

APPROVED
Hartford Town 250th Commemoration Committee
Special Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 11, 2025

1. Gwen called the meeting to order at 5:40 pm. Attendees: Lori Hirshfield, Earl Hatley, Dennis Brown, Patti Crimmin-Greenan, Linda Miller, Gwen Tuson, Scott Davison. On phone: Guest Becky Book from the DAR.

2. Public Comments - none

3. Any items to add to the agenda? Discuss who will be hanging posters.

4. Announcements. Cathy Melocik has resigned from this Committee. Gwen asked JD Hawkes to update the committee member listing on the Town website. **ACTION:** Lori Hirshfield will ask Danielle Taylor from her office to coordinate with JD on this.

Gwen asked the group to state their goals for this special meeting. Dennis suggested we need to do some healing as a result of the contentious ending to our previous meeting. Gwen offered a list of apologies. Becky Book asked for clarification of goal of the Committee, so Gwen read our purpose statement. Patti Crimmin-Greenan and Linda Miller asked that we need to have a group norm where if someone is uncomfortable, that it is best to air the problem rather than to let it fester.

Gwen shared that she has had a steep learning curve as chair, and that she had been uncomfortable trying to address issues she thought the group would find sensitive. She apologized for her part in not making clear her intention to discuss and include some very ugly parts of our history at the end of our previous meeting and not really making clear this was tied into the poster. She also apologized for this rushed end to the meeting. She had wanted to make sure we completed all other business before trying to dive into the topic of the poster. In retrospect she wished she had not left the topic as an addition to the end of the meeting.

Earl Hatley apologized for not speaking out when he was uncomfortable about the bean/tripod logo being removed from the posters. He especially loved the tripod of the three sisters and was quite hurt when the group dismissed this logo as simply being too busy for the posters. Linda apologized for not understanding how important the symbolism was to Earl. Linda suggested that we remove the Vermont 250 logo and have just the 250 America and the bean logos instead of all three.

Lori stated that we do have a shared history with indigenous people and an opportunity to celebrate it all. This is a great teaching moment. Earl shared his thoughts on how he will conduct the Abenaki Garden Tour starting with the events of the Revolution, including the collaboration of 50 Missisquoi who served with the Green Mountain Boys. Earl described how things went downhill from the time of that collaboration. Because Earl pronounced

Abenaki two different ways, he explained that Abenaki is the English pronunciation and Abnecki is the French pronunciation. He stated that it did not matter which pronunciation is used because Alnôbak is the true word. Earl shared that the word Ottauquechee means “our place where the land falls”, in other words, the Gorge. Common on-line references misstate another language and another meaning. Earl will bring this type of historical information to the present time to hopefully help us move forward together as a society, especially in this very difficult time. He explained that the seeds he uses at the Garden have weathered many seasons, and that we could come together using seeds that have been through different climate changes. These could be the ones that get us through. The 250th Commemoration is an opportunity for the Public to understand the meaning of 1776 to include the land taken from the indigenous people. Scott reminded the group that whatever we create for events, that they need to tie back to our Mission Statement. The group felt that we have a great opportunity to move forward. We don’t need to dwell on the past but recognize and learn from it.

For the Garden Tour Earl asked for some pop up tents for the Garden Tour. **ACTION:** Gwen will ask Scott Hausler if the Town has some water coolers and pop up tents.

Scott Davison offered to help educate and train interpreters.

As a group if we have a conflict or sensitive subject, we agreed to speak out and make time to resolve. We agreed to actively listen.

5.2. Discussed a working group for revising the poster template. Lori suggested that we want to ensure that word “Hartford” needs to be clear and prominent. Patti volunteered to work on the poster template for future posters.

Gwen mentioned that the unofficial July minutes have a lot of action items so please review and take care of those prior to our next meeting.

5.3. Gwen asked us to consider \$1,200 fee to pay 2 musicians and a caller for a “Country Dance” at Wilder Clubhouse. Gwen’s contact is Sue Hunt. She is available along with a fiddler and a caller for Friday, October 3rd starting at 7 or 7:30. If the group had a strong preference, we could change to Sunday afternoon October 5th. Gwen has worked out with Laura Abramson and Scott Hausler to make it happen at the Wilder Clubhouse. The only other financial expenditure is potentially the encampment and the banners. Gwen asked for a thumbs up vote to spend the money for the Friday dance, all present voted thumbs up. **ACTION:** Gwen will move this forward with a contract. We will need to work out the logistics of beverages, snacks, set up.

6. Next Meeting Wednesday, August 27 at 5:30 pm.

7. Adjourned at 7:02 pm.