

**Summary Report  
to the North Kingstown Rhode Island Town Council:  
January 27, 2024,  
on the Activities Associated with the  
Celebration of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
of the Founding of North Kingstown**

**Prepared by the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee**

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**Summary Report**  
**to the North Kingstown Rhode Island Town Council:**  
**January 27, 2024, on the Activities Associated with the**  
**Celebration of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of North Kingstown**

In this report we cover the full range of the planning, programming, development, and execution of all the activities during the 2024 calendar year associated with the celebration of the founding of North Kingstown in 1674 and our history since that time.

The committee in charge of all these activities included thirteen members, representing a cross section of municipal employees and private citizens, met every two weeks from September 2023 through December 2024.

Over the course of 2024 the celebrations included three signature events, the Gala, Family Day and a Parade along with other events including a kick-off presentation, a speaker series, Founders Day, the selection of North Kingstown as Rhode Island's World War II Heritage Community, a legacy tree program and a History Hunt.

The Gala on April 25<sup>th</sup> featured a semi-formal dinner/dance held at the Quonset 'O' Club where the 350 attendees enjoyed an evening of fine dining and dancing to the music of the Take It To the Bridge Band.

Over 3000 members of the community, little kids through senior citizens, participated in Family Day held a Wilson Park on Saturday, September 14<sup>th</sup> an event that featured numerous rides, games and crafts for young and old alike, a full band, the Rhode Island National Guard arriving with a helicopter and other military equipment, exhibits set up by local churches and other organizations, multiple food trucks offering all kinds of meals and refreshments, a petting zoo, a cotton candy station and other types of amusement for all.

On Saturday October 5<sup>th</sup>, replicating a highlight of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in 1974, we held a parade from the North Kingstown High School to Wilson Park, a parade that featured multiple marching bands, parade floats, civic and school groups, federal, state and local elected officials, police and fire departments from across the state, and over 40 fire trucks from across the region helping us celebrate our town.

More details on these three events and the other celebration events are found later in this report. Participation at all the events apart from the Gala Dinner Dance was at no cost to attendees.

Initial funding for the Celebration programs came in the form of a \$ 50,000 appropriation from the North Kingstown Town Council. The committee engaged in extensive fundraising efforts which raised well over \$ 70,000 in donations from businesses and individuals. These contributions are acknowledged in the full report. Fundraising was so successful that we are able to return \$ 30,000 to the town of North Kingstown for use in other programs in the future.

The committee would like to particularly recognize the work of a number of individuals who were most involved in the success of our programs.

Matt McCoy: Committee Chairperson in charge of the overall success of the program.

Kate Glass; Executive Assistant to the Town Manager who coordinated all the efforts that led to a wildly popular parade.

Haley Wicker: Personnel Manager for the Town of North Kingstown who led the planning and execution of Family Day enjoyed by so many in the community.

Jeannette Aylward: North Kingstown's Town Clerk who with Kate and Haley and others, planned the Gala which will be a great memory for so many in coming years.

Randy Wietman: Vice chairperson of the Committee who led the drive for the National Park Service's recognition of North Kingstown as Rhode Island's World War II Heritage Community.

Tim Cranston: Organizer of the Speaker Series which gave so many a better understanding of the history of our town from the time of the Narragansett through to the 21st century.

We would also like to thank other North Kingstown public officials for their assistance at the various organized events including Town Manager Ralph Mollis, Fire Chief Scott Kettelle and the North Kingstown Fire Department personnel, Police Chief John Urban and the North Kingstown Police Department Personnel and Public Works Director Adam White and the Public Works Department Personnel.

Historic Wickford Inc., a local community organization that raises funds and organizes programs that educate and celebrate the history of the community, helped with fundraising and publicity.

In **1974** North Kingstown celebrated our **300<sup>th</sup>** anniversary with a gala, a parade and other activities that created great memories for many in the town, memories that were shared with this year's committee as examples of how to properly recognize and enjoy our history. It is the hope of this year's committee that the programs we developed over the last 16 months created similar happy memories that will be expressed at the **400<sup>th</sup>** anniversary celebration to be held in 2074.

## **Origins**

North Kingstown is arguably the best place to live in Rhode Island, something recognized by the residents whose families have been here for generations through those who moved to town recently, drawn by the quality of the schools, friendly neighbors and delightful places to visit from Wickford to Rome Point to the Seabee Museum and many places in between.

The roots of North Kingstown extend back in time to 1637, when Roger Williams, recently banished from the nearby Massachusetts Bay Colony, established a temporary trading post at

the intersection of two major Native American thoroughfares, the Pequot Path (now Post Road) and the major east-west route of Narragansett People between their winter and summer villages (now Stony Lane); this seasonal trading outpost was additionally adjacent to the home of his friend Narragansett Chief Sachem Canonicus.

Williams was followed by two additional seasonal traders, Richard Smith and Edward Wilcox in 1639. Wilcox left the area after a time and relocated to the region that was to become Westerly, but Smith in 1641 and Williams in 1643 decided to make the “Narragansett Country,” as it was then known, their permanent home. Roger Williams, for his part, stayed here at Cocomscussooc for nearly eight years, farming, raising goats on Queen’s Island, and trading with the Narragansett People for fur and wampum.

Much of Williams’s groundbreaking writings, including *Experiments of Spiritual Life and Health* were written here. In 1651, Roger Williams, needing funds for a trip to England to secure the Rhode Island and Providence Plantations Colony’s Charter, sold his land to Smith and never again lived here on a permanent basis. Richard Smith on the other hand was here to stay and increased his land holdings greatly through his involvement in the 1658 Pettasquamscutt Purchase. Smith’s vast estate eventually included all the lands in an area approximately nine miles long by three miles wide.

### **Kings Towne**

In 1674, Kings Towne was founded by the colonial government. This region contained much of the old “Narragansett Country” and included the present-day towns of North Kingstown, South Kingstown, Exeter, and Narragansett. It got off to a rocky start though, as by virtue of its strategic location in the region and Richard Smith’s growing allegiance with the Connecticut Colony, it became the center of the whirling maelstrom that was the King Phillips War, a conflict between the Narragansett and Wampanoag People and the inhabitants of the Connecticut, Plymouth, and Massachusetts Bay Colonies, fought in 1675-6. More than 30 years of peaceful co-existence between the settlers of the region and the Narragansett people were over in the flash of muskets and the corresponding destruction of all colonial structures south of Warwick.

### **Expansion**

When the smoke settled, Kings Towne was now in the sole possession of the English and European settlers and colonial expansion began, primarily adjacent to Cocomscussooc, in the Quidnessett region, and at Bissell’s Cove (Hamilton) and Davis Mills (Davisville). By the start of the 18th century, settlement in all areas of Kings Towne was increasing at such a dramatic pace that the colonial government divided it up into North and South in 1722, with the understanding that North Kingstown, which included all the areas of earliest settlement, was to be the 1674 town. North Kingstown was later partitioned again in 1742, when Exeter was formed out of its western regions.

## **The 350th Anniversary Celebration of the Founding of North Kingstown**

### **The Major Events of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**

From the initiation of planning for the celebration, the committee decided to focus on creating three major townwide events and many smaller events that would add to the importance of local knowledge of our history and heritage.

The memories of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, held in 1974, remained strong in many residents' minds including a semi-formal Gala event attended by several hundred residents, a parade that included the famous Mummers Marching Band and the Budweiser Clydesdale horses, and other programs, all concentrated in a one week period that summer.

From the beginning, Matt McCoy's vision was to make the celebration a full year event, not just a one-week event, creating several large-scale programs that would bring the community together, residents of all ages to simply 'have fun', inclusive programs where all would be welcome. A major goal for these programs was that all events would be free to the public, no admission charges or other fees to participate. No barriers to being part of the event.

We decided to focus on three major events, the Gala, a semi-formal dinner dance, A Family Day program and a townwide Parade as highlights of the celebration year.

#### **Fundraising**

To make this happen, from the onset of planning in the fall of 2023, fundraising was a primary focus. The town of North Kingstown provided \$ 50,000 to the committee to start the programs with all other funds to be raised in other manners, through donations or sales of merchandise.

In the first months of committee operations, Missy Devine, Tuni Schartner, Haley Wicker, and John Gibbons started to reach out to local businesses asking them to become sponsors of our programs. Michelle Girasole and others solicited grants from local philanthropic groups and by the time our events started, Centreville Bank and Revolution Wind signed on as our largest sponsors with gifts of \$ 10,000 each. (A full list of our sponsors will be found later in this report).

Those in charge of the 300<sup>th</sup> celebration raised funds selling coins commemorating the event and these were proud keepsakes for many in the community. Our committee decided to produce 350 individually numbered coins to be sold at \$ 53.50 each and another 1,000 unnumbered coins to be offered at \$ 23.50 each. The coins featured the North Kingstown logo on one side and the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary logo on the reverse. Those in charge of the 300<sup>th</sup> celebration printed a souvenir brochure on their programs. Our committee, working with The

Independent Newspapers arranged to print a booklet with a history of North Kingstown produced by Tim Cranston and a description of all the programs scheduled for the year that would be distributed with all copies of the newspaper early in the year to help with advertising and awareness of the scope of our activities. Several hundred additional copies would also be made available to the Committee to sell to the public at \$ 5.00 apiece to aid in fundraising.

### **The Gala**

The Gala was held at the Quonset 'O' Club on Thursday, April 25th, Jeannette and Haley and Kate led the organizing of the event, including the choice of the 'O' Club as the site, the menu, the flowers, the band, seating plans, the hours the event would run, and all the smaller details to ensure success. The goal was to create something exceptional with folks dressed elegantly for the occasion.

The 'O' Club was chosen to be the site for the Gala in part to help keep the price of each ticket affordable so that more residents could attend the event, particularly seniors. Tickets were sold for \$ 75 apiece, and the turnout for the event was above expectations. We anticipated selling perhaps 250 tickets and, in the end, it was a sellout with 350 tickets sold. Missy Devine and Tuni Schartner helped with the raffle for the numbered '1' 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary coin and in obtaining donated prizes for a silent auction to help pay for the event which included gift certificates from Cardi's Furniture, the Kayak Center, the Rhode Island Film Commission and other businesses in the community. Between ticket sales, fundraising and raffles, the event paid for itself, leaving the other monies we were raising to help cover the expenses of our other programs.

Town Manager Ralph Mollis was the emcee for the Gala and Town Council President Greg Mancini gave welcoming remarks prior to the dinner being served. The principal celebration sponsors, Revolution Wind and Centreville Bank were cited for their financial contributions to our programs. The band 'Take It To The Bridge' a ten-piece band with a full horn section, kept people on their feet for several hours after dinner ended and attendees declared the Gala a wonderful event and asked if the Gala could be continued as an annual event, an idea exhausted event organizers were happy to hear, but unsure if the fundraising and the volunteer effort could be sustained for the long run.

### **Family Day**

Haley Wicker was the principal organizer for Family Day, relying on help from Kate and Jeannette and many other volunteers from the committee and across North Kingstown.

Haley's inspiration for Family Day came from seeing the efforts of other communities that held annual events for their residents. There were three signature events scheduled for our celebration, and we wanted to hold something that would be of interest to a diverse group. The

Gala we knew would draw older residents, the Family Day was geared for all ages, a fun day for kids to get outside and run around at Wilson Park, off their electronic gadgets, having fun.

We wanted to make the event completely free. Times are tough for many families. If you go out for dinner you will likely spend at least \$ 100. For Family Day, families could pack a lunch and enjoy a full day of family-oriented activities with no financial burden as all activities were free to the public.

In organizing the program Haley mentioned the work of Beth Wilkins, NK's payroll and benefits coordinator and David Creta, NK's Field Maintenance Supervisor in coordinating all the efforts. The Recreation Dept. helped in laying out the setup and blocking off the parking lots ahead of time. The Public Works Department coordinated the parking as well as putting up all the chairs and tables and at the end of the day all the necessary park clean-up. Fire Chief Scott Kettelle was also active in all these areas.

Family Day programs were extensive and varied. The day started with the arrival of a Blackhawk helicopter from Quonset, which set down in the eastern field in Wilson Park and kids and adults could swarm all over the helicopter and other military vehicles with Air National Guardsmen and women there to share their experiences with these advanced types of equipment.

There was a foam party, face painting, amusement rides, a petting zoo, folks dressed up like Spiderman and other action heroes, inflatable slides. Prizes were provided for an array of carnival games. The principal financial sponsors were Centreville Bank and Revolution Wind, which covered the cost of the Merry-Go-Round. Ten food trucks were stationed along the road on the north end of Wilson Park to provide food, ice cream, Del's Lemonade and other treats. A local band 'What Matters' set up in the middle of the soccer field to provide music through the afternoon.

More than three thousand people attended the Family Day and forty-five volunteers from the community helped in all the areas, ensuring fun and safety for all who came.

Community groups, including churches, Historic Wickford, Smith's Castle, the North Kingstown Education Fund, the VFW, Arts Council, National Guard, Sea Cadets, the North Kingstown Free Library, event sponsors Centreville Bank, Revolution Wind, TANK and Harbor Lights also participated with tents set up along the path that surrounds the field, sharing their programs that benefit North Kingstown.

The total cost of the program was \$ 37,291. To cover the costs the town allocated \$ 35,000 and we received a state legislative grant from Representative Robert Craven for \$7500. Monies left over were used for other programs associated with the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

The event was such an enormous success that many wondered how they were not aware of Family Day in previous years, not realizing that this was part of our anniversary celebration. The success of the event also generated hopes that Family Day could be held every year.

### **The Parade**

North Kingstown's Executive Assistant Kate Glass was the person most involved in coordinating all the details for the parade that celebrated the founding of North Kingstown.

From the start the committee knew that creating a good parade was a must. The parade held for the North Kingstown 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary was a really big hit. Current NK residents include many, who as children, took part in that parade, often dressed in colonial era costumes and that parade featured the nationally known Budweiser Clydesdale horses and the Mummers String Band, a memorable event in their memories.

Our committee's vision was to make the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parade more impactful than the annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day parades that are held in North Kingstown. The goal was for statewide and even regional participation in the bands and marching groups. We also wanted to keep it commercial free as much as possible, open to all ages in the community. There would be no food trucks, vendor booths or political signs in the marching groups or on vehicles.

Kate spoke to the number of local volunteers who helped with the parade organization. Fire Chief Scott Kettelle relied on his professional contacts to bring in antique fire trucks from as far away as Delaware and Maine. Committee chairperson Matt McCoy helped generate local support and enthusiasm for the parade and North Kingstown School Superintendent Ken Duva and Assistant School Superintendent Robert Mezzanotte mustered participation from the high school and middle school marching bands and marching groups and floats from all schools with a big recognition of the Davisville Middle School students for their Dragon float, a highlight of the parade.

Coordinating the event took many phone calls, residents would give Kate suggestions as to what groups, bands etc. would be good to have in the parade.

