

ACTON 250TH COMMITTEE

History Subcommittee

October 24, 2025 meeting

MINUTES

Attending: Bob Ferrara, Anne Forbes, Pamela Lynn. Absent: Mary Price Maddox.

Also attending: Steve Trimble (11:25); Desiree Demski-Hamelin (12:00 via ZOOM)

The meeting was called to order by Chair Pamela Lynn at 10:10 a.m. in the Acton Memorial Library.

Approval of past minutes

The minutes of the October 10 subcommittee meeting (second draft) were unanimously accepted as written.

Progress on establishing an Acton Historical Alliance. The AHA planning meeting of Sept. 30, which was attended by Bob, Anne, and Pam, was briefly reviewed. The current focus is on applying for funds (probably from the CPA) to establish and manage an AHA website.

Review this moment in the *Beyond the Bridge* countdown (late 1775-1776).

Pam pointed out that there is presently a lack of information on the situation around Boston in late 1775, and no book has been published on this period. The Concord Museum has just opened a new exhibit that is relevant to these months, however.

Progress on planning upcoming speakers and programs.

Alex Cain has agreed to speak in January, and J.L. Bell is confirmed for February 26. Pam has spoken to Emily Sneff, who has studied the dissemination of information during this period. She is due to be in Boston in late June, and Pam proposed asking her to give a talk in late June (probably 6/25). Jim Hollister of Minuteman National Historical Park has also been suggested as a possible speaker.

Bill Fowler is confirmed for a talk to focus on the Siege of Boston and the origin of the US Navy on November 10. He joined the meeting for a brief phone call.

Continuing walking tours after the 250th Committee winds down was also briefly discussed. Steve said the committee would like to continue the series of Amy Cole's Acton walks, and he is exploring whether the Recreation Dept. or Community Ed. could take charge of it. He also plans to discuss it with the Economic Development Department. Since the 250th budget will come to an end, Pam suggested soliciting potential sponsors for the walks, at least as supplementary support.

We have been approached by Acton resident Ted Clark, who gives Boston tours, about organizing a tour there. Steve may contact him about arranging one through the Recreation Department.

More "Beyond the Bridge" planning: parties, open houses, etc.

The local historical museums (through the Acton Historical Society and the Iron Work Farm) plan to continue holding open houses and programs, and will coordinate with the Acton Minutemen, AHA, and Acton 250th where appropriate.

A date for a party at Dirigible Brewery during the week of April 19th has not yet been finalized. In discussion about the proposed early July party at the Discovery Museum-- we will try to work out our communications with them over the next several months. The most logical date for that appears to be July 1. He proposes that the food be from Market Basket this time.

Related upcoming events and opportunities.

The six-part Ken Burns special on The American Revolution begins on Nov. 16, and it was agreed that we should highlight it in our 250th publicity. The series will have a companion book, which will be the upcoming focus of the library's book group. It was also suggested that we follow the "Emerging Revolution" podcast.

Freedom's Way's "Declaring Independence Then & Now".

Desiree Demski-Hamlin of Freedom's Way National Heritage Area joined the meeting via ZOOM at 12 p.m. She explained this ongoing program, based on an older one developed in 2016-17 by Mary Fuhrer, that has been working with local communities to stage interactive performances about how residents in Mass. and New Hampshire debated the idea of declaring independence from Great Britain in 1776. The scripts, largely written by Freedom's Way, are based on documents from the individual communities. The second part of the performance includes a narrator and an annotated reading of the Declaration. The narrator and 5-6 performers are usually drawn from the local community, although Freedom's Way can provide some actors and speakers as well. Nearby towns that have taken part so far include Boxborough, Concord, and Westford.

Members of both the subcommittee and 250th committee expressed interest in having Acton take part, and all agreed that the 250th committee should take charge of the local effort. Some ideas discussed included involving Acton TV, utilizing Acton artifacts and documents, and involving the Acton Minute Men and local historical organizations. Mary Price Maddox was suggested as narrator, as was inviting Georgia Barry and her horse, who have been part of numerous historic reenactments. Steve suggested the Acton Congregational Church as a venue, and proposed staging the event on June 14. He will communicate with the church and the Minute Men; Anne will speak to Georgia. Freedom's Way will hold a workshop for the local organizers in March.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Forbes, Clerk

NEXT MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Next subcommittee meeting: Nov. 7: 10 a.m.

Other 2025 meetings and events: Oct. 25, 1 p.m.: South Acton Walking Tour
Oct. 27, 7 p.m.: Acton 250 Committee meeting
Oct. 30, 11 a.m.: Acton Historical Alliance meeting
Nov. 10: William Fowler talk

2026 events (some dates are tentative):

Jan. 28: Alex Cain talk
Feb. 26: J.L. Bell talk
June 25 (tentative): Emily Sneff talk
June 14: "Declaring Independence" (with Freedom's Way)
July 1: Discovery Museum 250th party