



**DRAFT**

## **Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission (VA250)**

Full Commission Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, April 16, 2024, 10:00 a.m.  
General Assembly Building  
House Room A (Lower level)

**Members and Invited Participants in Attendance:** Delegate Terry Austin (Chair), Senator Mamie Locke (Vice Chair), Carly Fiorina, Delegate Alex Askew, Chief Stephen Adkins, Diane Bechamps, Jean Ann Bolling, Jamie Bosket, Gretchen Bulova, Glora Marrero Chambers, Christy Coleman, Dennis Clark, H. Benson Dendy, Clifford Fleet, Secretary Aimee Guidera, Delegate Paul Krizek, Jerri Marr, Eric Monday, Scott Stroh, Cheryl Wilson

**Virtual Attendees:** Lauren Maloy (speaker), Justice Elizabeth McClanahan, Jackie Stone, Jeanne Zeidler

### **Call to Order and Roll Call**

Delegate Terry Austin, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:03 am and Ms. Wilson called roll. A quorum was physically present.

### **Chair's Remarks**

Delegate Terry Austin welcomed everyone, including new members Delegate Alex Askew and Delegate Paul Krizek who were appointed to the Commission last week. He thanked Delegate Plum and Delegate Fowler who served in these positions previously. Delegate Plum has agreed to continue to serve on the Commission.

Delegate Austin welcomed and introduced Carly Fiorina who is serving as VA250 National Honorary Chair to give a few remarks on recent activities. Ms. Fiorina reflected on the Commission's progress and the work it has undertaken since its inception in 2020. She reiterated the founding pillars that were established to guide the Commission and objectives to educate, engage, and inspire a commitment to the ideas and ideals upon which the Nation was founded.

A motion was made by Mr. Monday and seconded by Mr. Fleet to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2024, full commission meeting. A vote was taken and passed unanimously.

### **Cardinal News 250 Series Overview**

*Dwayne Yancey and Luanne Rife*

Ms. Rife explained that Cardinal News' mission is to tell the untold stories of the Southwest and Southside regions of Virginia, which has been largely left out of the founding of America's stories. Cardinal News created a unique brand with a newsletter and web page to host these stories and content, *Cardinal News 250*. The newsletter has over 8,300 subscribers with a 63% open rate. They are launching a new podcast this week which features Cheryl Wilson as the first guest, explaining the work of the Commission.

Mr. Yancey reflected on the most popular stories told to date, of which the role of Native Americans in the Revolution has been most read, followed by stories about black sailors, and the lead mines in Wythe County that supplied most of the ore for the war. They are working on several more stories highlighting some of the lesser-known men and women of the revolutionary era and have enlisted a core of historians to work with, including Woody Holton with University of South Carolina. Syracuse University is working on a collaboration with Cardinal News to redesign their website and create additional interactive features.

## Advisory Council Reports

### Tribal Nations Leadership Advisory Council

*Chair: Stephen R. Adkins, Chickahominy Tribe*

Chief Adkins gave an update on the VA250 Tribal Nations Leadership Advisory Council, which is made up of leaders from the Indigenous tribes in Virginia. The Council has met in-person twice, once in January and most recently in March at Colonial Williamsburg. They are committed to coming together to help ensure that Virginia's 250<sup>th</sup> is a commemoration in which every Virginian can see themselves, and that inspires hope in our collective march toward a more perfect Union.

Tribal leaders have discussed a wide array of topics including the need for accurate, complete, and truthful representation of under-told narratives, the importance of acknowledging indigenous contributions to military service, advocating for broader education on Virginia tribal history, and understanding that art, culture, and food are all part of education. The Council has also discussed the planning of the upcoming July 4th celebration in Capital Square, with programming highlighting the human expression aspect of Virginia and including speeches from indigenous leaders.

The Tribal Nations Leadership Advisory Council has a page on the VA250 website with a listing of the membership and links to past and future meeting agendas and notes. The next meeting is on May 3.