The range of organizations in the parade was impressive. Over 40 antique fire trucks from all over the Northeast. Musical groups were a hit including the NKHS Marching Band, the combined Davisville/Wickford Middle School Marching Band, the Mystic Pipe and Drums, the Newport Hibernians, the Rhode Island Hibernian pipe band, the Monroe Dairy Milkmen band, the Catnip Junkies and the Kentish Guard.

Eight hundred and 25 individuals representing 97 organizations were in the parade including the North Kingstown Police, Fire and Public Works Departments. The Recreation Department led by Director Chelsea Dumas built a float for the parade. The Town Council, the School Committee, Town Manager Ralph Mollis and Town Clerk Jeannette Aylward marched. U.S. Representative Seth Magaziner, State Treasurer James Diossa, State Senators Brigid Valverde and Alana DiMario, and State Representatives Bob Craven and Julie Casimiro also joined the line of march.

The two Grand Marshalls for the parade, 99-year-old WWII veteran George Silva and Dorothy Medusky, Korean War era veteran drew cheers as they were chauffeured along the route in classic convertibles.

The total cost of the Parade was \$ 26,000 including all operations, the reviewing stand, photographers and sashes for the Grand Marshals. \$ 17,000 of the total went to bring the various bands to take part in the parade. As the budget for the parade was \$ 35,000, the monies left over were later made available to help pay for the Speaker Series and other events.

Like the reaction to the other 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events, many in the crowd said it would be great if we could have a parade like this every year. Parade organizer Kate Glass agreed that it would be a lot of fun, but also a lot of work, particularly in fundraising for the bands and other operating costs. She was thankful for the help from Public Works Department employees Joe Paquette, Mike Botelho and Kyle Wicker as well as the numerous North Kingstown High School volunteers who served in organizing the line of march and as parade marshals.

## **Programs that Ran Through the Year**

While the Gala, Family Day and the Parade were the signature events for the year, the committee also proposed and developed many other programs, spread throughout the community, to help celebrate our 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary and our rich history.

### **The Speaker Series**

Early in the planning process, Town Historian Tim Cranston proposed holding a series of speaker events that would be held throughout the town of North Kingstown to highlight the history of our town from the time of the Indigenous people, the Narragansett, through to the current era. The speaker series was designed to cover all periods of our history including times and topics that should not be ignored including moving the Narragansett off their lands and our connection to the slave trade through the production of Negro cloth in North Kingstown mills during the early years of the Industrial Revolution.

Over the course of 2024, the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary committee organized 25 such events which were held in the newly renovated Boston Neck Road Town Hall Town Council Chambers, the Saunderstown Yacht Club, Casey Farm, Gilbert Stuart Museum and Birthplace, Elm Grove Cemetery, and throughout the eight villages of North Kingstown through walking tours guided and directed by Tim.

The series started in the Town Council chambers on January 29th with Loren Spears, Narragansett member and Director of the Tomaquaq Museum discussing 'The Narragansett People and the relationships and people involved in the early days of North Kingstown', followed 12 days later by Tim, again in the Town Council chambers speaking on 'Setting the Record Straight: The story behind North Kingstown's connections to slavery and interactions with the Narragansetts'. The full list of programs held throughout the year can be found below.

Date	Speaker	Topic	Presenting Sponsor
29 Jan.	Lorén M. Spears	The Narragansett People and the relationships and people involved in the early days of North Kingstown.	350th Anniversary Steering Committee
8 Feb.	Tim Cranston	Setting the Record Straight: The story behind North Kingstown's connections to Slavery and interactions with the Narragansett.	<a href="#">Friends of the North Kingstown Library Association</a>
29 Feb.	John Dower	Broke The Ice: Richard Smith's Blockhouse and the Origins of North Kingstown	350th Anniversary Steering Committee
14 Mar.	Tim Cranston	The Story of Quidnessett: Villages of North Kingstown	<a href="#">Friends of the North Kingstown Library Association</a>
11 Apr.	Donna Desautels, Jim Garman & Tim Cranston	The Story of Slocum: Villages of North Kingstown	350th Anniversary Steering Committee
18 Apr.	Christian McBurney	North Kingstown and the Revolutionary War	<a href="#">Battle of Rhode Island Association</a>

Date	Speaker	Topic	Presenting Sponsor
16 May	George Loxton	Davisville: Villages of North Kingstown	350th Anniversary Steering Committee
25 May	Tim Cranston	Wickford History from the Water	Kayak Centre
5 June	John Edwards, Whit Hill	Saunderstown: Villages of North Kingstown	350th Steering Committee
15 June	Rhode Island Black Storytellers	Casey Farm Juneteenth & Open Farm Day	<a href="#">Historic New England</a>
22 June	Gilbert Stuart Birthplace Staff	The Birthplace of Gilbert Stuart & the North Kingstown Community	<a href="#">Gilbert Stuart Museum &amp; Birthplace</a>
20 July	Tim Cranston	Places of North Kingstown: Ryan Park	<a href="#">Friends of the North Kingstown Library Association</a>
27 July	Tim Cranston	Lafayette: Villages of North Kingstown	Bakeford The Hive
17 Aug.	Tim Cranston	Black History Walking Tour	<a href="#">HistWick</a>
24 Aug.	Tim Cranston	Women's History Walking Tour	<a href="#">HistWick</a>
29 Aug.	Dr. Charles Yurgalevitch	Planting trees today for a greener tomorrow.	350th Anniversary Steering Committee
12 Sept.	Erik Thorkilsen and Richard Trethewey	Wickford Village with This Old House	<a href="#">HistWick</a>

Date	Speaker	Topic	Presenting Sponsor
28 Sept.	Tim Cranston	What's so Special About Wickford?: A Walking Tour	<a href="#">Friends of the North Kingstown Library Association</a>
10 Oct.	Tim Cranston	Allenton: Villages of North Kingstown	<a href="#">Friends of the North Kingstown Library Association</a>
21 Oct.	Brian Wallin	Riding the Rails to Wickford	350th Anniversary Steering Committee
26 Oct.	Tim Cranston	North Kingstown Notables in Elm Grove: A Walking Tour	<a href="#">HistWick</a>
13 Nov.	Christian McBurney	Seabees: Create Pontoons at Davisville Play a Key Role in the D-Day Landings	350th Anniversary Steering Committee
20 Nov.	Jack Sprengel & Dan Urish	Quonset/Davisville: Villages of North Kingstown	350th Anniversary Steering Committee
5 Dec.	Tim Cranston	Hamilton: Villages of North Kingstown	350th Anniversary Steering Committee
12 Dec.	Susan Aylward	The Story of North Kingstown's Libraries	350th Anniversary Steering Committee

The committee was grateful to Historic Wickford Inc. (HistWick), the Friends of the North Kingstown Library, The Battle of Rhode Island Association, the Kayak Centre, Historic New England, The Gilbert Stuart Museum & Birthplace, and Bakesford/The Hive, for providing the financial sponsorship for the programs. All the programs were very well attended. At the onset of the series the programs were scheduled for the multi-purpose room at the North Kingstown Free Library but were quickly moved to the much larger Town Council chamber at the former Town Hall to meet the needs for audiences that were larger than expected.

The success of the anniversary celebration speaker program has encouraged HistWick to plan a continuation of the speaker series into 2025.

All the twenty-five programs were recorded through the efforts of NK Town IT Systems Administrator Mike Taylor and by videographer and North Kingstown High School student Jackson Beck of Hybrid Media. All videos were then made available on the North Kingstown town YouTube channel for later view.

<https://www.youtube.com/@NorthKingstown350th/videos>

A primary focus of the entire speaker program was to explore the history of all eight villages in North Kingstown, from the earliest Narragansett villages, our agrarian roots of early settlement, ship building and as a port in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the development of textile and other mills in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into North Kingstown's role in our nation's defense in World War II at Quonset and Davisville.

### **The Kickoff Event to Celebrate North Kingstown's 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**

Following several months of planning by an energetic group of town employees and local volunteers, the kick-off event for the year-long celebration of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of North Kingstown occurred at 10 am on Saturday, the 6<sup>th</sup> of January in front of the 1876 Town Office building on Boston Neck Road.

The morning dawned clear but cold, at 8 am the temperature hovered around 18 degrees and would only rise to 28 degrees by 10 but a happy and gregarious crowd of almost 100 citizens gathered to initiate but the first of many events planned throughout 2024 to educate the community about our heritage from the time of the Narragansett to the current day, celebrating triumphs and challenges along the way.

Members of the North Kingstown Fire Department led by Chief Scott Kettelle were there early using one of their ladder trucks to string banners declaring the anniversary across the façade of the recently renovated historic building.

Right at 10 the program began with the Presentation of the Colors by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War followed by the Invocation, given by the Right Reverend W. Nicholas Knisely, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island and North Kingstown resident.

Matt McCoy, Town Council Member and Chairperson of the Anniversary Committee, served as Master of Ceremonies, welcoming the crowd to the event and introducing the various state and local dignitaries who gathered with us that morning to honor North Kingstown. Matt thanked all who participated in planning the morning's activities including the North Kingstown Police

Department, the Fire Department and the Public Works Department along with the members of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, noting that a whole year's array of activities are planned to bring the entire community together throughout the year.

The first featured speaker was Town Manager Ralph Mollis. Mr. Mollis recounted the history of North Kingstown starting with and recognizing the importance of the Narragansett people, the first people in our area, continuing into the colonial period and the first development of Wickford as the center of North Kingstown. He then followed with descriptions of how the town fared during and after the American Revolution, through several different eras of economic and social prosperity, all leading up to North Kingstown's crucial position in the affairs of the Second World War with the development of the Quonset Naval Base. Mr. Mollis's remarks were very well received by the audience.

The list of other speakers was extensive and included our senior U.S. Senator Jack Reed, our new U.S. Representative Seth Magaziner from the Rhode Island Second District, U.S. Representative Gabe Amo from the Rhode Island First District, and Rhode Island Secretary of State Gregg Amore. Given that our event was held in South County, several of the out-of-area speakers suggested that they had to have their passports stamped when they crossed the East Greenwich line. State Treasurer James Diessa also attended as part of the government delegation.

Town Council President Greg Mancini was the last featured speaker for the event recapping for all, the importance of celebrating our history as we prepare for an even more glorious future for the community.

As the program ended, Town Manager Ralph Mollis shared with the crowd a list of the events to be held throughout the year, including a speaker series focusing on all eight North Kingstown villages and the people and milestones of our community. Other programs will include a 350<sup>th</sup> gala event at the Quonset 'O' Club, a Family Day event in Wilson Park, and an anniversary Parade, all leading up to honoring Founders Day in early November.

Father David Gaffney, Pastor of St. Bernard's Catholic Church gave the Benediction closing the program.

Following the ceremony guests shared a special 350<sup>th</sup> celebration coffee and cookies from local businesses NOKO Coffee and Kristen's Kreations.

A small aside: During the event, many in the crowd noticed that a hawk flew in and perched on the peak of the Town Hall building. In many cultures hawks stand for clear sightedness, being observant, our far memory and guardianship. A good omen for the future of our beloved community.

## **The World War II Heritage Community Award**

A true highlight of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration was North Kingstown receiving the award as Rhode Island's World War II Heritage Community, an award given to only one community in each state in recognition of North Kingstown's contribution to the success of the U.S. effort to win the war.

In the spring of 2024 chairperson Matt McCoy, realizing that no Rhode Island community had yet been chosen, asked vice chair Randy Wietman to spearhead our application to the National Park Service to approve North Kingstown for the honor. Throughout the spring, Randy worked with Matt and Kate Glass and others on the committee to show why our town was so important to the war effort at a national level, citing how ship building, air training and coordination of shipping to the different war theaters from Davisville and Quonset were instrumental in the success of the military effort.

Randy worked with Emily Kambic of the National Park Service to ensure that our application was thorough and representative of our contributions, submitting the application in May. In September we were notified by the National Park Service that our application was successful.

Matt McCoy and Kate Glass then started to organize how the community could come together during this anniversary year to recognize the honor. The committee decided to hold a ceremony on December 7<sup>th</sup> at the Chapel in the Pines at the Seabee Museum at the entrance to the Quonset Industrial Park, a ceremony that would include a memorial to the lives lost in Pearl Harbor on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941.

At the program, curated by Matt and Kate and aided by the Seabee Museum Director Jack Sprengel, over 150 residents and visitors gathered. Speakers included RADM Darryl Walker, the President of the Naval War College, Rhode Island Director of Veteran Affairs Navy Lieutenant Commander Kasim Yarn, , North Kingstown's Town Historian Tim Cranston and Emily Kambic from the National Park Service. North Kingstown's Town Manager Ralph Mollis also gave remarks on how special this honor is for the entire town.

North Kingstown's VFW Post 152 served as the Color Guard for the event and the local chapter of the Sea Cadets presented the flags. At the end of the program special recognition was given to longtime North Kingstown resident George Silva, 99 years of age, one of our few remaining veterans of the Second World War. George was also cited as the Grand Marshal of the 350<sup>th</sup> celebration parade.

**Founders Day – Speakers, Premiere of the Video, Student winners of the essay contest,**

On Saturday October 26<sup>th</sup> North Kingstown celebrated Founders Day, to commemorate the official date of the founding of North Kingstown on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1674, when the Rhode Island General Assembly incorporated the town of KingsTowne, which today includes North Kingstown, South Kingstown, Narragansett, and Exeter. The event started at 10 am with the Presentation of the Colors by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Heavy Artillery, Sons of Veterans Reserve, also known as the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War followed by our National Anthem.

The event continued with an invocation from Reverend Evan Howard of the First Baptist Church of North Kingstown and then Welcome Remarks by Town Manager Ralph Mollis who thanked the participants and attendees and spoke to the history of North Kingstown in context to Founders Day.

As part of the 350<sup>th</sup> celebration the committee wanted to encourage local students to learn about the history of North Kingstown and our nation. Matt McCoy suggested an essay contest for high school and junior high school students on the topics of "My vision for the future of North Kingstown" and "What North Kingstown means to me" with a \$ 1000 scholarship award to one high school and one middle school student from North Kingstown.

At the Founders Day program, the winners of the essay contest, Annaliese Cooney from Davisville Middle School and Suhani Srivastava from North Kingstown High School were announced as the essay contest winners and each read their essay to the audience and then received their scholarship check, to loud applause from the gathering.

Matt then made brief remarks on behalf of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee recognizing Historic Wickford's contributions to ensure a successful and memorable year-long 350th Anniversary and presented Historic Wickford's president Randy Wietman with one of our celebration coins in thanks for HistWick's support.

In early 2024, Reverend Even Howard and his colleague Peter Vogt asked the committee if they could produce a celebration video of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and we responded warmly to this invitation. Over the next month's Evan and Peter spent many hours attending and filming the various event programs, using drones to show the community from the air and even sailing along the shoreline to show the community from the water view.

Founders Day was chosen to premiere the film, scored with original music written and performed by Reverend Howard. The audience was thrilled to see such beautiful images of all the areas of North Kingstown, from Saunderstown to Slocum and up to Davisville and Quidnessett, a video that will be used to promote the beauty and history of our town today and in future years. Thank you, Evan and Peter.

