

**Utah America 250 Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
June 6, 2023**

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Attendees

Commissioners

Governor Spencer Cox  
Andrea Clarke  
Alan Hall  
Mindy Benson  
Barbara Jones Brown  
Brandon Fugal  
Brian Tarbet  
Byron Russell  
Christine Durham  
Darren Parry

David Clark  
Don Stirling  
Douglas McGregor  
Jani Iwamoto  
Kathryn Asay  
Kristy Pike  
Kim Wilson  
Luis Lopez  
Ronald Fox  
Sanch Datta  
Steve Handy

CCE Staff

David Wicai  
Ellen Weist  
Jennifer Ortiz  
Jill Love  
Kat Potter  
LaDawn Stoddard Marjorie  
Moore  
Sarina Ehrgott

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Welcome – Jill Love

Governor Cox –

Governor selected the names for the 250 Commission.

Discusses the bicentennial history and wants to look forward being ambitious and remind us of what it means to be an American.

3 National Focus Areas to work on.

- Educate
- Engage – Tells a story about how Bono engages politicians on the right and left. Advice given by Warren Buffett; “When you’re trying to convince Americans to do anything don’t appeal to their morality, appeal to their sense of American greatness. You can’t ask people to do something small or they won’t do it. You need to ask them to do something big or hard they are much more likely to have them do it.
- Unite – Happens through education and engagement.

We have ambition in this room. Co-chair Ron Fox is here to educate. D-Day today on its 79<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Utah beach was named after a carpenter from Provo, Utah. We have great history in Utah. We have brought in Mindy Benson, President of SUU and Christine Durham an attorney and judge who are also co-chairs. Grateful for willingness to volunteer. It seems to be the same 1000 people who do everything. Think big and be bold.

Ron Fox – Copy of Declaration of Independence that everyone is to sign

Introductions

- Jill Love – Exec Director of the Department of Cultural & Community Engagement. Commission staffed from our department.
- Kim Wilson – Pensioner. Practiced law for 5 decades. Formed organization called Ensign Peak Foundation, which is the park above the capitol.
- Kathryn Asay – Daughters of the American Revolution. Work at the veteran’s hospital. Volunteer at the Utah Natl Guard. Was on the commission to put an America 250 plaque on capitol grounds.
- Darren Parry – Former chair of Shoshone Nation. People have been here for thousands of years.
- Barbara Brown – Professional historian of Utah. Director Signature Books Publishing. Former director of Mormon History Association. Before that I was Historical Director of Better Days 2020. Book just came out this week. Utah History from 1847-1880’s book about importance of education

- Don Sterling– Executive Director of the Larry H Family Foundation – Takes care of pensioners.
- Andrea Clarke – Community volunteer. Serves on multiple boards.
- Douglas McGregor – Secretary Treasure of Utah Society Sons of the American Revolution.
- Luis Lopez-Ogden City Council member. Exec Director for outreach and community education. 10 years in K-12 and 10 years in higher education. Born and raised in Mexico and became a US citizen in 2008. Founder and co-chair Latinos United for More Education and Civic Engagement.
- Sanch Datta – President of Fatpipe Network. Immigrated to the US in 2005.
- David Clark – Retired from Zions Bank. Former speaker of the house. In the legislature for 12 years.
- LaDawn Stoddard – Helping to staff commission. Executive Director of the Commission
- David Wicai – With Dept. of Cultural & Community Engagement. Director of Strategic Initiatives. Works on projects like these. Here to support
- Brandon Fugal – Chairman of Colliers International. Loves history and celebrating our State involvement.
- Brian Tarbet-With the Attorney General’s office and am a former commander of the Utah National Guard.
- Steve Handy – Lives in Layton. Have been in the city council and legislature.
- Kristy Pike – Lives in St. George. Running advisory board for Washington County’s Children’s Justice Center. Loves history
- Byron Russell – Serves on commissions and boards.
- Mindy Benson - President of SUU. Rep national conventions, runs inaugurations
- Christine Durham – Also co-chair– Former supreme court judge. Currently practices law.
- Mike Mower – From the Governor’s office. Helped put the list together.
- Ron Fox-Worked with the Governor’s office. Helped put list together
- Kat Potter – Deputy Direct for the Department Cultural & Community Engagement
- Sophia Riggs– With CCE
- Jennifer Ortiz – Director for the division of State History
- Sarina Ehrgott – Director of Marketing
- Ellen Weist – Public Information Officer. Will be the interface between commission and reports
- Marjorie Moore – Jill Love’s assistant
- Ron Fox – History geek. Been a lobbyist and worked for the California legislature. Brought historical documents. Worked for six US Presidents.

