Approved August 11, 2025

Burke County -- America 250 Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, July 14, 2025
Location: Burke Co. Travel & Tourism office
140 N. Sterling St., Morganton
Time: 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm

Members Present:				Guests Present:
Gordon, Waits		Medford, Sylvia	✓	Phyllis Wogan
Hancock, Kevin		Patton, Robert	✓	
Johnston, Laurie (Secretary)	✓	Phillips, Ed (Chair)	✓	
Jones, Deborah	✓	Smith, Phil	✓	
Lindsey, Dr. Bryant	✓	Swan, Dr. Mike		
Lindsey, Dr. Linda	✓	Welch, Dr. Joel (Vice Chair)	✓	
McKesson, Dr. Leslie		Wilkinson, Sam	✓	
McSwain, Butch	✓			

Call to Order

Committee Chairman, Ed Phillips, called the meeting to order and welcomed committee members. A quorum was present. Ed introduced and acknowledged the presence of guest, Phyllis Wogan, Curator Emeritus from the History Museum of Burke County, visiting to represent the museum in the absence of Waits Gordon. She explained that the museum is working on an America 250 exhibit and that they have hired a well-trained curator Carly Collins.

Ed directed members to review the purpose of the committee, listed in the Agenda, reminding members that this is a county committee of 15 appointed members and thanking members for their participation.

Approval of Minutes from June 9, 2025

Minutes from the June 9 meeting were presented to members by email prior to the meeting and hardcopies were distributed at the meeting for discussion. No corrections or amendments were noted. Robert Patton moved to accept the minutes as presented, seconded by Butch McSwain. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

- 2025 Revolutionary War Days Update

Ed Phillips updated the group on some of the plans for the Revolutionary War Days events to be held September 26 and 27. He presented a draft of a resolution to distribute to the City of Morganton and other towns in the county. The goal would be to have resolutions presented at their town meetings in December of this year in support of the America 250 campaign as a kickoff to events in 2026. Feedback from the committee included checking dates of 1837 on the Burke County Courthouse and 1812 on the Charles McDowell House. Robert recommended to add the full date of October 7, 1780 for the Battle of Kings Mountain and add the Battle of Cowpens,

January 17, 1781, as "critical landmarks of time" that are locally relevant and important. Ed will finish the draft and send to Kay Draughn for presentation to the Morganton City Council. The main goal of the resolutions would be to solicit municipal support, gain publicity, and recognize the importance of the America 250 initiative.

Moving on to discuss the Revolutionary War Days events, Ed pointed out that we need to help with the details of these events. He referred to the handout with the budget and potential costs. Saturday, September 27th event will include an encampment at the McDowell House including a group of 'Burke Patriots' with Jordan Lowdermilk and friends, consisting of 5 or 6 people who will set up camp overnight in the style and dress of the Revolutionary period. We will be able to provide some compensation of the participants in this event using grant funds. Dr. Sonny Kelly, actor, has been confirmed as a performer to portray a 1700s enslaved man. His fee of $3000 includes arriving Friday by noon and performing both days as requested.

Ed reviewed and discussed several items from the budget sheet. Items discussed for the Rev. War encampment date of September 27 include providing 'dress-up' children's clothing, a living historians group, tents and chairs set up for the public, using the Trolley, and the site being prepared, including removal of a dead holly tree at the front area of the McDowell House.

Ed showed large America 250 yard signs that have been made and can be wired or zip-tied to posts. They are yet unassigned but can be posted to identify historic sites such as those on the site tour. Phyllis Wogan requested one for the History Museum of Burke County.

Port-a-Johns will be required at certain historic sites, such as Gilboa Methodist Church and the McDowell House.

Billboards and Facebook Marketing are being used to advertise and promote events along Highway 64. There was discussion about adding additional billboard advertising along highway 18/64 and highway 64/70. Ed explained some of the costs and procedures to the group.

There will be need for docent/student training before the September 26 & 27 events. There are 9 festival tents that have been purchased and prepared. They are on steel frames and are assembled on rollers and stored in the Arts Council basement. They are heavy-duty.

