

# Stamford Patriotic and Special Events Commission

## MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday August 9, 2023 at 2:00 PM

The meeting was called to order at **2:06pm** by Kate Cook, with all participants joining by Zoom.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87191603995?pwd=M0dlTyt3OXd5SXphZnNXOXJUUQ1hYQT09>

Meeting ID: 871 9160 3995

Passcode: PSEC

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### **Attendees:**

P&SEC Members: Xavier Shellman, Kate Cook, Hubert Delany

P&SEC Members Not Present: Dave Kaplan

Guests: Colleen Harkey, Kieran Matthew Edmondson, Pat Parry, Stephen Fischer

### **Agenda**

- 1) Review of draft meeting minutes
  - a) May 3<sup>rd</sup>
  - b) May 9<sup>th</sup>
  - c) May 11<sup>th</sup>
  - d) May 16<sup>th</sup>
  - e) May 18<sup>th</sup>
  - f) May 23<sup>rd</sup>
  - g) May 25<sup>th</sup>
  - h) June 7<sup>th</sup>
- i) The aforementioned minutes approved en masse by commission members.
- 2) 2023 Memorial Day activities debrief
  - a) Hubert gave thanks to everyone who assisted with the activities while he was completing army work overseas.
    - i) Additional thanks to Kate for all the work she put in for the events.
  - b) Street vendors that were on the route were selling toy guns.
    - i) Citizens approached Kate to recommend that not be allowed in the future as children were pretend shooting at people in the parade.
    - ii) Kieran made note that Chris Munger doesn't allow people to bring toy guns to offer at Toys For Tots.
    - iii) Brief discussion of the challenge of enforcement as Cashiering & Permitting is not at the parade checking. Commission would like to recommend that Cashiering & Permitting send a notice out prior to the parade advising vendors not to selling those items. How to prevent this issue in the future has been added to the list for follow-up.
    - iv) Hubert suggests having a volunteer help with connecting some of the new vendors to ensure they are vending appropriate materials at the events.
  - c) Citizen feedback regarding chair placement for guests during the ceremony as it was in front of the podium. Kate explained that the chairs are used for people who can't sit on the granite benches. Kate also noted that a lot of those seated in

those chairs were veterans. Commission wouldn't want them seated behind the podium where the elected officials and guest speaker are as they wouldn't be able to enjoy the ceremony.

- d) Veteran's Resource Center participated for the first time in the parade with a big truck. It was well received.
- e) Rogue participants in the parade procession
  - i) Multiple vehicles showed up that were no registered. Due to these last-minute additions, parade line up was 40% accurate. Line up became very chaotic.
    - (1) This posed a challenge for the announcer. He did the best he could to make sure he was saying them in the right order.
  - ii) Group discussion and clarification regarding this matter. Multiple vehicles who aren't registered participating in the parade is a liability issue.
    - (1) Per Xavier – liability will not cover the vehicles if they're not registered with the parade.
  - iii) Colleen – recommends commission reaching out to those who were rogue, acknowledge their participation but note that this won't be allowed moving forward. Suggestion to give them the proper procedure and advise them they're now on notice.
  - iv) Pat – Noted that many people, who had participated in the past, called David Kaplan asking if there would be a Memorial Day Parade as they had never heard from anyone.
    - (1) Concern that there was no outreach. Kate confirmed that multiple emails went out the groups of past participants, last year's Veterans Day and Memorial Day Parades. In the past, there may have been additional outreach by David via phone to supplement the emails.
  - v) Kate – Noted that a lot of these rogue participants were combative and not very friendly. With minimal commission support at front lines, difficulty managing this and telling them "No."
    - (1) Xavier – Had questions regarding staff support and CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) members on site. Kate advised that CERT did a fantastic job. Issue stemmed from CERT not being in a decision-making position and Kate being the only commission member at the parade.
  - vi) Hubert narrowed it down to two main issues:
    - (1) Communication to past participants.
      - (a) Strategize how to close the gaps in communication that David Kaplan was previously able to secure.
      - (b) In past, David may have made multiple phone calls to participants. This year, Kate didn't have enough time to make as many phone calls as David and primarily relied on people getting back to her via email. Acknowledge that some participants may be not as responsive to that.
    - (2) What commission will do when people try to join the parade without permission.
      - (a) Hubert suggests commission create standard operating procedures (SOP) regarding last minute parade additions.
        - (i) Colleen suggests SOP relate to the parade procession entry point where people get checked so issues go no further than that. Additional suggestion of having staff partnered at this area.
        - (ii) Further discussion that main points of SOP are there, and it needs to be further mapped out by commission.
        - (iii) Additional suggestion of contacting past participants earlier to remind them of the procedure.