The event concluded as participants headed outside to Reynolds Avenue which adjoins the Boston Neck Road Town Hall for the dedication of the Legacy Tree Program's planting of a Linden Tree for the village of Wickford, one of eight Linden trees planted, one in each village in North Kingstown, as a gift to future generations of North Kingstown residents from the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary committee. At the dedication Mike Donohue presented a certificate of appreciation and an anniversary coin to North Kingstown Tree Warden Peter Morgan in recognition of his efforts in the tree planting program. North Kingstown Public Works employee Brynn McNamee who was also instrumental in the program was unable to attend the event and was presented his certificate and coin later.

### **History Hunt**

In early 2024, North Kingstown resident Michelle Girasole made a presentation to the committee on the possibility of creating a 'History Hunt', a self-guided tour of historic sites in North Kingstown, using cell phone video technology to accompany the scholarship and narration from Town Historian Tim Cranston. The tour would include visits to over 20 sites across all eight villages of North Kingstown and likely include places many residents had never seen before or knew existed in our community. Michelle's company Fresh Maps previously worked on similar projects, including at Smith's Castle, to present our history in a new format, in some ways a trivia contest that would perk folks' interest in the range of sites to visit and appreciate.

The funding for the project came from committee sources and grants raised by Michelle. With the aid of four interns from the University of Rhode Island, the segments were filmed with Tim Cranston at locations like the Gilbert Stuart Museum and Casey Farms.

The platform for the hunt is the cell phone, locations of each site are 'pinned' on the History Hunt map with each location identified and the video content of the site at once available through the phone. The program successfully connects local history with easily accessible GPS technology.

Many residents and visitors have individually taken part in the History Hunt and the program remains available to all and continues to be promoted the Senior Center and local libraries, another example of a 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration program that will continue into the future.

### **Legacy Trees**

Over the last few years several local North Kingstown initiatives were developed to plant trees in the community, one developed by Historic Wickford Inc. and the Plum Beach Garden Club and another through a successful application for North Kingstown to be chosen as Rhode

Island's Tree Community for 2023. Seven new trees were planted in Wickford in the HistWick/PBGC program, and twelve new trees were planted in Wilson Park as part of the Tree Community award. For many years North Kingstown has budgeted for the removal of dead or dangerous trees as part of the public safety program, but no money is budgeted for replacement tree planting.

The success of the earlier tree planting efforts encouraged the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary Committee to include a tree planting program as part of our overall celebration. Starting in March, Mike Donohue, working with Randy Wietman and Tree Warden Peter Morgan, suggested planting a linden tree in each of the eight villages of North Kingstown, choosing a linden as they grow straight and tall, are hardy and are good pollinators. The committee endorsed this project.

Over the next months several local nurseries were visited and in late August eight lindens were purchased from Central Nurseries in Chepachet and delivered to the Highway Department. The trees were at least eight feet tall and 3" in diameter at the base and all eight were paid for by donations from Historic Wickford, Plum Beach Garden Club, Navigant Credit Union and several local families.

During the summer, the eight sites for the trees were selected, all on public land or public right of way, including:

Quidnesset: Harrison St.

Davisville: The North Kingstown Food Pantry on School Street

Slocum: North Kingstown Fire Station, Indian Corner Road

Allenton: North Kingstown Animal Shelter, Hamilton/Allenton Road

Hamilton: Hamilton Elementary School

Wickford: Reynolds Street, next to the Boston Neck Town Hall

Lafayette: Wickford Junction Train Station

Saunderstown: Saunderstown Post Office

During the first week of September, Tree Warden Peter Morgan and Public Works Department Liaison Brynn McNamee supervised the planting. They continued to water the trees in the following weeks to ensure that the plantings were successful.

A dedication ceremony for the trees was held as part of Founders Day at the tree next to the Town Hall on Reynolds Street.

## **Bike Safety**

Early in 2024, residents John Machata and Tom Sgouros came to the committee and proposed organizing a bike safety program for kids and adults, an idea that the committee at once

thought was very innovative. In May the idea came to fruition when John and Tom and the New England Mountain Bike Association conducted bike safety programs in Wilson Park, Ryan Park and on a short ride through the community for a larger group of cyclists.

The Wilson Park program focused on education of bike safety for kids, how to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings to safely and enjoyably ride in whatever environment, on road and off-road. The Ryan Park event involved a group mountain bike ride along the trails that cross North Kingstown's largest public park, and the community ride went through parts of Wickford in tribute to the history of the village.

Later in the year, at the Family Day celebration, John set up an information table on bike safety to further his efforts to encourage cyclists to ride safely and enjoy the ride.

The Bike Safety program was an example of how spontaneous suggestions for programs to benefit North Kingstown came to the 350<sup>th</sup> committee from local citizens, programs that would be of interest to those who live in North Kingstown. Great thanks to both John and Tom for bringing these initiatives to the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary activity list.

### **Christmas at the Castle**

As the anniversary year closed, the committee realized that, with the success of our fundraising campaigns, we would be able to financially support some other programs that complemented our efforts throughout the year. Every year Smith's Castle, the site of the iconic historic trading post set up by Roger Williams and Richard Smith in the 1630s, sponsors a Christmas at the Castle festival on the first weekend of December. The festival focuses on activities that might have occurred during the Christmas holidays in colonial times with games and crafts and exhibits on the history of the Castle for kids and adults alike.

Smith's Castle is 501 c-3 not for profit organization that depends on fundraising to cover the cost of supporting their buildings and grounds and usually charges admission fees for entrance to their programs. The committee offered to cover all costs for this year's Christmas festival if the program would be offered to the public at no charge. Smith's Castle gratefully accepted our offer, the weather for the weekend was cool but also clear and hundreds of visitors from across Rhode Island enjoyed a wonderful opportunity to experience how life in a colonial era home celebrated the holidays.

### **North Kingstown's Festival of Lights**

On the first weekend of December every year North Kingstown celebrates the holiday season with a Festival of Lights centered in Updike Park. Wickford Village shines with seasonal decorations, electric lights adorn the pine tree adjacent to the inlet to Academy Cove, Santa

comes in on a fire boat to thrill the little kids and the local restaurants and food trucks are open to offer residents and visitors a good meal. There's live music throughout the village to support good cheer amongst all. This year with some of the proceeds from our fundraising we were able to sponsor back lit 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary themed ice sculptures including the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary logo to add to the festivities. A nice way to end the year long celebration.

## **The Importance of our Sponsors.**

The success of the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration could only have been achieved through the support of a number of corporate sponsors and other organizations and individuals that shared our vision of what the celebrations would become.

Melissa 'Missy' Devine came onboard the committee early in the planning process. Using her corporate and other local contacts and with the assistance of committee members Haley Wicker and Jeannette Aylward and committee supporter Tuni Schartner, over \$ 50,000 in direct cash contributions and a considerable amount of in-kind contributions were added to the \$ 50,000 that was allocated by the North Kingstown Town Council to more than adequately fund all of the committee programs.

Sponsorships were recognized at distinct levels.

Our Lead Sponsors at the Sachem Level (\$ 10,000 and up) included Centreville Bank and Revolution Wind (Powered by Orsted and Eversource)

Dave's Markets, Fresh Maps and Taylor Rental Supported the programs at the Roger Williams Level (\$ 5,000 to \$ 9,999)

Ocean State Credit Union, Paul Bailey's, Washington Trust, Navigant Credit Union, and BankNewport at the Updike Newtowne's Level (\$ 2,500 to \$ 4,999)

Historic Wickford, Inc., Quonset Development Corporation, Rhode Island Real Estate, BankRI, Goldman Sachs, Richard's Pub/Ritrovo, Toray and Pleasant St. Wharf at the Mary Thomas level (\$ 1,000)

Riverhead Building Supply, Coldwell Banker and the Blue Bus Foundation were Seabee Sponsors (\$ 500).

Additional in-kind donations were received from NoKo Coffee, Allie's Donuts, The Quonset 'O' Club, The Kayak Centre, and Cardi's Furniture.

The committee is extremely grateful for the wonderful support from these local sponsors.

## **Profiles of Committee Members and others instrumental in the success of the 350<sup>th</sup> celebration**

The Committee that planned and executed the events surrounding North Kingstown's anniversary celebrations represented different villages and organizations throughout the community. Over the course of the 15 months the committee was operational we held 31 meetings of the whole committee along with many meetings of sub-committees that focused on the details of our three principal events including the Gala, Family Day and the Parade and the other events that occurred throughout the year. These included the speaker series, the History Hunt, the Legacy Tree Project, a bike safety program, Founders Day, a middle school and high school essay contest, the award as Rhode Island's World War II Heritage Community,

The initial members appointed to the committee as full members included:

Matt McCoy, John Gibbons, Randy Wietman, Palmer Beebe, Keith Finck, Gerry Grabowski, Haley Wicker, Bill Pennoyer and Mike Donohue. North Kingstown town employees Ralph Mollis, Kate Glass, Jeannette Aylward and Tim Cranston sat as ex-officio members with voting privileges.

Matt McCoy was appointed Chairperson, Randy Wietman as Vice Chairman and Mike Donohue as Secretary for the group.

Members of the committee were active in many different North Kingstown organizations and committees in town including the Town Council, Historic Wickford, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Recreation Commission, the Plum Beach Lighthouse Association, the Arts Commission, the Wickford Village Association, the World War Heritage groups, the Friends of the Plum Beach Lighthouse and several community churches, a wide cross section of individuals interested in promoting the town of North Kingstown and our history and heritage.

The Committee also welcomed the help of other local individuals in organizing and funding the different activities throughout the year including Melissa Devine, Tuni Schartner and Michelle Girasole. Fire Chief Scott Kettelle participated in many meetings in planning and coordinating major and minor programs.

Pastor Evan Howard of the First Baptist Church came to the Committee with a proposal to produce a video of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration which was gratefully accepted.

All of the events were videotaped by Jackson Beck, a North Kingstown High School student who recorded both video and audio that were quickly made available on 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary YouTube channel found on the North Kingstown website.

## **Members of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Committee 2023 through 2025**

**Matt McCoy: Committee Chair** – Matt came to North Kingstown in 2002 with his wife and two children and lives in the Quidnessett section of town. He was raised in the District of Columbia and served in the U.S. Navy from 1980 through 2003 retiring as a Lieutenant. He then worked for Raytheon. He and his wife have two children, a daughter living locally and a son in Manhattan with a granddaughter in Manhattan as well.

Matt has served on the Town Council for the last two terms and currently represents North Kingstown on the Quonset Development Corporation Board of Directors. He is very active in Veteran's Affairs organizations, and serves as the VFW National Legislative Committee member for Rhode Island. He also spent part of 2023 helping South Kingstown with the events celebrating their 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary focusing on increasing awareness of the three Congressional Medal of Honor recipients over the history of their town.

From the onset, he believed that, rather than make the event a one week event we could fill up the year with programs to celebrate NK's history, creating large scale and small scale events to bring the community together, events like parade, Family Day and the gala, the only question was could we get the resources to cover the anticipated expenses. We were successful in all those goals.

**Kate Glass: Ex Officio Member, Executive Assistant to North Kingstown Town Manager.**

No person on the committee was more instrumental to the success of the Parade and in the other signature events than Kate.

Such success is even more impressive in that she has lived in Rhode Island for only the last three years. Kate was raised in Connecticut, graduated from George Washington University, spent over five years in Japan with her husband and family and has worked as a lobbyist for arts and education in Connecticut and as a newspaper editor in East Greenwich. Kate and her husband have two children and live in East Greenwich.

To Kate the Parade was always described as a highlight of the 300<sup>th</sup> Celebration and the committee wanted to make a parade that was statewide, large scale and memorable. Kate coordinated all the activities for the parade from soliciting participation from marching bands, historic militia groups, state and municipal departments including fire, police, public safety and

public works, our elected representatives, North Kingstown High School and Middle School bands, scouting groups, elementary school students, more than forty fire apparatus from across the region etc. etc. Kate coordinated staging the parade at the North Kingstown High School, arranged for reviewing stand, all public safety functions associated with the parade and payment of all invoices for equipment rented and personnel costs associated with the event.

Kate was also at the core of most of the other events and functions that were held throughout the year, keeping the public website updated with the latest information on the speaker series and other programs and making sure that all recordings were posted on the website so that those residents unable to attend an event could view it after the fact.

**Haley Wicker:** Personnel Manager Town of North Kingstown

Haley envisioned, organized and coordinated all the events surrounding Family Day, a town wide celebration, open to all, that was held in Wilson Park on Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup> from 11 am to 5 pm, an event that was kicked off by the arrival of a Rhode Island National Guard Blackhawk helicopter on the Wilson Park fields and carried through a day of myriad games and rides for the kids (and adults), a petting zoo and arts and crafts programs. Community not for profits groups and organizations were able to set up informational booths to make NK residents aware of programs and activities that go on throughout the year in our town, and there was also a great band. Food trucks with all kinds of specialties and treats were ranged along the north side of the field and more than 3000 residents joined in the festivities on this beautiful day, all going off without a hitch to the delight of all.

Haley was born, raised and educated in North Kingstown and then at the University of Rhode Island. She and her husband had their first child in the early days of our committee meetings but Haley stayed aware of the initial planning thoughts and when she came back helped drive the programs forward. Haley foresaw the Family Day as geared for all ages, a fun day for kids to get outside and running around at Wilson Park, off their electronic gadgets and having fun. 'We wanted to make the event completely free. Times are tough for many families. If you go out for dinner you will probably spend at least \$ 100. For Family Day they could pack a lunch, enjoy a full day of family-oriented activities with no financial burden with no charge for any of the day's activities.

**Jeannette Aylward** – Town Clerk, Town of North Kingstown

Jeannette was born in the Bronx, New York but has lived in North Kingstown since 1967 and graduated from North Kingstown High School. Jeannette had a direct link to the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in that she participated on a float in the parade as George Washington's daughter Sara, and her memory is that on that occasion she couldn't wait to get off the float and she didn't get to see the parade as she was in the parade.

Jeannette was one of the principal organizers for The Gala. The 300<sup>th</sup> celebration also included a Gala which was a highlight of that year's program. Our committee hoped to hold something that would engender a similar response from the community. As Jeannette put it 'we succeeded.

#### **Gerry Grabowski – Community Activist**

Throughout the anniversary year Gerry could be found photographing the different events and at the committee meetings her comments on proposed programs helped the group focus on what would best serve the interests of the attendees. Gerry and her family moved to North Kingstown in 1979. Her children attended North Kingstown schools. During and after a career as a Registered Nurse at South County Hospital, Gerry found the time to become very active in the North Kingstown Arts Council and also served as President of the Wickford Art Association. She is also active in St. Bernard's Catholic Church serving as a Eucharistic Minister.

