

Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial
Approved Meeting minutes – Quarterly meeting
Huntington Center Building
Columbus, OH
December 15, 2023

Commission members present:

- Doug Preisse (co-chair), Van Meter-Ashbrook
- State Senator Hearcel Craig
- Christy Davis, Ohio Local History Alliance-immediate past president,
- Kathryn Dean-Dielman, Lorain County Historical Society-board president
- Steve Hambley, Medina County Commissioner
- Nancy Hollister, former Governor/Lt. Governor
- Melinda Huntley, Ohio Travel Association-executive director
- Vincent Keeran, clerk of the Ohio Senate
- Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy
- Adam Levine, Toledo Museum of Art-director
- Glenn Miller, County Commissioners' Assn. of Ohio-board president
- Charley Moses, Ohio History Connection-board president
- Kim Murnieks, Office of Budget and Management-director
- Paul Oyaski, former mayor of Euclid
- Elizabeth Pierce, Cincinnati Museum Center-executive director
- Sharetta Smith, mayor of Lima
- Ted Strickland, former Governor/former member of Congress
- Samantha Turner, Youngstown City Council
- Sarah Wickham, TourismOhio-director
- Mackensie Wittmer, National Aviation Heritage Area-executive director
- Megan Wood, Ohio History Connection executive director & CEO

Absent: Michael B. Coleman (co-chair), IceMiller; Kelly Falcone-Hall, Western Reserve Historical Society; John Fleming, PhD, museum professional; Thomas Hankins, Sons of the American Revolution/Committee to Rebuild Fort Laurens; State Rep. Adam Holmes; Megan Kvamme, Muskingum County entrepreneur; State Sen. George Lang; State Rep. Joe Miller; Ginger Warner, Ohio Arts Council-chair

Staff: Todd Kleismit, executive director
Chris Hurtubise, communications director
Taylor Tomu, community engagement specialist
Abby Reynolds, executive assistant

Guests: Rebecca Asmo, Executive Director, Ohio Humanities; Hillary Bates, Merrick Bates Consulting, LLC; Lauren Becker, Fahlgren Mortine; Jerrian Bell, KDC Marketing; Charles Bluestone, Bluestone Law Group; Andrea Brookhover, Ohio Holocaust & Genocide Memorial & Education Commission; Rebecca Carr, Muskingum County History trustee; Ashley Chapski, Interim Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Governor's Office; Donna Collins, Executive Director, Ohio Arts Council; Cookie Connell, Guernsey County Genealogy Society trustee; Steve George, Chief Advisor to the CEO, Ohio History Connection; Alyson Helwagen, Fahlgren Mortine; Robert Horner, Administrative Director, Supreme Court of Ohio; Paul LaRue, President, State Board of Education; Susan Leininger, State Regent, Ohio Society- Daughters of the American Revolution; Johnna McEntee, Executive Director, Ohio Museum Association; David Merkwowitz, Ohio Humanities; Susan Moeller, President, Ohio Poetry Association; Chris Nehring, State Vice Regent, Ohio Society-Daughters of the American Revolution; Chris Nichols, Professor of History, Ohio State University; Maggie Ostrowski, Ohio State Bar Association; Brian Perera, Zaino Hall & Farrin LLC; Ted Prasse, Hahn Loeser & Parks LLP; Drew Poulsen, Fahlgren Mortine; Sarah Sisser, Executive Director & CEO, Creative Ohio; Cheryl Subler, Executive Director, County Commissioners Association of Ohio; Yan Sun, artist; Alex Thompson, Hannah News Service; Lisa Underwood, Ohio Travel Pavilion; Betty Weibel, Ohio History Connection trustee; Elizabeth Wharton, Guernsey County Genealogy Society trustee; Hong Yin, artist; Jeri Yoest, Kelley's Island Historical Association

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CALL TO ORDER: Commission Co-Chair Doug Priebe called the Commission meeting to order at 10:40 am.

Co-Chair Priebe shared welcome remarks and thanked the America 250-Ohio staff and Huntington Center staff for hosting the meeting in the Horizon space. Co-Chair Priebe thanked the guests for attending and recognized the AM250-OH partners in attendance.

Co-Chair Doug Priebe asked Megan Wood to share a few remarks about her recent trip to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and Ms. Wood gave a brief update on Ohio's recent World Heritage inscription at the UNESCO World Heritage Committee meeting in Riyadh.

Commission Secretary Megan Wood took the roll. There were (21) commissioners and (36) guests present, (9) commissioners were absent. Ms. Wood confirmed the presence of a quorum. There were no corrections or additions noted for the previous meeting's minutes.

MOTION: Kathy Dean-Dielman made a motion to accept the minutes from the September 14, 2023 meeting. Seconded by Nancy Hollister. The motion passed.

Executive Director & Staff Reports

Todd Kleismit and staff gave their reports. Highlights included:

- Since we last met
 - The first AM250-OH grant cycle launched on October 16 with a submission deadline of November 17. He said 75 applications across the two grant categories were received requesting approx. \$1.5M in total eligible requests. A seven-member grants panel will review the applications and make their recommendations, with the award announcements occurring in January 2024.
- America 250-Ohio Communities
 - Taylor Tomu provided a brief update on the AM 250-OH Communities program, which is a key part of the Commission's priority of achieving 88-county engagement.
 - The initiative is in partnership with the County Commissioner's Association of Ohio, which is sharing this opportunity with all the counties.
 - Municipalities at all levels across the state can apply to become an AM 250-OH Community. This special designation offers many benefits, collaboration opportunities, and incentives for participating. The communities that sign up also commit to receiving AM250-OH communications and designating a liaison to be in contact with the Commission.
 - The goal is to have at least one AM 250-OH Community designation in each county and 250 overall by 2026. So far, 7 counties have officially signed on: Muskingum, Preble, Fairfield, Lawrence, Medina, Hardin and Miami. Co-Chair Priebe encouraged the commissioners to talk to their counties and ask them to sign up.
- 2024 Commission Meetings

