



AMERICA'S SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL COMMITTEE
November 13, 2025
Room 1228/1327 of the Legislative Building

The America's Semiquincentennial Committee meets on Thursday, November 13, 2025 at 2:00 PM. The meeting was held in Room 1228/1327 of the Legislative Building. Members present were: Representative Hugh Blackwell, Senator Ted Alexander, Mr. Jason Luker, Hon. Charles Batcheller Neely, and Ms. Tanzy Wallace.

Representative Hugh Blackwell, presiding, called the meeting to order.

Co-chairman Blackwell welcomed everyone to the committee meeting, and introduced Mr. Mike Leonard, senior advisor for The Conservation Fund.

Mr. Leonard introduced himself and gave a presentation on various lands in North Carolina which are state owned and have the potential for added trails and signage in conjunction with the 250th anniversary. (See handout for presentation).

Co-chairman Alexander gave his thanks and appreciation for the presentation and discussed the possibility of working with co-chairman Blackwell and committee members on approaching some of the agencies and organizations with the properties discussed to see further steps. Co-chairman Blackwell agreed and discussed in years past how the General Assembly allocated budgetary funds for various trails throughout North Carolina, citing some examples. He then discussed potentially working with Bryant Lindsay from the Overmountain Victory Trail as a point of contact for Mr. Leonard.

Co-chairman Blackwell next introduced Representative John Torbett of Gaston County, who gave a presentation on "First in Freedom: A History of the State License Plate." Representative Torbett discussed his involvement with the development of the "First in Freedom" license plate which can be seen on cars throughout North Carolina, from conception to the final product.

Co-chairman Blackwell then introduced the final presentation of the meeting, Dr. Dixie Abernathy, and her presentation "In Honor of Our Semiquincentennial: The Ancestral Tree and Patriotic Journey of a Great North Carolina Family." Dr. Abernathy discussed the Kramer Family of North Carolina and their vast history, especially in relation to the Revolutionary War and the aftermath. (See handouts for presentation).

Co-chairman Blackwell then called on Dr. Kickler to discuss the committee's Semiquincentennial Constitution Edition, in which Dr. Kickler discussed that each committee member should have a copy. He explained that this is a special edition in which the committee's logo is on the cover, as well as a forward completed by him. Dr. Kickler encouraged committee members to take more copies he provided as they deem necessary.

Co-Chairman Blackwell then moved on to have Dr. Kickler discuss the American Journey Experience. Dr. Kickler explained the program, citing that a museum in Texas is interested in bringing various artifacts to museums, historical sites, and libraries throughout North Carolina. Dr. Kickler explained he learned some more information about the experience, discussing a book for committee members to look at potential artifacts which could be used. Dr. Kickler then asked the committee members to let him know of two venues which might be interested in hosting the experience at their site. Dr. Kickler then described the three experiences which could be utilized by the venues, including a presentation, a popup museum tour, and an artifact booth. He then explained the price points for each of them, citing an in person presentation price point of \$1,500 - \$2,500 depending on the time of year, with virtual being free. Popup museum tours ranging from \$2,500 - \$3,000 for one day, and artifact booths from \$1,200 - \$2,500 based on the time of year and where it's located. Dr. Kickler explained costs could be offset by sponsorships or other sources as well. He explained his contact is Mike Noriega, the Chief of Outreach.

Co-chairman Blackwell then recognized Dr. Kickler to discuss committee outreach. Dr. Kickler discussed the committee's influence in the state of North Carolina, explaining how various organizations appreciate when members go to their events and help promote the events. He described how he has been to some speaking engagements, including Raleigh Sons of the American Revolution and dedications for monuments. Dr. Kickler then talked about the co-chairs involvement in speaking engagements and commemorations, and encouraged committee members to let him know if they are involved in any events. Dr. Kickler also asked the committee members to write columns for social media or print, looking at celebrating the 250th, explaining what the committee is doing, and potentially commemorating the 250th anniversary. He explained if any committee members need a list of willing publications to reach out to him. Dr. Kickler also discussed the possibility of doing "Letters of Commendation" for organizations, as was done with Foundation Forward. He then talked about working on beginning a Speaker's Bureau, in which he said there are 4-5 people involved and wants it to grow to eight people.