As someone dedicated to the larger community she enjoyed the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Activities, noting the number of events the committee planned and executed and she especially enjoyed the speaker series and our participation in the Christmas Festival of Lights with the Ice Sculptures. Each committee member played our parts in making the celebration a success but gives particular praise to the work of Kate, Haley, Jeannette and other town employees and committee chairman Matt McCoy who guided the programs and ensured success.

Gerry's thoughts for a 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration committee are to 'just bring people in to know how wonderful the town is. We had a great turnout from across the people of North Kingstown, something the town can be proud of.'

#### **Randy Wietman – Vice Chairperson**

Randy was the driving force in several of the anniversary events and celebrations, most notably in getting the National Park Service to recognize North Kingstown as Rhode Island's World War II Heritage Community.

Born in Minnesota, Randy had a career of 14 years of active duty in the U.S. Navy and 14 years in the Navy Reserve. He first came to Rhode Island in 1983 to attend Navy Officer Candidate School in Newport, came back to teach at the Naval Surface Warfare Operations School in 1989 and moved her permanently in 1992. Both of his daughters were educated in local schools.

Throughout the anniversary year Randy could be counted on to put in the effort to make things run smoothly, from speaker series programs to the planning, planting and caring for the heritage trees installed in each village.

### **John Gibbons – A steady volunteer**

John Gibbons of the Lafayette section of North Kingstown was a steady presence of quiet guidance throughout the 16 months the committee met in 2023 and 2024. Born and raised in Medford, MA, John served in the 26<sup>th</sup> Yankee Division of the National Guard as a fixed and rotary wing mechanic before working in Maintenance management positions for Northeast Airlines and later other airlines in New England and the Florida to Atlanta region before moving to North Kingstown in 1974. In Rhode Island he opened his own business, Mid-state Tire in East Greenwich. And in more recent times he has served North Kingstown as a school bus driver.

John served as a volunteer at the Family Day and drove one of the floats in the Parade and attended almost all the committee meetings through the year. He is proud of all the programs that were run, the Field Day and the Gala dinner were great. The speaker series was loved by many. We might have been a little over ambitious in some of our planning and given the enormity of the task, we realized our ambitions. Ideally, we could have started a few months earlier in the planning.

He cited with gratitude the work of Matt McCoy who handled a difficult job well and our members who worked on the special events did it with talent, intelligence and industriousness.

### **Palmer Beebe**

It is not surprising that Palmer Beebe served on the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Committee as he has served and continues to serve on many other town and business committees that benefit North Kingstown.

Palmer came to Wickford from New Orleans twenty-nine years ago to take charge of the famed local store J.W. Graham on Brown St. from his mom and stepfather and later opening the gift store Yes! Gallery, (also on Brown St.), which he and his wife Julie continue to operate.

Over the last decades Palmer has been a member of North Kingstown's Economic Development Advisory Board, the Wickford Economic Development Advisory Board, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, the Wickford Village Design Guideline Committee and currently serves as the President of the Wickford Village Association, an independent association of Wickford business establishments and restaurants that focuses on issues important in local commerce.

Palmer and his wife Julie also organize the placement and lighting of the Christmas trees that adorn all the telephone poles each holiday season as well as the plant baskets that hang from the telephone poles in the other seasons that brighten the community for visitors and residents.

For the 350<sup>th</sup> celebration he says he is very proud of the community involvement, we did a good job of capturing resources and the attention of enough of the local population to make it a community. Family Day was over the top, lots of volunteers and it was nice that it was self funding. The Gala was also special albeit for a smaller group. The speaker series was exceptional. We were also able to obtain enough sponsorship to pay for all of the activities and even give money back to the town at the end of the year.

Palmer thanked Matt for his leadership of the program, his energy was apparent front to back, as a patriot, militarily as well as community wise, able in a positive manner to enlist as many people as we needed to get things done.

### **Keith Finck**

Keith has lived in North Kingstown for much of his life including the early years of schooling and coming back to the community twenty nine years ago to build a home to settle permanently. In the in-between years his parents had moved back to live on Pleasant St. and this place always felt like home.

In his years in North Kingstown he has served on the Harbor Management Commission and as Vice Chairperson of the Leisure Services Advisory Committee, helping the town's Recreation Department create programs for residents of all ages that further enhance the quality of life in the town. He also serves as the Vice President of the Friends of the Plum Beach Lighthouse, the organization that rebuilt and now maintains the historic Plum Beach Lighthouse off the coast of Saunderstown.

In the planning of 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary programs Keith could always be counted on to help the committee evaluate the challenges that would be faced and the means to solve these challenges. To Keith, working on the celebration was a ball, we got things done and Matt did a great job as chair. The speaker series was awesome and through our fundraising we were able to give money back to the town after paying for all expenses.

### **Missy Devine – Lead organizer-corporate sponsorships**

In early 2024 Missy was chosen to lead the committee's efforts to pay for all the signature events that were in the planning stage based on her longstanding experience in developing corporate sponsorships for many organizations and groups. Missy and her extended family have lived in North Kingstown for nearly 100 years since her grandfather bought a farm on Fletcher Road in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and her parents built a home on the property some years later, a home still owned by Missy and her siblings, all graduates of North Kingstown High School. She is a graduate of the University of Rhode Island. She lived in Wickford Village for 20 years including time spent as the caretaker of the historic Wickford House on Main St.

**Michelle Girasole – Creator and CEO of Fresh Maps and developer of the North Kingstown History Hunt as part of the 350<sup>th</sup> Celebration**

In early 2024 Michelle made a presentation to the committee to create the History Hunt, an interactive self-guided map tour using GPS and cellphone technology that would bring residents and visitors to 22 sites of historic interest in North Kingstown. The committee enthusiastically endorsed the idea and provided funding for the program which became operational by the late summer.

Michelle has lived in North Kingstown for the last 16 years and her children have all received their education in the local school system. She has worked on similar programs for Smith's Castle and for the Battle of Rhode Island Association, developing digital media means to help visitors understand and appreciate local history. The History Hunt program has successfully developed a greater understanding of the history of North Kingstown and the program is ongoing, readily accessible on the web and is now offered through the local public libraries and the Senior Center.

For Michelle, the best part of the program as an NK resident was getting to know the community better and being part of something significant. All of the events were spectacular and she cited the work of Matt, Kate and Haley in organizing the programs and for Missy's help in fundraising.

**Bill Pennoyer**

An energetic voice on the committee in creating momentous events during the celebration year, Bill came to North Kingstown since 1963. His connection to the town comes much earlier as his mother worked for the construction company that built the Quonset and Davisville facilities during World War II.

In North Kingstown Bill has served as chairperson of the Parade Committee, spent two terms on the School Committee and is a member of the North Kingstown Post 12 of the American Legion and was a member of the North Kingstown Republican Town Committee.

A real local history buff, Bill says that the Gala at the 'O' club was a real highlight of the celebration year for him and remarked that his mother had told him that the 'O' Officers Club at Quonset was supposed to open on December 31, 1941 but the events of Pearl Harbor Day made it a different type of opening.

He also appreciated and supported the tree planting initiatives undertaken by the committee and hopes that the programs in the outstanding speaker series will be memorialized on the North Kingstown website to keep a permanent record.

**Mike Donohue – Secretary of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commission**

Mike and his wife Nancy have lived in North Kingstown for the last 23 years. During that time his activities include serving on the board of Historic Wickford, Inc. for 22 of those years including President for three, as a founding officer and first chairperson of the Wickford Advisory Council, on the Historic District Commission and more recently on the board of the North Kingstown Free Library.

The experience of serving on the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Committee is very rewarding, participating with a cross section of community residents committed to making the celebration something really special. As the programs developed, a real enthusiasm arose, that developing programs for the full year would be something people in North Kingstown would appreciate. And we succeeded in that beyond all expectations.

With the legacy tree program we have given something to the town that will continue to show our commitment to North Kingstown well into the future, something we all can be proud of.

**A Summary of Each of the 31 Meetings of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee that were Held from September of 2023 through December 2024.**

**September 2023**

In recognition of the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the town of North Kingstown, a group of citizens, representing all corners of the community, started to come together in September of 2023 to begin planning a series of events to commemorate the events.

The first meeting toward planning was held on September 7, 2023, in the Municipal Courtroom at the Town Hall on Fairway Drive. Attendees at the meeting included:

Jeannette Aylward – NK Town Clerk  
Kate Glass – NK Executive Administrative Assistant  
Ralph Mollis – Town Manager  
Keith Finck – Leisure Services Committee  
Tim Cranston – Water Department and Town Historian

Barbara Dawson – Plum Beach Garden Club who served on the committee organizing the 300<sup>th</sup> celebration in 1974.

Cynthia Carpenter – HistWick and also someone who also served on the committee organizing the 300<sup>th</sup> celebration in 1974.

Larry Mandel – Town Council

Bill Pennoyer – Parades Committee

Matt McCoy – Town Council

Haley Wicker – NK HR Director

Mike Donohue - HistWick

The meeting focused on a discussion of the size and scope for the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration program. We started by discussing the program of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration and were fortunate to have both Barbara Dawson and Cynthia Carpenter who shared their memories of the 1974 week-long events which included much treasured memories of a formal gala event for over 300 people, a big family event, and a spectacular parade that featured the Mummers Band, the Budweiser Clydesdales. Also, many marching bands, floats from community organizations, marchers in colonial costume etc. It was obvious to all that we had to produce interesting programs in the hope of matching the memories from the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Barbara Dawson had brought her commemorative medal from the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary and making a 350<sup>th</sup> commemorative medal as a fundraiser was widely accepted.

This initial meeting turned to ideas for this year's program, should it be one-day, one week, or throughout the year. How to celebrate and recognize all the villages in North Kingstown, lots of great ideas, all can be found in the Minutes of the Meeting which are attached to this summary.

The group discussed 'branding' our programs and Tim Cranston contacted a local company Hulafish to see how they could help in designing a logo for all our events. We also discussed, how to accomplish fundraising, could we use the 501 c-3 tax exempt status of other community groups to encourage donations to the 350<sup>th</sup> program etc. as contributions to the town of North Kingstown are not tax-deductible. Historic Wickford and the Blue Bus Foundation were mentioned as possible means of accomplishing that goal.

Getting corporate sponsorship from local businesses to help cover the costs of our programs was also discussed as a priority.

The makeup of the committee to organize the 350<sup>th</sup> celebration was discussed but no decisions were made at this meeting.

Two weeks later the second meeting of the 350<sup>th</sup> committee was held. Attendees largely included those who participated in the first meeting. Specific plans started to take shape.

Historic Wickford Inc. (HistWick) agreed to serve as the 501 c-3 organization to receive donations to help cover the costs of the celebration events.

The committee focused on developing the anniversary logo, Tim was asked to contact Hulafish to be sure they understood the townwide focus of the 350<sup>th</sup> and Ralph Mollis was asked to contract with Hulafish for work on the logo/branding project.

The organization of the committee was established to include:

Tim Cranston – Town Historian  
Matt McCoy – Town Council  
Haley Wicker – Town Personnel Department  
Randy Wietman – Historic Wickford  
Mike Donohue  
Jeannette Aylward – Town Clerk  
Palmer Beebe – EDAB  
Kate Glass – Executive Administrative Assistant  
Keith Finck  
Gerry Grabowski  
John Gibbons

A decision to elect a committee chairperson was postponed to the next meeting.

Bill Penoyer (head of the North Kingstown Parades Committee) is not a resident of North Kingstown but he agreed to participate in the committee on parade matters.

At the meeting, significant planning was initiated regarding working with the NK Public Works Dept. to create new welcome signs to North Kingstown promoting the 350t celebration with our soon to be created logos. Ralph Mollis suggested the next step would be to develop a rough draft of the dates and kinds of celebrations we would produce throughout the year.

Matt McCoy suggested that with these programs we could cross-promote activities of other organizations in town that occur during the year and that we work with the Independent Newspapers Group to produce a booklet with a timeline of our history and of the programs planned for the year. South Kingstown celebrated their 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year with a successful booklet of this type.

## **October**

As October started the program planning kicked into a higher gear. At the third meeting of the committee, Jeannette reported on the contract with Hulafish to produce several logo options. Mike Donohue reported that HistWick agreed to use our not-for-profit status for donations and had set up a separate HistWick account for these funds at Centreville Bank.

Kate Glass set up Facebook and Instagram accounts for the anniversary and a new website on the town website which will include the new logo. A framework for the schedule of all events was initiated with the intent to celebrate the eight villages in North Kingstown as part of the overall celebration. One goal will be to encourage economic activity in the town, with outreach to the Merchants Association and the Chamber of Commerce.

Potential major events were discussed, Haley Wicker spoke to setting up a Family Day program in the late summer with a band, lots of kids' activities etc. Jeannette Aylward discussed a formal dinner held at the Quonset 'O' Club at the 300<sup>th</sup> celebration which was a big hit and she agreed to contact different venues which might host such an event and on what dates in 2024.

Another favored major event at the 300<sup>th</sup> celebration was a parade which featured the Mummers Marching Band and the Budweiser Clydesdales. Many residents and their children marched in that parade and their memories are of a great celebration. The committee decided to set up a budget for a big parade and to reach out for legislative grants and other sources of funding for specific events.

Matt McCoy in some closing thoughts said that we are looking at the history of our town from colonial periods to today, the histories of the schools, the police and fire departments, the experiences of our veterans, all possible topics for the speaker series.

With a meeting schedule calling for the committee to gather every two weeks, the second meeting in October was very productive.

Matt McCoy, Mike Donohue, Randy Wietman, Kate Glass, Jeannette Aylward, Tim Cranston, John Gibbons, Palmer Beebe, Keith Finck, Gerry Grabowski, Bill Pennoyer, and Haley Wicker attended the gathering.

There were two main areas of focus, setting up the committee structure and approving the logo.

For the committee makeup, town employees Jeannette Aylward, Kate Glass, Tim Cranston and Ralph Mollis would sit as ex-officio members. The full members would include Matt McCoy, John Gibbons, Randy Wietman, Palmer Beebe, Keith Finck, Gerry Grabowski, Haley Wicker, Bill Pennoyer and Mike Donohue.

Matt McCoy was chosen to chair the committee, Randy Wietman as Vice Chair, and Mike Donohue as Secretary. All votes were unanimous.

Tim Cranston recommended that given the complexity of organizing many events through the celebration year that we hire an event planner(s). Missy Devine and Tuni Schartner are both

residents and both have extensive experience in this type of work. There will need for a lot of coordination with other local organizations and help in fundraising. Both Missy and Tuni would be invited to our next meeting to discuss fundraising.

Matt McCoy brought up the hope to include the schools in our efforts, specifically projects celebrating North Kingstown history done by students at both the high school and middle schools. Mike Donohue and Tim Cranston said we need to recognize the importance of Indigenous people in our history as well, all to be included in the full year program.

There was a long discussion on the logo designs produced by Hulafish which included two separate conceptions of three separate logos with different colors and design elements. The committee asked Tim to bring two of the proposed logos back to Hulafish with committee suggestions to even more accurately reflect the items that will be included.

