

**Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial**  
Approved Meeting minutes – Quarterly meeting  
Muskingum County Conference & Welcome Center  
Zanesville, OH  
December 13, 2024

*Commission members present:*

- Doug Preisse (co-chair), Van Meter-Ashbrook
- Commissioner Chris Abbuhl
- State Senator Hearcel Craig
- Christy Davis, Ohio Local History Alliance, immediate past president
- Kathryn Dean-Dielman, Lorain County Historical Society-immediate past board president
- Kelly Falcone Hall, Western Reserve Historical Society
- Steve Hambley, Medina County Commissioner
- Thomas Hankins, member of the Friends of Fort Laurens
- Nancy Hollister, former Governor/Lt. Governor
- State Representative Adam Holmes
- Melinda Huntley, Ohio Travel Association-executive director
- Charley Moses, Ohio History Connection-board president
- Kim Murnieks, Office of Budget and Management-director
- Elizabeth Pierce, Cincinnati Museum Center-executive director
- Sharetta Smith, Mayor of Lima
- Samantha Turner, Youngstown City Council
- Ginger Warner, Ohio Arts Council Chair
- Sarah Wickham, TourismOhio-director
- Megan Wood, Ohio History Connection executive director & CEO

*Absent:* Michael Coleman, former Columbus Mayor; John Fleming, PhD, museum professional; Vincent Keeran, Clerk of the Ohio Senate; Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy, Megan Kvamme, Muskingum County entrepreneur; State Sen. George Lang; Adam Levine, Toledo Museum of Art, executive director; State Representative Joe Miller; Paul Oyaski, former Mayor of Euclid; Former Governor Ted Strickland, Mackensie Wittmer, National Aviation Heritage Area, executive director

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

Guests: Erin Augenstein, Ohio River Museum director; Melissa Bell, Muskingum County Commissioner; Chuck Bluestone, Bluestone Law Group; Rebecca Carr, Chair, Muskingum 250; Sharon Cassler, Clerk of Council, Cambridge; Karen Castello, Cambridge/Guernsey Co. CVB; Tom Chema, The Gateway Group, Donna Collins, Executive Director, Ohio Arts Council; Cindy Coss, Hocking Hills Tourism Association; Mollie Crooks, Muskingum County Commissioner; Steve George, Chief Advisor to the CEO, Ohio History Connection; Kristina Hall, Guernsey Co. District Public Library; Terri Herron, Cambridge/Guernsey Co. CVB; Dixie Lacey, Cambridge/Guernsey Co. CVB; Paul LaRue, President, State Board of Education; George Laurence, Museum Acrylics Co., owner; Susan Leininger, State Regent, Ohio Society- Daughters of the American Revolution; Donald Mason, Mayor of Zanesville; Frances McGee Cromartie, Daniel Cooper DAR Chapter; Brittany Misner, Village of Hebron; Ada Myers, Guernsey Co. District Public Library; Chris Nehring, State Vice Regent, Ohio Society- Daughters of the American Revolution; Michael Port, Bayesville Council President; Debbie Robinson, Cambridge/Guernsey Co. CVB; Tammi Shrum, Fort Laurens site director; Bob Smith, Mayor of East Liverpool; Yan Sun & Hong Yin, artists; Doug Stein, Civic Education & Outreach Manager, Ohio Supreme Court; Leslie Wagner, Dawes Arboretum, Betty Weibel, Yopko Penhalluric.

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**CALL TO ORDER:** Commission Co-Chair Doug Preisse called the Commission meeting to order at 10:45 am. Mr. Preisse opened the meeting by recognizing Commissioner Ginger Warner for being named a Great Living Cincinnati and her 2024 Distinguished Public Service Award from the National Assembly of State Art Agencies.

Representative Adam Holmes welcomed the group to his hometown and introduced City of Zanesville Mayor Donald Mason, Muskingum County Commissioner Mollie Crooks and Commissioner Melissa Bell, who provided opening remarks. Co-Chair Preisse and Taylor Tomu presented America 250-Ohio Community flags to representatives from the City of Zanesville, Muskingum County and Guernsey County in honor of their status as official America 250-Ohio Communities.

