

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF CHESHIRE SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL STEERING
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2026, AT 10:00 A.M., ROOM
210, 84 SOUTH MAIN ST.**

Present: Diane Calabro Calabro, Ron Gagliardi Gagliardi, Ray Bennett.

Staff/Guests: Savannah Blantz- Maria, Coordinator of Grants & Community Engagement, Mitzi Romano, President of Cheshire Historical Society, Jessica Fischer, Member of Town Beautification Committee, Tony Cipriano, Cheshire Lions Club, and Shirley Brady, Cheshire Resident.

Absent: Andrew Martelli, Assistant Town Manger

1. ROLL CALL.

The Meeting was called to order at 10:00am and a quorum was present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

The Pledge was recited.

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 13TH 2026.

Motion was made by Ray Bennett and seconded by Ron Gagliardi Gagliardi to approve the meeting minutes from the Meeting of January 13, 2026. All voted in favor.

4. BUSINESS.

a. 250th Announcement Letter update.

The letter has been posted on the page on the Town's website and hard copies are being distributed across Town to various locations. Diane Calabro thanked her friend and Cheshire Resident who was present at the meeting, Shirley Brady, for her help. This letter has also been distributed to farmers in town in-person and via mail.

b. Graphic History Project.

Diane Calabro provided a up-to-date copy of the graphic history pages that have already been developed highlighting local events, individuals and moments in history to be kept in the Town Manager's Office to serve as an example for those who may have questions about the project. The goal is to have 250 graphic panels for the book. The Community is encouraged to submit pictures for inclusion as are Town Departments. The goal will be to have the graphic history novel complete for the Strawberry Festival 2027 and potentially an initial "phase" for the July 4th event.

c. Bartlem Park July 4, 2026 Event Logistics.

John Gawlak, Director of Parks and Recreation, asked about the needs of the Committee from the Parks and Recreation Department. Mr. Ray Bennett mentioned decorating the 26 light poles around the Great Lawn in Bartlem Park, having a firetruck with the American Flag, and other displays throughout the park. Mr. Gawlak responded that sponsorships may be available for pole banners similar to the sponsorships program for the Bartlem Beats series. Further discussion with Assistant Town Manager, Andrew Martelli will be required.

Tony Cipriano from the Cheshire Lions Club mentioned that up until COVID-19, the Lions Club provided copies of The Constitution of the United States of America to local schools. There are several copies left over that they would be willing to distribute for the July 4th event. He also mentioned organizing a reenactment/reenactment(s) of the time period of the historical figures

painted in the mural at Dodd Middle School. This could involve the Cheshire Players or other willing actors.

d. January 18th, 1:00 p.m., Cheshire Historical Society board meeting presentation recap.

The presentation was well received by the Cheshire Historical Society and supportive of the Committee's efforts.

e. January 20th, 6:30 p.m. Artsplace board meeting presentation recap.

The presentation was well received by the Town Council and supportive of the Committee's efforts. The Committee continues exploring potential artists that could participate in the Graphic History Project workshops.

f. Door knocking/mailings to local farmers recap.

The 250th Announcement Letter was well received by the local farmers and supportive of the Committee's efforts.

g. Visit with Cheshire Academy Jan. 15 recap.

The Committee met with Ms. Daly from Cheshire Academy, who has offered resources and supports the Committee's efforts. There will be a tent at the June 10 graduation ceremony for the Committee to use. Diane Calabro would like to explore ideas of how this Committee could use that tent that day to spread the word about the July 4th event/committee efforts. Cheshire Academy is committed to providing several Cheshire Cat drawings.

h. Pizza Box Time Capsule.

There is information about the Pizza Box Time Capsule initiative on the first floor of Town Hall. Ron Gagliardi mentioned there will be an article in Cheshire Today online magazine with more information. He also mentioned the idea of having a larger time capsule filled this year to be opened in 50 years from now to be stored in the Town Hall basement.

i. Future Visits and Presentations:

- May 2 - Suburban Plant Sale at Youth Center - display table 10-1.
- May 24 - Memorial Day Parade - Float 1-4.
- June 13 - CT Open House at Cheshire Historical Society (same day as Strawberry Festival 10-4).

The Committee confirmed these dates and will continue to discuss what to present on those events such as the Pizza Box Time Capsule. Other opportunities to present in the community will continue to be explored. Ray Bennett added that on February 18th a meeting at the Grange will be on the Connecticut Patriots, also known as the four signers of the Declaration of Independence. Diane Calabro expressed interest in presenting at a future Cheshire Lions Club meeting and Tony Cipriano welcomed the idea.

j. Website Coordination Update: Town of Cheshire, Bennett Family, Historical Society, Artsplace, Library, and others.

Savannah Blantz-Maria, Coordinator of Grants and Community Engagement, informed the Committee that the requested updates to the website have been made and invites all community organizations that have relevant information to share to forward her their information to be posted online.

k. Grant submission and other funding opportunities.

None at this time.

5. FUTURE MEETING DATES.

Meeting dates have been adopted and recorded with the Town Clerk. The next meeting is on March 10, 2026.

6. ALL OTHER BUSINESS.

Ron Gagliardi Gagliardi and Diane Calabro Calabro discussed having signage at the entry points of Cheshire stating that ex-President Gerald Ford lived in Cheshire. Signage could also be created for other notable public figures that lived in town. This effort will require further discussion amongst the Committee and with Assistant Town Manager, Andrew Martelli.

Jessica Fischer of the Cheshire Town Beautification Committee explained that the Kurtz family has historically donated geraniums to the Committee. This year, red and white geraniums with a to-be-determined blue-toned flower will be planted in the Town parklets with signage about the 250th anniversary of the United States. Mitzi Romano of the Cheshire Historical Society asked about the possibility of the Town Beautification Committee doing a planting at the Historical Society. Ms. Fischer will discuss the idea with the Committee.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Ray Bennett motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Diane Calabro Calabro seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion passed unanimously, 3-0. The meeting adjourned at 11:01 a.m.

Attest:



Savannah Blantz-Maria, Coordinator of Grants and Community Engagement