

AMERICA'S 250TH SOUTH DAKOTA COMMISSION MINUTES

Jay Vogt Education Room, Cultural Heritage Center

Pierre, South Dakota

April 2, 2025

Call to Order:

A meeting of the South Dakota America's 250th Commission was called to order at 3:04 p.m. by Commission Chairman Benjamin Jones. A quorum was present.

Commissioners present in the Jay Vogt Education Room:

Benjamin F. Jones and David Grabitske

Commissioners present via TEAMS Conference Call:

Peggy Besch, Catherine Forsch, Kurt Hackemer, Shane Penfield, Caleb Finck, Doug Knust, Marshall Michels, Tim Reed, Nick Harrington representing Kevin Robling, Jeremiah Schneider, Tyler Tordsen

Commissioners absent:

David Flute, James Hagen, George Seamon

Others Present in the Jay Vogt Education Room:

Braeden Kluver (SDSHS)

Others Present via TEAMS Conference Call:

SDPB, Kevin Larsen (SDSHS)

Adoption of the Agenda:

A motion was made by Forsch to adopt the agenda, Reed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Board Minutes:

Fink made a motion to approve the January 21, 2025, minutes, Besch seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment: (SDCL 1-25-1):

None.

Tourism Update:

- Jones gave an update from Commissioner Hagen on the Department of Tourism's efforts to promote America's 250th including: SD 250 has been working with the staff at Lawrence & Schiller to develop merchandise and handouts for public events.

New Business:

- Town Hall
 - Starting this May, the SD 250 commission will be hosting a partner Town Hall. The goal is to disseminate information between partners and keep partners updated on opportunities and events.
- A Common Cause To All
 - Commissioner Grabitske gave an update on his trip to Williamsburg, VA, for the A Common Cause To All convening hosted by the VA250 commission. Highlights included Ken Burns' *The American Revolution*, a rendition of Patrick Henry's *Give me liberty or give me death!* speech, and a panel on engaging youth in the 250 celebrations.
- National Potluck
 - The Utah 250 commission is asking all states to participate in a National Potluck on July 5th. Communities should pick a time, bring a dish, and celebrate the nation's birthday.
- National Declaration of Independence reading July 8th
 - The Hawaii 250 commission is asking all states to have a simultaneous reading of the Declaration of Independence on July 8th of 2026.
- National Civics Bee
 - Chairman Jones discussed South Dakota's efforts to participate in the National Civics Bee. Hosted by the SD Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with local school districts, students in three districts will compete to represent South Dakota at the National Civics Bee. The commission hopes that this event and increased civic engagement will outlast the 250 celebration.
- July National Convening
 - Chairman Jones asked members of the commission to consider attending the July National Convening, which will take place July 28-30.
- Two Lights for Tomorrow
 - Chairman Jones explained the Two Lights for Tomorrow initiative to commemorate Paul Revere's ride in 1775. For the week of April 18th, the commission wants to put two lights in the Capitol rotunda. An initial test was conducted on April 2nd with positive feedback. **Commissioner Grabitske made a motion that the America 250 South Dakota Commission purchase the services of Ryan Sheldon for photographs and video to be done on April 18th of the Capitol's Two Lights for up to \$500. Commissioners Besch, Breu, Finck, Forsch, Grabitske, Harrington, Jones, Knust, Michels, Penfield, Tordsen, and Schneider voted to approve. Commissioner Reed abstained.**

Other Business:

- Read 250
 - Updates to come next meeting
- Walk 250

- Harrington and GFP are prepared for people to hit the trails this summer. Harrington added that the GFP's theme for next year will be History.
- National Time Capsule Criteria
 - Commissioner Grabitske has not been given an update on the criteria. Discussion was held on what items or formats the commission could prepare. Harrington brought up the possibility of adding time capsules at some of the visitor centers around the state.
- Liberty Bell
 - Commissioner Grabitske apprised the board on the status of South Dakota's Liberty Bell. He noted that there are concerns with the trunnion and basic maintenance, but that the Bell will be able to be rung with a clapper.
- City Council Outreach
 - Chairman Jones urged commissioners to get onto the agenda at their local city council meeting.
- State Fair
 - Chairman Jones updated the commissioners on the efforts to celebrate America 250 at the State Fair, including items to be handed out, photobooth opportunities, and a large family-oriented activity. Jones also urged other commissioners to make an appearance and volunteer their time on August 28th. Commissioner Besch gave examples of programs planned for 2026, including a pie-eating contest, a 250-star scavenger hunt, the singing of the national anthem at 2:50 pm, and a community mural. Besch hopes to get plans finalized soon.
- Other Comments
 - Harrington inquired about the SD Grasslands, reaching out as a partner. Jones affirmed he was in communication.
 - Commissioner Reed brought up the legislature and their efforts to celebrate America 250. Reed and Jones agreed to discuss before the next meeting.
 - Commissioner Penfield recommended that commissioners spread resolutions via the South Dakota Municipal League. Jones noted that he has been working with them but will link back with them. It was noted that towns and local chambers should try and incorporate the 250 celebrations in their already existing events. Forsch noted that she was in contact with the League and was preparing a notice for the League's next newsletter.
 - Besch recommended reaching out to the South Dakota Industry and Commerce to spread information about America 250.

Next Meeting:

- The next meeting will be held June 4th at 3:00 pm Central Time in the Jay Vogt Education Room.

Adjournment:

Besch made the motion for Adjournment. Finck seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:51 p.m.

I, Benjamin F. Jones, Director of the South Dakota State Historical Society, declare that these minutes are true and an accurate reflection of the business conducted at the April 2, 2025, meeting of the America's 250th South Dakota Commission.

Benjamin F. Jones, Ph.D.

State Historian and Director

South Dakota State Historical Society

Braeden Kluver

Assistant to the State Historian

South Dakota State Historical Society