Burke County -- America 250 Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, June 8, 2026
Location: Burke County Commissioners Meeting Room
110 N. Green Street, Entrance E, Morganton
Time: 1:30 pm —2:26 pm

Members Present:				Guests Present:
Johnston, Laurie (Secretary)	✓	Patton, Robert		Phyllis Garrison
Corwin Keys	✓	Phillips, Ed (Chair)	✓	
Lindsey. Dr. Bryant		Stroud, Mike	✓	
Lindsey, Dr. Linda		Swan. Dr. Mike		
McKesson, Dr. Leslie	✓	Welch, Dr. Joel (Vice Chair)	✓	
McSwain, Butch	✓	Wilkinson, Sam		
Medford, Sylvia		Woodie, Charles	✓	

Call to Order

Committee Chairman, Ed Phillips, called the meeting to order and welcomed committee members. A quorum was present. Ed explained that the Lindseys and Robert Patton were not going to be able to attend today's meeting. He distributed an Agenda for the meeting and a list of item ideas for the Time Capsule.

Approval of Minutes from May 11, 2026

Minutes from the April 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 Leslie McKesson. The minutes were accepted by unanimous vote.

Introduction of Guest

Laurie Johnston introduced guest Phyllis Garrison of the Burke Theater Guild, who announced the upcoming production of *Tarheel Ladies of the Revolution*, to be presented July 4–5 in partnership with the Historic Burke Foundation. Written by Dr. Kelly S. Taylor as part of the America 250 commemoration, the production tells the stories of real North Carolina women

during the Revolutionary era. Garrison also highlighted the Guild's recent production, *Murder in the Courthouse*, which was staged in the Old Burke County Courthouse theater and reenacted a fatal shooting that actually occurred in the same room. The upcoming production features a cast of nine performers, including professional actress Kim Cozort Kay of Drexel.

Old Business

1. Time Capsule Contents

   Ed Phillips reported that the America 250 Time Capsule is in the final stages of construction. A donor recognition plaque has been ordered, and the capsule is scheduled to be sealed in 2026 for opening in 2076. The capsule measures approximately 18 inches square and 3 feet tall. Its removable top will be secured to the base with screws to create a permanent seal.

   Ed displayed several items that have already been collected for inclusion in the Time Capsule and reported that letters have been requested and received from public officials and student representatives. The committee's next step is to obtain archival sleeves to properly preserve and organize paper materials. Items received to date include contributions from Western Piedmont Community College, Freedom High School, East Burke High School, Patton High School, Draughn High School, Burke Middle College, the Burke County Board of Commissioners, the Town of Valdese, and the City of Morganton. Other items include materials from the Liberty Tree planting and dedication, a Burke County hiking guide, a Burke County map, the Valdese Visitor Guide, documentation of the Western Piedmont Community College Trades Center groundbreaking, and 2026 high school yearbooks, which Laurie Johnston reported she had obtained.

   The committee discussed the need to collect additional artifacts that reflect everyday life in Burke County in 2026. Leslie volunteered to solicit items representing the local Hmong community and the NAACP Youth Council. Members also brainstormed other possible additions, including Berry Site pottery, photographs, restaurant menus, theater programs, birth announcements, examples of current consumer products and packaging, information reflecting transportation and delivery services, prices of common goods, and other items that would document life in Burke County during the nation's semiquincentennial year.

   The committee also discussed strategies for encouraging public participation in the Time Capsule project. Members noted the challenges of reaching a broad audience through traditional and social media, given declining newspaper readership and the limited reach of Facebook. Ed mentioned the possibility of advertising on the digital billboard on Green Street, while Laurie Johnston agreed to coordinate Facebook announcements when the committee is ready to begin accepting contributions from the public.

2. July 4th Flyer/Events
   Ed provided an update on Independence Day and America 250 activities scheduled throughout Burke County and distributed a flyer to help advertise these events for the public. He noted that preparations for the America 250 Parade in Glen Alpine are underway. The Town of Glen Alpine is requiring advance registration this year, with participation limited to 60 entries. The committee's trolley will be decorated with banners and bunting, and committee members are invited to walk with the America 250 banner at the front of the parade. Representatives from the SAR and DAR will also participate with their respective banners. Following the parade, the Town of Glen Alpine will offer free watermelon and entertainment. The parade begins at 10:00 a.m. and is expected to conclude around noon.

   Ed announced that a special Charters of Freedom program will begin at 1:00 p.m. on the courthouse grounds, featuring readings and presentations, including a public reading of the Declaration of Independence. Performances of *Tarheel Ladies of the Revolution* are scheduled for 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. on July 4. He noted that the day's events have been scheduled to allow attendees to participate in multiple activities, including evening fireworks at Freedom Park in Morganton or at the Old Rock School in Valdese.

   Ed also shared that a private event sponsored by the SAR will be held at the McDowell House on the evening of July 4. He had also heard of a possible activity being planned by another group at the Burke County Fairgrounds in conjunction with the fireworks, although details had not yet been announced.

