

**Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial**  
Approved Meeting minutes – Quarterly meeting  
Huntington Center Building  
Columbus, OH  
September 19, 2024

*Commission members present:*

- Doug Preisse (co-chair), Van Meter-Ashbrook
- Michael B. Coleman (co-chair), Ice Miller
- Commissioner Chris Abbuhl
- State Senator Hearcel Craig
- Kathryn Dean-Dielman, Lorain County Historical Society-board president
- Kelly Falcone Hall, Western Reserve Historical Society
- Nancy Hollister, former Governor/Lt. Governor
- State Representative Adam Holmes
- Melinda Huntley, Ohio Travel Association-executive director
- Vincent Keeran, clerk of the Ohio Senate
- Megan Kvamme, Muskingum County entrepreneur
- State Representative Joe Miller
- Charley Moses, Ohio History Connection-board president
- Kim Murnieks, Office of Budget and Management-director
- Elizabeth Pierce, Cincinnati Museum Center-executive director
- 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:* Christy Davis, Ohio Local History Alliance, immediate past president; John Fleming, PhD, museum professional; Steve Hambley, Medina County Commissioner, Thomas Hankins, Sons of the American Revolution/Committee to Rebuild Fort Laurens; Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy, State Sen. George Lang; Adam Levine, Toledo Museum of Art, executive director; Paul Oyaski, former Mayor of Euclid; Mayor Sharetta Smith, City of Lima; Former Governor Ted Strickland; Ginger Warner, Ohio Arts Council-chair

*Staff:* Todd Kleismit, executive director  
Chris Hurtubise, communications director  
Quanta Brown, operations director  
Molly Kreuzman, Ohio Goes to the Movies Program Director  
Taylor Tomu, community engagement specialist  
Abby Reynolds, executive assistant

Guests: Donna Collins, Executive Director, Ohio Arts Council; Susan Fisher, Executive Director, America's River Roots; Lesley Fry, Sr. Social Investment Advisor, Cenovus Energy; Patricia Garling, Franklinton DAR Chapter; Steve George, Chief Advisor to the CEO, Ohio History Connection; Rick Greiwe, Executive Committee, America's River Roots; Robert Horner, Administrative Director, Supreme Court of Ohio; State Representative Laura Lanese; Paul LaRue, President, State Board of Education; Susan Leininger, State Regent, Ohio Society- Daughters of the American Revolution; Ron Marvin, Curator, Wyandot County Museum; Frances McGee Cromartie, Daniel Cooper DAR Chapter; Warren Motts, Founder, Motts Military Museum; Lori Motts, Deputy Director, Motts Military Museum; Chris Nehring, State Vice Regent, Ohio Society-Daughters of the American Revolution; Marty Reber, City of Upper Sandusky Community; Doug Stein, Civic Education & Outreach Manager, Ohio Supreme Court; Wendy Zucal, Executive Director, Dennison Railroad Depot Museum.

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**CALL TO ORDER:** Commission Co-Chair Doug Preisse called the Commission meeting to order at 10:45 am.

Co-Chair Michael B. Coleman shared welcome remarks and thanked the guests for attending. He reported that the co-chairs and Todd Kleismit recently had a successful meeting with Governor DeWine, and the Governor remains very supportive of America 250-Ohio.

Co-Chair Preisse made a special announcement that Cenovus Energy is the Commission's first Visionary Sponsor. Their gift will support Ohio's Homecoming & Picnic program and the Heritage Trees program. The Co-Chairs presented Lesley Fry, Sr. Social Investment Advisor at Cenovus, with a certificate recognizing their transformational support of America 250-Ohio.

Commission Secretary Megan Wood took the roll. There were (19) commissioners and (22) guests present, (11) 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:** Senator Hearcel Craig made a motion to accept the minutes from the July 2, 2024 Commission meeting. Seconded by Kim Murnieks. The motion passed.

**Executive Director & Staff Reports**

Todd Kleismit and staff gave their reports. Highlights included:

