

**Commission Meeting Minutes  
November 12, 2025**

**In Attendance**

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

David Clark  
Steve Handy  
Doug McGregor  
Kristy Pike

Byron Russell  
Brian Tarbet  
Kim Wilson  
Mike Mower

**CCE Staff**

Nicole Handy  
Katherine Potter

Renée Leta  
Kathryn Peterson

Chris Abbott  
Jennifer Ortiz

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**Time:** 10:00 A.M. – 11:45 A.M.

**Location:** Virtual Meeting

**1. Call to Order and Co-Chair remarks**

The meeting was called to order by Christine Durham, the commission co-chair, at 10:04 A.M.

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

Approval of both meeting minutes from August and this meeting will take place in February 2026.

**3. National Semiquincentennial Commission Update**

National Commission leaders Rosie Rios, Kathy Gillespie, and Lynn Forney arrived in Salt Lake City for meetings with the LDS Church, which are scheduled for Friday. They are expected to announce a significant contribution involving food donations to 250 cities across the country, and details will be shared with the commission once finalized. 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.

#### 4. **Community Engagement and Signature Events**

##### **Dominguez Escalante Expedition Celebration and K-12 Educational Materials**

Educational materials launched in September include the Dominguez Escalante storyboard and additional resources for teachers including Flat Explorers activities, a coloring book, and new maps of the area. Nicole Handy, Renee Leta, and Ian Wright (Utah Public Archaeologist) appeared on Fox 13's Good Day Utah to promote the history and new educational resources.

##### **Walk250 Challenge:**

Zions Bank has joined as the official sponsor. 25,000 sticker sets were printed and distributed to all Zions Bank locations, libraries (via state libraries), and state parks. 500 people have signed up, with two already completing the challenge. Finishers will be invited to join the Utah Summer Games opening ceremonies in June 2026 and walk with the athletes. We are working with UDHHS to promote the challenge in county health departments as well.

##### **"The Pen Is Mightier" Exhibit**

We are finalizing the date for the opening reception at the Capitol during the Legislative Session. A smaller traveling version is already in locations like Daggett County, Layton Heritage Museum, Kanab, and Beaver. It will visit all 29 counties through all of 2026.

##### **Exploring the Declaration at 250 Speaker Series**

Several speaking events have happened around the state and can be streamed on PBS Utah's YouTube channel. A preview of *The American Revolution* documentary was held in West Valley City last week with a great turnout. Dr. Greg Jackson presented and hosted a Q&A.

##### **September 11th Service Projects**

United in Service worked with UServeUtah and USO to build 500 care kits for military families/service members and wrote 96 letters to military service members. Daggett County plans to host a similar care kit building event in November. Grantsville City is undertaking a year of service projects with a goal to hit 250 by July 4, 2026.

##### **Municipal Events: A Small Sampling**

Smithfield is doing an America250 Utah kickoff on November 22nd at the rec center. Logan Rec Center has a board for people to track their Walk250 miles while exercising in the facility. Butch Cassidy 5K/10K (Springdale): The 42-year-old race themed their 2025 event around America250 Utah. Bluffdale City hosted a Constitution reading event at City Hall with local elementary school students. Benjamin Franklin and George Washington impersonators were also there. Boulder Town completed a service project called "Giving Boulder a Hand," resulting in a legacy art piece that took 250 hours to create. North Salt Lake hosted a successful America250 Utah themed photo contest with images displayed at City Hall. Orchestra of Southern Utah in Iron County has a concert planned for February.

#### 5. **Budget / Fundraising Update and Programming Shift**

The America250 Utah Commission's budget summary shows a decrease in total projected revenue from \$2.9 million to \$2.3 million, due to a \$600,000 reduction in the

private fundraising goal. Total expenses dropped to reflect the decreased revenue, largely by eliminating the tour budget.

This major shift formally eliminated the statewide tour initiative. The rationale was that \$129,000 was insufficient for a large-scale tour, and local communities had expressed more support for hosting their own local events. The \$129,000 will now be used to increase stipends for partner counties and cities, boosting local America250 programming. While the larger tour was canceled, the "The Pen is Mightier" Traveling Exhibit is still confirmed to visit all 29 counties.