### **Bicentennial Overview** – Jennifer Ortiz

1966 President Lyndon Johnson created the bipartisan American Revolution Bicentennial commission. 1970’s over \$20 million had been appropriated to states for the celebration.

In Utah, legislation was passed in 1973 creating the Utah American Revolution Bicentennial Commission UARBC, commission in 1976

Structure – 1973 Governor Calvin Rampton appointed a 25 member commission with Chair Obert Tanner. Included people from across the state and had 4 dedicated staff members including, Executive Director, Director of Special Projects, Administrative Assistant, and Secretary which over saw 8 district groups for all 29 counties.

5 subcommittees, which focused on projects funded across the state

- Heritage-focused on history
- Festivals-organized events
- Horizon-focused on improvements to communities across the state for human and natural resources
- Communications – messaging
- Finance – financial oversight to projects

#### Duties of bicentennial commission

- Communicate the bicentennial
- Grant program - 1.9 million dollars distributed across the state to over 200 projects which were determined by the districts
  - Notable projects amphitheater at Zions, historic preservation funds to Ogden union station, community swimming pool, restoration of Devereaux House in SLC

There was no signature project at the State level it was a grassroots effort. Abravanel hall came out as a director result of what the commission did but was not a signature project. A big state wide event or a big build is considered a signature project. Seems that each regions came together to determine their legacy projects.

Budget? There is a list of the projects and what money was requested and projects and how much was distributed. Sub grants from the federal government through national commission.

Senator Lee has been appointed for the US Senate to be one of the people over the 250 Anniversary.

- Ron Fox - State has appropriated some money for the current commission.
- Brandon Fugal – Pretty sizeable multiple. No number given.
- Sanch Datta – Nashville just did a signature project which was like a Parthenon. Previously it was all done at the regional level.

#### National Structure – LaDawn Stoddard

July 22, 2016 congress enacted legislation to create the America 250 Commission. There are 4 Senate members, 4 House members and 16 private citizens. Private Citizens are appointed by the senate or the house. There was a foundation created at the same time “The America 250 Foundation” which is operating outside this commission. There are two groups that are functioning in this capacity. Want to have the largest celebration ever seen. 3 areas of focus that the commission has chosen:

- Educate-Contribute to a better understanding where we came from and where we’re headed
- Engage – By engaging citizens, we can continue to shape our nation.
- Unite-By uniting we’ll recognize the power of our diverse stories without losing sight of our common bonds.

There are appropriations on the national level. We have received \$10,000. We do not expect that there will be much pass through. Currently only about 14 States that have formed commissions. All states only got \$10,000. The Federal commission has been running since 2016. They have lots of staff and expenses on the federal level.

- Jennifer Ortiz – There have been national challenges. They are encouraging states to do their own grass roots funding.

#### Goals Discussion – Kat Potter

*Are the National goals of educate, engage and unite the right goals/themes for Utah? Are there additional themes or goals we should consider?*

- Ron Fox – Think about what you individually want to be involved in. Think about how we’ll proceed on a regional basis or statewide basis. Want to talk about creating subcommittees and which you want to be involved in or we will assign subcommittees.
- Steve Handy – We need to have an education process about the founding principles of the country. Where are the roots in our country that are unique?
- Luis Lopez – Love the goals but we need to consider the people and build relationships. Could be bridge building.
- Douglas McGregor – Wants to see patriotism as part of the goals. Not just about self-governance. It is the passion. Every person that put his or her signature on the Declaration of Independence became a traitor to England. Would advocate that patriotism needs to be a main part.
- David Clark – Agrees that Patriotism needs to be a key part. We have a lot of reasons to be thankful. Need to recognize military and first responders.

- Christine Durham – How do we bring Americans together around visions of what this country can be? Interested in the educate portion but that could overwhelm everything else. Is there a way to cover it all? Or, where do we want to focus?
- Ron Fox – Need to get materials down to classrooms. There has to be love for country and it has to be shown. Emphasis that people should vote through the commission by have people participate in the government.

