



**Commission Meeting Minutes  
May 14, 2025**

**In Attendance**

Christine Durham, Co-Chair  
Ronald Fox, Co-Chair  
Mindy Benson, Co-Chair  
Kathryn Asay  
Barbara Jones Brown

David Clark  
Steve Handy  
Luis Lopez  
Doug McGregor  
Kristy Pike

Byron Russell  
Don Stirling  
Brian Tarbet  
Kim Wilson

**CCE Staff**

Nicole Handy  
Donna Law  
Katherine Potter

Renée Leta  
Kathryn Peterson

Chris Abbott  
Jennifer Ortiz

---

**Time:** 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**Location:** Virtual Meeting (Zoom platform)

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Justice Christine Durham, the commission co-chair, at 10:03 AM.

**2. Approval of Minutes from February 13, 2025**

David Clark moved to approve the minutes and Kim Wilson seconded. The minutes from the February 13, 2025, meeting were reviewed and approved unanimously by the commission.

**3. Co-Chair Remarks**

Justice Christine Durham, commission co-chair, America250 Utah welcomed and thanked everyone for their attendance.

Commission co-chair Ron Fox briefly touched on the success of the April 18th Two Lights for Tomorrow and the April 19th Patriots Day events. Ron estimated 900 - 1,000 people were in attendance on April 19th. The Patriots Day event was organized by the Sons of the American Revolution and the Daughters of the American Revolution.

#### **4. Two Lights For Tomorrow and The Shot Heard Round the World Report**

- Douglas McGregor, commissioner, America250 Utah
- Kathryn Asay, commissioner, America250 Utah

Details were shared about the events including all those that participated that day. Kathryn described the combined color guard of the Sons of the American Revolution and the Utah Military Academy, as well as other participating color guard units (JROTC, Civil Air Patrol, VFW, American Legion), totaling 14. She highlighted the Utah Pipe Band's moving performance and the display of a large American flag.

Doug mentioned the outdoor shooting salute by the VFW, American Legion, and the Minutemen. He identified Judge Ted Stewart as the keynote speaker, along with himself and Representative Maloy, who discussed Patriots Day becoming law in Utah (the 7th state to do so). He also highlighted Ron's and Brent Ashcroft's display of Revolutionary War-era documents.

There was press coverage by KSL.

#### **5. National Semiquincentennial Commission Update**

- Ron Fox, commission co-chair, America250 Utah

Ron reported on the recent visit of National Semiquincentennial Commission Chair, Rosie Rios, and Cathy Gillespie, a commissioner. Ron attended meetings with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints leaders and the Semiquincentennial Commission representatives. A follow-up meeting between the church and the national committee is scheduled.

Discussions are ongoing regarding America's Potluck on July 5, 2026. The White House reached out to Nicole regarding an update and potential participation with their separate committee on the 250th issue. Ron anticipates strong representation from Utah within the Western United States, crediting Nicole and the staff's work.

The LDS church expressed specific interest in assisting Utah's efforts, and a meeting with church leadership, Governor Cox, and the commission is being planned.

Nicole highlighted the wonderful opportunity for Utah to showcase its heritage and the collaborative interfaith activities planned statewide.

## **6. Utah250 community partner update**

- Chris Abbott, associate director, America250 Utah

Chris has been actively reaching out to communities statewide and noted universal excitement for America250 Utah. Recently Chris and Nicole presented at the Utah Recreation and Parks Association, the Utah League of Cities and Towns Legislative meetings, and the Utah Association of Counties meeting. Chris urged everyone to talk about America 250 Utah to their networks as word of mouth is a powerful marketing tool.

The Numbers:

- Currently tracking 72 communities, with a goal of reaching all 253 municipalities and 29 counties in the State of Utah.
- 41 communities are actively engaged in the process, which involves establishing a community committee, passing a resolution for partnership, and submitting one idea for an event.
- 9 communities have completed all the steps to become a Utah250 partner

Upon completion of forming a committee, passing a resolution, and submitting an event idea communities receive a branded America 250 Utah logo and are eligible for a small stipend that will be sent to partner communities mid-July

Chris shared some examples of community initiatives including Carbon County's Navajo American flag display, Cedar City's activities, St. George's large flag display, Heber City's red, white, and blue festival, Harriman City's historical parade and time capsule, Emery County's Frontier Days and Huntington Glee Club program, Orem City's Orem Fest, Saratoga Springs' Splash Days, Washington County's Founder's Festival, and Millcreek City's National Scrollathon project. There are many more activities and the website will be updated with all communities that have shared their plans.