### African American Advisory Council

*Chair: Senator Mamie E. Locke*

Senator. Locke gave an update on the VA250 African American Advisory Council, which has hosted two in-person meetings, the first in January and a second in March at Fort Monroe. The 25-member council is made up of distinguished thought leaders representing organizations from across Virginia.

In March the Council met at Fort Monroe and learned about plans for the 1619 African Landing Memorial. The African Landing memorial groundbreaking will take place on August 22, 2024, and all are welcome to attend.

Advisory Council discussions have focused on making the commemoration meaningful and representative of all Virginians. They have offered input on July 4th celebrations, exhibits, historical moments and places that should be highlighted during the commemoration. Plans include cultural, artistic, and musical acts, raising awareness through media outreach and education, and involving educators and grassroots organizations.

The African American Advisory Council has established a webpage listing all Advisory Council members and links to meeting agendas and notes on the VA250 website. The next meeting will be held virtually on May 21.

## Upcoming Convenings

Cheryl Wilson gave an overview on upcoming meetings that will assemble various affinity groups across the state of Virginia, with their respective hosts. These include:

- Education Advisory Council (*Secretary Guidera*)
- Museum community (*Scott Stroh and Karen Daly, VAM*)
- Arts community (*First Lady Suzanne Youngkin and Carly Fiorina*)
- Convening associations (*Carly Fiorina*)

## **Update on Programs**

### ***A Common Cause to All (March 18-20, 2024)***

*Cliff Fleet and Cheryl Wilson*

Mr. Fleet recapped and thanked everyone who attended *A Common Cause to All* which was hosted March 18-20, noting that over 450 people from across the country participated and left inspired and informed about the planning of the 250th commemoration. Colonial Williamsburg is actively working on the 2025 conference and looks forward to hosting it again.

Ms. Wilson shared that all photos and program videos are on the VA250.org website and a summary of the event and commission expenses is listed in the materials.

### ***VMHC/JYF Joint Exhibition: Give Me Liberty: Virginia and the Forging of a Nation***

*Jamie Bosket and Christy Coleman*

Ms. Coleman provided an update on the flagship exhibition, which is nearing final design and schematic phases, and remains on schedule, on time, and within budget. She presented several images of the exhibition, and although not finalized they capture the colors, vibrancy, and contemporary feel of the panels. The exhibit builds on the initial pillars established by the Commission and includes five major areas of content. A companion book will be produced and available when the exhibit opens at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture.

Ms. Coleman shared that 14 out of 22 available venues for the panel exhibition have been booked, with only a handful remaining. Communities interested in reserving the exhibition should sign up soon. The grand opening will be Saturday, March 22, 2025.

### ***Fincastle Resolution 250<sup>th</sup>***

*Eric Monday and Ashley Webb*

Ms. Webb shared that the Western Virginia Historical Society in Roanoke will be creating four new exhibits that will be unveiled on January 18, 2025, to coincide with the signing anniversary of the Fincastle Resolutions. The four exhibits will cover western expansion, conflicts with the native people, and the signing of the Fincastle Resolutions. Programming will be created as a companion to the exhibits and will include music, foodways, games, and craftsmanship. There will also be an outreach component to the communities, and all are welcome to attend the events on January 18, in Roanoke.

### ***VA250 Mobile Museum Experience***

*Cheryl Wilson and Kate Egner Gruber*

Ms. Wilson shared that the mobile museum experience is on track, on budget, and still slated to hit the road in Fall 2024. It is tentatively titled "Out of Many One" and provided a content overview with zones outlined. Ms. Wilson shared that it is designed to engage students in civics education and travel to schools throughout Virginia.

### ***July 4 at State Capitol: A Celebration of Freedom and Our Nation's Founding***

*Carly Fiorina and Cheryl Wilson*

Ms. Wilson shared that July 4<sup>th</sup> will be hosted at the Virginia State Capitol this year. It will be an afternoon and evening event, that starts with a Square Fair on the Capitol grounds with pop-up museums, art displays, essay contests, children's activities, and a tent with performances that capture every measure of human expression. Ms. Wilson shared that the advisory councils are working closely with the VA250 team to identify performers and opportunities to engage all communities in the festivities. The Square Fair will be followed by a Grand Ceremony

that features musical acts and speakers with the theme “What does Freedom Mean”. Ms. Wilson shared that in the materials there is information on the proposed budget and an outline of activities.

