



**Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission (VA250)
Full Commission Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, July 17, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

General Assembly Building
House Room A (Lower level)

Members and Invited Participants in Attendance: Delegate Terry Austin (Chair), Chief Stephen Adkins, Delegate Alex Askew, Diane Bechamps, Dennis Clark, Christy Coleman, H. Benson Dendy, David Duncan, Sue Gerdelman, Peter Hedlund, Carly Fiorina, Delegate Paul Krizek, Julie Langan, Jerri Marr, Justice Elizabeth McClanahan, Eric Monday, Delegate Ken Plum, Katherine Rowe, Jackie Stone, Scott Stroh, Cheryl Wilson

Virtual Attendees: Glora Marrero Chambers, Kevin Hampton (speaker)

Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

Chairman Austin called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. and Ms. Wilson called roll. A quorum was physically present.

Chair's Remarks

Chairman Austin welcomed everyone and thanked the Commission members for lending their time and talent to the Commission, as they are invaluable to forming a commemoration that is meaningful to every Virginian. He shared that there would be a full agenda, and he praised the July 4 program at the State Capitol, which was a tremendous success. The live stream is archived on the website, VA250.org, and all are welcome to watch it, as there were elements that will become signatures of VA250 events.

Chairman Austin shared that at the last session of the General Assembly, House Bill 839 and Senate Bill 117 passed, allowing the Chair and Vice Chair to appoint former legislative members and up to four representatives of historic sites to the Commission. Accordingly, Senator Locke and Delegate Austin have appointed:

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.

The Honorable Kenneth R. Plum

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

Dr. Douglas Bradburn, President and CEO, Mount Vernon

Dr. Jane Kamensky, President, The Thomas Jefferson Foundation (Monticello)

Jerri Marr, Superintendent, Colonial National Historical Park

A motion was made by Delegate Krizek and seconded by Ms. Stone to approve the minutes of April 16, 2024 full commission meeting. A vote was taken and passed unanimously.

Remarks from VA250 National Honorary Chair

Carly Fiorina

Honorary Chair Fiorina thanked all who participated and supported the July 4th event at the Virginia State Capitol.

She reiterated our goals to educate all Virginians and all Americans about who we are and where we come from; engage with every community, so that every community, every Virginian sees themselves in our Nation, and to inspire people to understand the role of citizenship and recommit to the role of citizenship.

VA250 Preservation Grant Fund

Julie Langan

Ms. Langan shared that the Virginia Department of Historic Resources received \$20 million in the 2024-2026 Virginia biennial budget to initiate a grant program to support improvements at significant historic sites and history museums in Virginia in anticipation of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution and the 1776 United States Declaration of Independence (also known as the nation's semiquincentennial). She provided an overview of the timeline, eligibility, and grant guidelines for eligible projects.

Multi-state Collaborative Opportunity: “Two Lights for Tomorrow”

(April 18-19, 2025)

Kevin Hampton, Wisconsin 250 Commission

The Wisconsin 250th Commission has developed a program to mark the “One if by Land, Two if by Sea” ride of Paul Revere. On April 18, 2025, using this historical moment, “Two Lights for Tomorrow” will call for two lights to be displayed in every state house in America, followed by a day of service and volunteerism on April 19. All states have been invited to join in this initiative, and many pledged their support. Kevin Hampton of the Wisconsin 250 Commission joined the meeting virtually to give an overview of “Two Lights for Tomorrow” program and invite Virginia to participate.

Members enthusiastically approved Virginia's participation in the program.

Advisory Council Reports and Other Convenings

Tribal Nations Leadership Advisory Council

Chair: Chief Stephen R. Adkins, Chickahominy Tribe

Chief Adkins gave a summary report of the VA250 Tribal Nations Leadership Advisory Council. Many members of the Tribal Nations Leadership Advisory Council played an active role in the Independence Day celebration at the State Capitol.

The Council is planning its next meeting and is looking forward to continuing its work to ensure meaningful representation of the tribal nations' communities throughout the commemoration.

African American Advisory Council

Chair: Senator Mamie E. Locke

On behalf of Senator Locke, Chief Adkins gave the report on the VA250 African American Advisory Council which last met in May.

Education Steering Committee

Chair: Secretary Aimee Guidera

Assistant Secretary Jacobs, reporting on behalf of Secretary Guidera, shared that the Education Steering Committee is focused on three primary goals: Making History Come Alive, Spark a Civics Renaissance, and Celebrate Democracy. The first program under the committee's leadership was an essay contest, Expressions of Freedom, which was piloted in VDOE Region 2 and printed as a booklet that was distributed at the Independence Day celebration at the State Capitol on July 4th.

