



Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission (VA250)

Full Commission Meeting Minutes

Friday, January 5, 2024, 10:30 a.m.

General Assembly Building

House Committee Room B

Members and Invited Participants in Attendance: Delegate Terry Austin (Chair), Senator Mamie Locke (Vice Chair), Edward Baine, Diane Bechamps, Douglas Bradburn, Jean Ann Bolling, Jamie Bosket, Gretchen Bulova, Gloria Marrero Chambers, Christy Coleman, H. Benson Dendy, David Duncan, Delegate Hyland (Buddy) Fowler, Secretary Aimee Guidera, Peter Hedlund, Kathy Jordan, Julie Langan, Jerri Marr, Eric Monday, Delegate Kenneth Plum, Katherine Rowe, Scott Stroh

Virtual Attendees: Chief Stephen Adkins, Sue Gerdelman, Justice Elizabeth McClanahan, Jane Kamensky

Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

Delegate Terry Austin, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:33 am and Ms. Wilson called roll. A quorum was physically present.

A motion was made by Chief Adkins and seconded by Mr. Dendy to approve the minutes of the October 17, 2023 full commission meeting. A vote was taken and passed unanimously.

Chair's Remarks

Delegate Terry Austin welcomed everyone and announced the addition of two new Commission members since the last meeting: Justice (Ret.) Elizabeth A. McClanahan and Gloria Marrero Chambers. Delegate Austin then recognized and thanked departing members, Senator Thomas Norment and Delegate Kenneth Plum, for their leadership and service to the Commission.

Development Report

Mr. Dendy reported that fundraising for the commemoration has seen early success, with over \$2.6 million raised, including a generous \$1 million gift from Dominion Energy and support from 32 donors, including 4 in-kind gifts.

Mr. Dendy recognized that Governor Youngkin's inclusion of funds for VA250 in his proposed budget signifies his strong commitment to and Virginia's leadership role in this nationwide commemoration.

Mr. Dendy reported that VA250 is launching a strategic fundraising campaign. In effect, it will be a public-private partnership for the purpose of celebrating the commemoration. The governor's commitment to VA250, coupled with Dominion Energy's dedication and that of other donors, is expected to inspire corporations and individuals to support VA250 and recognize Virginia's critically important role in the founding of our nation.

Marketing Report

Ms. Bechamps, Marketing Chair, reported that VA250 is actively engaging with the travel industry, with plans to make a presentation at the American Bus Association meeting in Nashville on January 16. The target audience includes motorcoach and group tour operators, along with travel industry suppliers planning for group tours through 2025 and 2026. In collaboration with VTC and historic sites across the state, VA250 plans to make a strong pitch to this important audience for traveling throughout Virginia during the 250th.

Staff participated in the VA1 Tourism Summit in Richmond in November, where Ms. Wilson presented VA250 plans to tourism professionals. The anticipation and excitement for the 250th is evident among these industry experts.

VA250's online presence is thriving, with a significant increase in website users, increasing from about 2,300 to over 20,000. Social media followers are also on the rise, particularly on Facebook, where a boosted post featuring an op-ed from Carly Fiorina, VA250 National Honorary Chair, garnered attention.

Ms. Bechamps announced the Commission has installed an exhibition in the Capitol extension exhibit space, providing visitors to the State Capitol with information about the 250th, and encouraging everyone to visit and share their experience on social media.

Staff Report

Ms. Cheryl Wilson, Executive Director, provided a report with updates, a recap of 2023 highlights, and what's on the horizon for 2024.

Ms. Wilson reported that Governor Youngkin's introduced budget included significant funding for the semi quincentennial, with \$20 million to support the operational activities of the Commission, and \$35 million to the Department of Historic Resources to establish a competitive grant program to support infrastructure improvements at historic sites in Virginia. Additionally, legislation was introduced in the 2024 General Assembly Session for a revenue sharing special license plate and additional appointments to the VA250 Commission, providing for participation of Virginia's historic homes and national park sites.

To ensure that the commemoration is meaningful to all Virginians, Ms. Wilson shared that Advisory Councils have been established to bring the voices of community leaders, experts, and key stakeholders to the planning table. Convening councils including:

African American Advisory Council – Chaired by Senator Locke

Tribal Leaders Advisory Council – Chaired by Chief Adkins

Education workgroup – Led by Secretary Guidera

Museums & historic sites – Led by Scott Stroh, President, VAM

Ms. Wilson summarized the highlights of the Commission’s work in 2023, including the launch of three robust grant programs, co-hosting the first national event “A Common Cause to All”, engaging stakeholders and partners across the Commonwealth, and garnering 460 million media impressions.

Looking ahead to 2024, Ms. Wilson shared a summary of plans in development which include regional and national events throughout the year, and the launch of the Mobile Museum Experience in Fall 2024.

Adjournment

There was no public comment. There being no further business, a motion by Mr. Dendy was made and seconded by Del. Plum to adjourn the meeting at 11:16 am.

Proposed future meeting dates:

Tuesday, April 16, 2024: 10:00 am

Tuesday, July 16, 2024: 10:00 am

Tuesday, October 15, 2024: 10:00 am

Tuesday, January 7, 2025: 10:00 am