

## **America 250 Oregon Commission Minutes of Meeting on September 15, 2025**

### **Opening Comments and Attendance**

Chair Tymchuk called the meeting to order at 3:30pm and welcomed Oregon 250 commissioners and the public.

The following commissioners were in attendance: Hanako Wakatsuki-Chong, Brad Parker, George Kramer, Senator Campos, Lisa Itel, Katie Henry, Alisha Babbstein, Secretary Tobias Read, Zachary Stocks, Todd Braje, Shana Radford.

### **America 250 Convening Update**

Brad Parker and Tara Cole provided an update on their trip to the America 250 State and Territory Convening in Washington D.C., held at the end of July. Parker shared a reflective piece on his experience and described it as both incredible and humbling to participate in the event. They both shared how inspiring it was to learn how other state commissions are planning to commemorate and celebrate the nation's semiquincentennial.

Commissioner Katie Henry also spoke about her recent trip to the American Association for State and Local History Conference and highlighted the important work being done by history organizations across the country.

### **Budget Update and Grant Program**

Senate bill 1531, which established the Commission in 2024, allocated \$250,000 to the Oregon Historical Society (OHS) to support the Commission's work, along with an additional \$10,000 from the Federal Commission.

From May 2024 through August 2025, total expenditures amounted to \$157,719.47, not including contracted or allocated funds.

Chair Tymchuk also announced a new grant program, dedicating \$100,000 of additional 2025 legislative funding towards this initiative. The program will include two application periods, with awards of up to \$5,000 each. Eligible projects must support the mission of America 250 Oregon and align with one of the Commission's established guideposts.

Additionally, the National Endowment for the Humanities has a separate funding opportunity, with applications accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis throughout 2025.

## **Oregon 250/America 250 Programs and Partnerships**

**National History Day:** Katie Pearson, Senior Education Manager at OHS, gave an update on National History Day in 2026. This program is a project-based research curriculum for middle and high school students, who select a research topic based on an annual theme. The 2025 theme is *Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History*.

Oregon History Day, the statewide affiliate of National History Day, will be held at Willamette University in April. Students who place in the top two of their categories will advance to National History Day.

**Traveling Exhibitions: *The Power of Place & The Pursuit of Happiness*:** These exhibitions are available to rent free of charge through 2025 and 2026. These two traveling exhibitions were also on display at the Oregon State Fair, where commissioners promoted America 250-Oregon.

***Moments that Made Us* Print-On-Demand Traveling Exhibition:** This free, customizable, print-on-demand exhibition explores the core ideas of the Declaration of Independence. Developed through a multi-state collaboration, it includes 21 ready-to-use panels. More details will be available by the end of 2025, with downloadable files in early 2026.

### **National Initiatives:**

- **Sharing the Spirit of America:** A nationwide, simultaneous reading of the Declaration of Independence on July 8, 2026, led by America 250 Hawaii.
- **America's Potluck:** A community-building event led by America 250 Utah, encouraging neighbors to gather for a shared meal on Sunday, July 5, 2026, to foster connection and belonging.
- **Our American Story:** A year-long cross-country tour to record thousands of interviews. Each tour stop will feature local activation events, media opportunities, and community engagement activities.
- **America Gives:** An initiative that challenges organizations to commit to increasing their level of volunteering and impact starting January 1, 2026.
- **Volunteer as a Citizen Archivist:** A project by the National Park Service and National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) recruiting volunteers to transcribe pension records of more than 80,000 Revolutionary War veterans.

## **America 250 Oregon Calendar of Events and Partner Spotlight**

Chair Tymchuk highlighted events currently listed on the Oregon250 website and encouraged community members to submit their events for recognition as official America 250-Oregon events or partners, which includes access to official logos for marketing.

He also announced two new partnerships for Oregon 250. The first is with FOX 12 and their new series *America 250 NW*, which over the next year will feature a series of stories as well as a recurring “This Day in History” segment.

The second partnership is with Oregon Humanities. Jennifer Alkezweeny, Program Director with Oregon Humanities, provided an overview of their *Beyond 250* initiative. They have worked with libraries across the state to create their own programming connecting to the 250th. Additional Oregon Humanities programs, including “Dear Stranger” letter writing program, the “Consider This” lecture series, story exchanges, and facilitated dialogues, are also a part of the *Beyond 250* umbrella.

### **Oregon 250 Commission Discussion**

Chair Tymchuk shared a letter he and First Lady Aimee Kotek-Wilson sent to Tribal Chairs, providing an update on the Oregon 250 Commission’s progress and raising awareness about the upcoming 2026 commemoration.

George Kramer expressed his appreciation for the Commission’s work, noting that he has followed developments at the national level and is impressed with the many ways Oregon is engaging communities.

Hanako Wakatsuki-Chong shared *Make Us Visible*, a coloring book on Asian American history that she developed in partnership with the National Park Service. The project highlights AANHPI contributions to U.S. history and has the potential to expand its narrative to connect with other communities.

### **Public Comment:**

David Witter, representing the Sons of the America Revolution, updated the Commission on the Revolutionary War Memorial planned for Beaverton Veterans Memorial Park. The dedication ceremony is scheduled for April 19, 2026, marking the 251st anniversary of the Battles of Lexington and Concord.

Russ Erickson, also with the Oregon Sons of the American Revolution, highlighted an upcoming event on November 14 in St. Paul to lay a wreath and honor the grave of William Cannon, the only American Revolutionary soldier buried in Oregon.

Brent Dahl, with the Friends of Timberline, announced an event on October 4 celebrating the nonprofit’s 50 years of support for Timberline Lodge. He also noted plans to hold a commemorative event in 2026.

**Conclusion:**

Tara Cole reminded the public about the Oregon 250 website and encouraged signing up for the Oregon 250 e-newsletter to stay informed about the Commission's work and upcoming events across the state.

Without further business, Chair Tymchuk adjourned the meeting at 4:19pm.