- Since we last met
  - Director Kleismit reviewed the FY24 Income & Expenses Year-End report, FY25 funding breakdown document, and FY25 Year-to-Date Income Statement. Quanta Brown shared that the Income Statement has been added per the Commission's recommendation to include financial reporting directly from the Ohio History Connection's accounting software, and this report will be included going forward.
  - Director Kleismit reviewed the staffing plan for FY25. Six full-time staff members currently support the Commission. The following positions will be added in FY25: Ohio Goes to the Movies Program Coordinator (PT), Communications & Outreach Program Coordinator (FT), Buckeye Train Celebration Project Coordinator (PT Contract), Trails & Tales Project Coordinator (PT Contract), Revolutionary War Graves Research Contractor (PT Contract).
  - In July, Todd Kleismit, Quanta Brown, Melinda Huntley and Kathy Dean-Dielman attended a national convening of the states hosted in D.C. by National America 250. They made many connections and gained insights on how other states are approaching the 250<sup>th</sup> celebration.
  - Todd Kleismit, Doug Preisse, Elizabeth Pierce, and Nancy Hollister are traveling to Philadelphia Sep 20-22 for a National Convening of States and Partners, hosted by PA250. Governor Hollister will participate in a panel discussion featuring current and former elected officials.
  - The America 250 Wisconsin Commission has started a national program called Two Lights for Tomorrow. They are calling for two lights to be displayed in every statehouse across the country on April 18, 2025, themed to "one if by land, two if by sea." April 19, 2025 will be a day of service, and it's the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Lexington and

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Columbus, OH  
September 19, 2024

Concord.

- The Ohio Historical Markers program (OHC program) put out a special call for markers themed to America 250-Ohio – “Ohio Originals: Highlighting Points of Pride and Unity.” The deadline to apply is May 1, 2025.
- In July, an America 250 barn was dedicated in Fremont in partnership with the Sandusky County CVB to celebrate Ohio’s agricultural roots, and it’s the seventh barn on their Sandusky Barn Trail. On Sept. 14, staff attended a dedication of an America 250 mural on American Nitrile’s headquarters building in Grove City.
- America’s Field Trip
  - Chris Hurtubise provided a brief update on America’s Field Trip, an initiative recently launched by the National 250 Commission. Now through April 2025, 3<sup>rd</sup> - 12 graders can submit an essay or piece of art sharing why they’re proud to be an American. The winners will receive a special field trip to an iconic site somewhere in the United States. One of the selected field trip sites is the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.
- Ohio Goes to the Movies (OGTTM)
  - Molly Kreuzman provided an update on recent OGTTM activities. The Ohio Movie Database—a catalogue of Ohio’s connections to film (actors, directors, composers, etc.)—is close to being finalized and will be published on the OGTTM website. A partnership guide for venues interested in hosting an OGTTM event will also be shared with venues across the state.
  - OGTTM will kick off on Valentine’s Day 2026 and will now run for 250 days instead of 100 due to an overwhelming response, as well as interest from drive-ins wanting to screen films throughout the summer. CAPA has also agreed to host one OGTTM film every week through the duration of their 2026 Summer Movie series. The team is currently in discussion with the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame to have the final event occur in October 2026 when their theater renovations are complete.
  - The OGTTM team filmed Governor & Mrs. DeWine and their family at the Murphy Theatre over Labor Day weekend for a trailer promoting the series. Ms. Kreuzman will be traveling to L.A. in October to film Beverly D’Angelo, a native Ohioan, for the trailer, which will be screened at theaters across the state starting this November.
- Underground Railroad Gathering
  - Taylor Tomu provided an update on the Underground Railroad Gathering that will be held on Sept. 23 in partnership with the National Park Service and the Ohio History Connection. This is the first gathering for Ohio’s Underground Railroad sites and over 130 people are attending. The objectives are to encourage research into new sites, share best practices, promote collaboration and facilitate public engagement. This initiative is driven by the Under-Told Stories Committee and the intent is that this will become an annual gathering that continues beyond 2026.

**River Roots Update**

- Susan Fisher, Executive Director, and Rick Greiwe, Executive Committee member, provided an update on America’s River Roots Festival, which will take place October 8-12, 2025, in Cincinnati. The festival will be a kick-off to America’s 250<sup>th</sup> celebration in 2026 and is supported by America 250-Ohio and America 250-Kentucky. Governor DeWine and Rob Portman serve as honorary Co-Chairs for the event.

**Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial**  
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- The festival will celebrate America’s river cities and the impact they’ve had over the last 250 years and will focus on three themes: culture, cuisine and music. The festival will have food trucks, restaurant booths, eight stages featuring performers from various genres, tall stacks river boats, exhibitions, a speaker series, and various tour options.
- The festival is a \$16M enterprise with half of their budget projected to come from earned revenue and the rest from sponsorship dollars and government funding. The majority of the festival experiences and activities will be free of charge, with the exception of a couple ticketed elevated experiences.