Mr. Jason Luker then asked the question of potential guidelines for committee members when they do participate in speaking engagements. Dr. Kickler expressed that while he does not have any specifically, to remember to keep the talks celebratory in nature. Mr. Luker then asked about specific topics being discussed, as they are not directly related to the Revolutionary War but could showcase some components, in which Dr. Kickler agreed. Dr. Kickler then mentioned the staff keeping an inventory list of speaking engagements for the committee members.

Dr. Kickler then discussed the requirement of the committee to complete a report in March and July of 2026. In doing so, he encouraged committee members to write reports of any site visits or speaking engagements which can be added to the finalized reports.

Co-chairman Blackwell then discussed with Mr. Luker that if he is involved with any events or engagements to crosscheck them with Dr. Kickler, as there may be some overlap.

Ms. Tanzy Wallace then discussed her event experiences while representing the committee, including the livermush festival in Shelby and a monument dedication in Earls Ford with co-chairman Senator Alexander. She also gave the contact for the Polk County Museum of History as a potential museum for artifact displays.

Co-chairman Blackwell then recognized the Sergeant-At-Arms from both the House and Senate.

Grace Obsitnik then spoke about the committee's website, reminding committee members to send her any photos or information they would like to be put onto the website. She also discussed how each month the event calendar is updated, so if there are specific events anyone

would like to see added to email her. Finally, she spoke about updating the National 250th tab on the website, which now includes the new competition for 3-12th graders, in which she encouraged people to go and check out.

Paul Norcross, co-founder and chairman of the Celebrate America Foundation, virtually discussed the concert which will be occurring in High Point Theater as a major event. He explained they are now in the process of fundraising for it, with a donation of \$25,000 from the Pope Foundation. The event is scheduled for July 3rd at the High Point Theater and includes the North Carolina Brass Band and Baptist Choir. PBS NC is to record the concert for future uses as well. Mr. Norcross then discussed possible promotion within the theater, including sponsoring tables and VIP reception.

Co-chairman Blackwell then recognized Mr. David Garrigus as a public comment to discuss the film the "American Constitution." Mr. Garrigus discussed his filmmaker role in the production of "American Constitution" and invited the committee to partner with him for a screening event of the film in honor of the 250th anniversary. He explained that throughout 2026, the film will be on a national screening tour ahead of its premier on PBS in the fall of 2026. Mr. Garrigus also discussed visiting the website ConstitutionMovie.com for an overview of what the project is. He then discussed the possibility of having an event in which people viewed the film and then engaged with an expert panel for a civic engagement connection. Mr. Garrigus then explained that the cost of the event is \$1,000 per event, in which he asked the committee to fund or match funds to bring the event to more places in North Carolina.

Grace Obsitnik then spoke on some DNCR events she was able to attend, including a "History for Lunch" and "Teaching the Foundations of American Democracy." She raved about both events, explaining their informative and interesting nature. Ms. Obsitnik explained that DNCR is putting on great events to help celebrate the 250th.

Dr. Kickler then reiterated that he and Grace Obsitnik are visiting various events to put into the final report as well as let the committee know what is happening throughout the state. He also explained he is looking into the committee meeting at alternative sites.

Co-chairman Blackwell then recognized Mr. David McCracken from the Raleigh Sons of the American Revolution Chapter, who was a former presenter for the committee to speak. Dr. Kickler then discussed the potential of creating a Statement of Commendation for the Raleigh SAR chapter and their recreation of the North Carolina Brigade. Mr. McCracken then discussed an update on the North Carolina Brigade reconstruction, including a grant from the George Washington Fund and having all of the mannequins for the reconstruction. He also discussed an event to be held on November 17th titled "Picturing Washington's Army."

Ms. Wallace then motioned for the preparation for a Statement of Commendation for Mr. McCracken and the Raleigh SAR Chapter for the North Carolina Brigade project.

Co-chairman Blackwell accepted the motion, and was voted on with all committee members in agreement.

Co-chairman Blackwell then discussed the absence of Ms. Anne Evangelista from DNCR, but explained she sent a report which each committee member has in their folder.

The next committee meeting date was discussed as a possibility in January of 2026.

There being no further business, the meeting stands adjourned at 3:20 PM.

Presiding

Grace Obsitnik, Committee Clerk