Abby Reynolds shared the dates and locations of the 2024 Commission Meetings:

 - Thursday, March 14 at Rhodes State College in Lima
 - Friday, June 14 at Great Council State Park in Xenia

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- Thursday, September 19 at the Huntington Center Building in Columbus
- Friday, December 13 in Zanesville (location TBD)
- **Commission Budget Report**
Director Kleismit reviewed the FY24 budget document included in the meeting packet.
 - The Commission approved a \$2M budget in FY24 at the September meeting. The budget document reflects that the Commission has been underspending to date, but expenses will increase in early 2024 as more projects will officially launch and the AM250-OH grant funding from the fall cycle will be dispersed.
 - The Commission plans to increase non-state support through private fundraising. Director Kleismit recognized and thanked Neighborhood Strategies for their recent commitment of \$10,000 per year through 2026.
 - An operations director will be hired in early 2024, with the new hire in place by the March 2024 Commission meeting.

America250 National Commission Update

A recorded message was shared from Rosie Rios, Chair of the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, which emphasized highlights of the national America250 Commission’s work to date. In particular, she shared “America’s Invitation” – a multiyear public engagement campaign that calls on Americans to share their stories. The National Commission has received thousands of submissions to date.

America 250-Ohio 2026 monthly themes/Annual Report

Chris Hurtubise introduced the 2023 Annual Report, which all Commission members received in their meeting packets, and gave a brief overview of the highlights:

- 2023 was a foundational year for building momentum in the lead-up to 2026. In 2024, AM250-OH will have activities launching every month with the goal of securing media coverage each month.
- The AM250-OH website launched in the fall, and Ms. Hurtubise recognized Jerrian Bell of KDC Marketing for his work developing the new website.
- Fahlgren Mortine was hired as AM250-OH’s PR partner, and staff worked with them this fall to produce two press releases that generated a half million impressions.
- Ms. Hurtubise reviewed the projects launching in 2024 and the monthly themes planned for 2026. 2026 will celebrate Ohio’s impact on the United States for the past 250+ years, and each month will be focused on a different theme as a way to organize the celebration and offer opportunities for partners to connect with content.

Committee Reports

Committee Co-Chairs reported the following updates on their committees’ activities:

- **88-County Engagement**
Samantha Turner reported a tri-county meeting was held in northeast Ohio with county commissioners, local partners, and grassroots organizations in attendance. The groups shared how they would like to engage with AM250-OH. This committee plans to hold similar meetings across the state.
- **Public Awareness**
Elizabeth Pierce reported they have yet to convene their first meeting and are still identifying people to serve on the committee. The committee will amplify the work of other committees and

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the Commission overall. Ms. Pierce encouraged anyone interested in participating to reach out.

- Education

Paul LaRue reported (in Co-Chair Rep. Joe Miller’s absence) that a K-12 working group met over the summer and discussed how to produce America 250 content that will be a resource for teachers. The meeting included teachers across Ohio and representatives from the Ohio School for the Deaf and the Ohio School for the Blind. The committee’s goal is to serve all Ohioans in addition to K-12 students.

- Signature Events & Programming

Melinda Huntley reported the Signature Events & Programming committee has five main projects: Ohio Goes to the Movies, Statewide Picnic, Public Art, Buckeye Train, and Tales & Trails.

- Ms. Huntley gave a brief overview of the Tales & Trails project. The goal is to launch 12 thematic trails that link Ohio sites and stories between 2024 and 2026. Three trails will launch in 2024, with the first being the Aviation & Aerospace Trail to roll out in April.
- Ms. Huntley reviewed the committee framework document she developed as a tool to help structure the committee work. This will be discussed in depth at the next Commission Co-Chairs meeting.

- Under-Told Stories

Kathy Dean-Dielman reported a new Co-Chair has been appointed, Frances McGee-Cromartie. The committee has 12 members and will convene their first meeting soon. Christy Davis invited the Under-Told Stories co-chairs to present at an upcoming Ohio Local History Alliance meeting, as local history groups will be familiar with under-told stories in their area.

- Philanthropic Partners

Doug Preisse reported this committee has convened on several occasions, and he will meet with a potential sponsor next week. Co-Chair Preisse announced Hillary Bates has been hired as AM250-OH’s fundraising consultant, and Ms. Bates introduced herself to the group.

Project Updates

- 4th Grade History Pass

Elizabeth Pierce provided a brief update on the 4th Grade History Pass, which will launch in February 2024. Every fourth grader in Ohio will receive free admission to participating history museums with a paid adult admission. The Cincinnati Museum Center, Ohio History Connection and Western Reserve Historical Society are the founding partners. Fourth grade is the year students learn about Ohio history, and the goal is to incentivize families to visit history sites.

- Ohio Goes to the Movies (OGTMM)

Steve George and Betty Weibel provided a brief update on the Ohio Goes to the Movies project. This will be a statewide celebration in 2026 that lasts for 100 days. OGTMM will showcase different kinds of motion pictures associated with Ohio and Ohioans, and there will be hundreds of public showings across Ohio.

MOTION: Sen. Craig moved to adjourn. Sharetta Smith seconded. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 12:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Abby Reynolds on behalf of Commission Secretary, Megan Wood.