Approved May 11, 2026

Burke County -- America 250 Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, April 13, 2026
Location: Burke County Commissioners Meeting Room
110 N. Green Street, Entrance E, Morganton
Time: 1:37 pm —2:43 pm

Members Present:				Guests Present:
Johnston, Laurie (Secretary)	✓	Patton, Robert	✓	Corwin Keys (History Museum)
Jones, Deborah	✓	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 we have lost one of our committee members, Waits Gordon, who passed away on Saturday, March 28, after a brief period of declining health. The funeral service will be Saturday, April 18 at First United Methodist Church in Morganton for anyone who wishes to attend. Ed invited Corwin Keys, from The History Museum of Burke County, to introduce himself, as he is a prospective committee member awaiting approval from the County Commissioners. Corwin has been serving as an intern at the History Museum as he is finalizing his Master's Degree in Public History at UNC-Charlotte. He has submitted an application for membership on the America 250 committee.

Approval of Minutes from March 9, 2026

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

Old Business

1. Liberty Tree Planted and Plaque has arrived!
   The Liberty Tree was donated by the Fitzgerald Family Nursery and planted mid-March by the City of Morganton Parks & Recreation Department at the designated site at Freedom Park. The plaque came in after Ed had submitted numerous requests for information and a proof but a proof was never sent in prior to production of the plaque, so we didn't have a chance to review any spelling or content. The plaque is very small, spelling is okay. The size was disappointing considering the $250 application fee. Ed has already complained to the Buncombe County America 250 Committee, who managed the project. Only 18 other groups are participating in the Liberty Tree project statewide. A stone memorial will be placed on which the plaque will be mounted. Michael Berley, designer from the City of Morganton, is looking at how it will be mounted. We will unveil the monument at a dedication ceremony and do a photo opportunity. Committee members are encouraged to attend. Date is still TBD. Ed will send a message out when the date and time are finalized.

2. Time Capsule Contents
   Ed had a meeting a week ago last Friday with Larry Clark, local historian who has written many books about local history. He also wrote a book about time capsules in 2010 and it was revised in 2015. It includes tips on creating time capsules and outlines some time capsules in Burke County. There is one on the courthouse and there was a time capsule at Western Piedmont Community College at the dedication of the Learning Resource Center. Laurie Johnston advised that an inventory and documentation of locations of time capsules including the America 250 Time Capsule should be kept on hand in a repository designed to "be around" in 50 years, such as the NC Room at the library.
   Leslie asked about size parameters for the contents of our capsule. Ed explained that it would be housed in the Register of Deeds office, where it will be temperature and humidity controlled.
   Planned contents include photographs of the Liberty Tree site, County resolution in support of Burke's America 250, forward looking letters from Mayors, Letters on letterhead from elected officials/towns, Burke/Chamber business directory, possible special edition of local newspapers. Ideas were presented for objects that could be included. 2026 coins were mentioned. Ed says he is on a waiting list to receive newly minted coins. Leslie suggested that we include a broad cultural representation of items from cultures represented in Burke. We can't include batteries, such as for a cell phone. Need to use archival paper. Other suggestions include Community Foundation Annual Report, TGIF Program, and Burke County artwork. The size of the time capsule container is 18 inches square and approximately 26 inches tall. Ed will need to confirm the exact size. Ed has met with The Paper about the Time Capsule. Someone mentioned contacting Virginia Annable from The News Herald as well. She lives in Drexel.

There was discussion on the importance of "getting the message out" and using various methods. Perhaps contact teachers or get submissions from younger groups of students and include Valedictorian speeches from the graduating classes this year.

A concern was expressed that the intention is that contents of the time capsule should exist outside of politics. There are some people who are hesitant to support the America 250 program because they see it as connected to current administration and leadership. That has caused problems sometimes in soliciting support from the public at large.

Ed reported that we have sold 20 t-shirts out of 144. We may set up a table to sell t-shirts at TGIF.

3. July 4 Fireworks (2X) and Parade (Glen Alpine)
   On Saturday, July 4, there will be two towns launching a fireworks show. Morganton will do fireworks at Freedom Park, as it has been in past years. Valdese will do fireworks at the Old Rock School. Fireworks shows have to be approved by Burke County Emergency Management and an appropriate fallout zone perimeter has to be established for the launch area.

   The official Independence Day parade that we are endorsing is the traditional 4th of July parade in Glen Alpine. Ed will be meeting with Glen Alpine officials next week for planning. The DAR is involved in that parade, along with the SAR Color Guard) The Trolley will be decorated with banners in June. There could be a huge turnout to this parade this year.

<u>New Business</u>

1. Valdese Celebrates America 250 – Date: August 29 (Saturday)
   Valdese has planned an America 250 festival for August 29 in downtown Valdese in and around the Old Rock School. The steps will be painted, Old Colony players dressed for photos, vendors, food, festival atmosphere, American Legion, a community choir. Ed Lane will present a photography program on the National Parks. There will be a movie outside, bike parade, sparklers for kids. It is called Valdese Celebrates America 250! Committee members expressed that they were impressed with the planning and activities for the Valdese celebration.

Additional comments:
The North Carolina America 250 group held a zoom meeting recently. It was explained that there is no more funding from the state as no state budget has passed. As of June 30, there will be no funding and they may not even have a state staff left. Any new money and staffing are

unclear at this time. We have approval to take until September 30 of this year to finish spending our money from the last big grant.

We have received $2500 from the Rostan foundation for the time capsule.

We also need to plan next year for Burke County's 250th anniversary.

We will meet again in May and we all will need to help getting time capsule items in. After the time capsule container is finished, we can do a big promotion on Facebook with pictures of the time capsule. The History Museum will be helpful in any additional items that need to be preserved. Perhaps we should host an Open House to bring items by for consideration of placement in the Time Capsule.

Laurie presented the most recent draft of what she is calling the "inspiration letter" designed to be sent to local businesses and organizations to encourage them to develop products, activities, and events for America 250. Linda suggested that a subcommittee is needed to help finalize the letter and generate the list of recipients. Volunteers were Corwin, Deborah, Linda, and Leslie. Laurie will set a meeting in the next week and contact subcommittee members. Corwin expressed a desire to include various history perspectives in the letter to accommodate varying narratives.

Laurie asked for volunteers to speak at a Memorial Day program on behalf of the America 250 Committee. We've been asked to provide a 10-15 minute presentation on the events of the committee. Laurie will plan to go and welcomes anyone else from the committee who can attend as well. It is Monday, May 25 at 11:00 am at the Foothills Higher Education Center.

Linda & Bryant Lindsey toured the new American Revolution exhibit at the Charlotte History Museum and a new museum in Gaffney, South Carolina that they highly recommend. Opening in April 2026, Carolina Rising is a new, immersive Revolutionary War museum located in Gaffney, SC. The museum features AI-generated avatars, 3D video, and interactive exhibits. They would like to see buses of people from Burke County to visit these museums.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:43 pm. The next meeting will be Monday, May 11 at 1:30 pm.

Submitted by Laurie Johnston, Secretary
May 5, 2026

Appendix:
Attachment A—Meeting Agenda
Attachment B— Community Partner Letter Draft #2