



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

Full Commission Meeting  
Thursday, January 8, 2026, 10:00 AM

Patrick Henry Building  
West Reading Room, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
1111 East Broad Street, Richmond VA

### **DRAFT MINUTES**

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

*The Honorable Terry Austin, Chair*

Chairman Terry Austin called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM.  
Roll was called at 10:10 AM, and a quorum was present.

Chairman Austin delivered opening remarks recognizing the historical significance of entering the 2026 commemoration year and reaffirming Virginia's leadership role in the national observance of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States. He expressed appreciation to Commission staff, local and regional committees, and advisory bodies for their continued work in advancing the mission of VA250. The Chairman also extended formal thanks to outgoing ex officio members, including Secretary of Education Aimee Guidera and Julie Langan, Director of the Department of Historic Resources, for their service and leadership contributions. Vice Chair Senator Mamie Locke provided remarks emphasizing the importance of inclusive storytelling, public engagement, and the commemoration of the diverse individuals and events that contributed to the formation of the nation. She noted the importance of ensuring that programming reflects a broad and representative historical narrative. Honorary Chair Carly Fiorina was noted as absent due to illness.

#### **Approval of Minutes from October 21, 2025**

The minutes from the October 21, 2025, meeting were brought forward for approval. Delegate Krizek made the motion, which was seconded by Senator Locke. The motion passed unanimously at 10:16 AM without amendment.



## **Development Report**

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

Ben Dendy, President of Virginia Commemorations, Inc., presented the development and fundraising report. He reported that total fundraising to date, inclusive of gifts, pledges, and in-kind contributions, has reached approximately \$6.3 million. He further detailed that during calendar year 2025, the development team conducted more than 40 meetings with prospective donors and stakeholders and submitted 27 formal funding proposals.

Discussion during this item included questions regarding the categorization and allocation of raised funds, including whether contributions were designated for general operations or restricted to specific programs and events. It was noted that additional detail and reporting would be beneficial to clearly reflect how private funds are integrated into the overall financial framework of the Commission.

## **Advisory Council Updates**

### **Tribal Nations Leadership Advisory Council**

*Chief Stephen Adkins, Chair*

Chief Stephen Adkins, Chair of the Tribal Nations Leadership Advisory Council, provided an update on Council activities. He emphasized the importance of continued collaboration between Tribal leadership and the Commission and acknowledged the contributions of state leadership in supporting Tribal engagement. Chief Adkins announced a forthcoming signature event scheduled for April 24–25, 2026, which will focus on Native sovereignty and examine the historical continuum of Native experiences in Virginia from 1607 to the present. The event is expected to include participation from members of the judiciary and national Tribal leaders.

### **African American Advisory Council**

*Senator Mamie Locke, Chair*

Senator Mamie Locke, Chair of the African American Advisory Council, provided a comprehensive update on the Council's activities and planned initiatives. She highlighted the Council's accomplishments in 2025 and noted ongoing efforts to expand outreach, strengthen communications, and increase public awareness of its work in coordination with VA250. Senator Locke reported that the Council intends to submit a formal resolution honoring the life and legacy of Judge Quander, with the resolution to be shared with the Quander family. She outlined several key events planned for 2026, including a Freedom 250 Dinner scheduled for January 16 in Hampton. The event will feature a colonial-inspired, five-course meal prepared by students, including participation from a culinary program, and will highlight local history and heritage. Additional planned observances include Juneteenth, African Landing Day, and other commemorative programs throughout the year.



## Advisory Council Updates

### **Education Steering Committee update**

*Secretary of Education Aimee Guidera, Chair*

Secretary of Education Aimee Guidera provided an update on the work of the Education Steering Committee and related initiatives. She noted that the Committee has established a comprehensive calendar of programming for 2026, marking the final planning phase under the current administration. Key initiatives include the development of a statewide “Expressions of Freedom” contest and a statewide oratory competition focused on the founding principles of the nation, in partnership with UVA Democracy 360. The oratory competition is expected to involve participation from college students and will include judging by former White House speechwriters.

Secretary Guidera also highlighted the expansion of the Civics Bee program, noting that for the first time, every superintendent region in Virginia will be able to host a competition, ensuring broad student participation statewide. The Reading Revolution initiative will continue, reinforcing literacy and civic education.

