

Arizona America250 Commission
History, Heritage, and Historic Preservation Subcommittee

Virtually via Zoom

Meeting Minutes of February 26, 2026

Subcommittee Members Present:

Ashley Harder, Chair	Holly Henley	Leah Stagg
David Turpie	Margaret Hangan	Caitlin Dichter
Jim McPherson	Kathryn Leonard	J.J. Lamb
Helana Ruter	Bridgette Crosby	

Subcommittee Members Not Present:

Stuart Rosebrook	David Breeckner	Eric Vondy
Kelly McDonald		

Non-Voting Members Present:

Kori Tueller	Ryan Ehrfurth
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Non-Voting Members Not Present:

Verlon Jose	Carolyn Rearly	Amy Hartmann-Gordon
Aimée C. Quinn	Jeremy Fricke	Steve Kaiser
Jill McCleary		

1) Call to order and welcome.

The meeting of the Arizona America250 Commission History, Heritage, and Historic Preservation Subcommittee was called to order by Chair Ashley Harder at 10:03 AM.

2) Discussion and possible action on meeting minutes from November 20, 2025, and January 22, 2026.

MOTION Member Caitlin Dichter moved to approve the November 20, 2025, and January 22, 2026, meeting minutes as presented. Member Margaret Hangan seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

3) Report from Executive Director

a) Road to 250: Arizona Traveling Museum

Executive Director Laura Terech provided an update on the Road to 250: Arizona Traveling Museum, noting that the exhibit launched on Arizona Statehood Day and has welcomed approximately 7,600 visitors across its first six stops. The

remaining tour schedule is available on the America250 website, with the tour currently scheduled to conclude on April 11 in Lake Havasu City. Executive Director Laura Terech also discussed ongoing conversations regarding a potential transition to a fully metal headstock for the Liberty Bell display due to rust and degradation concerns with the existing wooden structure. Attendance in Prescott alone reached approximately 4,000 visitors, and the exhibit has received strong positive feedback from Arizona residents statewide.

b) Arizona Initiatives

Executive Director Laura Terech reported that Passport250 continues to expand engagement efforts, including an upcoming webinar with participating sites focused on promotional coordination. The Commission is also working with the Arizona Office of Tourism to keep Passport250 active through 2026 rather than closing the program in July. Outdoors250 has seen strong sign-up numbers, and Fish250 is preparing to launch. Fitness250 is being promoted in partnership with Banner Health as a statewide wellness campaign. Operation Freedom March is being developed to support military members and veterans.

Applications for the Dougherty Foundation, Rotary, and America250 Scholarship are due March 1. Read250 programming continues to expand through libraries statewide, with ongoing public relations efforts to amplify participation.

The “Dear America, Love Arizona” postcard campaign has exceeded expectations; an initial order of 5,000 postcards was expanded to 23,500 postcards distributed across all Arizona counties, grade levels, and Girl Scout troops. The postcards are also incorporated into the Arizona Traveling Museum and are slated for display at the Arizona State Capitol. Additional initiatives include the 5 C’s Art Exhibition in partnership with the Flinn Foundation and the Cheers250 program, featuring commemorative beer and bourbon collaborations that support partnerships with local businesses.

c) National Initiatives

Executive Director Laura Terech provided updates on national America250 programs, noting that the application window for America’s Field Trip will close at the end of March. The “Our American Story” oral storytelling initiative is underway, though no Arizona event dates have been confirmed. She also discussed the “My America” nationwide campaign, in which students share messages of hope and patriotism through individual cloth tiles that will contribute

to the creation of a large American flag display. Arizona currently leads participation in tile submissions for this project.

4) Update, discussion, and possible action on the Arizona Heritage Youth Council by Pranav Raj Vippagunta.

Subcommittee Member Kathryn Leonard provided an update on behalf of Pranav Raj Vippagunta regarding the Arizona Heritage Youth Council. Member Kathryn Leonard reported that the student-led organization is currently being established, including efforts to direct fundraising activities and pursue grant opportunities. The next step for the group is to begin applying for grants, including mini start-up grants offered through the Arizona Preservation Foundation, which may support transportation and meal expenses for student travel and programming.

Member Kathryn Leonard asked members to share any small sponsorship opportunities that could help students promote their mission and secure additional funding support. The Youth Council plans to participate in activities related to the Route 66 Centennial celebration and will take on a leadership role in recruiting additional student participants. Upcoming trainings include social media instruction for the communications subgroup, and the students are currently planning their first service project.

The Gilbert Historical Museum has requested assistance amending its existing National Register documentation to include an additional building. Youth Council members will support this effort as part of a learning opportunity focused on the National Register nomination process. Students have also expressed interest in local preservation issues, including proposed zoning changes in downtown Gilbert and efforts to preserve the community water tower. The group plans to engage with the Gilbert City Council to present their concerns. Additional field trips and programming are being explored, though coordination depends on funding availability and student schedules. Member Kathryn Leonard also noted that updates and improvements to the organization's website are currently underway.

5) Member share out on upcoming events or initiatives.

Members shared updates on upcoming events and initiatives supporting America250 and related historical programming across Arizona. Subcommittee Chair Ashley Harder announced that the Phoenix Symphony will host an America250-themed performance titled *Celebrating America at 250: Gershwin, Copland & More*.

Jaynie Adams of the Arizona Historical Society reported that the organization has launched the first installments of a virtual program series connecting Arizona history with broader American history themes. The programs are available on the Arizona Historical Society's YouTube

channel, with the next installment scheduled for March 4 at 12:00 PM featuring Dr. Eduardo Obregón Pagán discussing his recent work, Additional program information is available on the Arizona Historical Society calendar.

Lauren Clementino highlighted the upcoming Route 66 Centennial celebration scheduled for June 6 in Flagstaff.

Subcommittee Member Margaret Hangan provided an update on an upcoming conference hosted by the Arizona Center for Arizona History, which will summarize completed and ongoing work related to legal compliance, archaeology, and preservation initiatives. Arizona Public Service (APS) is serving as a co-sponsor, and organizers have emphasized accessibility for attendees. Registration for the conference is currently full. A mini job fair will also be held on that Sunday in partnership with the Verde Valley Archaeology Center, featuring participation from several environmental and cultural resource firms. Additional updates and future discussions were noted regarding preservation efforts and initiatives statewide, including projects in Flagstaff, Queen Creek, Yuma, and the Central Arizona History and Heritage Symposium.

6) Call to the public.

- No members of the public requested to speak. No action was taken.

7) Adjournment.

- a) Chair Ashley Harder adjourned the meeting at 11:07 AM.