We will use the logs for all committee letterhead, brand for all advertising, on the website, social media, event signage. Get folks familiar with the image, share it with other community groups to encourage them to add it to their programs. John Gibbons suggested adding the logo to all town vehicles.

Matt said that at our next meeting we should have a preliminary list of program activities for 2024 with dates. Our goal is to brand the 350<sup>th</sup> event to draw people into town.

At this meeting Haley Wicker reported on using Quidnessett Country Club or the Quonset 'O' Club for the Gala and gave a list of dates when those facilities could hold our event. We should make a commitment at our next meeting.

## **November**

On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, the committee met to finalize the logo design.

Matt McCoy, Ralph Mollis, Jeannette Aylward, Kate Glass, Bill Penoyer, Palmer Beebe, Tim Cranston, Missy Devine and Tuni Schartner attended the meeting.

The committee voted 5 to 4 to accept the Compass Rose Design. Upon further discussion there was a request for both color and monochromatic versions. Colors should include burgundy for the town crest, and gold with black text (school colors) to be incorporated into the design. Other suggestions for the fine details of the final Compass Rose design were suggested and would be discussed at the next meeting.

A tentative events calendar was created that would be placed on the 2024 Town Calendar and on the North Kingstown town website.

The North Kingstown Free Library will offer space for speaker events and historically relevant displays to coincide with the 350<sup>th</sup> celebration. The plan includes eight speaker events to highlight each of the eight villages of North Kingstown, and one speaker event focusing on Native American history and one on the history of the Seabees, Quonset and the Navy in our town. Tim Cranston and Mike Donohue will work on choosing speakers for each event.

#### The Gala Event

After a discussion of the pros and cons of holding the event at either Quidnessett Country Club or the Quonset 'O' Club the overwhelming consensus was to hold the event at the 'O' Club on Thursday, April 25<sup>th</sup>. Aside from the dinner interest was shown to have space outside the room within the same floor for displays or other programming related to the history of North Kingstown.

The Parade was briefly discussed at this meeting with attempts to choose a date in August or September but no decision was taken. There was a similar discussion on a date for Family Day but again, no decision was made.

Tim Cranston introduced Missy Devine and Tuni Schartner to the group to ask them if they would be interested in managing marketing and event planning for the three main events. They were asked to bring back proposals for providing this type of service at the next meeting.

The sixth meeting of the committee was held on November 16<sup>th</sup>.

Matt McCoy, Gerry Grabowski, Mike Donohue, Randy Wietman, Keith Finck, Jeannette Alyward, Palmer Beebe, Tim Cranston, John Gibbons, Bill Penoyer, Haley Wicker, Missy Devine and Kate Glass.

The discussion returned to the final design for the logo. The black and white design was accepted by the committee, but questions remained about the color version and Tim and Kate agreed to go back to the designer with the concerns. The final logo will be displayed on all town vehicles and we will ask the school bus drivers if they will put the logos on the back of the buses. Matt McCoy suggested selling decals for fundraising and Jeannette Alyward will check on the pricing.

Jeannette reported that the 'O' Club is reserved for the Gala.

Missy Devine presented a proposal to use her services in fundraising and event planning. The committee discussed what assistance we will need from anyone we hire. Tuni Schartner was unable to attend the meeting.

There was a long discussion on what monies had been spent so far, primarily \$ 1500 on logo design and there are concerns about budgeting for the different events that will be held and how to fundraise for that. Suggestions included committee members focusing on asking local businesses for their support or should we use professional assistance from Missy or Tuni in funding the speaker series and all our other events.

Town employee members of the committee can help in planning the events but are not required to solicit businesses or individuals for contributions. We need clear guidance on who we will ask for support for each event.

Michelle Girasole was invited to join the meeting to discuss a proposal to include a North Kingstown History Hunt, a weeks long activity where families and individuals would use their phones to go to twenty different GIS locations throughout North Kingstown to learn about our history in greater detail.

Upon arrival at a site, they could go to the link for the location and listen to a speaker discuss why this site is interesting and important. At each site, their visit would be logged and at the end of the week the names of those completing the list would be eligible to win one of three gift baskets of goods from North Kingstown businesses and services.

The cost of the Scavenger Hunt would be approximately \$ 7,500 to \$ 10,000 and there are commercial links to fourteen of the twenty sites where we could ask for sponsorships.

Missy Devine was able to give very detailed answers to many of the questions raised about both event planning and fundraising and spoke to how much time she estimated would be needed weekly to work on both functions.

A decision on accepting Missy's proposal or a proposal that might be coming from Tuni was deferred to the following meeting.

The Speaker Series. Discussion commenced on the format of the speaker series with Tim Cranston suggesting one speaker event per month, with a primary initial focus on including one presentation for each of the eight villages of North Kingstown. Also recommended were programs on the Seabees and Quonset during and after WWII. A list of other possible topics was also created. The committee approved awarding an honorarium of \$ 150 per speaker and allocated \$ 2500 toward the program.

In one final item, Barbara Dawson, a member of the Plum Beach Garden Club and the committee that organized the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration asked for a donation of \$ 100 to plant bulbs in front of the police/fire station on Post Road. The motion passed unanimously.

## **December**

Due to the holiday schedules and other events the next meeting was held on December 14<sup>th</sup>.

Matt, Randy, Keith, Jeannette, Tim, John, Bill, Haley, Missy and Kate met and discussed several items as the planning for the 2024 celebration continued. Kate provided a run-through of the new 350<sup>th</sup> tab on the North Kingstown website which includes the Speaker Series, a Calendar of Events, where to buy 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary apparel etc. etc. The committee agreed to purchase one thousand Challenge Coins, 350 to be numbered sequentially and 650 unnumbered. The goal will be to sell the numbered coins for \$ 53.50 and the unnumbered coins for \$ 23.50. As the coins cost approximately \$ 5.00 each to produce this could be a good source of funding for other activities. The committee also voted on the purchase of stickers, banners and decals locally from Signarama along with larger banners to be posted at the Boston Neck Town Hall building and other areas in North Kingstown to promote our activities.

It was agreed that we would hold the Kickoff Celebration on January 6, 2024, at 10:00 am in front of the Boston Neck Road Town Hall. Our federal delegation, state office holders, state and local representatives and Town Hall members would all be invited to attend.

The NK Community Chorus would be invited to sing the national anthem and the Color Guards of the Police and Fire Departments would also be part of the ceremony. Jeannette Aylward agreed to arrange refreshments which would include one hundred cookies from a local bakery with 350<sup>th</sup> piping to celebrate the Kickoff event.

Tuni Schartner suggested that vertical banners be hung from the front of the building as part of the celebration. The idea was well received and Tuni will work with Kate and Jeannette on making this happen.

## **January 2024**

The first meeting of the committee in 2024 was held on January 4<sup>th</sup>. Matt, John, Palmer, Keith, Gerry, Jeannette, Kate, Mike Tuni, Missy, Tim, Haley and Ralph were in attendance.

Final plans for the kickoff event on January 6<sup>th</sup> at 10 am were shared with the group. Confirmed speakers included Senator Jack Reed, U.S. Representative Seth Magaziner, U.S. representative Gabe Amo, Secretary of State Greg Amore, Town Council President Greg Mancini and Town Manager Ralph Mollis.

The Sons of the Union Veterans of the Civil War will present the colors, and the NK Community Chorus will sing the National Anthem. Reverend Nicholas Knisely, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island and a North Kingstown Resident will deliver the invocation.

After the speaking program Town Manager Ralph Mollis will give an overview of all planned activities through the celebration year and then he and Matt McCoy gave 350<sup>th</sup> celebration

Challenge coins to each of the speakers. This was to be followed by the official unveiling of the 350<sup>th</sup> logo.

As a follow up to the previous meeting, it was announced that NoKo Coffee Roasters would provide the coffee for the event and Kristin's Creations would provide cookies emblazoned with the number 350.

The attention shifted to the 350<sup>th</sup> Gala planning and the committee by unanimous vote, chose to hire a local band (all NK residents), Take It to the Bridge, to perform at the event.

This prompted a discussion of funding all our planned activities. The Town Council allocated \$50,000 for 350<sup>th</sup> activities and until we see how our fundraising pans out, \$ 26,400 of the \$50,000 has been committed leaving \$ 23,400 in our accounts, not including committed overtime for the DPW for the kickoff event. Fundraising in earnest needs to get off the ground.

Haley suggested that we need to have a list of all our events and to start assigning individuals to help coordinate the events and the fundraising. Haley and Jeannette will coordinate the list and we will discuss this at the next event.

Tim Cranston followed with more details on the speaker series, with at least two speaker events each month. Some of the speaker series events will be sponsored by HistWick, the North Kingstown Free Library, The Battle of Rhode Island Association,. The first and keynote speaker will be Ms. Loren Spears, director of the Tomaquaq Museum in recognition of the importance of the Indigenous peoples in our local history.

The meeting closed with a reference to Matt and Randy initiating an application to the National Park Service to have North Kingstown designated as a World War II community..

The second meeting in January followed the successful kickoff event held on January 6th.

After an overview of the details of the kickoff program the meeting turned the next event on the program, the presentation by Loren Spears to be held in the Town Council Chambers on Boston Neck Road on January 29<sup>th</sup>, and where we were publicizing the event on the town Facebook page, distribution of flyers and reaching out to other organizations and groups in town to make them aware of the program. Mike mentioned that Tim Cranston would give a series of the talks on the eight different villages in North Kingstown and other confirmed speakers would include John Dower from Smith's Castle, Wickford resident Eric Thorkilson who was the President of the noted PBS series 'This Old House' and Rhode Island historian Christian McBurney. HistWick committed \$ 1,000 to the speaker series to support the honorariums.

Subcommittee assignments were announced to aid in planning the major events for the year.

The Gala: Jeannette, Haley, Tuni, Missy and Gerry

The Parade: Bill, Randy, John, Haley, Kate, Tuni and Missy

Family Day: Haley, Michelle, Tuni, Keith, Gerry, Missy and Jeannette  
Founders Day: Matt, Kate, Missy and Mike

At this meeting Missy Devine was officially hired to help coordinate our fundraising efforts through the year.

The meeting then focused on funding all these activities. Missy presented a spreadsheet on sponsorship levels from \$ 100, to \$ 10,000 at the highest level. Those sponsoring at the highest levels would receive additional benefits in signage, presenting promotional materials at the events etc. Their logos would be prominently shown at all events and would be featured in the planned 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration booklet to be published in the next months.

She discussed holding a silent auction at the gala as a fundraiser and which local businesses could be asked to contribute something for the auction.

Haley next gave an update on the Gala, the band Take It to the Bridge agreed to play for the event at a cost of \$ 3600. The cost for the dinner at the 'O' Club would be \$ 58.00 per plate. All in the total cost per ticket for the event would be between \$ 85 to \$ 90 per person. Some of this cost will be covered by fundraising. We expect at least 250 people to attend the event.

The need to record our programs and the speaker series for history was discussed in great length. Unfortunately, the Kickoff event was not recorded.

Evan Howard, pastor of the Baptist Church on Post Road has offered his videographer services to produce a full video overview of the activities over the course of the year and he shared images he had already captured to illustrate what he would propose to do. There was an enthusiastic response to Evan's offer and it was proposed to discuss this in greater detail at the next meeting.

At this meeting it was suggested that we record all the 350<sup>th</sup> programs so that whatever committee celebrates the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary will have our work as a resource at that time. We did not formally record the kickoff event but need to start with future events. If we use town employees there will be overtime costs. There may be other options. Kate and Haley were to investigate options.

A first update on planning the parade was given but we were still in the investigation stage, contacting bagpipe bands and other groups as to cost of participation and availability.

## **February**

The first meeting of the committee for February occurred on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month. We were pleased that the first speaker event, given by Tomaquaq Museum President Loren Spears drew more than 130 people to the Town Council Chambers for a wonderful talk on the history of the Narragansett people in our community. Given the popularity of the event and

potentially for future speakers programs we discussed alternative venues as many of our speaker series events are scheduled for the North Kingstown Free Library conference room which holds fewer than seventy people. No decision was taken at this time as to moving events from the library to the Town Hall or other locations in North Kingstown.

Progress in fundraising was discussed. Online merchandise sales have raised \$ 1584 for our events and we have \$ 20,500 remaining in our accounts.

Missy reported that we currently have commitments from three organizations to help fund our events and she is contacting all local banks and many businesses to ask for assistance. The Quonset Development Corporation added a link to sponsorship opportunities to their website. Michelle Girasole is also soliciting grants to help cover the costs of the History Hunt.

The planning for the Gala forged ahead. Haley, Jeannette, Kate, and others met with the 'O' Club managers to co-ordinate the event and met with florists to discuss centerpieces. There was also discussion of inviting state and local dignitaries to the event. Ticket prices yet to be determined. The Senior Center indicated that they would purchase several tables for the event.

Keith Finck suggested holding a pro-am golf tournament fundraiser at the North Kingstown Municipal Golf Course and the committee unanimously agreed to ask Keith and Haley to develop a proposal for such an event with costs and who to invite to the event.

The opportunities to video all our activities was again discussed. Kate has one proposal in hand but more discussion will take place at our next meeting.

Meetings with the Recreation Department are starting the planning for Family Day, first to be sure there will be no conflicts with other organizations that use Wilson Park on most weekend days. Discussions centered on what types of activities we want to hold, including music, food trucks, kids' activities, petting zoos. Our first priority is to get the town permit for the event.

The Parade is scheduled for Saturday, October 5<sup>th</sup> and we need to make sure that Wilson Park is also available that day as part of the staging of the event.

The local business NOKO Coffee is doing a signature roast of a different type of coffee each month and labeling it with the names of each of the eight North Kingstown villages and the 350<sup>th</sup> logo.

Our application to be named the WWII Heritage Community for Rhode Island is proceeding. Randy has prepared all the application materials and Town Council Chairperson Greg Mancini will submit the application to our Congressional Delegation for their support on behalf of North Kingstown, Quonset and the Seabees.

Parade planning continued, Bill Pennoyer had prepared a list of organizations and bands that may be willing to participate. The direction of the parade is still being discussed, starting or ending at the high school or starting or ending at Wilson Park.

The second February meeting of the committee was held on February 15<sup>th</sup> with Matt, Missy, Bill, Gerry, Haley, Jeannette, Kate, Mike, Keith, Palmer and Ralph in attendance. The meeting focused on finance and fundraising as we are rapidly running through our original funding. At this time, we have \$ 11,730 in our original account after setting aside \$ 10,000 for Michelle Girasole for the History Hunt which we hope will be covered by grants. We are looking for ways to sell 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary stickers which have a high profit margin perhaps through local merchants.

Missy discussed our fundraising events and during her presentation, to great acclaim and thanks, Town Finance Director Deb Bridgham entered the room to announce that Centreville Bank agreed to give \$ 10,000 toward our programs for the celebration. Missy announced that Goldman Sachs, Rhode Island Real Estate Associates and Coldwell Banker have also donated to our efforts.

