 27 at 1:00 p.m. at the South Green, poster attached. Posters have been circulated and along with social media presence. For the record, staff presented these few questions to answer now or bring up in future discussion:

1. Is there a rain date for these events? Fireworks is Saturday, June 27 with a rain date of Sunday June 28th. **July 4th parade has not been discussed.**
2. Staff recommends doing flag raising rain or shine; have a tent to provide for coverage of participants and students playing their instruments.
3. D. Shapiro asked of the protocol for a pole flag display. Discussion ensued and it was discussed that nothing should ever fly above the American flag. **Chief Albert will follow up with guidelines and secure the procedure.** Staff noted that the current flag on municipal lawn is as follows from the top of the pole; American, POW, CT Flag.
4. **Chief Albert questioned about the Honor Guard and will contact them to explore for this event.**
5. **G. Wallace has contact for a bag pipe band for this ceremony. Staff will reach out to him for inquiry and future events for the celebrations.**
6. How will we utilize the billboards as offered by D. DeMartino?
7. How do we get city departments and outside orgs to March in the parade and sign onto the 250th festivities?

ii) Mayor Nocera

Mayor Nocera shared his gratitude and excitement to the group on how activities are developing. Mayor reported on the following two items:

1. Setting up meeting with DOT to approve or disapprove two large American flags to be hung on the bridge. South Fire is offering this flag. At that time they will speak about specifics like how to erect the flag without disturbing traffic and how long it can stay up.
2. Hosted a meeting with Eversource regarding their energy efficiency program for businesses. Further, Mayor asked for them to consider subsidizing the banners for our business owners with their name on it as a sponsor. D. Shapiro confirmed that CGI has started their campaign because Shapiro Law Offices has purchased the first one. It will be hung on Washington and Main. It was questioned and then confirmed that the committee is not intended to get a cut for these banners.

iii) Vice Chair

D. Shapiro announced “Scanning Day” a photo scanning project advertised within the state’s initiative to involve the community with the town’s history. Registration goes live April 13th and the event date is scheduled for Saturday, June 13th at the Russell Library. The library will provide a staff to work the scanner and volunteers will triage intake and photo release forms.



Scans will be owned by the Historical Society and the Library; people will take their photos back home with them; the library will email scans to each participant. K. Michael asked if there was a poster to go along with this event. The response is that the library will likely do a poster since registration happens on their website. Description attached.

The Historical Society is hosting a post-civil war concert on May 9th with registration to purchase tickets forthcoming.

The Amistad Tall Ship update:

- plans for its arrival the first week of October
- a film screening of the Stephan Spielberg movie Amistad
- historical society is working with the education director to come up with other activities to support their visit here
- Maria Scarlett has convened a meeting with Councilmembers Ford, Blackwell, M. Scarlett, Mayor, etc.
- Staff will forward invite to D. Shapiro and Rev. Anderson to this meeting in April 22 at 11 a.m. Discovering Amistad has made formal contact with many stakeholders and Rev. Anderson is privy to the matter.
- Mayor Nocera's suggestion is to have a representative from the school system be invited to this meeting.
- Deb ended with stating a port marker ceremony will be planned.

iv) Chair

Defer to 6a, briefing of developments.

b) Subcommittee Reports

S.RussoDriska beautification subcommittee Chair reported on the following details:

- i) Members and city staff met with CGI to discuss installation. The representative is actively working on getting sponsorships during the month of March to make goal then install in April.
 - (a) Subcommittee chair requests for a meeting to happen near the end of the month to get an update on their progress.
 - (b) Subcommittee chair will reach out to D. Demartino regarding what to put on the billboards to ensure that it's quick and fast reading.
- ii) A floral theme of red white and blue will go in the Main Street planters after the pansies; also working on putting a small American flag in the middle of each planter.
- iii) DBD's three sided signs installed many years ago on Main Street were in need of upgrade. In the interest of the 250th celebrations the commission invested \$5k to upgrade each pole sign to reflect the 250th and look to see them in stalled I late march or early April. They have pulled from the Historical Society's images during the 1800's. The tagline will be *Celebrating Americas' 250th on Main Street.*
- iv) The idea of Main Street business to cohesively decorate is presented. S. Russo Driska suggested and K. Michael concurred that we should purchase bunting and offer to them to each business.