   Commenting on statewide America 250 celebrations, Ed observed that historical reenactors are in high demand and are spread thin across North Carolina because of the large number of commemorative events taking place. Laurie also mentioned some national America 250 initiatives that we have promoted on our Facebook page: *Let Freedom Ring*, encouraging communities to ring bells 13 times at 2:50 p.m. Eastern Time on July 4 in honor of the original 13 colonies, and *America's Block Party*, which promotes neighborhood and community celebrations on July 3 or 4, *Giving Fourth* which encourages charitable giving on July 4, along with *America's Potluck*, encouraging community potluck gatherings on Sunday, July 5. Laurie mentioned that some churches are planning America 250/patriotic church services June 27 or July 5.

New Business

Laurie Johnston distributed a calendar of summer events highlighting America 250 and other historical activities taking place in Burke County and surrounding areas during June, July, and August. She noted that America 250-related programs will continue over the next several years,

culminating in 2033 with the anniversary of the Treaty of Paris, which formally ended the Revolutionary War. The committee also submitted the summer calendar to *The News Herald* at the newspaper's request for inclusion in its June 13 America 250 special edition. Ed Phillips and Laurie Johnston each contributed articles for the issue.

Ed Phillips reported that, at the state level, funding for America 250 activities and staffing beyond July 4 remains uncertain pending adoption of the state budget. As a result, it is unclear whether state America 250 staff will be able to continue in their current roles.

Members also reviewed upcoming events, including Juneteenth observances, Revolutionary War Week sponsored by the Historic Burke Foundation this fall, the Council Oak replacement and rededication, and the Overmountain Men Crossing of the Catawba River commemorative event.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:26 pm. The next meeting will be Monday, July 13 at 1:30 pm.

Submitted by Laurie Johnston, Secretary
July 8, 2026

Appendix:
Attachment A—Time Capsule Contents ideas
Attachment B—Burke County Events on the 4th of July flyer
Attachment C—Burke County America 250 Summer Calendar
Attachment D—America 250th Church program plan
Attachment E—Glen Alpine Parade flyer
Attachment F—US Mint America 250 dime design

Attachment A - 1

Time Capsule Contents ideas

Item		Received
2026 Penny		
Photo of America 250 Committee		
Photo of County Commissioners- Manager		
I-phone-charger-		
Newspaper *The Paper - News Herald*		
Burke County Annual Report-Most recent		
Burke Tourism Stickers		
Stanley Tumbler		
Studen Flag Designs		Yes
Letter from High School Class Presidents		Yes
Retail Price Lists- vehicles, bread, milk, hamburger		
Proclomations		Yes
Photo of Liberty Tree as planted in 2026		Yes
Chamber Magazine-2026		Yes
Typed narratives from:		
•A public school teacher •A high school senior •A factory worker •A small business owner •A nurse •A pastor •A retiree •A farmer •A sheriff's deputy •A restaurant server		
• What does your day look like?		
• What worries you?		
• What gives you hope?		
What do you think Burke County will be like in 50 years?		
City/County Governments		
• America 250 local proclamation		Yes
• County budget summary		
• City of Morganton budget summary		
• School system budget		
• Sheriff's annual report		
A printed sheet listing 2026 prices for:		
• Gallon of milk		
• Dozen eggs		
• Gallon of gas		
• Average rent		
• Median home price		
• Movie ticket		
• College tuition at WPCC		
• Electric bill per kwh		

• Health insurance premium		
A Cultural Portfolio		
Include:		
• Church bulletins		
• Apple Watch		
• High school football program		
• A local restaurant menu		
• A brewery tap list		
• A community theater playbill		Yes
• A wedding announcement		
• A funeral program		
High School yearbook from 2026		
Signed letters from:		
• The Mayor♂		
• County Commissioners Chair		
• Sheriff		
• School Superintendent		
• Hospital CEO		
• A clergy leader		
• A student representative		
• Publisher of *The Paper*		
Each answering:		
• What are our greatest challenges?		
• What are our strengths?		
• What must you protect?		
Final Principle Do not curate only what makes us proud. Preserve what is true. A time capsule is not a marketing brochure. It is evidence.		

Attachment B

BURKE COUNTY Events on the 4th of JULY



10 AM

4th of July Parade

GLEN ALPINE

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

1 PM

"Charters of Freedom Celebration."

HISTORIC COURTHOUSE SQUARE–MORGANTON



3 & 7 PM

"Tarheel Ladies of the Revolution"

★ DRAMATIC PLAY ★

HISTORIC BURKE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Presented by the Burke Theater Guild and Historic Burke Foundation.

Play Tickets are $10.

Call 828-437-4104 for reservations.



PLAY DATES:

JULY 4TH
3 PM & 7 PM

JULY 5TH
3 PM

FIREWORKS!