Matt, Missy and Kate have met with Northeast Independent Newspapers and they will print 10,000 copies of our commemorative magazine with content provided by Tim Cranston. Every subscriber to both the Independent and the Standard Times will get a copy which will include a history of North Kingstown and listings of all the events we will be sponsoring throughout the year. We will also get copies of the magazine for fundraising or distribution throughout the year. All funds raised this way will go to support the Gala.

Jeannette gave a thorough update on Gala planning. Flowers and Centerpieces are ordered from two local businesses, Bert and Peg's and Robin Hollow Farm, the estimated costs are \$ 2,000. The band Take It To The Bridge have also been paid. There will be a cost of \$ 50 per ticket. We estimate that the event will have a total cost of \$ 22,000 to \$ 25,000 and ticket receipts will cover most of the cost with our fundraising efforts to cover the remaining expenses. The 'O' Club will hold three hundred people and the event is widely anticipated to be a sellout. Donors at the \$ 10,000 level will get two free tickets. All sponsors will be prominently thanked at the event for their donations.

All principal federal and state office holders will be invited to the event and offered the opportunity address the event and the head of the Town Council will give the greeting from the Town Council.

We will include a dress code that will be included on the invitations.

In other items, Gerry said that the Art Association may re-do the murals on the side of the town building at the town beach to reflect the 350<sup>th</sup> celebration and asked if the Art Association could march as a group in the parade. There were no objections.

Keith shared his proposed program for a pro-am golf tournament at the North Kingstown Municipal Golf Course. A tournament would showcase both the course and the new restaurant at our municipal facility. A motion was made and passed to go forward with this program.

The Lecture Series is a great success. Due to the number of people signing up for the lectures, more, if not all, of the future series will be moved to the Town Hall Town Council Chamber so that more can attend. We realized that recording these events has become necessary so that those residents unable to attend an event can watch it later through the link to the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary website. A local high school student, Jackson Beck has offered to record all our events for \$ 175 each. For events held in the Town Council chamber there would be another \$ 125 expense for overtime for our IT manager who manages the A/V equipment in that room. We agreed to use Jackson to record the next event and to make a final decision on recording presentations at our next meeting.

Mary Ann O'Halloran of the EcoLand Art Project asking the Committee for support for a new project delivering public art to the community. Several months ago, EcoLand Art completed a landscape sculpture project near the boat launch at Wilson Park, they are now proposing to put in artwork in the median strip at Yorktown Drive to memorialize the aircraft carriers with connection to Davisville and Quonset that were lost in WWII. They did not ask for financial support but rather for a letter of support for their application to the Town Council to go ahead with the project. This would echo Randy's work to gain recognition from the National Park Service as the sole Rhode Island Community to receive the World War II Heritage Community Award. The committee agreed to write a letter to the Town Council in support.

Mike brought up an idea to plant a heritage tree in each of the eight villages of North Kingstown. HistWick, the Wickford Village Association, the Plum Beach Garden Club and town residents have offered financial support for such a program. We will ask Town Tree Warden Peter Morgan to help identify what type of tree to plant and potential locations. We will also ask for Public Works Dept. support in planting the trees which we would hope we could get in the ground before the Founders Day celebration. A motion was made to accept this idea which was accepted unanimously.

It is rare to have five Thursdays in February but in the leap year of 2024 it happened so the third Committee meeting in February was held on February 29<sup>th</sup> in the Municipal Courtroom. Matt, Missy, Bill, Gerry, Jeannette, Kate, Mike, Palmer, Ralph, John and Haley were in attendance.

Finances and Fundraising were the prime focus of the meeting. Kate reported that we have received \$ 27,500 in checks from sponsors in the last few weeks. Haley also has a check in hand for another \$ 2,500. Prior to this report we had \$ 18,329 in our accounts. We had allocated \$ 2,500 for the Speaker Series and HistWick will provide \$ 1,000 for the series including Tim's Walking Tours.

Missy detailed our fundraising successes so far which include donations from Ocean State Job Lot, Paul Bailey Chrysler, Rhode Island Real Estate, Centreville Bank and Dave's Market. Bank

RI's donation is pending. Richard's Pub and Ritrovo will supply gift certificates for the Gala auction. Missy said that we need to start soliciting for more items for the Gala auction.

Matt is working with The Independent publishing group to get sponsors for the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklet that they are producing. Kate suggested that we add sponsor logos to all our social media postings.

There was concern that our vote last meeting to organize the golf tournament was done in haste. It will be difficult to get sponsorships given our efforts to get sponsors for the Gala, the Family Day and the Parade which will have wider community support. The committee decided to rescind the earlier vote.

Matt said that National Bike Month is coming up and that he is collaborating with John Machata and Tom Sgouros and VFW Post 152 to include a celebration of National Bike Month and the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a community bike ride and then a bike safety program in Wilson Park. There was a lot of enthusiasm to support this idea.

Haley is preparing detailed cost estimates for police, fire and safety personnel we will need for the Family Day celebration. Matt asked for a detailed estimate of the cost for bands that will perform at both Family Day and in the Parade. There was a long discussion on the direction of the parade route, with one suggestion to make it a loop, starting at Wilson Park, going up West Main, left on Post Road, left on Phillips, left on Brown and again left on West Main and back up to Wilson Park to disband. The second option would start at Wilson Park, down West Main to Brown, across Brown to Boston Neck and then right on Fairway to finish at the High School. As either parade route would be in part on State roads, permissions from the state will be required.

The committee preferred the first option depending on state approval but would accept the second option in case the first option is not approved.

Randy reported on the application on naming North Kingstown Rhode Island's WWII Heritage City. Jack Sprengel from the Seabee Museum has provided information on Camp Endicott and other items that should support our application. The application deadline is in August.

Gerry said that the Art Association has offered the Committee to set up a table at their events to promote our activities and to sell 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary merchandise.

Palmer mentioned that Joellen and Scott from Harbour Lights have several events scheduled that will complement our 350<sup>th</sup> celebrations.

Missy presented an invoice for \$ 2900 for the work she has accomplished so far. The group greatly appreciates all her efforts in fundraising and Randy made a motion to effect the payment which passed unanimously.

Mike said that given the success of the Speaker Series we have asked to move most if not all indoor programs from the library to the Town Hall. There are additional unanticipated but needed expenses in moving the programs, for town employees to provide the A/V services and for Jackson to film them to put on the 350<sup>th</sup> website. Mike made a motion to pay both the town employee and Jackson to work our next two speaker events and to re-assess the need to do this in the future at our next meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

## **March**

The first March meeting was held on March 14<sup>th</sup> with Matt, Tuni, Missy, Kate, Jeannette, Haley, Michelle, Bill, Randy, John, Keith and Gerry in attendance.

**Finance and Fundraising:** We learned we were well over budget on the Speaker Series due to the need to move the series to the Town Council Chamber necessitating overtime work for Town employees and to the decision to video record all presentations to be posted on the North Kingstown 350<sup>th</sup> celebration website. A motion was made to allocate up to \$ 4500 to pay for the anticipated additional expenses and this motion passed with no objection.

Michelle also suggested reducing her anticipated costs to run the History Hunt to \$ 2500 as part of covering the additional cost. This was approved by the committee with our thanks to Michelle for this offer.

For the Gala, already 44% of tickets have been sold. The nametags for committee members will be fastened with magnets instead of pins. We hope that the Silent Auction proceeds will cover the anticipated \$ 7,000 gap between ticket sales and event expenses for the evening. We also expect revenue from selling 350 of the 350<sup>th</sup> magazine to generate up to \$ 1500 to help with our overall finances. Randy mentioned that HistWick has \$ 9100 in the 350<sup>th</sup> account.

The Bike Safety Event is finalized. John Machata and Chelsea have worked out the details and Kate will update the website with the event.

The Parade route is finalized from NKHS through to Wilson Park. The Town Hall will be on the route. There are still concerns about ending the parade at Wilson Park due to potential for congestion and moving the participants to the breakup spots. Jeannette will manage the permits and the request to use the NKHS parking lots to stage the beginning of the parade.

The History Hunt continues to advance. Tim has given Michelle text for eleven of the twenty-two of the chosen sites. There may be some sponsorship opportunities for this program as well.

The second committee meeting in March was held on the 28<sup>th</sup> with Tuni, Gerry, Jeannette, Haley, Kate, Mike, Randy, Bill, Keith, Palmer and John attending.

With the Gala coming up soon much discussion centered on making sure everything is done right. Kate reported that 81.7% of tickets had been sold. None of the state dignitaries who were invited will be attending. State Senator Brigid Valverde will attend.

Our major sponsors are Revolution Wind and Centreville Bank. We will have GOBO light projectors at the event which will feature the logos of our principal sponsors. The flowers for the event have been ordered. We are still looking for a photographer for the event. Currently, we believe all but \$ 7100 of the cost for the event is covered by ticket sales. Commemorative coin # 1 will be auctioned off at the event.

There was a discussion about name tags for the Gala. Missy indicated that she works with a company that can provide nice adhesive tags, pre-printed with the names of those who have purchased tickets.

For the Parade Bill mentioned hiring the Mystic Fife and Drum Band. Keith made a motion authorizing Bill to go forward with this for \$ 1300. The motion passed unanimously. Kate shared a very thorough pamphlet she has prepared to give to parade participants, listing requirements, waivers, rules and regulations etc. for the bands. It will also have a map of the parade route.

The committee will ask Fire Chief Scott Kettelle to contact other fire units from across the state to include antique fire trucks in the parade. (*This proved very successful as eventually over forty fire trucks participated in the parade.*)

#### April

The first April meeting was held on April 11<sup>th</sup> with Tuni, Keith, Jeannette, Missy, John, Bill, Palmer, Kate, Matt, Randy, Mike and Haley in attendance.

We have \$ 14,600 in our HistWick account and will pay Michelle Girasole \$ 3500 for her work on the History Hunt. Missy continues to contact potential sponsors for our programs. Kate reported that we based our budgeting for the Gala on selling 250 tickets. We sold out the event at three hundred people! We have approximately \$ 30,000 total in funds for our remaining events and we are still fundraising. Matt reminded all that the very successful 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration events all were held over the course of one week. Our events continue through to the end of 2024.

For the Gala, the silent auction will include hydrangeas, the opportunity for a walk on role in a movie to be filmed in Rhode Island, a ride over Rhode Island in a small plane, lots of gift certificates for food and entertainment. Cardi's provided a \$ 2.000 gift card for the silent auction.

Haley and Jeannette cited the need for volunteer help at the event. At the merchandise table we will sell the coins, magazines, stickers etc. For other items like clothing, we will have forms that can be used to order the goods.

State Senator Brigid Valverde and State Representative Bob Craven will attend the event. Matt McCoy will be the M.C. for the event. Both Town Manager Ralph Mollis and Town Council Chairperson will address the event. As part of the introduction Matt will recognize the members of the 300<sup>th</sup> committee that are attending and will also introduce the 350<sup>th</sup> Committee members and a pre-defined list of our sponsors.

There will be placards at each table that ordered their tickets as a group.

We decided to hire two photographers for the event, one to be at the photo line and a second for candid pictures. The Town will produce a news release on the success of the event and pictures etc. to social media following the event.

Randy next reported on the progress in the application to become the WWII Memorial Community and that he may need a letter from the head of the Town Council for the submission. We will get this on the next Town Council agenda if needed.

Missy reported that our 350<sup>th</sup> magazine has gone to print. A copy will be distributed in every copy of the Standard Times and The Northeast Independent in coming weeks. The publisher is very happy with the ad sales, there will be links to order Tim Cranston's books and a QR code that will direct folks to the different anniversary events through the rest of the year.

We will get three hundred copies that we can sell at \$ 500 for fundraising (*in the end we received thousands of extra copies which were freely distributed throughout the community in the following months*).

Mike reported that \$ 1800 of the estimated cost of \$ 2,000 to \$ 2,400 needed to fund the tree planting has been raised and that he will be meeting with Pete Morgan, North Kingstown Tree Warden in the following week to move the project forward.

## May

Our first meeting in May, and the first meeting post the Gala, was held on May 16<sup>th</sup> with Matt, Missy, Randy, Haley, Kate, Keith, Mike, Jeannette, Gerry and Michelle participating.

Matt thanked all for the excellent work in presenting such a Gala event for the residents of North Kingstown. The only question was 'should we have found a bigger place?' 😊 The gala was also a financial success with no debt after ticket sales and silent auction proceeds. Kate reported that we now have \$ 41,642 in the HistWick account and a total of over \$ 71,000 in

available monies to help in planning the Family Day and the Parade and other items. The Town Council has also appropriated some extra money for our events.

Planning for Family Day and the Parade are well underway. Haley and Matt met with the police, fire and public works departments to estimate what overtime for security and other needs are met. The initial thought is that these will cost around \$ 3,000. Missy has met with Dino at Taylor Rental as we will need to rent tents, tables, chairs etc. for the Family Day. We are asking Taylor Rental for a thirty-five' by fifty' framed tent. The tent will be erected on the Friday before Family Day and up through the weekend. Missy will get the Taylor Rental logo to put on our website and the advertising materials.

Our Family Day subcommittee includes Michelle, Tuni, Keith, Gerry, Missy and Jeannette. In the following days they met to further develop the programs including food trucks and with Chelsea to discuss set up, programs for kids etc.

Given our current financial status Mike made a motion to allocate up to \$ 35,000 each for Family Day and Parade expenses. The motion passed unanimously.

Our biggest sale items are the commemorative coins. Some of the numbered have been reserved for special programs. It was suggested that we make some of these available for folks requesting a specific numbered coin. Jeannette and Kate will research this further.

The committee will also make a request for a Legislative Grant from the State Senate or House of Representatives.

Mike reported on the progress of the tree project. With Randy, he visited Central Nurseries to see if they would have the Linden trees Pete Morgan, NK Tree Warden suggested for planting. Lindens are known to grow tall and straight and they are excellent pollinators. It is our plan to plant one Linden in each of the eight villages of North Kingstown. The financing of the trees is in place coming from donations from several organizations and individuals.

Mike will be meeting with Fire Chief Scott Kettelle and Pete Morgan to go over potential sites for the plantings. Missy mentioned that given our financial projections for needs through the rest of the year, there may be remaining monies that could go into a dedicated tree fund for the community. North Kingstown Public Works and the Tree Warden have funds to take down trees but not to replant. We could set up a dedicated tree fund to dispense whatever funds are remaining over a period of time, perhaps working with the Conservation Commission. This would be another gift and promise coming from the 350<sup>th</sup> committee. Matt made a motion to create a subcommittee to further investigate this possibility. Randy seconded the motion which passed unanimously. The subcommittee will include Mike, Matt, Missy, Randy, Keith and Gerry.

Michelle reported on the ongoing efforts for the History Hunt. All twenty-two sites have been chosen and she and interns working with her are testing each site and we will plan to start promoting the event at the Arts Festival in Wilson Park in early August.