- (b) Discussion of how to resolve the issue day of.
  - (i) Suggestion of working with the police officers who are there and have it handled by them.
  - (ii) Ensure there are more commission members present on the day of parade for decision making and troubleshooting.
  - (iii) Get the contact information of these last-minute participants to ensure they are contacted for future parades.
  - (iv) Provide the CERT members and other volunteers working the lineup entry points list of approved participants and emphasize these are the only people allowed on the road. In addition, have CERT and others be more empowered to say “No” to people. If those people give them a hard time, escalate up to commission members.
  - (v) If dealing with rogue participant who doesn’t want to follow the procedures, then members can contact police to have them moved.
- vii) Entry point of parade procession
  - (1) Check-in process is where shutdown of rogue participants should happen.
  - (2) Pair up commission/committee member with CERT.
- viii) Future parades, need additional staffing commission/committee support.
- f) CERT was amazing the entire day and incredibly helpful. Commission is thankful for their assistance.
- g) Ceremony was wonderful and guest speaker (Gregg Barratt, State Captain of CT Patriot Guard Riders) did a great job.
- h) Plane flyover was well-timed as it was when the ceremony was starting. The multiple aerial displays were well received.
- i) Commission thanks Captain Philip Alan Gerard for the wonderful job done at the parade, ceremony, and general contributions.
- j) Ceremony, flyovers, etc. were well received.
- 3) 2023 Veterans Day Parade Planning (Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>, rain date Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>)
  - a) Participants/Jot Form
    - i) David reached out requesting for 2023 Memorial Day participant list to merge with previous participant list (2022 Veterans Day Parade).
      - (1) Kate will follow up with David regarding capacity to manage this as she has limited capacity to assist in this area as she had done with the 2023 Memorial Day parade. Kate is running the Stamford Downtown Parade Spectacular for her company which occurs around the same time as the Veterans Parade this year.
    - ii) Veterans’ contingent at Parade Spectacular in lieu of separate veterans parade.
      - (1) Kate had emailed Xavier the following suggestion: if not enough manpower to support the parade, have the ceremony on original date and a specific veterans contingent for the Parade Spectacular (Nov 19).
        - (a) Inclusion of a veterans contingent in the Parade Spectacular was offered last year. Kate’s concern was not enough committee support leading up to the event and a lot of overlap of participants (i.e. many of the same schools, marching bands, police honor guards, Fairfield County Police Pipes & Drums, radio stations, etc.) with parades only weeks apart.
      - (2) Discussion of the aforementioned suggestion.
        - (a) Xavier provided historical context and related information. The Memorial Day parade/ceremony and Veterans Day parade/ceremony are the main things that the commission complete. Previous conversations have been had about cancelling one of the PSEC parades but those have been met with controversy (i.e. 2018 or 2019).