Information about participating communities will be featured on the website.

No immediate questions or comments from commissioners.

## **7. Budget & Fundraising Update**

- Katherine Potter, deputy director, CCE

Katherine shared the budget overview, noting the \$500,000 appropriation from the state, bringing the total state and federal funding to over \$1.4 million. The private fundraising goal is \$1.5 million, with \$500,000 currently committed (Larry H. & Gail Miller Family Foundation, Intermountain Health at \$250,000 each). A verbal commitment for an additional \$125,000 is pending written confirmation. Active conversations with other potential donors at the \$250,000 and \$125,000 levels are ongoing. The focus remains on securing higher-level donors due to the team size and their ability to manage a large donor base. Regarding smaller donations, the commission encourages individuals to engage with their local community efforts.

Expense budgets are becoming more specific, tied to program details. Programmatic line items include merchandising/marketing specific to each program. Professional services time will be allocated to specific programs. Funding allocated for professional development/K-12 resources (civics education, library summer reading), Capitol exhibit, traveling exhibit, service programming, Walk250, community-directed funding (stipends), speaker series, kickoff event, and the traveling festival (details still in development). Items in orange on the budget are considered more flexible if fundraising goals are not met.

Staffing and operations budgets were presented. Significant in-kind support from CCE staff (marketing/design) is not reflected in the budget.

## 8. Marketing

- Renée Leta, director of communications, America250 Utah

Renee outlined a four-phase marketing plan ("flights") with a finite budget.

- **Phase 1 (July):** Awareness building campaign coinciding with the kickoff event.
- **Phase 2 (September-May):** Judicious promotion of signature programs, targeting Gen Z.
- **Phase 3 (New Year-Early January):** Leveraging the national campaign launch, coinciding with the capital exhibit opening and legislative session.
- **Phase 4 (Mid-June-July 24th):** Driving traffic to community events and programs, leading up to the July 24th anniversary.

A specific media budget for America's Potluck in Utah is planned for July 5, 2026 promotion. Emphasis on reaching the Gen Z audience through social

media influencers and university connections. Actively pursuing media partnerships with KSL and Fox, leveraging CCE's editorial connections, and utilizing PSAs and community calendars. Requested input and connections from commissioners regarding advertising, email lists, and business/nonprofit networks.

A toolkit for community events and programs is being created. Ron suggested commissioners write guest editorials for smaller newspapers and explore partnerships with theater groups (e.g., movie theater previews). The phase one campaign visuals were shared, highlighting a multimedia approach (digital, TV, radio, print, promo video).

## **9. Social Media**

- Kathryn Peterson, AmeriCorps Member

Kathryn provided an overview of the active platforms: Instagram, Facebook, and Threads, launched a little over a month prior to this meeting. Instagram has reached over 1,322 people and grown to 230 followers. Facebook has generated 2,600 views and has 41 followers, with daily growth.

Social media's key role in statewide and community-driven engagement was highlighted, allowing connection with Utahns in their digital spaces. Strategies include visual storytelling, educational content, collaborative campaigns, elevating community voices, highlighting historical milestones, and building statewide momentum.

Focus on engaging multiple generations through short-form videos, interactive posts, and graphics to make history relevant. Fostering two-way communication to encourage public participation.

Active partnerships formed with the Utah Historical Society and the State Historic Preservation Office, with deeper collaborations planned with other divisions within CCE.

## **10. Merchandise e-commerce store**

- Chris Abbott, associate director, America250 Utah

The Commission has secured an official partner for merchandising. An e-commerce store will be launched with a button on the America250 Utah

website. A variety of products will be available (hats, patches, shirts, pins, pendants, lanyards, mugs, water bottles, etc.).

The merchandiser will handle on-demand production and direct shipping. Communities with branded logos can also place bulk orders through them. The store aims to provide a way to celebrate the occasion. Branding control and adherence to America250 Utah brand guidelines will be maintained.