The committee is working on partnerships throughout the Commonwealth with educators, higher education institutions, museums, and education associations to offer opportunities for learners of all ages. Mr. Jacobs shared some of the working materials, and asked Commission members to make suggestions for any additional people or institutions who should be included in this important work.

VAM Museums Collaborative

Co-Chairs: Karen Daly (Stratford Hall) and Scott Stroh (Gunston Hall)

Mr. Stroh shared that the collaborative had just convened their first meeting in June. The first meeting included more than 50 individuals from a geographically diverse range of museums from across the Commonwealth and focused on ensuring the broad spectrum of museums are aware of the VA250 commission and the goals, priorities, and opportunities available to them when partnering with VA250. They are looking forward to hosting their next meeting in August.

Convene the Conveners

Cheryl Wilson

Ms. Wilson shared that Honorary Chair Fiorina had hosted a call with convening associations and organizations with great outreach across the Commonwealth. More than 20 convening organizations attended the call to learn more about VA250, its goals, and how they can help to engage, educate, and inspire through the Commemoration in their networks.

Development Report

Ben Dendy, President, Virginia Commemorations, Inc.

Virginia Commemorations, Inc. has raised over \$5 million dollars in cash and in-kind contributions, with many more proposals being considered. Mr. Dendy reported that a series of fundraising events are being planned across the state, with dates already scheduled in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads.

Marketing Report

Diane Bechamps, Vice President, Virginia Tourism Corporation

Ms. Bechamps reported that the July 4th event generated 658 million media impressions based on earned media. The total to date is 9 million impressions in earned media. \$5,000 was invested in radio for July 4th which generated 490,700 impressions. VTC recently did a study for VA250 on audience segmentation, which confirmed that Virginia is the target market, but there are great opportunities to market in New York, Washington, DC, and Atlanta. Ms. Bechamps recommended using video on YouTube as a way to increase exposure across the state.

Upcoming Programs / On the Horizon

A Common Cause to All (March 24-26, 2025)

Cliff Fleet

Ms. Wilson gave a report on behalf of Mr. Fleet. This year's conference will be the third and final Common Cause in the lead up to 2026. The weekend will begin with the grand opening of the signature exhibition at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture and the anniversary events of Patrick Henry's speech, "Give me Liberty, or Give me Death" at St. John's Church in Richmond, VA. All Commission members are encouraged to attend.

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

Jamie Bosket and Christy Coleman

Ms. Coleman reported that work continues on the exhibition and is going well. The current round of scripting is in the hands of the historical scholars for review and will then head to exhibit design for final production.

Staff Report

Cheryl Wilson

Ms. Wilson gave an update on several VA250 programs and initiatives:

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

More than 2,500 people registered from 76 localities of the 134 in Virginia, and seven other states.

Video footage of the Grand Ceremony, including drone video of the grand finale drone light show, can be found on the VA250 website.

Media Report

Ms. Wilson thanked Ms. Bechamps for sharing a comprehensive summary in her earlier report.

Ms. Wilson highlighted one key success metric: as of July 17, VA250 has reached 658 million earned media impressions, as compared with a total of 461 million earned media impressions in 2024, which is a significant increase.

Grant Recommendations

Ms. Wilson welcomed Mr. Hedlund who would be sharing round two of the Virginia Humanities grants. Mr. Hedlund thanked the committee who evaluated the 22 grant proposals. Of the 22 proposals, 20 have been recommended for funding and two have not been recommended with the suggestion they would be a better fit for funding through the Commission for the Arts grant program.

Approval of the grant funding requests requires 2/3 vote of members present. Hearing no discussion, Del. Austin asked for a motion to approve the recommendations of the grant committee as presented. The motion was made by Del. Askew and seconded by Mr. Dendy. The vote was taken and passed unanimously.

Upcoming Events

Ms. Wilson shared an update on upcoming programs in development and invited members to share about their upcoming events as well.

- **Bray School** opening ceremony (Friday, November 1)
- **Yorktown Tea Party** (Thursday, November 7)
- **Lafayette's Grand Tour** (Multiple locations, Fall 2024)
- **Launch of Mobile Museum** (TBD)
- **Fincastle Resolutions** (January 2025)
- **Opening of Give Me Liberty: Virginia and the Forging of a Nation** (VMHC)
- **St. John's Church:** 250th anniversary of Patrick Henry's "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" speech (March 22-23, 2025)
- **A Common Cause to All** (March 24-26, 2025)

Adjournment

There was no public comment. A motion was made by Chief Adkins and seconded by Mr. Hedlund to adjourn the meeting at 11:27 am.