## **6. Utah250 Community Municipal Partnerships**

We now have 53 municipalities that are full partners, meaning they have formed a committee, passed a resolution, and submitted an idea, with another 49 municipalities currently in progress. So far, 34 municipalities and 13 counties have received their stipends, and the deadline for communities to apply is December 31, 2025. At the Utah League of Cities and Towns annual meeting, we presented alongside representatives from Cedar City, Bluffdale City, and Heber City, who shared strong examples of community engagement. Outreach continues through multiple channels, including emails, calls, partner networks, ULCT support, and assistance from the Wasatch Front Regional Council. County participation also remains strong, with 23 of 29 counties already signed up. Commissioners were asked to review the list of participating communities, identify gaps, and share any contacts who may help broaden engagement.

## **7. Marketing and Social Media**

An RFP for a media team was released in late September, and Boncom was selected based on their strong alignment with the commission's vision to infuse pride, hope, and optimism through a distinctly Utah lens. Their scope includes approximately \$175,000 for creative development and media placement, with additional value expected through their in-kind media relationships. The team is preparing to launch a statewide awareness campaign in January to mark the official kickoff of the anniversary year.

On the social media front, engagement continues to grow. Instagram has generated more than 25,000 views since October 13th, with 75% of interactions coming from non-followers, demonstrating broad reach beyond our core audience. A new LinkedIn account has also been created to engage professionals—particularly educators and city representatives—and commissioners were encouraged to follow and share the page. Additionally, dedicated social media channels for America's Potluck are now live to help distribute materials and support participating states.

## **8. Partner Outreach**

America250 Utah offers two logos on its website, the Community Project logo and the Community Event logo, to encourage nonprofits and private organizations to co-brand their programs and celebrations. To support this effort, staff is developing a clear, one-page toolkit that commissioners and partners can easily share, helping expand co-branding efforts and ensuring we reach key audiences, including the veteran community.

**9. Signature Program Highlight: 500 for Our Future Educational Materials**

America250 Utah is collaborating with partners including the UVU Center for Constitutional Studies, the BYU Arts Partnership, the Historical Society, and the Utah Education Network to develop strong K–12 resources aligned with state standards. Educational materials are organized into three themes: Our American Experiment, which focuses on founding ideals; We The People, which highlights diverse perspectives such as women, African Americans, Indigenous communities, and British colonists; and Power of Place, which explores what was happening in Utah in 1776, including the Dominguez Escalante Expedition. New resources include a detailed map of the expedition and surrounding Indigenous groups, a Flat Explorer Set for students to engage with the trail, and a coloring and picture book created by Emily Soderborg and illustrated by Jenny Duff. The team is also working with the State Superintendents Association to encourage schools across Utah to complete service challenges like collecting or donating 250 items. In addition, the initiative has committed to supplying textbooks to 500 classrooms, with 250 sets already distributed.

**10. America’s Potluck - Utah Taskforce**

America250 Utah is actively cultivating partnerships to support a statewide celebration. Recent efforts include meetings with Associated Foods and Kroger to explore potential collaborations, as well as discussions with Swire Coca-Cola, which is developing a statewide plan for Coke’s involvement. In Salt Lake City, the team is exploring a partnership around the Longer Table initiative, and Mayor Mendenhall has expressed interest in presenting the concept at a national US Conference of Mayors event. Additional partnerships are underway with the Utah Farm Bureau, the Utah Restaurant Association, and interfaith communities.

**11. America’s Potluck - National Efforts**

America’s Potluck continues to build national momentum, with 40 states now officially participating. Outreach efforts include collaboration with major national partners such as the National League of Cities, the American Farm Bureau, the National Recreation and Park Association, and several bridge-building organizations like Disagree Better and Living Room Conversations. To showcase nationwide engagement, the team is planning a GIS map on the America’s Potluck website where individuals and organizations can enter their potluck information, whether public or private. The initiative is also drawing on the popular Friendsgiving tradition as a natural model for casual community gathering and shared meals. To reach younger audiences, a new social media story template is launching today on Instagram and Facebook to encourage participation and spread the word.

**12. Adjournment**

Christine Durham moved to adjourn the meeting and the meeting adjourned at 11:45 A.M.

*Meeting Minutes approved by Commission on February 19, 2026*