- (b) Stephen noted that the two holidays (Memorial Day, Veterans Day) are listed in the [City Charter](#) as under the PSEC purview but unsure if the Charter specifies for parades to be held.
  - (i) The Charter doesn't reference parades but instead states "specifically make arrangements for appropriate observance of Memorial Day, Flag Day, Veterans Day, Independence Day and other national holidays and for receptions of distinguished visitors to the City."
  - (ii) Xavier provided context that Independence Day and Flag Day celebrations have typically been done by the Department of Operations. The PSEC does not manage the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks. Group discussion that those events may have historically been under the PSEC but at some point, branched off. Most recent referendum date under PSEC in the Chart is from 1995.
- (c) Pat noted that even with a full commission board of five (5) members, that's not enough people to help plan and execute the events. Recommends commission reach out and ask others for help. Specifically the help needed as opposed to just relying on CERT as there may be a limit to how many people from CERT you'll receive.
  - (i) Kate clarified concern is for help needed for all the work that goes into the planning of the event, minimal concern for help the day of.
- (d) Discussion of spectator attendance at the PSEC sponsored events.
  - (i) Memorial Day Parade may have had a stronger turnout than Veterans Day Parade. Veterans Day ceremony elicits great turnout in the park.
  - (ii) Colleen expressed want for community to come to the parades. Noted that it may be a disservice to the community to have the same participants in both parades (Veterans; Spectacular). As some of these are paid participants (i.e. bagpipe band), there should be no duplicates. Additionally would welcome diversity so it's not the same participants every time.
    - 1. Kate noted that there's difficulty in getting participants to sign up for two parades happening on nearly consecutive weekends.
  - (iii) Brief discussion of a veterans contingent at Parade Spectacular would give the veterans an audience they don't typically have at the Veterans Day Parade.
- (e) Part of proposal includes having floats and giant patriotic helium balloons that could be flown by veterans' groups.
  - (i) Suggestion of an interactive program similar to Touch-A-Truck where community can actively engage with veterans.
  - (ii) Brief discussion of having all the veterans in a block in the Spectacular Parade would have serious impact and would give an incredible visual representation to the community of how many veterans there are in Stamford.
- (f) Hubert brought up potential safety concerns with the combining of the two parades.
- (g) Brief discussion of the potential impact on downtown stores and restaurants if there's only one parade instead of two.
- (h) Stephen will bring up this parade alternative proposal to the Veteran's Council within the next week.
  - (i) Stephen to send draft of email to PSEC for feedback. Responses from council will be due to Stephen by Friday August 18<sup>th</sup>.
- (i) Potential special meeting to review veterans feedback on this matter can

be scheduled for Tuesday August 22<sup>nd</sup> at 2pm

(3) If the issue/concern is volunteer manpower, Hubert suggests getting additional support for the planning if Veterans Day Parade is held on traditional schedule.

b) Marketing

i) Item on hold until determination made about merging the parades.

c) Ceremony

i) Discussion of the importance of the Veterans Day ceremony

(a) Proposal of merged parades does not apply to the ceremony. The Veterans Day ceremony would remain the same, an event dedicated to honoring and recognizing veterans.

(b) Suggestion that if parades are combined, that the ceremony be changed to occur on Saturday November 11<sup>th</sup>, which is Veterans Day, instead of the original Sunday November 5<sup>th</sup>.

(i) Minimal potential for issues with this proposed date change as the PSEC hasn't started marketing the November 5<sup>th</sup> date.

4) Reminder: any questions can be sent to [StamfordPSEC@StamfordCT.gov](mailto:StamfordPSEC@StamfordCT.gov)

5) General discussion (non-agenda items)

a) Hubert thanks Lieutenant Joseph Colavito for his service to the commission and all the hard works he's put in. The commission wishes him continued success and thanks him for the work he's currently doing for his unit.

i) Per Winni, Joe's resignation was sent to the Director of Operations and the Mayor's Office. The commission positions are appointed by the Mayor's office. The Mayor's Office have been informed of the resignation and will work through their processes to fill the vacancy.

ii) Information about PSEC appointments and related matters can be found in the City of Stamford Charter:

[https://library.municode.com/ct/stamford/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=CH\\_PT6BOCO\\_DIV4OTBOCO\\_SDKPASPEVCO](https://library.municode.com/ct/stamford/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CH_PT6BOCO_DIV4OTBOCO_SDKPASPEVCO)

(1) Brief review of what the Charter states about the PSEC

iii) Per the charter, PSEC is a commission. Commissions must have quorum to proceed with their meetings. As noted by Kate, there was difficulty achieving quorum in many of the meetings leading up to Memorial Day. As such, the Director of Operations designated a Patriotic & Special Events Planning Group to facilitate the preparation work needed for the Memorial Day Parade. It was an emergency designation due to the time sensitivity of the parade.

b) Stamford Veteran's Resource Center now has a phone number, 203-274-7713; information about the center can be found on the City website:

<https://www.stamfordct.gov/residents/veterans>

c) Kieran shared the following:

i) Acknowledged the passing of a veteran (George Ducanic) on 7/15/2023 who was very involved with Toys for Tots for over thirty years.

ii) Sunday August 13<sup>th</sup> American Legion is hosting a barbecue event in Darien, free for members, \$25 for non-members.

iii) Wednesday May 31<sup>st</sup>, he, Alan Gerard, and two other gentlemen picked up over 100 flags from graveyard. In recognition of his work that day and continued service to veterans, Kieran received blue coin from Alan Gerard

Meeting adjourned at 2:59 PM

Next regular meeting: September 6, 2023 at 2:00 PM