Committed for the September 26 & 27 event are Dr. Sonny Kelly, a photo booth set-up, and the Air Stream Camper from the state America 250 campaign. We do not have food trucks yet. Those contacted so far were already booked. The photo booth is set up as a backdrop and props for people to do self-portraits. We will need to provide staff to oversee.

Robert Patton mentioned that Historic Burke Foundation has Rev. War style plywood painted photo props made by Michael Berley—the type where participants put their face through the hole for a photo opportunity. They are currently being stored in Beth Spahn's home but need to be moved ASAP. They would require about a 10 by 10 foot storage space. They could be used for America 250 events as well.

Discussion was opened about budget items. The topic of children's clothing was discussed at length. Linda Lindsey talked about past events for the Overmountain men, where children's clothing was a big hit with the kids. They wanted to dress-up and feel the clothing. We would want to have caps and hats that could be used for years to come. Robert has purchased shirts and other clothing. Dennis & Lorraine Velker make period clothing. Linda will send contact info to Ed. With children's clothing, we would need items to be washable. Not only children but also adults would like to dress up. We could put together a children's kit and an adults kit with props. Bryant Lindsey pointed out that we may want to include Native American items as well. Ed pointed out the need to be aware of historical inaccuracies in dress vs. reality.

- Committee Assignments

We need to establish some help for the event on the 27th. In the past, Historic Burke Foundation has done a great job planning and executing this event but it is ramped up for this year. Linda said there would be 25 stations this year, garden tours, demonstrating, corn husk dolls. Lots of logistics to work out.

For the Historic Site tours, we will need people to help with that, and may need one person on each motor coach. We will need set-up help on the 27th. The Community House program for the 26th will include a speaker and we may be able to get Dr. Sonny Kelly to do a performance that day for the group.

- Other Burke County Events in 2025

Other ideas for America 250 events past September 27 include educational outreach to 4th graders, participation at local festivals, Burke County colonial Christmas, Christmas parade with colonial theme. Ed will plant the idea with the Downtown Development Association.

Ed is working on a separate logo that could be used for merchandise including shirts, etc.

Robert is working on coordinating a fife and drum group like that used at the Guilford Courthouse site. Alex Stillwell is learning to play the fife and plays many instruments. There are drummers with Patton & Freedom High Schools that may participate. Robert has offered to buy a fife for those who will learn to play. He is working on having a cannon firing at the 27th event.

New Business

- Establish July 4, 2026 Sub-Committee

Ed announced the need for establishing a July 4, 2026 sub-committee to initiate solid plans for next year's event. There was discussion about the prevalence of out-of-town travel for the fourth, viewing area for fireworks, parade, activities on the courthouse square, ringing the bell on the square, rides for kids, etc. Ed reminded the committee that we have no revenue stream for events except our current grant. We can spend money this year and must be spent by June 30 of next eyar. We need to involve towns. Volunteers for this committee include Joel Welch, Butch McSwain, Debbie Jones, Laurie Johnston, and we may ask Michael Berley from the City of Morganton to participate.

- Burke Events for 2026

Linda Lindsey discussed working on 4th grader event for the spring instead of trying to coordinate it for the week before the Rev. Days event this September due to the huge logistics of working with 17 different schools and nearly 1000 students. Mary Lou Furr and Dawn Poore had been the main organizers in past years but are not available due to personal obstacles this year. As this is a component of our grant proposal, we would need to follow through with plans for a coordination with Burke County School students for a spring event. Robert Patton suggested that is we involve Mike Swan, he can designate people on staff at the schools and have the school staff help share the load. It is amazing what teachers and school staff can accomplish, so they should be able to help.

Wrap Up

For now, we will focus on the September 27th event and plan for and additional event in the spring. There was concern that Linda and Historic Burke Foundation will need additional help in planning and carrying out the activities for the 27th. Linda will let us know how the committee may help.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 pm. The next meeting will be Monday, August 11 at 1:30 pm.

Submitted by Laurie Johnston, Secretary
August 11, 2025

Appendix:
Attachment A—Meeting Agenda
Attachment B—Resolution Draft
Attachment C—Grant Budget

Attachment A

AGENDA
BURKE COUNTY 250th PLANNING COMMITTEE
MORGANTON, NORTH CAROLINA

Committee Members: Butch McSwain, Deborah Jones, Dr. Bryant Lindsey, Dr. Joel Welch, Dr. Linda Lindsey, Ed Phillips, Kevin Hancock, Laurie Johnson, Leslie McKesson, Mike Swan, Phil Smith, Robert Patton, Sam Wilkinson, Waits Gordon.

