

Approved May 12,
2025
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Burke America 250th Committee

March 10, 2025 Minutes

Members Attending: Ed Phillips, Robert Patton, Deborah Jones, Joel Welch, Bryant Lindsey, Patricia Wells, Leslie McKesson, Gordon Waits, Butch McSwain, Linda Lindsey

Members Absent: Mike Swan, Laurie Johnston, Phil Smith, Sam Wilkinson, Kevin Hancock

Chair Ed Phillips called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Minutes from the previous meeting were approved unanimously after a motion to approve by Robert Patton and a second to the motion by Deborah Jones.

Ed Phillips announced that the committee received a \$10,000 grant from the NCAmerica250 office in the NC Department of Cultural and Natural Resources. The funds were used to purchase banners for use on the Old Courthouse Square and other key locations in the county, including public schools and Western Piedmont Community College. Purchases were handled online by Burke County. Banners are expected to arrive within a week. Michael Berley from the City of Morganton staff will decide placement locations on the grounds of the Old Courthouse.

Ed Phillips announced that a second grant, this one competitive, of \$30,000 has been awarded to the BurkeAmerica250 Committee. Funds will be administered by the Burke County Tourism Development Authority, not Burke County. A 15% match is required but can be met by in-kind contributions.

Burke County's staff person, Jessica Whitesides, assigned to work on grants with the BurkeAmerica250 Committee, has left County employment. Matt Johnson in the County Finance Office has now been assigned to assist with grants for BurkeAmerica250.

Tentative plans are underway for a major Revolutionary War Days event during the last week of September that will involve public, private, and home school students, a living history re-enactment, a tour of historic sites by motor coach, and possibly more.

Ideally, training will be provided to people, including some students from the NC School for Science and Math (NCSSM) and Western Piedmont Community College (WPCC), to serve as docents.

Groups that may be invited to play one or more roles in the proposed event include Historic Burke Foundation (HBF), the Overmountain Victory Trail Association (OVTA), the Southeastern Living Historians, The Frontiersmen, and others. Historic Burke Foundation has sponsored and coordinated living history days for fourth graders, living history days for the public, and commemorative crossings of the Catawba River for many years. The OVTA has assisted with HBF programming. The Southeastern Living Historians demonstrate life as it was lived in this area during Colonial times; they portray family life, sleep in straw, cook over open fires, weave, and so on. The Frontiersmen use buckskin canvas tents, bows and arrows, animal skins, and items such as tortoise shells to demonstrate life skills on the Burke County frontier.

In the past, groups needing tents for public events could borrow them from the City but the City is getting out of the tent business. BurkeAmerica250 will need to buy or rent or borrow tents.

Ed Phillips noted there are very few native Catawbans in the area who can represent their way of life in this area in the late 1700s. Bryant Lindsey suggested that the committee might benefit from reviewing the highly-acclaimed book, Native Nations by Kathleen Duval.

Leslie McKesson recommended including speakers/demonstrators who can speak to life in this area in the late 1700s for Africans and others who were enslaved. She recommended Dr. Sonny Kelly from Fayetteville Community College and Mike Wiley from Raleigh/Chapel Hill.

Corrected to Dr. Sonny Kelley

Linda Lindsey asked the Committee to consider sponsoring one or more events that would feature renown first-person re-enactors who represent figures such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Nathanael Greene, Daniel Morgan, etc.

Robert Patton suggested another first-person re-enactor is Robert Rambo who represents Cherokee figures from the Revolutionary War era.

Ed Phillips noted that July 4, 2026 will be a Saturday.

The committee voted to hold BurkeAmerica250 meetings on the second Monday of each month, beginning at 5:30 pm at the Visitor's Center.

Submitted by Linda Lindsey