Ms. Wilson also shared that on July 5<sup>th</sup> there will be a ceremony to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Thomas Jefferson’s purchase of Virginia’s Natural Bridge. Commission members are encouraged to also attend if possible.

Mr. Bosket shared that the VMHC will host a Naturalization Ceremony on the morning of July 4<sup>th</sup> and will coordinate efforts with VA250 July 4<sup>th</sup> events.

## **Development Report**

*Ben Dendy, President, Virginia Commemorations, Inc.*

Mr. Dendy shared an update on the private fundraising to date. He thanked the leadership and many volunteers for their help in outreach to private donors and companies. He recognized recent contributions from Sentara Health, Altria, Jordan Saunders, and the Landmark Foundation.

## **Staff Report**

*Cheryl Wilson*

Ms. Wilson gave an update on the following:

- Virtual meeting policy
  - The General Assembly made some changes to the state law governing virtual meeting policies to make it easier to meet virtually. The policy must be adopted annually, which will happen at the April meeting each year. The new policy will allow Commission members who live farther than 60 miles from the meeting location an automatic approval to participate electronically, and rather than only having 25% of meetings virtually the Commission is now able to host 50% of meetings virtual.
  - Mr. Dendy made a motion to accept the revised policy and it was seconded by Senator Locke. A vote was taken, and it passed unanimously.
- Legislative update
  - HB 839 and SB 117, companion bills, allow more flexibility in membership of the Commission. Former legislators who have retired from office can continue to serve on the Commission. The Chair and Vice Chair are able to appoint up to four members who are representatives of historical homes, historical sites and national park sites. Those appointments can be made after July 1, 2024.
  - Legislation also passed for a VA250 revenue sharing license plate that will be available after July 1, 2024.
  - HJR 84 passed which encourages public institutes of higher education to display the VA250 logo on all men’s and women’s athletic uniforms for the 2025-2026 athletic season.
- Marketing, licensing, outreach, and media report
  - The Commission sponsored, in conjunction with VTC, the America Bus Association’s national conference in Nashville which was very successful.
  - Outreach and media are going well. VA250 has counted nearly 100 million cumulative media impressions so far this year.
- Grant recommendations (VTC two rounds, VCA)
  - Virginia Tourism and Virginia Commission for the Arts submitted three grant cycle recommendations.
  - A motion to approve the recommendations was made by Chief Adkins and seconded by Secretary Guidera. A vote was taken and passed unanimously.

- Registration and Trademark
  - Mr. Peter Broadbent is working to establish a trademark licensing agreement that allows for the use of the logo and promotional consideration for private partners that will return a portion of the sales to VA250.

## **Spotlight on 250<sup>th</sup> Across the State**

### **Shaping the World: Conversations on Democracy (Poplar Forest)**

*Alyson Ramsey, President and CEO, Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest*

Ms. Ramsey provided an update of the project summary included in the materials. Poplar Forest is working on a Declaration of Independence educational series, which grew out of role that Poplar Forest can play in the celebration of our nation's independence. Goal is to deepen the understanding of the Declaration and its relevance in today's world.

### **Prince William local committee activities**

*Lauren Maloy, PWC Historic Communities Coordinator (Virtual)*

Ms. Maloy shared that Prince William County will host a series of events beginning in June 2024, to commemorate the Prince William County Resolves. They will also host an exhibition that focuses on local participation in the Revolution and an education day in November. All are welcome to attend, and more information can be found in the materials.

## **Adjournment**

There was no public comment. There being no further comment, a motion was made by Chief Adkins and seconded by Sen. Locke to adjourn the meeting at 11:34 am.

### **Upcoming meeting dates:**

Tuesday, July 16, 2024: 10:00 am

Tuesday, October 15, 2024: 10:00 am

Tuesday, January 7, 2025: 10:00 am