



**MINUTES**  
**WETHERSFIELD TOURISM and CULTURAL COMMISSION**  
*Tuesday, February 24, 2026*  
*5:15 p.m. - DRAFT*  
*Town Manager Conference Room, 505 Silas Deane Highway*



- 1) **Call to Order** - Meeting called to order by C. Traczyk at 5:15 p.m.
- 2) **Roll Call** (5 members required for quorum)

**Members:**

Antoniak, Mark - OW Bus. Comm. (not retail)	X	Bruno, Brianna - OW Shopkeepers	X	Raymond, Mark – HDC Liaison	E
Grom, Brenton – Ex. Dir. WDS Rene	X	Keane, Judy - EDIC Liaison.	X	Kevin Sullivan – Chamber	X
Traczyk, Chris - Weth. Resident	X	Emily Sesko - OW Resident	E	Ciarcia, Dorene - WHS	X
Lemo, Julie - SDH Bus. Comm.	X	Ivana Marrero - Chamber	X		

**Town/Staff:**

Wands, Scott- Council Liaison	X	Leng, Curt – Economic & Development Director	X	Vazquez-Felipe, Kassandra – Recording Sec.	X
-------------------------------	---	--	---	--	---

**Also in attendance:**

Lesser, Ken - Mayor	X	Smith, Jesse - Soc. Media	X		
---------------------	---	---------------------------	---	--	--

- 3) **Public Comment** - None
- 4) **Approval of Minutes** – *Motion to approve the January 27, 2026, meeting minutes as well as the minutes from the special meeting that took place on February 17, 2026, made by D. Ciarcia and seconded by M. Antoniak. All members were in favor.*
- 5) **Open Items** (Old Business)
  - a) America250 – C. Traczyk
    - Chair Traczyk reported that, following the February 17 special meeting, the Town Council adopted a proclamation recognizing Wethersfield’s participation in the celebration of the nation’s 250th birthday. The Chair gave the Council an overview of the Town’s America 250 efforts, including the website and event listings. The Chair reported on a productive meeting with Rachel Mattioli from Parks and Recreation and outlined three Town-supported America 250 events now being developed:
      - **July 3, 2026** – Governor’s Foot Guard Band at Kycia Farms
        - The Commission discussed the July 3 concert as one of the Town’s key America 250 events and part of the broader holiday week programming.
      - **July 4, 2026** – Independence Day concept

- The Commission also discussed the possibility of participating in a national bell-ringing at 2:00 p.m. on July 4, potentially involving local churches and other bell locations.
- **July 5, 2026 – Community Picnic at Cove Park**
  - The Commission discussed plans for a community picnic, inspired by the national “America’s Potluck” concept but branded locally as a community picnic. Key points included:
    1. Proposed time frame of approximately 12:30/1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
    2. Location at Cove Park, due to parking availability, existing restroom access, and easier traffic/security management
    3. Families would bring their own picnic meals
    4. Possible use of the Parks and Recreation sound stage and background music/DJ
    5. Possible participation by the Red Onion vintage baseball team
    6. If baseball is not feasible, a cornhole tournament was discussed
    7. Additional kid/family activities, such as local history trivia or simple games, were discussed
    8. The Commission also discussed whether the Registrar of Voters could have a presence at the picnic and/or fireworks, pending further conversations
  - Rachel also suggested highlighting the Solomon Welles House, which is celebrating its 250th year, and exploring whether it could be open that day or interpreted in some way for the public.
- **July 8, 2026 – Reading of the Declaration of Independence**
  - The Commission discussed plans for the national coordinated public reading of the Declaration of Independence at 6:00 p.m. on July 8. The preferred concept discussed was:
    1. Begin around 5:00 p.m. at the Keeney Center
    2. Walk to either the Cove Warehouse or Solomon Welles House
    3. Stop along the way at the Heritage Walk panels
    4. Have a docent/historian interpret Wethersfield’s role in the American Revolution
    5. Conclude with the reading of the Declaration at 6:00 p.m.
    6. Include the Colonel Chester Fife and Drum Corps if available
  - The general preference during discussion leaned toward the Cove Warehouse as the destination, with the possibility of opening the building for visitors.
- The Commission discussed incorporating America 250 into Memorial Day weekend programming. The Memorial Day parade theme will include America 250. WDS and WHS reported coordination of their annual encampment/traditional trades programming around the same weekend, creating a fuller day of activity. The Commission also discussed promoting these events together so visitors understand the broader range of offerings throughout Town.
- Governor Lamont invitation - Mayor Ken Lesser joined the meeting and suggested that one or more of these July events may be appropriate to include when inviting the Governor to Wethersfield for America 250-related programming.
- School involvement - The Commission discussed the importance of involving the schools more directly, including:
  - Essay opportunities tied to Memorial Day or America 250 themes
  - Better communication through school channels, such as ParentSquare
  - Possibly identifying a school staff representative to participate regularly with the Commission
- Action Items:
  - Chair Traczyk to continue coordinating the community picnic and Declaration reading with Parks and Recreation and other partners
  - Follow up on Registrar of Voters participation for July events
  - Follow up with Nita regarding the church/open house concept
  - Continue loading finalized events to the State America 250 calendar and local tourism platforms