*What does success look like? What do we want to see as a result of all of the programs and work that this commission does?*

- Christine Durham – Wants measurable increases in public engagement with civic education. How do you love your country if you don't understand it?
  - Voter participation
  - Look at degree in which public education is engaging with civic education. Students should know there are three branches of government.
- Douglas McGregor – agrees with Christine. Immigrant has to take a test and answer civic questions. Why isn't that test given to high school students? High school students should have to pass a test. That would be measurable.
- Barbara Jones – What is going on that is engaging? Wants to see all the many histories.
- Ron Fox – Needs to be broad based in that period of our time. There are nations that were already here. There is some diversity around the table. We need to talk to people and to people that do not look like us. We should not pretend to know what different populations in Utah want us to know.
- Don Stirling – Some diversity around the table.
- Ron Fox – Wants a google doc where we can share ideas
- Alan Hall – introduction – previous meeting ran long. Local businessman. Interested in participating with this commission.
- LaDawn – Want to do a statewide survey to see what people feel about the celebration and what they want.
- Sanch Datta – We need to have a lot of conversations and measurements. Fortunate to be able to travel. When we talk about diversity, it's not just about Indians, Hispanic, native Indians. Everyone is an immigrant into this country except the population that existed here. We need to celebrate the diversity of different types, Albanians, everything focusing on the united. This is a united country.
- Luis Lopez – See how many we can get to show up to the events that we put up together, especially young people. This is something we can measure.

*How do we engage everyone within the state both before we start and as we take on projects?*

- Darren Parry – Storytelling. As we listen, we gain a lot for ourselves. Giving a voice to the marginalized. Engage diverse communities that have never had a seat at the table.
- Ron Fox – We want to have a document that we can share. 1,125 days until July 4, 2026. We need to move forward. July 4 was just our staring. It was not until 1783 that Britain finally surrendered. It took several years after the declaration of independence was signed before we were a nation. There is a lot of work to do in a short amount of time.
- Brian L. Tarbet – This will be over a year, not on a day? Ladawn 2024 through.
- Ron Fox – Governor will issue a press release regarding our appointment. We will then need to roll out to our legislature, counties and cities a general plan and idea of how we want their involvement.
- Sanch Datta – Do something with storytelling.
- Brandon Fugal – Do something that focuses how Utah stands out. We have taken a leadership position. We can use Utah that makes us a shining star
- Ron Fox – Several things are in process and will be completed by 2026. The museum will be ready in 2026, temple will be completed, a new statue in Statutory Hall, etc.
- Don Stirling – Learned from 2002 Winter Olympics: Is it nice to have or a must have or nice to do or must do. We need to zero in on what we want to do. We need big ideas that execute simply.
- Christine Durham – Patriotism is sometimes felt as an empty symbol but it's not

- Brian L Tarbet – We can partner with things that are already planned around the state. Freedom Festival, etc. We need to reach out and blend in our programs and thoughts. We can stretch the impact if we do it that way.
- LaDawn Stoddard – Are we ok with the goals, education, engage, and unite? Want to make sure that we feel ok with that. It is proposed that we include patriotism? Can we put that into educate, engage or unite?
- Barbara Jones – Think it belongs under unite.
- Brian Tarbet – Consider that there are events that play out over the year that we can partner with. We don't have to create everything. We need to collaborate with current events.
- Ron Fox – Patriotism comes through education. If we educate people.
- Luis Lopez – Want to share and not talk at people.
- Jill Love – As staff we will come back with a way we can approach this. We can send an email out so everyone can share their thoughts. That way we can move on more organized.
- Christine Durham – The history of the Japanese in this country is a vibrant community but the History is terrible. There will be all kinds of stories. How can people tell their stories and their positive stories in this country?
- Brian L. Tarbet – Needs to be told: story of the Bear River Massacre

### Logo/Branding/Website – Sarina Ehrgott

How will we visualize as a brand and the work we will do and the messaging we will do. The brand has elements we would like to convey. Shows slide showing designs.

Guilloche – Lines are wavy and has a layering effect. Guilloche was originally created at the national level. It has a layering effect. There are states that are using the Guilloche style.