VALDESE DOWNTOWN
★ Dark ★

MORGANTON FREEDOM PARK
★ Dark ★

Attachment C-1

BURKE COUNTY AMERICA 250 SUMMER CALENDAR

Celebrating the 250th Anniversary of American Independence
June – August 2026

The Burke County America 250 Committee invites residents and visitors to join us this summer as we commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Through parades, historical programs, heritage festivals, educational events, and community celebrations, we honor the diverse people, events, and ideals that have shaped our nation, our state, and our county.

From Revolutionary-era stories and patriotic observances to the rich cultural traditions of Native peoples, immigrants, and settlers who helped build Burke County, these events offer opportunities to learn, reflect, celebrate, and inspire future generations.

These commemorations recognize the many individuals and communities—including Native peoples, settlers, immigrants, veterans, and civic leaders—whose contributions have shaped the story of Burke County and the United States.

JUNE

June 11 – Free Women of Color in Revolutionary North Carolina (Online, 12:00 Noon)

America 250 NC webinar exploring the lives and contributions of free women of color during the Revolutionary era.

June 20 – Juneteenth Celebration (10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., CoMMA, Morganton)

Community celebration honoring freedom, heritage, and African American history.

June 27 – Avery County Heritage Festival (Courthouse Square, Newland)

Traditional crafts, music, genealogy, and mountain heritage demonstrations.

June 27 – Liberty Ball (Historical Association of Catawba County)

America 250-themed evening featuring colonial music, dancing, and historical interpretation.

JULY

July 4 – Burke County America 250 Independence Day Parade (10:00 a.m., Town of Glen Alpine)

Official Burke County celebration of the 250th Anniversary of American Independence. Community organizations, civic groups, veterans, churches, businesses, and citizens are invited.

July 4 – Charters of Freedom Patriotic Program (10:00 a.m., Morganton Courthouse Square)

Presented by Foundation Forward featuring readings from founding documents and patriotic reflections.

July 4 – Town of Valdese Independence Day Celebration (Old Rock School, Valdese)

Live music by The Tonez, car show, food trucks, children's activities, and fireworks.

July 4 – City of Morganton Independence Day Fireworks (Freedom Park)

Annual fireworks celebration.

July 4 – Capitol 250 NC Freedom Fest (Raleigh)

Statewide America 250 celebration featuring living history, exhibits, music, and programming.

July 4–5 – Tarheel Ladies of the Revolution (Historic Burke County Courthouse)

Burke Theatre Guild presentation highlighting Revolutionary-era North Carolina women.

July 4 – Giving Fourth (Nationwide)

America 250 initiative encouraging charitable giving and community service.

July 5 – America's Potluck (Nationwide)

National initiative encouraging community gatherings and shared meals.

AUGUST

August 7–8 – Waldensian Festival (Downtown Valdese)

Celebration of Waldensian heritage featuring music, food, exhibits, cultural demonstrations, and historical interpretation.

ONGOING SUMMER ACTIVITIES

History Museum of Burke County – Exhibits on Native American history, Fort San Juan, early settlement, Revolutionary era, genealogy, and county history.

America 250 Liberty Tree (Freedom Park, Morganton) – Living symbol of liberty and civic engagement.

Charters of Freedom (Burke County Courthouse Square) – Permanent display of founding and civil rights documents.

For additional information, visit local museums, libraries, historical societies, and heritage sites throughout Burke County during the America 250 commemoration.

Special Program
held at Bethel Methodist Church of Dry Ponds
Sat. June 27 4pm



America 250th

June 27,2026

Welcome...Pastor Donald Farris

George Washington Prayer....Pastor Donald Farris

*Presentation of Flags Troop 197 Scouts Crayton & King Pollard

***I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.**

***I pledge allegiance to the Christian Flag and to the Savior for whose Kingdom it stands and One Savior, Crucified, Risen and coming again with Life and Liberty to all who believe.**

*Star Spangled Banner....Antonio Corpening

American Creed...Andrea Kiser

*Hymn...America the Beautiful... Page 601 Aubrey Costner

Declaration of Independence.....Stacy Costner

*Hymn...My Country Tis of Thee....Page 599..... Aubrey Costner

Preamble to the Constitution...Mildred Henry

God Bless the USA....Antonio Corpening

Keyboard...Darleen Mitchiner

Moment of Silence...Andrea Kiser

Presentation of Patriots...Andrea Kiser

Benediction and Blessing...Pastor Donald Farris

*All Sing "Happy Birthday America".....Aubrey Costner

All American Meal in Fellowship Hall! All Welcome!

*Please Stand

Attachment E

CELEBRATE IN FULL STRIDE!

Join us as we honor the 250th year of freedom with floats, marching bands, local heroes, food, music, and a whole lot of red, white & blue!



GLEN ALPINE PARADE

SATURDAY, 4TH OF JULY

STARTS AT 10:00AM

More Details, Visit: www.townofglenalpine.org

or

Facebook - Town of Glen Alpine



U.S. MINT TO DEBUT 'EMERGING LIBERTY' DIME DESIGN IN 2026 FOR AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY

Attachment F