**Committee Reports**

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

- **Public Awareness**  
Elizabeth Pierce reported multiple programs have received earned media in 2024 including the grants program, the 4<sup>th</sup> grade history pass, and the Air & Space Trail. Ms. Pierce encouraged Commission members and guests to follow America 250-Ohio social channels and said they are currently recruiting for additional members to join. The next meeting will take place in October.
- **Education**  
Charley Moses gave a presentation on iCivics, an online educational program that was founded by Sandra Day O’Connor. The Capitol Square Foundation and OSU partnered in 2015 to build the iCivics Ohio webpage (linked with the main iCivics program); iCivics Ohio currently hosts four months of civics and social studies curriculum, however, there is an opportunity to expand and upgrade the offering, especially since iCivics is a partner of the National America 250 Commission. Discussion ensued, and the commission agreed it is worthwhile to pursue iCivics Ohio enhancements.
- **Signature Events & Programming**
  - **Public Art** – Donna Collins is leading the Public Art Initiative. One major project is the identification and recognition of murals across the state that depict important moments of Ohio greatness and history. The Ohio Arts Council is developing a map of identified murals that will be available online. The murals will also be identified in-person with an America 250 vinyl logo. The second project is a public, permanent tribute to women’s suffrage. More details will be shared at a later date.
  - **Ohio’s Homecoming & Picnic** – Megan Wood is leading this effort. The program will have its public launch on Oct. 3, 2024, at the Statehouse with Cenovus Energy, which is the Presenting Sponsor of this program. The goal is for communities across the state to host gatherings in 2026, which will be supported with picnic kits from the commission.
  - **Buckeye Train** – Wendy Zucal is leading this effort, which will be a celebration of Ohio’s transportation history and accomplishments. For two days in April 2026, there will be train rides from Dennison to Columbus and back. There will also be a car show and a fly-over with vintage planes.
  - **Trails & Tales** – Melinda Huntley leads this effort. The Air & Space Trail launched in May 2024, and has received 4M impressions to date. The team is currently working on an audio component to go with the trails, and the approval process for the storytelling app is in process. Ms. Huntley will also be giving a free group sales training workshop for the Air & Space partner sites to help them maximize group tour sales. The Creativity Trail will launch in January 2025 and the Ohio Waterways Trail will launch in Spring 2025.

**Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial**  
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- Under-Told Stories  
Kathy Dean-Dielman reported that the committee will launch their blog series in 2025, and it will run throughout 2026. The posts will align with the 2026 monthly themes. The committee will also be utilizing MemoryFox to capture and share under-told stories.
- Philanthropic Partners  
Doug Preisse provided a brief update on the committee's outreach efforts to prospective corporate sponsors. All commission members and guests are invited to attend the Oct. 3, 2024, announcement of Cenovus Energy as the commission's first Visionary Partner.
- 88-County Engagement  
Samantha Turner reported that 80 communities have signed on to be an official America 250-Ohio Community. The committee continues to spread awareness of the Communities program through partner organizations like CCAO, the DAR and the Ohio Local History Alliance. All communities will receive an official America 250-Ohio Community flag, and Ms. Turner shared a sample flag with the commission.

**America 250-Ohio Grants**

Todd Kleismit provided a brief overview of the America 250-Ohio Fall 2024 Grants Program document contained in the meeting packets. The proposed program would grant \$5,000 awards to official America 250-Ohio Communities, and Communities would need to be registered by Dec 31, 2024, to be eligible to apply. A panel of reviewers will not be utilized to make recommendations for this round, since the award amount is modest. Discussion ensued about how to communicate the program widely so communities are aware of this opportunity.

**FY 2026-27 State Budget Submission**

Todd Kleismit and Kim Murnieks provided a brief overview of the FY26-27 biennium budget planning process and timeline. America 250-Ohio is included as a line item in the Ohio History Connection's budget submission, which is due to the Office of Budget and Management by the end of this September. The commission's FY26-27 budget input document (collected from project stakeholders) was shared on screen; the Commission will submit a flat budget, per state instructions. After OBM receives all budget submissions, they will prepare the executive budget, and following the Governor's review it will be sent to the General Assembly. Staff will begin working on an actual FY26 budget in spring 2025, once more information is available. Director Kleismit requested commission members' assistance with advocating for America 250-Ohio throughout the budget process, and discussion ensued on how to support that process.

The next Commission Meeting will be held on Friday, Dec 13 at the Zanesville-Muskingum County Conference & Welcome Center.

**MOTION:** Kim Murnieks made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-03, establishing a third round of grants for America 250-Ohio Communities. Seconded by Nancy Hollister. The motion passed.

**MOTION:** Sen. Craig moved to adjourn. Samantha Turner seconded. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

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