Abby Reynolds took the roll in place of Megan Wood, who arrived late due to a conflict. There were (19) commissioners and (22) guests present, (11) commissioners were absent. Ms. Reynolds 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 December 13, 2024 Commission meeting. Seconded by Mayor Sharetta Smith. The motion passed.

**Executive Director & Staff Reports**

Todd Kleismit and staff gave their reports. Highlights included:

- Upcoming Commission Meetings
  - Todd Kleismit reviewed the Commission meetings occurring in 2025. The spring meeting will take place March 14, 2025 at the Akron Civic Theatre. The June 13, 2025 meeting will occur in Columbus. The September Commission meeting will align with the national American Association of State and Local History (AASLH) conference in Cincinnati, and will take place at the Cincinnati Museum Center on September 11, 2025.
  - Director Kleismit will be attending "A Common Cause for All" in March, which is the annual conference for state commissioners in Colonial Williamsburg.
- Since we last met
  - Director Kleismit introduced Rachel Sipes, the new Program Coordinator for Ohio Goes to the Movies.
  - Director Kleismit reviewed the America 250-Ohio Committee Roles and Responsibilities document contained in the meeting packet and encouraged commissioners to reach out to him with questions.
  - Director Kleismit reviewed the FY25 Income Statement, which reflects commission expenses for the period of July 1 – Oct 31, 2024. He noted other sources of funding on the document that have been received this fiscal year, including a grant from the National Park Service for the Underground Railroad Gathering, a grant from the National 250 Commission, and sponsorship support from Cenovus Energy.
  - The commission has submitted a \$7.8M FY26 funding request to the Office of Budget & Management. The Governor's version of the budget will be released on Feb 3, 2025, and then Director Kleismit will provide budget testimony before the Ohio House in February or March. Director Kleismit reviewed the Budget Advocacy one-pager contained in the

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meeting packet and encouraged commissioners to meet with or send letters of support to their legislators.

- Starting in 2025, Director Kleismit will host monthly office hours, called “Todd Talks” via Microsoft Teams. This is an opportunity for stakeholders and members of the public to hear updates on the commission’s work and ask questions.
- In 2025 Director Kleismit will also host a quarterly webinar series with guest subject-matter experts presenting on different topics related to Revolutionary War-era history.
- Ohio is participating in Two Lights for Tomorrow. On the evening of April 18, 2025, all state capitol buildings will hang two lights in honor of the famous Paul Revere ride.
- The National 250 Commission is working on a calendar of events that will display major events around the nation, and commission staff will submit updates for Ohio. The calendar will go live on January 13, 2025.
- In November 2025, PBS will air a six-part documentary series called “The American Revolution,” directed by Ken Burns. The documentary will come with a free online American Revolution toolkit and other educational resources.
- Annual Report
  - Chris Hurtubise introduced the 2024 Annual Report and thanked commissioners and committee co-chairs for their contributions. The Governor’s office will receive several copies; additionally, the commission will mail a copy to every legislator in January and will also have copies for donors and potential funders.
- Project Updates
  - Quanta Brown provided several project updates:
    - The Heritage Trees Working Group has finalized the project scope, and the commission will provide a white oak tree to every Ohio county, as well as materials to help maintain the tree. Plantings will occur in 2025 and 2026. A project letter has been sent to county commissioners and to America 250-Ohio Communities encouraging their participation.
    - The Revolutionary War Graves Identification project scope has been finalized, and the plan is to identify and locate Revolutionary War veterans’ graves and build out a statewide database and electronic map of the burial locations. The commission has hired a consultant to help with the research.
    - The commission is hiring Outreach & Communications Coordinator position to support the 250 Communities program other projects. Two RFPs have been submitted for part-time contractors to support the Trails & Tales and Buckeye Train project.

