

America's Semiquincentennial Committee

August 22, 2024

Room 1228/1327 of the Legislative Building

The America's Semiquincentennial Committee met on Thursday, August 22, 2024 at 2:00 PM. The meeting was held in Room 1228/1327 of the Legislative Building. Members present were Senator Alexander, Representative Blackwell, Dr. Troy Kickler, Dr. Cary Poole, Mr. Kyle Luebke, Mr. Jason Luker, and Hon. Charles Neely. The three presenters included Sarah Koonts of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Clarence Henderson, and Randell Jones. Representative Blackwell presided and called the meeting to order at 2:06 P.M.

Rep. Blackwell and Sen. Alexander shared tentative plans for the next committee meeting set for September 19 and other upcoming events related to America's Semiquincentennial. Rep. Blackwell provided updates on the search for a staff director in addition to funding for the committee to help plan committee events offsite. Sen. Alexander made note of a packet given to committee members about the American Bicentennial and the 450th anniversary of North Carolina. He encouraged committee members to review the packet to come up with ideas for the semiquincentennial activities for North Carolina.

Rep. Blackwell then introduced Sarah Koonts, Director of the Division of Archives and Records at the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Ms. Koonts then presented the goals of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources for the American Semiquincentennial and their current resources to help achieve those goals.

Rep. Blackwell then opened the floor for questions from the committee. Mr. Luebke asked if the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources plans on going to any events or festivals to promote America 250. Ms. Koonts said that the Department plans to use a small camping trailer to travel to various festivals around the state such as New Bern to publicize America 250.

Dr. Kickler asked how the Department defines "true freedom." Ms. Koonts explained that she believes it is "a recognition that in 1776 there was a limited group of people that could even vote or have a voice in government but that rights and freedoms expanded over time; and that's basically how we're interpreting the 250th."

Rep. Blackwell Then introduced guest speaker and civil rights activist, Clarence Henderson. Mr. Henderson spoke on his experiences with the Woolworth sit-in in Greensboro during the civil rights movement and how those experiences relate to the values of the founding of the United States and our constitution.

Seeing no questions, Rep. Blackwell thanked Mr. Henderson for his presentation and then introduced guest speaker, Randell Jones, author and historian. Mr. Jones spoke on North Carolina's role in the Battle of Kings Mountain and provided additional background on the Overmountain Victory Trail.

Rep. Blackwell then asked for discussion or questions from members of the committee and noted the need for planning events across North Carolina. Mr. Luker shares various plans underway in Mecklenburg County and at the Charlotte Museum to promote America 250th, including interactive exhibits. Rep Blackwell asks Mr. Luker to provide legislative staff and his legislative assistant (Jacob Kuhn) with a list of suggestions to pass along to an executive director that the committee hopes to hire to help plan future events and meetings.

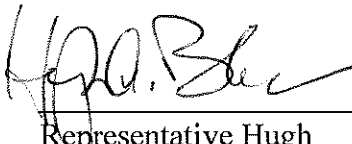

Mr. Luebke suggested creating a "passport" similar to that used during the bicentennial celebration that can be used to collect various stamps from locations of importance, and also suggests ideas for planning future events at locations of important events such as New Bern or Charlotte.

Rep. Blackwell asked that members to record their ideas for plans or meetings outside of Raleigh for when the General Assembly is not in session to allow the best availability for all members of the committee. Rep. Blackwell noted the proposed next meeting date of September 19th along with an optional reception after the meeting.

Sen. Alexander thanked members of the committee and the presenters for being in attendance. Senator Alexander presented the idea of using the presentations and ideas from the first two meetings to start planning events outside of future committee meetings and asked members to continue to share ideas and suggestions. Rep. Blackwell asked committee members to share any suggestions for potential presenters at future meetings. There followed a discussion of developing a timeline of anniversaries to plan future events around.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:34 PM.

See attached handouts from Randall Jones.

	
Representative Hugh Blackwell, Presiding	Jacob Kuhn, Committee Clerk