



Semiquincentennial

Middletown/Portland America 250 Committee
Monday, January 12, 2026 | 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Virtual meeting was held for public attendance via webex.

MEETING MINUTES

Present:

Mayor Gene P. Nocera
First Selectman Michael Pelton
Jeanette Blackwell
Linda Salafia
Johanna Bond

Christine Marques
Sandra Russo Driska
Ken McClellan
Deborah Shapiro, Vice Chair
Kisha M. Michael, Chair

Also present:

Sam Gold, RiverCOG
Susie Beckman, RiverCOG
Head of Information Services, Russell
Library

Absent:

Robert Santangelo
Robyn Anderson Turner
Dominick DeMartino

1) Call to Order

K. Michael, Chair called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

2) Public Comment

D. Shapiro shared that a member of the public has an idea for a celebration and will follow up when she reconnects. Also present (Diane M.) Head of Information Services, Russell Library to explore potential partnerships.

3) Accept/Amend the Agenda

A motion to accept or amend the agenda was made by Mayor Nocera and seconded by D. DeMartino; matter passes with no comments, abstentions, and no objections.

4) Accept/Amend the Minutes

A motion to accept or amend the minutes from [December 8, 2025](#) was made by Councilmember Blackwell and seconded by Councilmember Salafia; matter passes with no comments, no abstention and no objections.



5) Remarks from the Chair

Chair welcomes feedback regarding past recorded minutes and gave briefings on the following developments:

- Emphasized the team's progress and positivity despite feeling behind schedule.
- Seven (7) MCA grants are in process with information to be announced on the city's website. Additionally, email notifications have been sent out by using the arts offices listserv (CivicSend).
- A list of merchandise is to be generated with items to put the logo on; for example, coin, hat, t-shirt, pencil, calendar, etc...
- K. Michael reported on the support provided by the Chamber in the form of a strategic & marketing, attached.
- Other topics of note is the parade, the incorporation of Portland's activities, and the 4th of July. Discussions arose about the scheduling of multiple parades and the negative impact it has on local businesses during busy months. The committee to discuss the potential consolidation of events and the scheduling of the 250th celebration at next month's meeting. Feedback ensued with these comments:
 - J. Bond concurred on the idea of the parade in September with the businesses being highly impacted by the downtown events.
 - S.R.Driska concurred but would suggest a consolidation with another event for example, Memorial Day.
 - K. McClellan shared the public's expectation for a parade to be on July 4th. However, if consensus states otherwise, expand Memorial Day instead of waiting until September.
 - D. DeMartino concurred with a combined event idea while also noting that September is Fair season and to caution for that reason.
 - L.Salafia concurred with K. McClellan's suggestion.
 - Mayor Nocera has contacted Eversource and Pratt & Whitney who seem interested as major donors to help with the bridge.
 - Press conference tomorrow on 1/13/25 with three reporters for an update on the referendum question; also to mention the 250th to get the word out.
- D. Shapiro, Vice Chair briefed the committee on the following:
 - A productive initial meeting was held on 12/19/25 with First Selectman Pelton, K. Michael to brief each other on developments within our city and town.
 - It is reported that our chosen logo being America's 250th to include the "apostrophe" and "th" makes our logo ok to use.
 - Holy Trinity wants to do a play on early history of Middletown and will reach out to the arts office.



6) Old Business

a) Briefing of developments

- i) Amistad ship looking to dock in the first week of October to serve approx. 300-400 Beman Students and 80-90 Black and LatinoX students at MHS. They will be offering group and private tours for the general public. Funding portion is still of question. Elizabeth Mancini has been noted as the contact educator
- ii) 250th webpage is up and running with a populated calendar.
- iii) Deb's picture idea with the library is confirmed.
- iv) Kisha, Debby, and Gene to finalize plans for the flag raising event and include it in the proclamation set tentatively for the February 2nd council meeting.

7) New Business

a) Subcommittee Reports

- i) Beautification – S. Russo Driska, subcommittee Chair gave detailed developments on the banner project with CGI, to include the following details:
 - templates and design examples were presented, brackets and supplies were itemized and discussed,
 - personal photos and how to manage,
 - a minimum of \$20 is needed to start, they do the leg work and meeting with the businesses.
 - The image of the bridge and river was chosen to display.
 - One more meeting will be had to confirm the numbers.
 - Also suggested is to do a separate banner program for the veterans. K. Michael offered to assist with stewarding the process of that program. With the recommendation to bring in the Veterans commission staff Faith Jackson for support and that everyone on the veterans committee has input.
 - D. Shapiro stated the Historical Society has plaques program with river.
 - L.Salafia presented a question on what era of photographs are to be displayed. Ken has paintings and graphic of revolutionary war images; the process suggested is to raise money and honor veterans whomever pays they provide photo of their veteran for their banner.
- ii) Parade – K. McClellan, subcommittee Chair reported on the parade process:
 - Invitations get sent in March with responses by mid-May,
 - Organizes spreadsheets and puts groups in order ,
 - A press releases with who, what and when is sent out by mid-February the latest,
 - Two car clubs with convertibles have offered to carry the marshals and elected officials,
 - Follow up with the IT department to resolve issues with his Middletown email address, staff will follow up.



8) Other

K. Michael explored and shared new ideas:

- a community quilting project either digital or hand stitched with citizen participation and master seamstress
- WESU 88.1
- Community U.S. History Trivia night while encouraging literacy
- local businesses and veterans groups for potential banner projects
- Kickoff event of question, S.RDriska – Bristol is doing a fundraising event in February and suggests that the military museum would be a great place to conduct our flag raising event. February must be the month it is announced.

9) Adjournment

K. Michael entertained a motion brought to the floor by Mayor Nocera to adjourn, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell, passes unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 4:42 p.m.

Attachments

[America 250 Master Plan for the City of Middletown](#)

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