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## Selectmen Appoint, Charge Permanent 12/14 Memorial Commission

By [John Voket](#)

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Photo: *John Voket*

**Town Clerk Debbie Aurelia Halstead swears in the 12-member Permanent Memorial Commission and commission clerk Lynn Kovack October 7 following a brief meeting with the Board of Selectmen during which the panel was charged and members took a few moments to introduce themselves.**

Sandy Hook families will be well represented as efforts progress toward the establishment of one or more permanent memorials in remembrance of the tragic events of 12/14.

Current and former students' families, including four parents of children lost on 12/14, as well as two architects, a landscape products supplier, an individual who has worked on grant writing projects, a former member of the Board of Education, and a public relations professional began what could be a two-year-plus mission Monday night as they were sworn in as appointed members of a Permanent Sandy Hook Memorial Commission.

The Board of Selectmen confirmed the appointments of those volunteers who will be responsible for reviewing and eventually rendering recommendations on proposed 12/14 memorials.

The newly appointed commissioners include JoAnn Bacon, Joanne Brunetti, Steffan Burns, Brian Engel, Daniel Krauss, Agni Pavlidou Kyprianou, Scarlett Lewis, Kyle Lyddy, Alan Martin, Sarah Middleleer, Tricia Pinto, and Donna Van Waalwijk.

During brief introductory remarks from panel members, Ms Middleleer, a landscape architect, said she began thinking about memorials on December 15. First Selectman Pat Llodra said her

board was particularly honored by the willingness of the Sandy Hook parents to serve on the commission.

Mrs Llodra said almost immediately after news of the shooting broke, she started receiving calls and suggestions from people around the world about ways to memorialize the victims. She said notes, plans, schematics, and offers tied to eventual permanent memorials have been archived by members of the town's Cultural Arts Commission.

"These will provide a place for your committee to start," Mrs Llodra said. The first selectman asked the committee to pay close attention to engaging the greater community and those making the suggestions that eventually rise to the top of any list of possible contenders.

She also affirmed that the committee could end up recommending not moving forward with any specific memorial project, and that it was well within reasonable expectations for that review and decisionmaking process to take as much as two years or more.

"Your job is to determine what and if it should be, when, where and how — the how is the funding. Pace yourself; the work will dictate the time," Mrs Llodra advised. "Examine all the options."

She said the committee will be supported by per diem clerk Lynn Kovack, who is an assistant in the town's Building Department. Her responsibility is to take minutes at meetings, and to be sure all meetings and public hearings are posted, advertised, and that the commission conforms to all Freedom of Information statutes.

Under the assistance of GE support staffer Anne Alzapiedi, the panel was directed to hold as many as four meetings just to settle all its organizational practices and meeting plans.

According to the charge, the 12 residents will be expected to lead the community through the process of determining the nature, location, and funding of one or more permanent memorials to honor the memory of those lost on 12/14, in order to make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen.

The panel or its leadership may also be called upon to provide interim requests for information on the process as required.

The charge goes on to state that the Permanent Memorial Commission will be expected to:

- \*Solicit ideas to be submitted for consideration and review offers and suggestions received from many interested persons and organizations, including those which have been archived by the Cultural Arts Commission and other town departments;

- \*Directly solicit input and meaningfully engage with: families of victims and survivors, Sandy Hook School faculty and staff, and Sandy Hook School parents;

\*Conduct public meetings with the Cultural Arts Commission, Library Board of Trustees, and other organizations as appropriate to solicit input;

\*Conduct public hearings for community input;

\*Work with town departments in determining available/appropriate locations;

\*Conduct all of its review and decisionmaking consistent with public processes.

\*Recommend to the Board of Selectmen, commission findings related to the nature, location, and funding of a memorial(s).

\*Conduct inquiries as the commission deems necessary.

Mrs Llodra told the volunteers she and Selectmen Will Rodgers and James Gaston, Sr, felt confident those chosen from among almost three dozen residents who offered their services were the right fit for the panel.

“You have great capacity and a diverse skill set to lead us in the right direction,” Mrs Llodra said.

Mr Gaston told the group their work will be very significant and very important.

“Be patient, get to know each other, and don’t feel it’s an imposition to ask questions,” was Mr Gaston’s advice.

Mr Rodgers said that at times, commission members might get e-mails and phone calls they didn’t ask for, “but keep the faith,” he added. Mrs Llodra reassured the group that the selectmen would be there for them to “manage those hurdles.”

Mr Rodgers told the commissioners to use the selectmen as a resource, as well as the town attorney when appropriate. He also suggested the group attend an FOI orientation conducted by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.

“Don’t rush to the end,” Mrs Llodra concluded as the group adjourned to be sworn in by Town Clerk Debbie Aurelia Halstead. “It’s important with a group of 12 to be really good listeners — and listen with your heart, as well as with your head.”