**Supplementary Budget Requests**

- Director Kleismit gave a brief overview of the two supplemental funding requests received by the commission. Both projects relate to Ohio’s Revolutionary War era, and Director Kleismit proposes using a portion of the FY24 carryover dollars to fund these requests.
- Point of Beginning Project, East Liverpool, OH - Mayor Bob Smith of East Liverpool and Tom Chema, former America 250-Ohio Commission member, provided background information on the Point of Beginning’s significance to Ohio’s Revolutionary War-era history and presented a request for a \$25,000 planning grant. East Liverpool is situated along what’s being developed as the Riverfront Trail, a hiking and biking path

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along the Ohio River. The development of the Trail also includes plans to raise awareness of the Point of Beginning's significance locally and statewide by building a visitor center with artifacts, creating an academic program for middle school students and developing a program for academics to conduct research. Funding from the commission would support this planning work through mid-2025 and allow for the beginning of implementation in 2026.

- 250: Ohio's Heritage Traveling Exhibit, Fort Laurens –  
Tammi Shrum, Site Director of Fort Laurens, and George Laurence of Museum Acrylics presented a request for \$6,000 to fund *250: Ohio's Heritage*, a traveling exhibit consisting of nine pop-up banners that will cover critical themes of Ohio's history. The banners will be easily transportable and sent to various locations, including courthouses, museums, visitor centers, halls, and libraries across Ohio. The goal is for the exhibit to travel to all 88 counties. Additionally, a series of educational posters will be produced for schools and homeschool groups across Ohio. The total project cost is \$20,000 to fund two copies of the exhibit. The \$6,000 is requested to get the project started. Discussion ensued and the following recommendations were made:
  - Produce instructions for installation and an overall narrative of the banner content.
  - Future funding requests should go through a review process, similar to the grant program, and the commission recommended that the Management Committee reviews future requests before they go before the full commission.
  - America 250-Ohio should receive recognition and branding inclusion on the exhibit project materials.
  - Digital versions of the pop-up banners should be produced so they can be shared broadly.
  - The Fort Laurens group should work with the Education and Under-Told Stories committees to ensure the project aligns with the commission's structure and goals.

**MOTION:** Samantha Turner moved to approve the \$25,000 funding request for the Point of Beginning Project. Nancy Hollister seconded. Motion passed.

**MOTION:** Ms. Turner moved to approve the \$6,000 funding request for the *250: Ohio's Heritage* exhibit, with the condition that \$2,000 will be provided up front, and after further preparation and coordination with the Education and Under-Told Stories committees, the remainder will be paid. Kathy Dean-Dielman seconded. Motion passed.

**Spotlight on Muskingum 250**

Rebecca Carr, Chair of the Muskingum 250 Committee, provided a brief overview of the committee's plans and activities leading up to and throughout 2026. Their mission is to remember and honor those from Muskingum County who played an integral role in founding the nation. They will host a series of events highlighting the region's rich history and community spirit including historical reenactments, cultural exhibitions, community movie nights and more.

**Committee Reports**

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

- Public Awareness  
Elizabeth Pierce reported multiple programs have received strong earned media in 2024.
  - The Ohio Homecoming & Picnic launch was a successful media event with all three Columbus TV stations. 13 stories generated 1.65M reach.