The second May meeting of the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary committee was held on May 30<sup>th</sup> with Kate, Randy, John, Bill, Gerry, Missy, Mike, Palmer and Keith participating.

Under New Business the group discussed sending thank you notes to all the speakers and to other contributors to our different programs including those who contributed to the silent auction. We believe a handwritten card with the 350 logo on it would be best. Mike made a motion to order one hundred of this type of card. At Keith's suggestion, we could sign cards at our next meeting.

Our speaker series presentation on the village of Allenton will be moved from the First Baptist Church of North Kingstown to the Town Council chambers due to space and parking limitations.

Sign-A-Rama prepared a sample and a quote for banners for each of the participating groups in the parade. The Parades sub-committee will review this further and make their recommendations.

Matt earlier submitted an idea for the 350<sup>th</sup> committee to sponsor an essay writing contest on North Kingstown and national history with a cash scholarship prize to the winners from both the high school and the Wickford or Davisville Middle Schools. All agreed it was a good idea. We will have to be sure the program is in place prior to the end of summer with essays received by the end of September so that we could present the awards at Founders Day. Matt was asked to contact the schools as soon as possible with our proposal.

## June

The first meeting of June was a small one, held on June 13<sup>th</sup> with Missy, Haley, Keith, Kate, John and Gerry attended the meeting.

The next full meeting was scheduled for the 27<sup>th</sup> of June with committee business for the first half hour followed by Rev. Evan Howard sharing a short video presentation on North Kingstown and an offer to build a full video on the town and the 350<sup>th</sup> celebration.

Following the success of our Gala event, Missy will tweak our sponsorship outreach to relate more to Family Day and the Parade involvement and representation. A conversation on banners and other signage to use at both Family Day and in the Parade including a full sponsorship banner that can be used in multiple locations at different times. HistWick and the 350<sup>th</sup> committee will share a tent at the 350<sup>th</sup> celebration.

Haley continued to meet with Taylor Rental on our needs for Family Day and Missy continued to court potential sponsors for our remaining events.

The second meeting in June occurred on the 27<sup>th</sup>, well attended with Matt, Jeannette, Michelle, Gerry, John, Mike, Haley, Missy, Randy and Rev. Evan Howard and Peter Vogt joining us to talk about the video they propose to present.

Evan presented a first edit video to promote the town and the celebration using current video and drone footage along with old photos to give a view of our past, our present and our hopes for the future. He also had written an original song to accompany the video. The response from the committee members was overwhelmingly positive. The committee had a full range of suggestions as to areas and events that could be added to the program as it goes forward, focusing on each village in North Kingstown, our parks, bike paths, Wickford Fire, the new Ken McDonald sculpture in Library Park and others. No shortage of good ideas. We hope to present the final version at Founders Day in October.

We continue to get rave reviews for the Speaker Series. All have been captured by our videographer and are up on the town's YouTube channel.

Haley gave an extensive overview of the activities planned for Family Day, for both adults and kids. There will be a band, food trucks, a petting zoo. Non-profit and other community organizations will be able to set up information booths but selling of goods from the stands will not be permitted.

Taylor Rental is becoming an important sponsor through in-kind donations for the use of tents and generators at the event. Their logo has been added to our promotional materials for Family Day and going forward. Some of the organizations invited to participate include first responders, the police and fire departments, the State Police, the National Guard, Smith's Castle, the Gilbert Stuart Museum, the North Kingstown Educational Foundation, Wickford Art Association and other groups.

Haley said that there will be a shuttle bus circulating through town to bring folks from the different parking areas to the event.

Mike covered the ongoing planning for the tree planting program. We have the financing in place and the nursery that can get us the lindens will be ready to deliver them. Mike asked the other sub-committee members for suggestions for locations to plant the trees. We will report back to the committee by late July with the final plans to accomplish our goal of a tree in every village.

Randy wanted to congratulate Tree Warden Peter Morgan and his wife for their work in beautifying Veteran's Park, planting flowers and decorative shrubs and working with Public Works to clean up brush and make the park more open. Mike made a motion to ask the Town Council to recognize their work on behalf of the community which passed unanimously.

## **July**

The first committee meeting for July occurred on July 12<sup>th</sup> with Matt, Jeannette, John, Haley, Mike, Bill, Missy and Gerry attending. Michelle participated by phone for the first part of the meeting which focused on the History Hunt

Michelle said the planning for the History Hunt was going well. Almost all the videos conducted with Tim on the sites for the Hunt have been completed along with location stories to add emphasis to the event. Michelle and Tim are pulling together historic photos of sites along with residents who were associated with each location. Twenty of the twenty-two sites have been filled, next week they will be at Casey Farm and Gilbert Stuart Museum to complete the filming.

Four URI interns have helped Michelle on this project. It is estimated that driving across all locations will take about two hours and folks will spend about ten minutes at each location. There may be opportunities to share the History Hunt videos with Evan Howard who is working on the full video of our celebration.

For promotion of the History Hunt there will be a series of Trivia Tuesday e-mails. The interns will also join us at our table at the Art Festival to promote the event and to sign up those interested in both Trivia Tuesdays and in the History Hunt itself. Our goal is to get five hundred families to participate in the program.

Family Day will also offer us the opportunity to promote the History Hunt. We will need to get materials on the Hunt to the Senior Center, the Recreation Department, the Libraries, the Chamber of Commerce etc. We will have tents and tables for both the 350<sup>th</sup> committee and HistWick at the Family Day to help in promoting our activities.

Mike reported on the ongoing progress with the Tree Planting program. We are working with Public Works and Planning on siting the trees. Our finances for the planting are in place. Missy succeeded in obtaining a \$ 500 contribution from Navigant Credit Union for the program. Missy has been in contact with Dr. Charles Yurgalevitch, a noted arborist from New York city who would be able to give a presentation to the town on tree planting and care as part of the speaker series in August. We will follow up on that opportunity.

The 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parade will be held on October 5<sup>th</sup>. Bill spoke about the need to get as many marching bands as possible, perhaps the Narragansett and South Kingstown High School bands might be available. Matt said that we must get the invitations out as soon as possible.

Scouts, militias floats, trolleys etc. etc. Kate is managing a spreadsheet with all who have been contacted so far. We have money in the budget for all these groups.

Questions were raised about regulations for parade participants and the need to get waivers signed for liability. Kate is working with the Town Attorney on this.

Missy will be meeting with the new director of the North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce to discuss the 350<sup>th</sup> celebration and Missy also reported that Navigant Credit Union is donating \$2500 toward our programs in addition to the \$ 500 for the tree program.

Matt thanked Missy for all her great work on the Celebration. Early on we felt constrained in our efforts based on our projected finances, now we have the resources to use for all our programs, the Parade, Family Day, the speaker series.

There was a limited discussion on choosing the Grand Marshall for the Parade. More discussion will follow at our next meeting.

Our second meeting in July was held on the 25<sup>th</sup> with Matt, Jeannette, Mike, Palmer, Bill, Keith, John, Kate and Missy attending.

On the program finances we learned that Representatives Bob Craven and Julie Casimiro obtained a \$ 7500 legislative grant for the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary Family Day celebration.

As reported at our last meeting, Navigant Credit Union made a large donation to our projects and they will be opening their new branch bank office at the Walmart Plaza on July 30<sup>th</sup>. Town Manager Ralph Mollis will be there and will present them with two of our commemoration coins for in thanks for their support. Missy reported that the Blue Bus Foundation has donated \$500 for the celebration and may disburse additional funds in the future for the tree program.

Mike spoke on the efforts to site the trees. He had visited potential sites with Tree Warden Peter Morgan and Public Works tree liaison Brynn McNamee for their recommendations and had shared their thoughts with Planning Director Nicole LaFontaine. Nicole responded with detailed suggestions as to the feasibility of some of the suggested sites. Mike will continue to work to find sites acceptable to all. The goal remains to have the trees purchased, delivered and planted by the first or second week of September.

As discussed at the last meeting we added one more speaker to the speaker series, Dr. Charles Yurgalevitch, former Director of the New York Botanical Garden who will discuss successful tree planting projects in historic towns and villages in the Town Council chamber on August 22<sup>nd</sup>. As we are doing with all presentations this one will be recorded and available after the presentation on the town YouTube channel.

In other business Missy submitted her invoice for the work she has accomplished on our behalf. All expressed our gratitude for her efforts which have raised over \$ 100,000 for our programs. The invoice will be paid on July 26<sup>th</sup>.

The History Hunt will be operational in a few days.

Family Day is shaping up to be a fabulous event. Haley was unable to be with us as she was meeting with Rockwell Amusement to arrange the carnival rides for the event. There will be a petting zoo, inflatable kids' games including an obstacle course, a foam party, face painting, celebrity cartoon characters, a great band, food trucks, magicians and a merry go round.

Local not-for-profit and church groups will be able to set up tents and tables at the event to help celebrate our history. The event will take place on Saturday, September 14<sup>th</sup> at Wilson Park.

Matt has spoken with Rhode Island National Guard commandant Callahan and they will support the event and try to arrange a helicopter fly-by.

The VFW will set up a beer tent for the event.

For the Parade, the town attorney has reviewed the liability waiver forms and said they were appropriate for the event. Those groups who have agreed to participate have signed the waivers.

Kate will prepare a spreadsheet that shows which groups and individuals are committed to participate and which are pending including Miss Rhode Island and Miss Wheelchair Rhode Island. Kate also asked if we have invited other fire departments to be in the parade. Jeannette said that we will have the parking lots at the high school available for staging the start of the parade.

Matt suggested that we recognize those residents over one hundred years of age as part of our program and prepare a certificate of recognition. Jeannette said that she could develop a list of these centenarians.

Missy reported that the SO RI magazine will produce a feature on the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in their September issue. The committee agreed to place an ad in the program to promote the dates for all our upcoming events and include the logos of our sponsors.

For the legislative grant we have received we will get a photo of the grant being given to the town by Representatives Craven and Casimiro which will be put on the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary website.

## August

On August 8<sup>th</sup>, the committee met again. Those present included Matt, Michelle, Mike, Kate, Jeannette, John, Missy and Haley.

Matt thanked all the members of the committee for all our efforts so far and reminded us that we are less than five months from the finish line.

We have \$ 98,626 in funds in our accounts including the \$ 44,000 in the HistWick account. To date Haley has spent \$ 17,832 on Family Day and estimates that she has \$ 9,300 left in her budget.

Kate indicated that our website is continually updated and that we are disseminating our information on social media including the tree project. Michelle asked that the History Hunt be included on all our social media outreach.

Matt asked if we had any metrics on the number of visitors to our website. Kate will check on this. He also asked if we promote purchasing our coins on the website but also we may want to start giving away coins to individuals for exceptional service to the community.

The committee also decided to place ads in the two local newspapers to publicize Family Day, the History Hunt and the Parade.

For the Family Day Haley announced that we will have three amusement rides as part of Family Day including a Merry-go-Round sponsored by Revolution Wind. There will be a slide, a dragon spinner, nine-hole miniature golf, twelve carnival games. We will need a banner to show who has sponsored the rides. There will also be face painting stations, giant Legos. The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts will help erect the games and help with crafts.

There will be many food truck choices and Taylor Rental will supply the cotton candy machine.

Haley has shuttle buses and drivers to bring folks from the parking lots at Wickford El and other areas. The shuttles will run on continuous loops through the village for five hours.

All Family Day details will be included with the Water Bill residents will receive in early September.

Michelle reported that planning for the History Hunt is completed. It will be launched to coincide with Tim Cranston's Walk in Wickford on August 24. The Hunt will be promoted at the presentation of 'Grease' at the Town Beach on August 17<sup>th</sup> and will also have promotional tables

at Casey Farms and the Food Pantry in the next weeks. The Senior Center and HistWick will promote the event to their members as well.

Matt indicated that we need to get the information about the Essay Contest to the high school and middle schools with themes and rules regarding length of the essay, the final date for submission and what the prizes will be.

### **September**

The first meeting of the committee for September was held on September 5<sup>th</sup>. Matt, Michelle, Palmer, Randy, John, Mike and Haley attended the meeting.

Michelle reported on her efforts to spur interest in the History Hunt. She has held promotional events at the Farmers Market at Casey Farm and is working with the Senior Center to arrange a bus tour of the sites for interested seniors. HistWick will send out another reminder to the membership and Kate will push out another announcement on the North Kingstown Social Media pages.

For the tree project the committee formally approved the \$ 2006.90 payment to Central Nurseries for the trees and their delivery to the town Public Works Dept. which will occur in the next few days. Kate will make a press announcement about the tree program.

Haley said that all was in order for Family Day. Volunteers should meet at the welcome table in the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary tent. Haley will be there by 7 am. Matt thanked Haley for all her good work on the program.

Earlier in the week Matt had written to the committee about a proposed land acknowledgement proclamation with reference to the Narragansett people. The proclamation is being reviewed by the North Kingstown Town Attorney and will likely be discussed at the September 23 Town Council meeting. We will discuss this further at the next Town Meeting

Matt suggested that we find a means to recognize the town's centenarians in this sesquicentennial anniversary year, perhaps with commemorative coins. It appears that we have seven residents who have reached this age.

Parade planning is moving fast, the parade will be organized into divisions for example, the school department representatives with the school marching bands. Sports teams, public safety groups, the state police, the Rhode Island Aviation Hall of Fame, the Seabee Museum, Veterans Groups, and state and local government officials. Religious organizations and other community groups are also welcome. At our next meeting we will 'put the meat on the skeleton.'

The Essay contest as part of Founders Day is going forward. We have six judges for the essays and the winning essays will read their essays as part of the program.

Matt suggested that we need to be thinking of a Final Report to be presented to the Town Council by January 2025 to include a financial statement and recognition of all sponsors and individuals who supported our programs. Mike volunteered to write this up with help from others on the committee.

The committee held a regular meeting on September 19<sup>th</sup> with Matt, Jeannette, Palmer, Melissa, Keith, Kate, Haley and Randy in attendance.

The meeting's primary focus was on the upcoming parade scheduled for 1 pm on Saturday, October 5<sup>th</sup>.

Haley and Kate will provide walkie-talkies that will be needed by parade staff monitoring the parade. Traffic signs and cones will be set up at NKHS to help participants know where to assemble.

Ali Hornung, Miss Rhode Island 2024, will be in the parade. The committee voted to donate \$1,000 toward her community efforts as the reigning Miss Rhode Island.

The initial budget for the NK350th parade was \$35,000. An additional \$7,500 was received in the form of a legislative grant, making the new budget \$42,500. Funds remaining from the NK350th Family Day will be rolled into the budget for the NK350th parade, if needed.

The Grand Marshals of the Parade will be WWII veteran George Silva and Korean War veteran Dorothy (Dottie) Madusky. Both will ride in convertibles driven by members of VFW Post 152

The Parade sub-committee will again meet with the public safety groups in town, the police and fire departments and EMS personnel. The NKFD Color Guard and Engine 1 will be in the parade.