K. McClellan parade subcommittee Chair reports to reach out to PD and Fire after Memorial Day to figure out the July 4th; would like to have that email working.

7) New Business

Staff asked for input on the draft proclamation attached. No comments.

Membership letter from America 250 Connecticut was partially read containing info on a recommitment ceremony on July 4th requests a representative from each municipality to attend. Attached and noted for the record. Additional details will follow.

Staff itemized merchandise items purchased for test runs. Expense report reflects the purchase of patriotic themed coins, flags, pins, pens, bunting, writing pads, posters and postcards. The remaining coins are to be given as a token of offering at the Flag raising. Also found a Juneteenth dashiki print lapel pin. Next purchase is t-shirt, hat, simple merchandise.

america250 - merch purchases	
product	price
2" round die cast double sided zinc cast coin	\$1,732.50
2" round die cast double sided zinc cast coin	\$1,870.41
Official America250 Flags	\$ 89.52
Patriotic Lapel Pins	\$ 25.80
Patriotic Writing Pens - MOINCHORE	\$ 31.96
Patriotic Writing Pens - *TENARE	\$ 31.98
USA 250th Betsy Ross Flags	\$ 91.80
America250 Writing Pads	\$ 660.00
5x8 America250 & 5x8 POW-MIA Veterans Flag	\$ 55.99
5x8 America250 & 5x8 POW-MIA Veterans Flag	\$ 28.99
75 Posters and 250 Postcards	\$ 226.64
total start up expenses	\$4,845.59

Portland's events briefly listed and attached minutes:

- (a) Middle school coordinating school activities
- (b) Hometown festival sat May 16th
- (c) July 4th dedication of brownstone plaque at Town Hall
- (d) T-shirts *I'm from Portland*
- (e) Historical reenactments/fife and drum
- (f) Time capsule
- (g) Sponsorship commemorative booklet
 - **Staff intends to do the same to help give exposure to what's happening in Middletown, and turn into a coloring book.**

To ensure everyone is on the same page, Mayor Nocera revisited the tentative plan to end the July 4th parade at the South Green with a picnic for the community. Unofficially we have asked PD and Fire to volunteer as food servers to the public with the ideas of the city to sponsor. Eversource has a \$2500



grant; a good conclusion to the parade. S. Russo Driska is meeting with the owner of Taino to discuss and pull a draft budget proposal as vendor for this event. Meeting is Wednesday to discuss costs. Fire thinks a great idea; PD being now just informed will return with a count.

8) Other

Staff stewarded message from Phil Pessina who offered the suggestion to have a reception on the bridge honoring the 250th with a ribbon cutting ceremony conducted by the Mayor and First Selectman; the bridge is the focal point of our community.

D. Shapiro celebrates the 38th year the Historical Society has engaged kids to write about their ancestors. This year they added the 250th component looking into exploring their ancestors' contributions.

9) Adjournment

K. Michael entertained a motion to adjourn; moved by Mayor Nocera, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell, passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Attachments:

- [Attendance sheet](#)
- [Posters](#)
- [Letter from CTAmerica250](#)
- [Memorial Day Parade Orders 2025](#)
- [draft Proclamation for Flag Raising](#)
- [Historical Society Photo Scanning](#)
- [Letter from Portland America 250 Committee Chair](#)
- [CGI Banner](#)
- [Draft1-july4th poster](#)
- [Draft2-july4th poster](#)

*Respectfully Submitted,
Kisha McWilliams Michael
Arts & Culture Coordinator*