

Arizona America250 Commission

In person and virtually via Zoom

Meeting Minutes of January 5, 2026

1. Call to Order and roll call

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by Chair Honorable Adrian Fontes

Commission Members Present:

Honorable Adrian Fontes, Chair
Anna Needham
Ashley Harder

Marcus Carney
Paul Tighe

Representative Justin Wilmeth
Sarah Webber

Commission Members Absent:

Chairman Verlon Jose, Vice-Chair
Senator Vince Leach
Neil Giuliano

Jay McCall

2. Discussion and possible action on meeting minutes for November 3, 2025, and December 1, 2025.

MOTION: Adoption of minutes from November 3, 2025, and December 1, 2025, as written. Motion by Commissioner Paul Tighe; seconded by Commissioner Marcus Carney. There was no discussion. The motion carried.

3. Discussion, possible action, and approval of A250 AZ Traveling Museum design budget.

a. Presentation from MRA on design and logistics.

MRA's industrial designer presented preliminary exterior and interior designs for the Traveling Museum vehicle, including the Liberty Bell as a central feature and activations such as a postcard campaign, "Moments that Made You," and the Liberty Bell Project. Commissioners expressed support for the design, including appreciation for the open, glass-forward feel, and suggested incorporating the Arizona State Capitol into the interior wrap and featuring Arizona's space and planetary history on the ceiling.

Executive Director Laura Terech noted that commissioners will have an opportunity to review content and confirmed that signage is planned for the Arizona State Capitol that will explain the Liberty Bell's absence and highlight the museum route. MRA confirmed interior lighting and indicated that exterior lighting for evening activations could be explored. Historical context on the state Liberty Bells touring when first presented was shared with the Commission.

Executive Director Laura Terech outlined the budget, explaining that additional design elements, such as the exterior wrap and ceiling, require an additional allocation of approximately 80K. ED Terech recommended an allocation of 125K beyond the originally approved Traveling Museum budget and recommended a 160K media buy to promote the tour, with incidentals to be brought back at a later date. Chair Fontes noted ongoing fundraising opportunities, including potential sponsor events and local Chamber outreach, and expressed support for the additional investment.

MOTION: Allocate an additional 125K for Traveling Museum design elements. Motion by Chair Fontes; Commissioner Paul Tighe moved; Representative Justin Wilmeth seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Approve 160K for a media buy to promote the Traveling Museum. Motion by Chair Fontes; Commissioner Anna Needham moved; Commissioner Ashley Harder seconded. The motion passed.

Incidentals associated with the project will be considered at a future special meeting.

b. Tour manager and route update.

Executive Director Terech shared that a tour manager has come on board to assist with the tour. She has worked with him previously. Tour Manager Steve Weichert introduced himself and shared that he has been working on logistics and content for the Traveling Museum. He presented a preliminary map based on interest forms from cities, towns, and organizations and explained that MRA will refine stops based on location suitability, logistics, and drive time, with a finalized route expected in the coming weeks for distribution to the Commission.

Chair Fontes shared the plan to “go big” at the start of the tour, with a send-off event at the Archives/Polly Rosenbaum Building on February 13, followed by the first official tour stop at the Prescott Territorial Capitol on Statehood Day, February 14. Commissioners discussed the possibility of multiple stops within some cities or counties during the 10-month access period to the vehicle, approximately six-hour open windows for each stop, posting of the route and potential wait times, and the use of activations outside the vehicle to engage visitors. The PR team described planned outreach via social media, print, local news, and geotargeting once the route is set. MRA confirmed experience managing visitor flow and wait times.

4. Commissioner Updates and Subcommittee Reports

a. Arts, Museums & Cultural Institutions

The committee reported that work is underway on upcoming initiatives, with a Poet Laureate announcement expected soon that will be integrated into committee projects. There will be an upcoming 5C's art exhibition at the Flinn Foundation in collaboration with Art State Arizona. Opening night is scheduled for February 3, 2026.

b. Civic Engagement, Education & Community Service

The committee shared a reminder about the Cardinals Civics Summit for Students on January 20 and reported that the Dougherty Foundation/Rotary Scholarship is scheduled to go live this week.

c. Fundraising

The committee continues to focus on fundraising and networking with prospective partners and sponsors.

d. History, Heritage & Historic Preservation

The committee reported strong interest in the Heritage Student Council, with numerous student applications received, and highlighted ongoing work on the Traveling Museum, including collaboration with the Arizona Historical Society and David Turpie on content collection.

e. Military & Veterans Affairs

No updates were reported.

f. Municipal Outreach & Tribal Affairs

The committee reported an upcoming presentation to the League of Cities and Towns on January 21.

g. Travel & Tourism

The committee recently held an in-person meeting and is working to finalize an itinerary that celebrates Arizona history across the state and can be used by tourism partners such as destination management companies and tourism offices. Outdoors250 is launching the trails component through First Day Hikes, with information available via Arizona State Parks and the AZ A250 community calendar.

5. Executive Director's Report

a. National Initiatives

Executive Director Terech reported that applications are open for "America's First Trip" and noted that the "Our American Story" Airstream will be visiting Arizona, with additional national initiatives to be shared as they are finalized.

Agital is running a social media campaign featuring book recommendations for the new year. Commissioner Harder inquired about the Phoenix Symphony America250 George Gershwin performances scheduled for February 27 and 28; the event could potentially include a proclamation.

6. Call to the Public

No comments were made by the public

7. Adjournment

Chair Fontes adjourned the meeting at 10:25 a.m.

DRAFT