- Pennsylvania adopted the logo style wavy. PA has also been designing their website.
- Michigan is using already created brand and putting their mark to it.
- Connecticut – Wisconsin are all very similar.

Shows an example. Proposal that we take the American 250 logo and put the UT at the end of it. Introduces Guilloche (French) as a Utah design. Maybe use patterns that feel more contemporary since we are a newer state.

Thoughts from commission?

- Ron Fox – Please come back with specific choices.
- LaDawn Stoddard – Do we want to start from scratch or use the national influence?
- Christine Durham – Likes some degree of coherence but don't want to look like everyone else.
- Sarina – Pull from the landscape. We can interweave yellow because it is unique to us and can still remain cohesive to national brand.
- Barbara Jones – What if we have deviations with a general pattern and invite students to submit the backgrounds representing all the cultures, etc.
- Steve Handy – Have a Utah variation on the National theme which incorporates Utah.
- Ron Fox – As we go forward we will have more meetings and possibly zoom meetings where we can work more efficiently.
- Douglas McGregor – Not just focus on how we are diverse but what do we in Utah have in common?
- Brandon Fugal – This stuck with me that our youth know the answers to the civic test. Putting together an initiative that helps this.
- Christine Durham – Need to work with the legislature because the boards of education with legislative support have eliminated testing in civic education. We have one semester on civic but there is no testing in schools.
- Brian Tarbet – In this room we are all patriots. We should have a subcommittee of youth because there is leadership among the young people. We need to bring it to the youth.
- Don Stirling – We need to think about how this will look on a shirt, cap, and merchandise, etc.
- Ron Fox – No exclusivity to good ideas.

- Jill Love – Jennifer participates in a National group called “Made By Us”. This group works with youth and how to civically engage them. It is a major national project. We can share that research with the group. Through our History division we run History Day for kids 4<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. We had about 5,000 kids this year participate.

### **CCE America 250 legacy Projects** – Jennifer Ortiz

We have a couple of legacy projects at the Department of Cultural & Community Engagement

- **The Peoples of Utah Revisited** – This is our 250 initiative. Base on the original peoples of Utah which is an anthology developed by Helen Papanikolas from Carbon County. Your story matters based on the original people of Utah. First ethnic studies in Utah documenting the diversity of the State. This was originally for the bicentennial project. There was funding that she received for the bicentennial. Shows images from photograph collection shifting our understanding of who is in the state.
  - Comment to update this work – This is what is being done through Senator Iwamoto’s help. Received \$350,000 to launch this project. This is an ongoing project.
  - This is a 2 prong project. Dedicated scholarship and research. What do we have history and research on and what do we not.
- First symposium August 12 call for papers. 2<sup>nd</sup> piece is involves events like scan and shares with communities. Things that are important to their community. In 2026 we will have 4 themed historical quarterlies.
- **State History Museum** - Last state in the nation to develop a State History Museum which should be done in 2026.

### **America 250 Budget and Resources** – Jill Love

The legislature appropriated monies to the People of Utah Project which was sold as an America 250 Project. Legislature appropriated 2 sessions ago, \$250,000 to pay for staffing. That is how we’re paying for LaDawn. Rep Handy mentioned we would want to go to the legislature and ask for money. We need to figure out what we need so we can try to get it in the Governor’s budget one time money for America 250. There is some fundraising that needs to happen. National level has been in a bit of disarray. Completely new staffs on the federal level with new presidents. There is a foundation within our department that we are able to fund raise.

### **Next Steps** – Ron Fox

Meetings – Physical meeting once every quarter or 6 months and as required for subcommittees. Input on meetings. For those coming more than 50 miles we can cover your mileage and will work with you in the future with mileage. In person will only probably be annually. Meetings will increase, as we get closer. We could do hybrid meetings.

### **Historical Spotlight** – Ron Fox

June 6 is just another day to most people but now for our parents, our grandparents and for most of us we know it as the greatest generation that sacrificed for us in World War II. Operation overlord combined countries retake Europe from Nazi Germany. 4,000 people died that day. It was the largest naval air and land invasion in all of our history. Name from beaches were at random. General Bradley talked about a carpenter from Provo, Utah so Bradley took the Utah name and attached it to the beach.

### **Adjourn**