

MINUTES
TEXAS AMERICA250 COMMISSION
Bullock Texas State History Museum
1800 N. Congress, 4th Floor Boardroom
Austin, Texas 78701
May 8, 2025
11:00 AM
VIDEOCONFERENCE MEETING

The Texas America250 Commission convened with the following designated Members of Commission Agencies in attendance: Margaret Koch, Presiding Chair, Bullock Texas State History Museum, Rodney Franklin, Director of Parks, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Pat Hardy, State Board of Education, and Jelain Chubb, State Archivist & Director, Texas State Library and Archives Commission. Tim Fennell, Director, Travel Texas Economic Development and Tourism, Governor's Office and Lynn Young, America250 Representative were excused.

I. Call to Order and Establishment of a Quorum, Introductions

Margaret Koch, serving as the Commission's presiding chair, called the meeting to order at 11:00 am and called roll. A quorum was established.

Chair Koch called on the Advisory Panel to introduce themselves. Advisors present: Emily Hermans, Texas Historical Commission; Kelsi Tyler, Humanities Texas; Brittany Petrilli, Texas Association of Museums; Christine Jacobs, San Antonio Missions National Park and NPS A250 Liaison; Nathan Jones, The Alamo Trust; David Preziosi, Texas Historical Foundation; Lisa Berg, Texas State Historical Association; Ali James, State Preservation Board; Nancy Foster, Museum of Western Art; Ann Hobing, Lone Star Flight Museum; Nancy Davis, Texas Daughters of the American Revolution (Texas DAR) America250 Committee; Dr. Krystle Matthews, Texas Veteran's Commission; Michael Abels, Texas Maritime Museum; Bob Ward, Camino Real de los Tejas.

Additional attendees included: Steven McFarland, Harrison County Texas America250; Mark Ellison, Texas Sons of the American Revolution; Mari Tamez, Heritage Outreach Manager from Bexar County; presenters Katie Raney and Tara Humphreys, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department; and Nicole Handy, Executive Director of the America250 Utah Commission.

II. Discussion and Possible Action on Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings

Chair Koch called for a motion to approve the minutes of the last Commission meeting held on April 10, 2025, as presented. Pat Hardy so moved and Rodney Franklin offered a second. The motion carried and the minutes of the previous meetings were adopted.

III. Presentation on National Neighborhood Unity Potlucks — Nicole Handy, Executive Director, America250 Utah Commission

Nicole Handy, Executive Director of the America250 Utah Commission, presented details about [America's Potluck](#), a nationwide initiative encouraging communities to host Neighborhood Unity Potlucks on Sunday, July 5, 2026. America's Potluck is an opportunity for neighbors to join with one another to share a fun, communal meal, creating a sense of connection and belonging following Independence Day.

The initiative will officially launch in August with a promotional video and marketing assets provided by Utah. These materials will be distributed to other commissions to support nationwide promotion.

IV. Presentation/Discussion on Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Site Plans — TPWD Commissioner Rodney Franklin

Rodney Franklin, Director of Parks, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, introduced TPWD Interpretive team members Katie Raney and Tara Humphreys. They presented plans for Texas State Parks' involvement in the America250 commemoration. Key programs include:

- Constitution to Nature – exploring natural materials used to make founding documents, such as oak gall ink.
- If Trees Could Talk – highlighting park stories set around 1776
- Battle of the Birds – a program contrasting the bald eagle and turkey, addressing the myth that Benjamin Franklin preferred the turkey as the national bird
- Patriotic Bike Parade – reaction focused community engagement
- Ask a Historian/Archeologist – sessions will be related America250 themes

The team emphasized integrating nature and history in interpretation and expressed openness to partnerships. America250 training will be introduced at Statewide Interpretation Conference in January 2026.

V. Consideration of the Following Agenda Items:

Item 1. Report on Outreach to Legislative Offices, Congressional Caucus Members, and Texas Counties

Letters introducing the Texas Commission have been sent to all current Texas Congressional Caucus members as well letters asking the remaining Texas Congressional members to join the Congressional Caucus. Letters and logo pins have also been distributed to the Texas House and Senate legislators, the Secretary of State, Governor, and Lt. Governor.

Chair Koch has been in communication with Henderson and Montgomery counties, both of which have begun planning local America250 commemoration events.

Item 2. Report on Sub Committee Task Group Assignments

Assignments to the Task Groups which correspond with the Commission's goals have been shared. Conveners are encouraged to schedule their first meeting by the end of May and begin discussions on how to encourage participation in national and state initiatives.

The Enhance Civics Knowledge task group plans track progress on [S.B. No. 1284](#) and review the TEKS for America250 and Texas 200 document prepared by advisor Emily Hermans (THC).

Item 3. Discussion/Possible Action on Participation in *Sharing the Spirit of America, July 8, 2026, a Reading of the Declaration of Independence Across America*

Led by America250 Hawaii, Sharing the Spirit of America is a nationwide initiative inviting all 50 States and 16 Territories of the United States to participate in a simultaneous reading of the Declaration of Independence on July 8, 2026 – the same date it was originally read publicly in 1776. The event aims to unite Americans across nine different time zones for this symbolic reading.

The Texas America250 Commission will explore options for participation in this initiative.

VI. Public Comment

The Presiding Chair introduced Delaney Todd, Brand Experience Manager at the Texas State Fair, to the commissioners and advisors. A meeting is scheduled to explore collaboration opportunities.

Lisa Berg, Texas State Historical Association, announced that 82 Texas students will compete at National History Day this June. She also congratulated Pat Hardy, recipient of Caldwell Service Award for her exceptional support of teachers and students across Texas.

Jelain Chubb, representing the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, shared that TSLAC is producing 500 sets of promotional banners highlighting America250 related documents for distribution to public libraries across the state. A list of the libraries receiving banners will be made available.

Steven McFarland is currently seeking volunteers to speak on the Harrison County Texas America250 podcast.

VII. Adjournment

Next meeting is currently scheduled for June 12, 2025 at 11am. June meeting agenda items are due to Chair Koch by May 30th.

With no further business, the Chair requested a motion to adjourn. Pat Hardy made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Rodney Franklin seconded, and the motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:08 p.m.