

Burke County -- America 250 Committee Meeting Minutes



Date: Tuesday, May 7, 2024

Location: Old Burke County Courthouse, courtroom

Time: 6:00 pm – 7:20 pm

Attendees:

Gordon, Waits

Hancock, Kevin

Johnston, Laurie

Jones, Deborah

Lindsey, Bryant

Lindsey, Dr. Linda

McKesson, Dr. Leslie

McSwain, Butch

Patton, Robert

Phillips, Ed

Smith, Phil

Swan, Dr. Mike

Welch, Dr. Joel

Wilkinson, Sam

Whitesides, Jessica

Absent: Wells, Patricia

The meeting was called to order by Robert Patton, President of Historic Burke Foundation, who gave a brief welcome and introduction regarding the meeting purpose then invited members to introduce themselves. Members present included Kevin Hancock, representing the Alexander Ervin Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution; Phil Smith, representing Burke County Commissioners; Sam Wilkinson, Citizen-At-Large and former Chair of the Burke County School Board; Dr. Joel Welch, representing Western Piedmont Community College; Bruce McSwain, representing the Morganton City Council; Ed Phillips, representing Burke County Tourism Development Authority; Robert Patton, representing Historic Burke Foundation; Dr. Leslie McKesson, Citizen-At-Large; Jessica Whitesides, Burke County Grants Manager, serving as an assistant to the group; Deborah Jones, representing the Burke Arts Council; Dr. Mike Swan, representing Burke County Public Schools; Dr. Linda Lindsey, representing Historic Burke Foundation and NC America 250 Committee; Bryant Lindsey, representing the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail; Laurie Johnston, representing the Burke County Public Library; and Waits Gordon, representing The History Museum of Burke County. Patricia Wells, representing the Quaker Meadows Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, was absent.

Linda Lindsey explained the background of the America 250 initiative and the NC America 250 Committee. Along with the national initiative, North Carolina also has a statewide committee that is coordinating and planning events throughout the state, beginning this year with the 250th anniversary of the Halifax Resolves celebrated April 12-14 this year and continuing until the anniversary of the Treaty of Paris on September 3, 2033. Bryant and Linda have been meeting with the state committee by Zoom for three years to lay the groundwork for county-wide efforts. A meeting was held with Brian Epley, Burke County Manager, in order to initiate the formation of this committee, and he was very supportive in creating this Burke County America 250 Committee on a tight deadline. County committees are eligible to apply for a \$10,000 grant with a deadline of May 17. There will be additional grant opportunities later, with some requiring matching funds from the county. The committee finances will be handed by the County. The plan is for the America 250 movement to touch every community.

Robert Patton outlined the goals of this first meeting to

1. Elect a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary
2. Discuss the \$10,000 grant options
3. Set the next meeting date, time, & location.

He led a discussion of candidates for committee officers, recommending Ed Phillips as Chair and Laurie Johnston as Secretary. Upon an open invitation for nominations, Dr. Joel Welch volunteered to serve as Vice Chair. Further discussion was opened; no other nominations were presented. Bryant Lindsey made a motion to accept the proposed officers and Dr. Leslie McKesson seconded the motion. A vote was held and passed by unanimous vote. Leadership of the remainder of the meeting was passed to Ed Phillips, Chair.

Linda Lindsey explained that the meetings are public and subject to the open meeting policy. A two-day minimum notice of meetings is required and seven day notice is preferred. Half of the committee members present will constitute a quorum. There are 50 commemorative America 250 lapel pins available. Each committee member was given one, and remaining lapel pins will be distributed to various individuals, leaders, and participants going forward.

Chair, Ed Phillips continued discussion by discussing the attachments that had been sent earlier to committee members via email. The attachments include additional information on the America 250 NC themes (See Attachment B), eligible activities (See Attachment C), and grant application (See Attachment D). He expressed the need to set a plan in motion today for the types of activities eligible for the \$10,000 grant. Some of the eligible activities were mentioned. He encouraged the committee to think of what sets Burke County apart from other counties and ask, "What makes us unique?" He drew attention to the three commemorative themes of America 250: Visions of Freedom, Gathering of Voices, and Common Ground, found in the America 250 NC Planning Guide (Attachment B). The reach of this program will be broad in scope and will include education and inclusion. This 250th anniversary is termed the semiquincentennial.

Discussion continued regarding the grant application, with Phillips seeking discussion and recommendations on what the committee could apply for that would utilize the \$10,000 in proposed grant funding. Jessica Whitesides, County Grants Manager, would assist the committee in completing the application. Discussion continued from various members of the committee regarding possibilities for the grant, settling on marketing awareness and branding through purchasing signage/banners to be erected in communities and at individual events to establish interest and create continuity among events. The banners would be moved to event sites as needed. Following discussion, Dr. Mike Swan motioned to approve the idea of purchasing branding banners with Ed Phillips and Jessica Whitesides working out the details of the application; the motion was seconded by Waits Gordon. The motion passed by unanimous vote. Ed and Jessica will complete the initial grant application, send updates as needed to the committee via email, and submit by the deadline.

Chair, Ed Phillips continued the discussion to consider what sets us apart in Burke County. He asked the committee to consider the themes, and include the many strengths of Burke County, such as our Revolutionary War historical sites, cemeteries, etc. There are significant places in history that occurred here. Discussion continued with contributions from various members of the

committee. Stories do not have to center only on the Revolutionary War period but can include other connections on freedom, immigrants, the Overmountain Victory NC State Trail, famous visitors to Burke, military connections, etc.

Robert Patton is interested in pursuing reacquiring 163 acres of property that was part of the Quaker Meadows plantation to see that the property is preserved, not sold and developed. This is the area around the Catawba River and Highway 18 North down to Freedom High School, possibly including trails. He is interested in rebuilding some of the structures on the plantation, using Ground Penetrating Radar to determine slave structures, doing a botanical review of the area, determining the exact location of McDowell Station, etc. He would need support to make it happen, and projects would be expensive.

There was discussion about planning the next meeting and it was decided that the committee will meet again at the Old Courthouse on Tuesday, June 4 at 6:00 pm. Further meetings will be discussed again at that meeting. It was mentioned that this committee has to meet in person and not by Zoom. At the next meeting, be prepared to discuss ideas for activities and organizations to involve. Laurie Johnston volunteered to review files at the library on the Bicentennial events in Burke County from 1976 and report on that at the next meeting.

Bruce McSwain made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Dr. Mike Swan.

Submitted by Laurie Johnston, Secretary
May 7, 2024

Appendix

Attachment A – Meeting Agenda

Attachment B – America 250 NC Planning Guide

Attachment C – America 250 NC Local Grants: Eligible Activities

Attachment D – America 250 NC Local Grants: Application Instructions