REGULAR MEETING **July 14, 2025**

1:30 P.M. **Burke Visitor Center**

I. CALL TO ORDER

1. Purpose of the Committee- Burke County

"To engage all North Carolinians and ALL 100 counties through their many signatures and officially recognized programs, projects and events over the commemoration by inspiring future leaders and celebrating North Carolina's contributions to the nation over the last 250 years."

II. Approve Meeting Minutes from June 9, 2025

III. OLD BUSINESS

1. REV War Days Update
2. Committee Assignments
3. Other Burke County Events in 2025

IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. Establish July 4, 2026 Sub- Committee
2. Burke Events for 2026

Attachment B

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF BURKE COUNTY IN CELEBRATION OF AMERICA'S 250th ANNIVERSARY

WHEREAS, the year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, the United States Semi quincentennial presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reflect on our nation's founding principles and to celebrate the people, places, and events that have shaped our shared American story; and

WHEREAS, Burke County holds a prominent place in North Carolina and American history, with deep ties to the Revolutionary War, including the Overmountain Men who mustered in this region before the pivotal Battle of Kings Mountain in 1780; and

WHEREAS, Burke County is home to significant historical landmarks, such as the Historic Burke County Courthouse (1837), the Charles McDowell House (1812) and numerous early settlements and structures that tell the story of our community's development; and

WHEREAS, the Burke County America 250 Committee was formed to recognize, promote, and coordinate local activities that honor the County's historic contributions and engage the public in meaningful commemoration; and

WHEREAS, the Committee aims to highlight and preserve local history through educational programs, commemorative events, community storytelling, heritage tours, and public engagement initiatives;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Burke County Board of Commissioners proudly recognizes the historical significance of Burke County in the founding and shaping of the United States and supports the ongoing efforts of the Burke County America 250 Committee;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board encourages all residents, municipalities, schools, businesses, civic organizations, and historical institutions to participate in and contribute to America 250 observances that showcase Burke County's unique role in the American story;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that Burke County shall honor this milestone with dignity, pride, and public engagement to ensure that its historical legacy is preserved and celebrated for future generations.

Adopted this ___ day of _____, 2025.

Attachment C

	Rev War Week Outreach & Festival			
	Actual	Budget	Actual Costs	Confirmed
Income				
3000 · Historic Site Tour Revenue $25 x 40 ppl		1,000.00		
4200 ·Grant Revenue		30,000.00		
Total Income	0.00	31,000.00		
Expense				
6200 ·Burke Patriots Campers J. Lowdermilk		1,000.00		
6300 · Entertainment (Sonny Kelly)		3,000.00		Yes
6304 ·Children's Period Clothing		1,500.00		
6400 · Living Historians (SECLH)		2,500.00	12 ppl max	Yes
6730 · Canopy Tent Rental (2) 20 x 40		1,500.00		Yes
6730 · Chair Rental (175)		350.00		Yes
6750 ·Trolley Transporation (Shuttle)		0.00	In-kind	Yes
6760 ·Motor Coach for Historic Tours (2)		2,400.00		Contract Signed
6770 · Yard signs at Historic Sites		500.00		
6800 · Portajons Handicap plus Hand Stations		1,500.00		Yes
7200 · Event Supplies		1,500.00		
7240 ·4th Graders Outreach: Location TBD		2,000.00		
7250 · Take Home Tuesday Materials		2,000.00		
8350 · Marketing: BillBoards/Facebook		7,000.00		
8500 · Docent & Student Training Expense		2,500.00		
8800 · Festival Tents (10 x $300)		3,314.59	3314.59	Yes
8850 · Tour Lunch	45 x $15	675.00		Yes
9500 ·	0.00			
9900 ·	0.00			
Total Expense	0.00	33,239.59		
Net Income	0.00	-2,239.59		
Dr. Sonny Kelley- Black History Speaker				Yes
Food Trucks ?				
Air Stream Camper -Cultural Resources				Yes
OVNHT/NPS- Photo Booth				