## b) Cultural District

- The Commission revisited the request for 2025 Cultural District data, which had been due to the State on February 15. Chair Traczyk emphasized the need to collect information quickly so the Town's case for additional Cultural District support can still be strengthened. Discussion included:
  - Number of events held in 2025
  - Revenue/economic impact
  - Attendance and, where possible, employment information
  - Flexibility in using estimates where exact figures are unavailable
  - The Shopkeepers' plan to collect business information via a SurveyMonkey format
  - Clarification that WDS and WHS would provide their information separately
- Scott Wands also shared that Fox 61 / Cultural District coverage may be kicking off in Wethersfield, likely at WDS, and that further details were still being finalized.

## 6) New Business

### a) Marketing/Advertising brainstorm

- The Commission reviewed a draft marketing and advertising budget for promoting Tourism and America 250 events through June 30. Discussion included the following possible components:
  - Wethersfield Life insert
  - Rare Reminder insert
  - Press release package
  - Social media influencers
  - Banners
  - Radio/NPR-style ads
  - Social media boosted posts
  - Promotional items such as temporary tattoos, stickers, and window clings
- Key discussion points:
  - Greater emphasis should be placed on highlighting the Town's cultural assets and America 250 programming
  - Brianna Bruno noted existing relationships with influencers through the Shopkeepers and suggested costs could likely be reduced substantially through coordination, in-kind arrangements, or business partnerships
  - Jesse Smith indicated the social media boosting line could likely be reduced
  - The Commission discussed dropping or reducing radio advertising if it would not produce meaningful value
  - There was support for producing a flyer/insert that residents could keep and reference, potentially with a QR code linking to the events calendar
  - Brianna offered to help develop insert options for review at the next meeting, working with Jesse as needed on branding and visual consistency
- Curt Leng and Chair Traczyk to refine the draft numbers and continue moving the work forward.

## 7) Reports – Affiliate Commissions/Organizations

- The agenda included reports from WHS, Wethersfield Arts Academy, Old Wethersfield Shopkeepers, EDIC, Website and Social Media, WDS, Chamber of Commerce, Town Council Liaison, and BikeWalk Wethersfield. Given the amount of business already discussed, reports were folded into the broader agenda discussion rather than presented as lengthy separate updates. Notable report-related items included:
  - Shopkeepers are already framing some 2026 activities around the America 250 theme
  - WDS noted progress on Memorial Day weekend and other America 250-related programming

- BikeWalk Wethersfield may connect walking and biking concepts to July and other themed events
- A drone light show was explored, but determined to be too expensive

**8) Correspondence** – None

**9) Other Business**

a) Brief discussion included:

- Possibility of a mural and rough cost comparisons to prior mural work
- Sharing the finalized logo files in both JPEG and PNG format, along with the event link, for partner use
- Need to continue loading events to the State calendar and Connecticut tourism-related platforms
- Follow-up on the July 4 bell-ringing concept

**10) Next Meeting** – March 31, 2026

**11) Adjourn** – Chair adjourned the meeting at 6:23 p.m.

DRAFT