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- America 250-Ohio had strong growth in social media followers this fall and achieved strong reach in social media.
- The Public Awareness committee has eight current members and their next meeting is in January. They are focusing on statewide promotions in 2025-2026 and developing support for the 12 monthly celebration themes.
- Education  
Paul LaRue provided a brief update on the Education committee's recent work. Next Gen Citizens is the umbrella term for the committee's education projects and initiatives. Next Gen Citizens just launched a webpage on the America 250-Ohio website, and Mr. LaRue provided an overview of the page, which has descriptions and links for the committee's major initiatives: iCivics Ohio, Service Learning, Northwest Ordinance Activities, K-12 Supplementary Resources, and Judicial Workshops.
- Under-Told Stories  
Kathy Dean-Dielman reported that the first Underground Railroad Gathering held in September was a great success. Over 100 people across the state participated. The committee will launch their blog series in 2025, and it will run throughout 2026. The posts will align with the 2026 monthly themes.
- Philanthropic Partners  
Abby Reynolds presented a fundraising progress report on behalf of Committee Co-Chairs Doug Preisse and Chuck Bluestone. In FY24, the committee presented an FY25 revenue target of \$500,000 to the Commission. This projection was primarily based on a significant sponsorship proposal (\$530,000) that was confirmed in July 2024. At the time of this initial projection, the fundraising pipeline did not yet support a broader projection of additional gifts; therefore, the committee promised a revised fundraising goal in December 2024. Based on the momentum of securing a Visionary Partner, increased outreaches and likely corporate prospect commitments, the committee has updated the FY25 fundraising goal to \$1.42M. The committee is pursuing an aggressive outreach strategy in early 2025 to secure more meetings and prospects, as the first six months of 2025 will be the final window of time to secure major commitments.
- 88-County Engagement  
Samantha Turner reported that 69 counties have signed on to be an official America 250-Ohio Community, and the committee is on track to securing all 88 counties' participation by the first quarter of 2025. There are over 200 official America 250-Ohio communities in total. The committee continues to spread awareness of the Communities program through partner organizations like the CCAO, the DAR and the Ohio Local History Alliance. Ms. Turner also presented an Ohio map with a visual representation of all participating counties, as well as markers for locations of organizations and venues participating in other America 250-Ohio programs.
- Signature Events & Programming  
Melinda Huntley provided a brief update on activities of the committee.
  - **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. Over 50 murals have been identified, and a webpage with a map that will show mural sites is in progress. The artist for the Ohio Women's Monument, Brenda Council, was announced at a recent event at the Statehouse, and Ms. Huntley showed an artist's rendering of the monument. Shortly after the event, an

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anonymous \$1M gift was received in support of the project. Donna Collins recognized Charley Moses for his leadership in making the monument project possible.

- **Ohio's Homecoming & Picnic** – Megan Wood is leading this effort. The program had a successful public launch with Cenovus Energy on October 3, 2024, at the Statehouse. The working group has refined the scope of the program, which includes several signature picnics in 2026, hosted by the commission in partnership with Cenovus Energy, community picnics hosted by localities across the state that will receive the 250 picnic kits, and grassroots picnics for small family groups which can access online digital resources for hosting their gatherings.
- **Buckeye Train** – Wendy Zucal is leading this effort, which will be a celebration of Ohio's transportation history and accomplishments on April 25-26, 2026. There will be train rides from Dennison to Columbus and back. There will also be a car show and a flyover with vintage planes.
- **Trails & Tales** – Melinda Huntley leads this effort. The Air & Space Trail launched and has 34 participating sites with four more being added. The working group is in contract with TravelStory to produce a mobile storytelling app in conjunction with the trail. The Creativity Trail will launch in February 2025, and features over 100 sites across the state. The trail is organized into six genres: On the Page, Visual Arts, Glass & Pottery, Carousels, Music, Folk & Traditional Arts.
- **Ohio Goes to the Movies** – Molly Kreuzman played the Ohio Goes to the Movies trailer featuring Beverly D'Angelo and shared the trailer has been sent out and will play in theaters across the state. Ms. Kreuzman also gave a brief overview of the Ohio Movie Database and commission members were provided with a copy. Over 100 venues have signed up to be part of OGTTM.

**Discussion & Announcements**

Todd Kleismit and Doug Preisse recognized outgoing commission members Christy Davis and Commissioner Chris Abbuhl. Director Kleismit thanked them for their excellent work and support and presented them with certificates of appreciation on behalf of the commission.

The next Commission Meeting will be held on Friday, March 14, 2025, at the Akron Civic Theatre, John S. Knight Stage.

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

The meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

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