

Commission Meeting Minutes
February 19, 2026
DRAFT

In Attendance

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

David Clark
Sanchaita Datta
Steve Handy
Doug McGregor

Kristy Pike
Byron Russell
Kim Wilson

CCE Staff

Nicole Handy
Katherine Potter

Renée Leta
Chris Abbott

Jennifer Ortiz
David Wicai
Gracia Allen - Gov's
office

Time: 11:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

Location: North Capitol Building – Museum of Utah, 2nd Floor

1. Call to Order and Co-Chair remarks

The meeting was called to order by Ron Fox, the commission co-chair, at 11:03 A.M.

2. Approval of Minutes from August 13, 2025 and November 12, 2025

Kim Wilson motioned to approve the minutes and Kristy Pike seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

3. National Semiquincentennial Commission Update

America's Field Trip has relaunched its essay contest for a third year, this time doubling the number of winners. Meanwhile, the Our American Story Airstream continues its nationwide journey to collect stories and is confirmed to visit every state, with Utah's turn anticipated after March 2026. The Flag Sojourn is also underway, sending a traveling flag to all 50 states in partnership with the National Sheriff's Association, though Utah's date and location have not yet been determined. Discussion also took place about Freedom 250 and their efforts. Both Freedom 250

(White House) and America250 (Congress) are working on separate initiatives but are in coordination with each other. There was also discussion about NEA Grants that are going out to organizations for 250-related projects. Several Utah organizations have received funding. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Great American Road Trip celebrates the nation's 250th anniversary by highlighting iconic routes and historic landmarks. Travelers can visit the initiative's website for interactive maps and curated itineraries to help plan their journey for this milestone celebration.

4. Great America Fair and Time Capsule

The Great American State Fair

Kat Potter discussed the Great American State Fair, scheduled to take place on the National Mall from June 25 to July 10, 2026. Utah will have a 30' x 30' pavilion to showcase the state's innovation, culture, and agriculture. The project is a collaborative effort between the Governor's Office, Tourism, and Agriculture. The commission discussed the possibility of reusing the pavilion at the Utah State Fair in September. Support for staffing the D.C. event may involve Just Serve volunteers or congressional interns to minimize travel costs.

America250 Time Capsule

The commission brainstormed items for a 250-year time capsule. Each state is provided a 6" x 5" x 2" archival box. Requirements stipulate non-reactive materials (i.e. gold, silver, copper). Suggestions included: ores found in Utah, commemorative coins or pins, miniature bronze sculptures, challenge coins, sheet of copper with Utah images. The final selection must be approved by March 15, 2026 and delivered by April 20, 2026.

5. Report on Statewide America250 Utah Events

"The Pen Is Mightier" exhibit on the 4th floor of the Capitol Building is open to the public. The Legislative VIP reception on Friday, January 30 featured the curated historical panels on the walls, collections of 1776-era documents, founding flavors ice cream, a 1776 printing press replica, and student actors in period clothing as docents.

Additional community engagements continue to demonstrate participation across the state in unique ways. Some past events mentioned were: Brigham City's Revolutionary Roots speaker series; Utah Historical Society's "Utah at 1776" panel; Santa Clara Blood Drive and Valentine community dance; Riverton youth art show; Parowan's "I Love America" flag photo contest; Bluffdale's family bingo; and Taylorsville's 281 wreaths laid for 2025's Wreaths Across America. This is not all the engagement from around Utah, rather a small sample of engagement ideas. Barbara

Jones Brown shared photos of an America250 ice installation of the U.S. Capitol in Sapporo, Japan.

6. Utah250 Community Municipal Partnerships

America250 Utah is now partnered with 142 communities. As part of working with communities, we are giving out community stipends. Counties received \$3,000 and municipalities received \$1,500. Based on budget, the commission has enough to send existing partner communities another \$1,200 (final number pending approval). The team will work to get that additional funding out over the next few weeks.

Staff is hosting a community partner meeting once a month. The meetings are structured to provide national and Utah updates, feature a community and their commemorative events, and time for questions. These meetings have been helpful to keep the state united in efforts to celebrate together.

America250 Utah also has a variety of toolkits that communities have access to (general toolkit, America's Potluck, education, service, The Pen Is Mightier, veterans and first responders, and Walk250). These toolkits are designed to help the celebration and communication of local events.

7. Marketing and Social Media

Recent media successes were highlighted, including segments on *Good Day Utah* and coverage of The Pen Is Mightier exhibit. A new statewide billboard campaign featuring Utah-centric pins is launching soon. Media outreach took place for "The Pen Is Mightier."

The commission has social media campaigns running on channels (Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn).

8. Signature Program Highlight: Walk250 Utah

The Walk 250 Utah program now has over 1,100 online participants and five confirmed finishers. Finishers will be recognized with certificates and opportunities to walk as "athletes" in the Utah Summer Games opening ceremonies.

Efforts also include that 25,000 sticker sheets have been distributed to libraries, state parks, and Zions Bank branch locations. A toolkit was created for state parks and state libraries, a bi-monthly newsletter is distributed to keep participants engaged.

Additionally, staff is collaborating with groups to promote a variety of activities, including the Utah Summer Games, Ski Utah, POWDR, and the National Ability Center.

9. Signature Program Highlight: Serving a Common Cause

Residents are encouraged to log hours via the "America Gives" national portal. Locally, the Lieutenant Governor will issue certificates and a letter to volunteers who complete five or more hours of service. Residents can sign up for the certificate on the America250 Utah website. Staff is also working to collect stories from those who have served to highlight civic participation.

10. America's Potluck - Utah Taskforce

The Commission highlighted "America's Potluck" as a core signature program, managed by a dedicated Utah taskforce. This group, which meets every six weeks, includes a broad coalition: interfaith groups, the Utah Food Bank, the Grocers Association (including Smiths/Kroger and Associated Foods), restaurant associations, PBS Utah, and the Farm Bureau. Recent updates include the creation of an interfaith outreach "one-sheet" to be distributed through JustServe and church communication councils, ensuring religious organizations can engage their members in community-building meals.

A new "Pin your Potluck" feature is now live on the commission's website, allowing residents to register public or private events on an interactive map. To expand reach, materials are being distributed at the Salt Lake City Winter Market and various legislative "Days on the Hill." The commission emphasized that food serves as a universal language to celebrate the shared history and cultural fabric of Utah.

11. America's Potluck - National Efforts

On a national level, the potluck initiative has gained significant momentum, with participation confirmed in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. The number of communities planning a potluck is now over 200 and counting. The program has received high-profile media recognition from the *Smithsonian* and *USA Today* as a top way to commemorate the 250th anniversary. Governor Cox has taken a leading role in advocacy, recording a PSA for the National Governors Association. The commission aims to inspire individual potlucks across the country to celebrate the American spirit at a grassroots level.

12. Signature Events around July 4th

A few featured events coming up:

- June 27 - Opening festival for Museum of Utah
- June 27-28 - HAFB Airshow
- July 3 - Utah Symphony concert of the State Capitol south lawn
- July 4 - Local municipal events around the state, America's Freedom Festival
- July 5 - America's Potluck in neighborhoods and communities across the state and nation
- July 24 - Local and municipal event celebrating Utah's contributions to the American story.

13. Adjournment

Ron Fox moved to adjourn the meeting and the meeting adjourned at 1:00 P.M.