Miss Rhode Island and Miss Teen Rhode Island will be in the parade in vehicles provided by Paul Bailey's.

Randy Wietman will serve as the announcer for the parade from the reviewing stand in front of the Boston Neck Road Town Hall building.

Public Parking: Parking will be made available to the public at Wickford Middle School, Wickford Elementary School, the Town Hall, and at the Municipal Office Building. Public parking will be free and available on a first-come basis. Parking at North Kingstown High School will be for parade participants. Eight (8) spaces at the Town Hall will be reserved for NK350 sponsors.

Student volunteers from NKHS have been requested. Volunteers will primarily be used to help stage parade participants in the assembly areas at NKHS and to keep the parade order of march flowing correctly. A short discussion was held concerning the dispersal of parade participants upon arrival at Wilson Park and the use of the blue recreation bus/buses to return parade participants to NKHS. Sports activities are planned for Wilson Park in the afternoon.

Other Business: Haley brought up the Christmas tree lighting in Updike Park scheduled for December 5, 2024. She suggested that the NK350th Anniversary Steering Committee fund a holiday drone show. She took an action to research drone show vendors and costs and to report them at the next regular meeting of the committee.

### **October**

The first meeting in October was held on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Matt, Mike, Gerry, Jeannette, Kate, Keith and Randy in attendance.

The focus of the meeting was on the upcoming Parade. Kate distributed 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Volunteer pins. We are under budget for the parade. The only bills outstanding are for overtime for Public Works, Police and Fire personnel at the event.

There will be one stage platform for the reviewing stand at the Boston Neck Road Town Hall and forty folding chairs for guests.

The parade final order of March will be announced on Friday but will include:

Over forty fire trucks, both modern and antique, coming from towns all over southern New England.

The Parade Marshals

Town Officials

The Ancient Order of Hibernians Pipe and Drums band

The State Police

Representative Seth Magaziner and our State Representatives and Senators

The North Kingstown Public Works Department

The School Committee and the high school and middle school bands and students from the different elementary schools.

The North Kingstown Educational Foundation

The North Kingstown Independent Bus Contractors

Four military veterans' groups

Military Vehicles

The Boston Windjammers Band, the Arts Council, local church groups

The Plum Beach Garden Club

Plummy the Lighthouse mascot  
The Dune Buggy  
The Shriners  
Monroe Dairy  
Classic Cars of Wickford

Matt thanked Kate for all her work on the parade.

Matt announced that all student essays had been submitted for judging and each will provide a ranked order for each submission which will be tallied to announce the winners for both Middle School and High School scholarship awards.

The committee met again on Thursday, October 24<sup>th</sup> with Bill, John, Gerry, Mike, Kate, Missy, Randy, Haley and Jeannette in attendance.

Under New Business the committee discussed supporting Smith's Castle's 'Christmas at the Castle' as the history of the 'Castle' is intertwined with the history of North Kingstown. They asked if they could use our 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary logo as part of their marketing efforts.

Christmas at the Castle is a big fundraiser for the organization, and they usually charge an \$ 8 person admission fee. Smith's Castle President John Dower has said that the program raises between \$4000 and \$ 5000 each year to support their programs. This year's event is scheduled for Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup>.

From our successful fundraising efforts, we do have a significant sum of money remaining that is available for other programs in the community that reflect our efforts to promote the history of our community in different ways.

Our discussion revolved around possibly donating \$ 5,000 to Smith's Castle for this year's event. One concern was that all our programs this year have been free to the public and if we choose to subsidize the event then admission should be free.

Matt said that if this is marketed as a 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary supported event it would fit into our schedule for the remainder of the year, and it would not interfere with the Wickford Village Association's programs in the village that weekend.

Kate mentioned that the programs that had been run by other organizations throughout the year could also have benefitted from our support, but again, we have only supported programs that featured free admission. Perhaps there are other organizations that focus on local history who also need help.

Mike made a motion to offer Smith's Castle \$ 5,000 to support their program with the understanding that this donation would underwrite all admission costs to the event for the weekend and to form a sub-committee to see what other groups might qualify for support. The motion passed unanimously and at future meetings as we get closer to the end of the year we will decide how to allocate our remaining funds for other causes and programs.

The Wickford Village Association Festival of Lights.

This event will be held in Wickford Village from December 5<sup>th</sup> through December 8<sup>th</sup>. Haley proposed participating in this program with ice sculptures celebrating the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of North Kingstown, one precut with the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary logo and the second, a snowman carved on-site in Updike Park. There is consensus that this is a good idea and Mike made a motion to spend \$ 3,150 for the sculptures and transportation to Updike Park. The motion passed unanimously.

Missy suggested that at the Festival of Lights we could use the GOBO lenses with our logo that we purchased for the Gala to project the logo on the side of the Gregory Building during the festival. We own the lenses but would have to rent the projector. Missy will check out the cost.

Founders Day will be celebrated on Saturday the 26<sup>th</sup> of October in the Town Council Chamber.. As Jackson will be videorecording Tim's talk at Elm Grove Cemetery, his father will do the recording of the Founder's Day program. Ralph will be the keynote speaker, focusing on the events and programs the committee produced in this 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. Matt will then announce the winners of the essay contest, the winners will read their essays to the audience and then they will be presented with their award checks, \$ 1,000 to the high school winner and \$ 500 to the middle school winner, a certificate of recognition from the committee and a numbered commemorative coin. All other essay contestants will also receive a certificate and a commemorative coin.

A highlight of the program will be the first screening of the 350<sup>th</sup> Celebration Video that he and Peter Vogt have produced over the last few months.

At the end of this ceremony, we will leave the building and cross Reynolds Avenue for a dedication of one of the trees that have been planted as part of our 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary tree program.

A discussion followed on the planning for our event that will recognize the National Park Service's naming North Kingstown as Rhode Island's World War II Heritage Community. This event will be held on December 7<sup>th</sup> at the Chapel in the Pines as the Seabee Museum. This is also the day that the town's Parades Committee traditionally holds a ceremony at the Town Dock in honor of the people and the ships that were lost as a result of the bombing of Pearl

Harbor on that day in 1941. Most of the committee members favored including the Pearl Harbor remembrance as part of the World War II Heritage Community program. Others thought it should be separate. The committee eventually decided to include both programs within the overall program.

## **November**

The first meeting in November was held on November 3 and attendees included Gerry, Keith, Missy, Haley, Matt, Mike and Kate.

**Finances:** Program finances have been consolidated as all the funds collected by HistWick on behalf of the committee have been turned over to the town and the HistWick sub-account has been closed. We continue to contact the two remaining sponsors to redeem their pledge of financial support for out anniversary programs. Both Missy and Kate are in contact with these groups.

As the last major event of the calendar, Founders Day, was a successful event in October, in November the committee turned to wrapping up the remaining planning details with an objective of preparing a final report for the Town Council at their meeting in late January. The remaining programs included helping to sponsor:

- 1) the Festival of Lights held in Updike Park in Wickford in the first full weekend of December
- 2) and the ceremony announcing North Kingstown's National Park Service recognition as the state's only World War II Heritage Community. Both the Quonset and Davisville naval bases were instrumental in the American success in the Second World War

For the Festival of Lights Haley said that she had been able to arrange for two ice sculptures for the event to be held on Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup> including one with our 350<sup>th</sup> Logo to be fabricated ahead of time and transported to Updike Park and a ice sculpture snowman to be carved on site. Both will be lit in different colors to add festivity to this wonderful outdoor program for the entire community.

The ceremony for the naming of North Kingstown as the WWII Heritage Community was scheduled for Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at the Chapel in the Pines at the Seabee Museum at the entrance to Quonset to be held in conjunction with the annual community memorial service for those men and women lost at Pearl Harbor on December 7<sup>th</sup> 1941. Committee vice-chairman Randy Wietman and chairman Matt McCoy and Town Administrative Assistant Kate Glass would be directing the planning for the event.

The committee agreed to hire our videographer for the event and to provide up to \$ 1500 for refreshments and other materials to be used as part of the program. The motion passed unanimously.

In other committee activity we will be providing a check for \$ 5,000 in support of Smith's Castle's annual Christmas at the Castle program, also held on the weekend of December 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. Through our support, all activities, games and programs will be provided at no charge to all visitors this year, in keeping with our efforts to make all 350<sup>th</sup> associated activities available to all in the community.

The committee discussed the desire to have dedication plaques at all the eight Linden trees to include recognition of our 350<sup>th</sup> celebration and the names of those organizations and individuals who provided the financing for the trees. A motion was made to purchase individual plaques which passed unanimously.

Keith mentioned that Chelsea Dumas, head of the Recreation Department was applying for a \$200,000 Rhode Island State grant to hire the artist who built the troll structures in Ninigret Park in Charlestown to install troll structures in a North Kingstown site as part of a tourism incentive for the community. Keith asked if our committee would write a letter of support for this effort as the Arts Council has written a letter in support. By consensus the committee asked Matt to write the letter of support on our behalf.

As part of their senior project, several North Kingstown High School students in Mrs. Mason's class are planning to produce a 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary community cookbook and they asked for our permission to use our logos and other marketing materials as part of their program. A motion was made to allow use of the logo which passed unanimously.

There was discussion as to who owns the rights to the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Video produced by the Rev. Evan Howard that was shown as part of the celebration of Founders Day and based on the work of Rev. Howard and his associate Peter Vogt. The 350<sup>th</sup> committee provided some financial support for the program, but Rev. Howard made the production. The committee indicated that we would like to be sure that the images on the video are recognized as specific to our celebration and would not be featured in other programs, commercial or non-commercial. Rev. Howard would like to hold the copyright to the original song he wrote for the video. The committee had no problem with that but would like to formalize the town's ownership of the video. We are very grateful to Rev. Howard and Mr. Vogt for all their efforts in making this fine representation of our community for our sesquicentennial anniversary.

The committee met next on November 21<sup>st</sup> and attendees included Haley, Kate, Mike, Jeannette, Gerry, Keith, Matt and Randy

Matt thanked all of us for our efforts to make our yearlong celebration such a success.

Finances: Kate covered our current expenses and anticipated expenses as well as a summary of our overall financial position. Outstanding were the payments for the last event of the Speaker Series, the plaques for the trees, and \$ 1,850 for the Pearl Harbor Memorial event for December 7<sup>th</sup> which will be accompanied by the recognition of North Kingstown as the WWII Heritage Community for Rhode Island.

Kate indicated that we have approximately \$ 45,000 remaining in our accounts with several outstanding pledges. We have also given Smith's Castle \$ 5,000 toward the Christmas in the Castle celebration.

At the next meeting we will make a distribution of our remaining funds on community projects.

Randy and Matt discussed the details of the Pearl Harbor Memorial and the WWII Heritage Community programs on December 7<sup>th</sup>. Various state and federal dignitaries have been invited to attend. The President of the Naval War College will be on the program and the Rev. Lee Hargrove will be the chaplain. There will be a wreath laying memorial service as part of the memorial to those lost. The event, tentatively titled 'the past into the Future' will feature local residents from the service of George Silva through to the local Sea Cadets and will be recorded and posted on the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration website. We have the approval of the National Park Service to use their logo in our promotion of these events. Matt has arranged for WWII Victory Medallions and special lapel pins which can be distributed as appropriate to the attendees.

## **December**

One meeting of the committee was held in December on Thursday the 19<sup>th</sup>. Attendees included Haley, Kate, Mike, Jeannette, John, Matt, Keith, Bill, Randy and Gerry.

Most of the activities had been successfully completed, our participation in the Festival of Lights and our financial support of Smith's Castle's 'Christmas at the Castle' were appreciated and the tasks at hand were to finalized our finances prior to preparing a final report on the 350<sup>th</sup> celebration to the Town Council. This included distributing remaining available monies for use by community organizations and community projects.

We currently have \$ 15,000 at Bank of Rhode Island and another \$ 23,000+ in Town of North Kingstown accounts. According to Kate net of potential outstanding bills we should have close to \$ 36,000 to distribute to other local groups or causes. Kate also shared a list of local organizations/projects that might be considered for some financial assistance.

The following decisions were made by the committee following lengthy discussion.

- a) John Gibbons made a motion, seconded by Keith, to allocate \$ 10,000 toward a project to promote North Kingstown by placing four new signs at entrances to the town that would include mention of North Kingstown as Rhode Island's only World War II Heritage City and other notable items of North Kingstown history. The motion passed unanimously.
- b) Mike made a motion , seconded by Randy, to use \$ 5,000 of the monies to establish a legacy tree planting program to help the town plant and replace trees in all villages, with the hope that this seed money would encourage other residents and organizations to contribute to make this a vibrant fund for many years into the future. The motion passed unanimously.
- c) Randy made a motion, seconded by Mike to provide \$ 10,000 in seed money for a projected North Kingstown celebration of our nation's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary to be held in 2026. The motion also sets aside \$ 5,000 to help in the planning and production of another Family Day in Wilson Park in 2025, based on the success of the 2024 Family Day. Haley will coordinate this effort, which will also include fundraising from local businesses and residents. The motion passed unanimously.
- d) Mike made a motion, seconded by Gerry, to set aside \$ 1,000 for final marketing efforts, ads to thank sponsors and those who worked on our programs and other miscellaneous items that may come up before we close the books on the 350<sup>th</sup> Celebration. The motion passed unanimously.
- e) Mike made a motion, seconded by Keith, to donate \$ 1,000 to the Seabee Museum in thanks for their help in both the Speaker Series and in the ceremony on December 7<sup>th</sup> in remembrance of those lost at Pearl Harbor and the ceremony where North Kingstown was recognized as Rhode Island's WWII Heritage City. The motion passed unanimously.
- f) Mike made a motion, seconded by Haley, to provide \$ 2,500 to the Veterans Memorial Scholarship Fund. The motion passed unanimously.
- g) Some months past the committee authorized helping fund one of the summer Harbor Fire events but never sent a payment. Mike made a motion, seconded by Randy, to send \$ 1,000 to Joellen Wunner to fulfill our obligation. The motion passed unanimously.

After all these distributions there will be approximately \$ 2,157 remaining in our accounts, if the contribution from Goldman Sachs is received the amount will be over \$ 3,000.

Several committee members wanted to find a way to thank Historic Wickford, Inc. for all their support, for hosting the 350<sup>th</sup> Committee's fund-raising account at Centreville Bank, for their donations to the Speaker Series, the Legacy Tree program and other committee programs. HistWick has decided to fund another speaker series in 2025, and remaining Committee funds

could be used to supplement the budget for that very popular program. This will be discussed again in January when we close out our programs.

A final report on all our activities will be presented to the Town Council at their meeting on January 27<sup>th</sup> and it is hoped that all members of the Committee will be available that evening for a group photo to commemorate the work of the Committee.

Matt thanked all of us for our efforts on behalf of the 350th Anniversary Celebration.

All members of the Committee made a motion, seconded by all members of the Committee, to thank Matt for his outstanding leadership and tremendous efforts to ensure that all our programs were successful. The motion passed unanimously.