

THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE NEW HAMPSHIRE - IRELAND TRADE COUNCIL

MEETING ATTENDEES

Hon Sharon Carson, Chair

State Senators

Hon. Regina Birdsall

State Representatives

Hon. Dennis Malloy

Secretary of State

Hon. Steve Shurtleff

Dept. of Business & Economic Affairs

Chase Hagaman

University System of New Hampshire

Michele Dillon

Public Members

Julie Demers

NH Tech Alliance

Darragh Madden

Irish Electric

Guests

Adam Boltik

Alan Dillingham

Peter Lally

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

November 21, 2025

Department of Business and Economic Affairs

100 North Main Street, Suite 100

Caswell Conference Room

Meeting called to order at 1405 by Senator Sharon Carson, Chair

Senator Birdsall made a motion to accept the minutes of September 19, 2025, seconded by Representative Malloy

Motion carried unanimously.

Peter Lally, head of the Spectacle Live company, spoke to the council about a potential Irish festival in New Hampshire. Mr. Lally's company handles operations, marketing, and events for venues in Laconia and Nashua in NH and in Lowell, Plymouth, and Lexington, MA.

Mr. Lally noted that his company has hosted an Irish festival in Lowell for 6 of the last 7 years. Guinness is a major sponsor and the event is available free or charge. It uses indoor and outdoor space in Lowell (with a rain plan that has only been needed once) and features music, food, and the arts including local arts vendors.

Mr. Lally mentioned that he wanted to replicate the Lowell model in NH; usually the event is in September ("Halfway to St. Patrick's Day") but is open to other ideas and opportunities.

Senator Carson, Chair, noted that this would be new for New Hampshire but that there are opportunities to work with the New Hampshire Liquor Commission given its connections in Ireland and that there are several competitive Irish step dancing schools in NH that could be featured.

Mr. Lally noted that Guinness was a small sponsor at first, but by the third year they were able to enter into a longer term agreement with larger sponsorship, but noted that both small and big players made good sponsors; smaller sponsors often could provide product that people wanted.

Mr. Lally noted that there was a small charge for vendors to make sure they had skin in the game, but there are artists, clothing vendors, food vendors. Money from the event in Lowell is used to support the arts center but they can work on any type of cost and profit sharing arrangement that would make sense.

Senator Carson, Chair, noted that having genealogists could be a draw as people are interested in heritage, and perhaps there can be historical displays as well.



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THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

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The Council considered some options for locations, including the new Artists Alley area in Concord (near the Bank of NH stage which would allow for inside and outside opportunities) and helping to promote this as a family event.

Mr. Lally highlighted that the family-friendly nature is important; in the first year, the Lowell festival went until 11:00 PM but that few people really stayed and it was easier to end by 7:00 PM. It is not hard to find vendors and he thought it would be easy to replicate an event in Concord, though it is important to make sure there is infrastructure such as bathrooms. Spectacle Live could run things and take on more risk- but then they would need a share of the profit. They have worked with Laconia to close down Canal Street before and it is something they could do- provided they had assistance and access to necessary power, water, restrooms, etc.

The Council discussed whether they could do an “after dark” modeled in Derry, and linking it up with other activities like a 5K in Manchester or even with a state-wide theme like a restaurant week to encourage Irish heritage celebrations in the lead-up to the festival. Mr. Lally noted they are doing a 5K tied with the Lowell festival now as well. The Council considered some potential funding streams, bands, and even films at a venue like Red River Theater.

Mr. Lally noted they do 600 events a year- so they would not be limited to a timeline and the company would work with the Council to put on an event. The Council decided to form a subcommittee that would include **Chase Hagaman** (BEA), **Julie Demers** (NH Tech Alliance), **Darragh Madden** (Irish Electric), **Michele Dillon** (USNH), and **Rep. Malloy** to consider plans for a smaller event, think about timing, and cost-share. The subcommittee should work with Mr. Lally and other partners.

The Council discussed using funds for reimbursement; the Council has a non-lapsing appropriation for \$20,000 which was meant to support travel to the American Irish State Legislators’ Caucus events in Ireland in August. The process would have a pre-authorized set of expenses, approved by the Chair for airfare, lodging, and transportation and then get things approved. Senator Carson, Chair, noted that it would be best to have a cap to help cover airfare and lodging- particularly as lodging in Dublin is expensive, and she proposed a \$1,000 cap. The Council agreed that there should be a cap on flights, and that Jeanie Forrester from BEA would work with Senator Carson on approvals and work on written procedures.

Senator Birdsell noted that the aim was to use the fund for legislators which was the original plan. Michele Dillon noted that she could use a fund from UNH and that other funds could be sought for other members. Steve Shurtleff noted that for the New Hampshire Canadian Trade Council, the funds could be used for any members.

Michele Dillon noted that the Irish Consulate in Boston had a new Research and Innovation Officer and recommended that be part of the next meeting.

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for **January 16, 2026 at 2:00 PM.**

Senator Birdsell made a motion to adjourn at 15:15, seconded by Representative Malloy.
Motion carried unanimously, meeting adjourned.