

MINUTES
TEXAS AMERICA250 COMMISSION
Bullock Texas State History Museum
1800 N. Congress, 4th Floor Boardroom
Austin, Texas 78701
July 10, 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, Jelain Chubb, State Archivist & Director, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Lynn Young, America250 Representative, and Tim Fennell, Director, Travel Texas, Economic Development and Tourism, Governor's Office.

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. She requested that AI note-taking through Zoom be deactivated during Texas America250 Commission meetings.

She then called roll and a quorum was established.

Chair Koch called on the Advisory Panel to introduce themselves. The following advisors were present: Rebekah Dobrasko, Texas department of Transportation; Nathan Jones, The Alamo Trust; Monte Monroe, State Historian; Christine Jacobs, San Antonio Missions National Park and NPS A250 Liaison; Ali James, State Preservation Board; Emily Hermans, Texas Historical Commission; Fidel Santos, Granaderos y Damas de Galvez; David Preziosi, Texas Historical Foundation; James Harkins, General Land Office; Nancy Foster, Museum of Western Art; Jeff Salmon, Frontier Texas; 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 Ables, Texas Maritime Museum; Doug O'Connell, Scouting America Capitol Area Council.

Additional attendees included Steven McFarland, Harrison County Texas America250; Andrew Mink, Executive Director of the Smithsonian's Rural Initiative; Delaney Todd, Texas State Fair; Mari Tamez, Bexar County Heritage Outreach, and several public members who joined in person at the Bullock Texas State History Museum.

Before moving forward, Chair Koch took a moment to acknowledge the tragedies suffered in Kerr County over the Fourth of July weekend. She commended the emergency responders for their swift action and compassion, noting that they represent the best of who Texans are—a friend to their neighbor.

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 June 12, 2025, as presented. Lynn Young so moved and Jelain Chubb offered a second. The motion carried and the minutes of the previous meetings were adopted.

III. Consideration of the Following Agenda Items:

Item 1. Presentation from the Smithsonian Institution, Rural Initiatives — Andrew Mink, Director

Andy Mink, Director of Rural Initiatives at the Smithsonian Institution provided an overview of the Smithsonian’s work to engage rural communities ahead of the Semiquincentennial.

While widely known as the “Nation’s Museum,” Mr. Mink clarified that the Smithsonian is a far-reaching network of 21 museums, 40 research centers, and the National Zoo. He emphasized that the Institution is not merely a destination in Washington, D.C., but a public service entity committed to connecting with communities across the country.

The Rural Initiative seeks to amplify the voices of rural Americans by supporting local communities, raising visibility of their cultural stories, exchanging resources, and participating in conversations about the nation’s shared future.

Highlighted programs include:

- **Democracy in Dialogue Virtual Exchange Program**, which invites students to respond to the question: *How has your community played a role in the 250 years of the American experience?*
- **Rural Leaders Regional Convenings**, a series of training workshops designed to equip young leaders with tools to develop community-based, actionable programs such as commemorative festivals in collaboration with the Smithsonian.

Pat Hardy and Monte Monroe asked about the overarching theme of the Rural Initiative or the possibility of sharing prototypes of existing programs. Mr. Mink emphasized that the Smithsonian does not deliver “one-size-fits-all” programs. Instead, they engage with communities directly to co-create projects that reflect local stories and priorities.

Jelain Chubb offered to host a conversation with representatives from the Ten County Region, noting it as a prime area to engage due to its strong local reach. They will connect on next steps for a potential visit in Liberty, TX.

Item 2. Presentation on Bexar County Liberty Beyond Borders Initiative — Mari Tamez, MPA, Bexar County Heritage Outreach Manager

Mari Tamez, MPA, Bexar County Heritage Outreach Manager presented an overview of Bexar County’s America250 Project, titled *Liberty Beyond Borders*. The initiative highlights Bexar County’s contributions to the American Revolution, particularly the role of Spanish patriots and the region’s impact on the path to American independence.

The project is centered on raising public awareness and providing educational resources, with a strong focus on teacher development and historical storytelling.

Key Project Elements:

- **Bexar America250 Teacher Development Workshops**
- **Tri-County Symposium Series** in collaboration with the Tri-County Historical Commission
 - The first symposium is scheduled for **October 2025** and will focus on: *"Ranches, Soldiers, and the Making of Colonial Bexar, 1718–1775"*
- **Bexar Heritage Center Exhibit** to tell the story of the foundation of Bexar County and region's influence on the American Revolution
- **Bexar America250 Online Portal** with education modules and TEKS curriculum

Commissioner Koch offered to add the Bexar online portal to the Texas America250 website once it launches in the Fall.

Item 3. Update on State-wide Initiatives from Texas State Library and Archives Commission — Commissioner Jelain Chubb, State Archivist and Director, Archives and Information Services Division

Commissioner Jelain Chubb presented an update on America250 initiatives from the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC). She shared that TSLAC's official America250 [webpage](#) provides detailed information on current and upcoming programs in which institutions and the public can participate.

Key Initiatives Include:

- **Texas America250 Traveling Exhibit:**
 - Highlights historically significant Texas treasures from TSLAC's collections
 - Will be displayed in the TSLAC lobby as well as in pop-up format in Public Libraries
 - 700 sets of five pop-up panels have been printed and are available for distribution to public libraries and other institutions at no cost
 - Designed to showcase "What Makes Texas Unique"
- **Statewide Reading Challenge:**
 - Texans of all ages will be invited to participate in a special America250-themed reading challenge, further engaging communities through literacy and history. TSLAC is currently exploring possible incentives to encourage participation.

Due to time constraints, Presiding Chair Commissioner Koch made a motion to adjourn the July 10, 2025 Texas America250 Commission meeting. The following remaining agenda items will be carried over to the next scheduled meeting.

Item 4. Report from Task Group Conveners on TXAM250 Goals

- a) Enhance civic knowledge of the founding principles of the country and the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. — Commissioner Jelain Chubb
- b) Encourage Texans to unite in commemorating the Semiquincentennial. — County Rep Steven McFarland
- c) Promote scholarship and research that illuminates the history of the American West and Texas's role in the formation of the nation — Advisor, Bob Ward
- d) Recognize the service and sacrifices of veterans and their families who have protected our liberties and independence for future generations — Advisor, Krystal Matthews

Item 5. Report on America250 and Task Group 250 National Initiatives

IV. Public Comment

V. Adjournment

Next meeting is currently scheduled for August 14, 2025 at 11am.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.