#### **11. Kick-Off event/press conference - July 1, 2025**

- Nicole Handy, executive director, America250 Utah

A media event/press conference is scheduled for Tuesday, July 1st, at 10:00 AM. The event aims to introduce programs to the public, with hopes for attendance from commissioners, national delegation, local officials, and legislators. A short program with the One Voice Children's Choir and student participation is planned, with confirmed attendance from the Governor and potential attendance from the Lieutenant Governor. Efforts are underway to add memorable elements to the event. Potential takeaways include cherry pies and Walk250 Utah sticker books.

The kickoff is envisioned as a week-long statewide introduction, with communities using their logos and a promotional video being shared at events like Freedom Festival/Stadium of Fire and Ogden Pioneer Days. Efforts to align signature programs with statewide activities during that week (e.g., Walk250 events at state parks, UServeUtah event in Vernal). Webpages for each program and the e-commerce store will launch on July 1st.

#### **12. America's Potluck - Utah task force**

- Steve Handy, commissioner, America250 Utah

America's Potluck is planned for Sunday, July 5th, 2026, as a statewide initiative for neighborhood gatherings. A subcommittee of food writers and restaurateurs brainstormed ideas, focusing on seasonal Utah cherries for signature dishes. The vision is to bring communities and neighborhoods together to celebrate. The idea has been shared with other states nationally, with significant interest and participation from 14 states so far.

National partnerships include America's Test Kitchen, Interfaith America, More Perfect, The Dignity Index, and Made By Us. Efforts to engage local Utah communities, restaurants, and faith networks are also underway.

### 13. Launch of signature programs

- Nicole Handy, executive director, America250 Utah
- **K-12 Education:** Resources being developed with master teachers, BYU Arts Partnership, BYU's Native American cultural initiative, Utah Historical Society, and Civic Thought and Leadership Initiative. Launching in September for Founders Month via a UEN landing page. Meetings with the First Lady (July 10th) and superintendents (June) planned. Association for Social Studies Teachers in Utah theming their fall conference as America250 Utah.
- **Walk250:** Partnership with state parks to make starter kits (sticker book) available at libraries and park entrances. Designating America 250 trails within communities. Certificates and prizes for completing 250 miles.
- **Service Initiative:** Focus on volunteerism and civic engagement. A webpage will allow individuals to share their service stories and impact. Collaboration with universities ongoing.
- **Pen is Mightier Exhibit:** Traveling exhibit launching in the fall, with the schedule for all 29 counties to be finalized by July 1st.

### 14. Role of commission members discussion

Co-chair Justice Christine Durham initiated a discussion on how to better utilize the skills, connections, and talents of the commission members.

Nicole Handy emphasized the goal of the commission to "summon the tide" and empower community-led initiatives. She invited feedback on how individual commissioners would like to participate based on their expertise and capacity.

- Ron Fox suggested commissioners reach out to county and city groups in their areas, offer materials for schools, and promote the America250 Utah website.
- Kathry Asay inquired about how interested groups can get involved and become partners. Nicole directed her to the "Get Involved" tab on the website to submit community events/projects and download logos.
- David Clark offered assistance from commissioners with contacts in their geographic areas to reach out to mayors and city councils.
  - A template email about how to become a Utah250 Community was requested.

- General Brian Tarbet suggested engaging the Division of Military and Veterans Affairs for veterans' groups and offered to facilitate that. He also proposed reaching out to Hill Air Force Base regarding their air show with Steve Handy.
- Justice Christine Durham emphasized the importance of acknowledging the complexities of history and ensuring diverse perspectives are included in the celebration, suggesting op-ed pieces and community outreach.
- Byron Russell suggested identifying respected Utah figures to serve as messengers for historical narratives. A plan was made for Kat Potter, Nicole Handy, and Byron Russell to collaborate on this initiative and present recommendations.
- Ron suggested reaching out to the national committee to identify interested individuals in Utah who have already engaged with their initiatives.

#### **15. Adjournment**

- Justice Christine Durham moved to adjourn the meeting.
- The meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

*Meeting minutes approved August 13, 2025.*