She further reported that efforts are underway to ensure that both Mobile Museum units reach all Virginia middle school students, providing equitable access to educational resources. Additionally, a time capsule initiative will be implemented at the Washington Monument, with a focus on preserving materials with long-term durability; Commission members were invited to contribute items for inclusion.

### **VTC-VA250 Tourism Marketing Grant Recommendations (Round 6)**

*Staci Martin, Grants Director, Virginia Tourism Corporation*

Staci Martin of the Virginia Tourism Corporation presented the Round 6 grant recommendations. A motion to approve the recommendations was made by Chief Adkins and seconded by Alyson Ramsey. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Update: *Give Me Liberty: Virginia and the Forging of a Nation***

*Jamie Bosket, Virginia Museum of History and Culture*

*Christy Coleman, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation*

Christy Coleman provided an update on the “Give Me Liberty” exhibition, noting strong positive reception and significant economic impact. The exhibition is being relocated to the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown in preparation for a July 4, 2026, opening. A Yorktown gala is scheduled for the evening of July 2, 2026, to coincide with the exhibition’s debut.



## **Program and Budget Updates**

*Cheryl Wilson, Executive Director*

Executive Director Cheryl Wilson reported on ongoing programmatic efforts, including continued outreach by the Department of Education to principals and superintendents across the Commonwealth. She highlighted key initiatives such as the “America Made in Virginia” signature events and the expansion and scheduling of the Mobile Museum program. The 2025 Annual Report was distributed, and additional contributions were noted, including a comprehensive 63-page document outlining Revolutionary War events and ongoing storytelling efforts through Encyclopedia Virginia.

The Commission noted the completion of a second Mobile Museum, which will soon begin service. To date, the original museum has welcomed over 27,000 visitors. The initiative remains focused on reaching all 362 middle schools in Virginia, incorporating educational programming and interactive experiences to enhance student engagement statewide.

Cheryl Wilson presented an overview of the current budget and spending plan. During the discussion, members requested clarification regarding the allocation and tracking of the \$6.3 million raised, specifically distinguishing between General Fund and Non-General Fund sources. There was consensus on the need for a more transparent and unified financial document, and staff committed to providing a revised budget with detailed line items. Additional discussion addressed the importance of securing funding to sustain programming through 2031–2032, ensuring continuity for the full duration of the Revolutionary War commemoration.

## **Other Business; Adjournment**

Proposed meeting dates for 2026 and early 2027 were presented, including April 21, June 22, October 20, and January 7. The Commission also welcomed Chris Eck as the new Executive Director of Gunston Hall. Members received the VA250 Passport, which features more than 100 historic sites across Virginia.

Senator Locke made a motion to adjourn, and Chairman Austin adjourned the meeting with no further business.

**Members Present:**

\*The Honorable Terry L. Austin, *Chair, Virginia House of Delegates*

\*The Honorable Mamie E. Locke, *Vice Chair, Senate of Virginia*

\*Chief Stephen R. Adkins, *Chickahominy Indian Tribe*

Jean Ann Bolling, *Mechanicsville VA*

Gretchen Bulova, *Office of Historic Alexandria*

Dennis Clark, *Library of Virginia, **Virtual***

\*Christy S. Coleman, *Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation*

\*H. Benson Dendy III, *Chairman Emeritus, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation*

David Duncan, *American Battlefield Trust, **Virtual***

Sue Gerdelman, *Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation Board of Trustees*

\*The Honorable Aimee R. Guidera, *Secretary of Education*

Peter Hedlund, *Virginia Humanities*

Dr. Jane Kamensky, *Monticello – **Virtual, Tasha Stanton on Behalf of***

\*The Honorable Paul E. Krizek, *Virginia House of Delegates*

Julie Langan, *Department of Historic Resources*

Jerri Marr, *Colonial National Historical Park*

The Honorable Elizabeth McClanahan, *Former Justice, Supreme Court of Virginia, **Virtual***

Rita McClenny, *Virginia Tourism Corporation*

\*The Honorable Ryan T. McDougle, *Member, Senate of Virginia, **Virtual***

\*Mark Ingrao, *Gunston Hall, **Virtual***

\*The Honorable Kenneth R. Plum, *Former Member, Virginia House of Delegates, **Virtual***

Alyson Ramsey, *Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest*

\*Member of Executive Committee