Burke County -- America 250 Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, February 16, 2026
Location: Burke County Commissioners Meeting Room
110 N. Green Street, Entrance E, Morganton
Time: 1:35 pm —2:40 pm

Members Present:				Guests Present:
Gordon, Waits		Patton, Robert		Jane Tate (representing History Museum)
Johnston, Laurie (Secretary)	✓	Phillips, Ed (Chair)	✓	
Jones, Deborah	✓	Stroud, Mike	✓	
Lindsey. Dr. Bryant	✓	Swan. Dr. Mike		
Lindsey, Dr. Linda	✓	Welch, Dr. Joel (Vice Chair)	✓	
McKesson, Dr. Leslie		Wilkinson, Sam		
McSwain, Butch	✓	Woodie, Charles	✓	
Medford, Sylvia				

Call to Order

Committee Chairman, Ed Phillips, called the meeting to order and welcomed committee members. Jane Tate was recognized to represent the History Museum of Burke County in the absence of Waits Gordon, who is experiencing health issues. A quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes from January 12, 2026

Minutes from the January meeting were sent by email and hardcopies were distributed at the meeting for discussion. Mike Stroud moved to accept the minutes as presented, seconded by Butch McSwain. The minutes were accepted by unanimous vote.

Old Business

- Grant Update (Ed Phillips)
  Ed provided another grant update. The first $10,000 grant has been finalized. This was the grant in which the banners for marketing the America 250 program in Burke were created and distributed across the county. Funds were expended and all paperwork is completed.

For Grant #2, the $30,000 grant, most of the funds were utilized for the Revolutionary War Days/Rev. War Encampment event last fall. At that time, we postponed the outreach to 4th graders, so $3500 allocated for that was unspent. We have a total of $4673.50 remaining from that grant. Ed contacted Dan Brosz, at the state level America 250 committee, to ask about flexibility in using the remaining money from the grant. He said that it would be fine to use the money for other projects within the scope of Burke America 250 projects and the funding expenditure would be extended until the end of 2026.

- 4th Grade Flag Contest
  Due to the ice and snow event, the 4th grade flag contest experienced a delay. There are 11 flag submissions from local 4th grade winners at the school level. They will be received at the Burke Tourism office later today. We will call a special meeting to judge the entries. Every member of the committee is encouraged to participate in the judging. The winners are needed by March 1.

New Business

- Liberty Tree Application
  Our application for a Liberty Tree was accepted. The Fitzgerald family nursery is supplying an Azure Maple tree, 14-16 feet tall and 2-3 inch diameter to be planted in late March or early April. This timing will be best for the tree's development. Ed will set up an appointment with the City of Morganton to have the tree planted at Freedom Park. It will require 4-5 years of careful maintenance to get fully established. The application fee covers a plaque that will be installed at the site. We will have a public dedication later this year, time to be determined.

Time Capsule

We've written a grant application for the Rostan Foundation and received a verbal commitment for a $2500 grant to help fund the creation of the time capsule. Ed is also in talks with the Huffman-Cornwell Foundation about a grant for the project as well. A team from WPCC have been working up plans for the time capsule. Estimated cost would be $1900-2000 with the capsule including welding, woodworking, and machine tools. The stand would be 18 inches square at the base and 26 inches tall. Materials include stainless steel sides, a thicker welded box with a steel lid and wood accents. The capsule would be filled and sealed from the top in a secure but sealed container.

There was considerable discussion about ideas for the contents. Ed commented that we need to come up with ideas for its inventory, including elements that encompass what life is like in Burke this year. Ideas for time capsule contents included:

- Letters by public figures
- Robert Patton had said in a previous meeting he could contribute a 1776 penny.
- 1976 penny/modern penny since they are no longer minted

- Photographs, analog/hard-copies since we have no idea what digital format may be available or obsolete in 50 years.
- Something on video
- Cell phone possibly can store data

We will be limited by the size of the capsule. It will be mounted on a pedestal. Should we keep the list of contents secret or publish the list? Bryant Lindsey suggested that we may want to consult the new state Archivist. Perhaps seek a contribution from each school or reach out to each town. Ed said he will start a spreadsheet of item ideas and send to everyone to edit. Someone suggested that we should contact the current High School graduating classes as they will be celebrating their 50th reunions that year that the time capsule should be opened.

July 4 Meeting set for Feb. 26

Ed will meet with city and county officials at 2pm on Feb. 26 to discuss options for July 4 celebrations and develop a strategic plan. At the meeting, the County manager—Bryan Epley, Sally Sandy from the City of Morganton, Public Safety & Emergency Services Representatives will discuss possible parade & firework plans, etc. Ed will report back to the committee.

Spring Historic Site Tours

Ed reported that at this point, we have made no additional progress on plans for the tours, but we are still planning to do them. We need to make them easier and more affordable since we don't have the additional grant money like we used in the fall the supplement the tour costs. Plan is to make multiple stops, perhaps stops in Valdese. Option to have Open Houses at locations so there would be no need to provide transportation. Perhaps we could utilize mural tours similar to the Hometown Walkabout tours from the Industrial Commons.

4th Grader Outreach

Linda reported that the outreach program is traditionally held in the fall in conjunction with Rev. War Days by Historic Burke Foundation. The OVTA brings more help to the program in the fall. Planning typically takes four people from Historic Burke working February through September to pull it off and some of the people who have led the planning in the past are no longer able. Linda is not able to do it by herself. She suggested that the outreach be planned for the fall if possible, to coincide with Rev. War days. In the past, schools have provided students but no help in terms of planning and carrying out the various stations. There have been 22 stations to host and it is a massive job for volunteers.

A suggestion was made that the schools could assist in planning and executing the stations, but there would need to be a consistent school contact. Who from the schools would be the most helpful? Linda suggested that Kim Rudisill, who was a county administrator over the elementary schools in the past, was helpful but she has retired. Kim saw the vision and benefits of the

program and made it mandatory for students so the student audience jumped from about 300 to 1000 people. Perhaps she may be willing to help or have ideas.

In the past, 4th graders were bused in from 17 elementary schools to Catawba Meadows location. Also has been held at Freedom High School and Collett St. Rec Center. There are 15-20 student groups that gather together to hear the history then go to 22 stations, moving from station to station. Stations show life in 1780s, living history, school, church, music, cooking, etc. There is a lunch break, then buses roll out. Catawba Meadows was a good location.

We would need support groups, schools, money, logistics help, include homeschools. The schools could participate at a bigger level. We would need a contact person for the schools; perhaps the Elementary Coordinator? We need to discuss with Mike Swan. Perhaps we could create a new model or we could consider a roadshow style and take the show to the kids? We need to work with school personnel to figure out how this could work for this year. Board members reached a consensus to plan for the fall.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 pm. The next meeting will be Monday, March 9 at 1:30 pm.

Submitted by Laurie Johnston, Secretary

March 6, 2026

Appendix:
Attachment A—Meeting Agenda