

Arizona America250 Commission

In person and virtually via Zoom

Meeting Minutes of April 6, 2026

1. Call to Order and roll call

The meeting was called to order at 9:02 a.m. by Chair Honorable Adrian Fontes

Commission Members Present:

Honorable Adrian Fontes, Chair
Anna Needham
Ashley Harder

Marcus Carney
Neil Giuliano
Representative
Justin Wilmeth

Sarah Webber
Paul Tighe

Commission Members Absent:

Chairman Verlon Jose, Vice-Chair
Senator Vince Leach
Jay McCall

2. Approval of March 2, 2026, Meeting Minutes

Chair Fontes called for consideration of the March 2, 2026, meeting minutes. Commissioner Wilmeth moved to approve the minutes as presented; Commissioner Giuliano seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Discussion, update, and possible action on Road to 250: Arizona Traveling Museum.

a. Tour Highlights

Executive Director Laura Terech presented a highlight reel and photos from the Road to 250: Arizona Traveling Museum tour, noting strong attendance and positive feedback from host communities and that only a few stops remained, concluding in Lake Havasu City on the upcoming Saturday.

b. Content, Panels, and Distribution

Executive Director Terech outlined options for the traveling exhibit panels after the tour, including placement with the Arizona State Museum or State Archives, potential loans to venues such as the Arizona State Fair, and providing print-ready panel files for partner organizations. Commissioner Harder noted the interest of the State Library/Archives and the 3H Committee in preserving the content digitally through the Arizona Memory Project, and Chair Fontes requested continued discussion with that project. Commissioner Giuliano asked about statutory reporting

requirements; Executive Director Terech stated she is required to submit an annual report and will research whether a separate sunset report is required.

c. Bell Rededication Ceremony

Executive Director Terech reported that demolition work at the Capitol is underway and expected to conclude within approximately two weeks, after which the commission must determine interim placement and timing for rededication of the bell at its new foundation in front of the Capitol. Commissioners discussed potential dates in late spring, mid-summer (including July 4 or 8), fall, the start of the next legislative session, Flag Day, and Memorial Day, with a preference expressed for an earlier, non-politicized event that also recognizes sponsors. By consensus, the Commission directed staff to plan for a mid- to late-May rededication ceremony, with Tuesday or Wednesday as the preferred day of the week.

4. Fourth of July 2026 Activations

a. City Showcase – City of Avondale

Stacy Swainston from the City of Avondale presented “Light Up the Sky,” the city’s July 4, 2026, signature Independence Day celebration held at Phoenix Raceway, featuring approximately 10,000 attendees, a major fireworks show, a Luke Air Force Base flyover, vendors, and indoor and outdoor inflatable kids’ zones. Commissioners had no questions following the presentation.

b. Arizona America250 Toolkit

Executive Director Terech provided a brief mention on the development of the Arizona America250 toolkit to support local July 4 activations; discussion will continue as materials are finalized.

5. Post-Fourth of July Activations

Executive Director Terech reported that additional funds may be available following July 4 activations and presented a list of potential uses, including grants for public art projects, extension of the public relations contract, endowment support for the Historic Preservation Youth Council, a fall essay contest, and assistance for partner organizations. Commissioner Giuliano suggested sponsor recognition opportunities such as plaques, a replica of the traveling museum, a thank-you breakfast, and an idea was pitched for a large belt buckle for major sponsors. Chair Fontes noted that several items are priorities, but that no immediate decisions were required; no formal action was taken.

6. PR and Media Update – Agital/Go Fish Digital

Representatives from Agital/Go Fish Digital presented a performance overview for February 27–March 31, highlighting 44 earned media mentions for the traveling museum, an estimated 46.5 million impressions, and approximately 19,000 in advertising value equivalency. They reported 122 social media posts generating 135,323 organic impressions, 2,987 engagements, 463 new followers, and 39,736 impressions specifically on traveling museum content, along with more than 4 million paid digital impressions and nearly 42,000 digital clicks across four media channels and 20 radio stations.

7. Commissioner Promotion for Passport250 and A250 AZ Programming

Executive Director Terech thanked Commissioners Carney and Wilmeth for recording a promotional video about the traveling museum that has performed well on social media. Commissioners were invited to contact Executive Director Terech if they are interested in filming additional short promotional videos.

8. “Dear America, Love Arizona” Postcard Displays

Executive Director Terech reported ongoing work with the Arizona Department of Administration to identify functional and secure display options for the Dear America, Love Arizona postcards, including in the museum, and invited commissioners to suggest or host display locations. Commissioner Harder proposed creating an online form request to share with partner agencies and sponsors interested in hosting displays.

9. National and Arizona Time Capsules

Executive Director Terech shared that the commission recently assembled materials for the national America250 time capsule, including a letter from the Chair and a copper ingot, for a 250-year capsule. She proposed including a signed letter from all commissioners, among other items, in a future Arizona time capsule.

10. Commissioner Updates and Subcommittee Reports

a. Arts, Museums & Cultural Institutions

Commissioner Needham reported that the subcommittee met recently and continued work on Stories250 and related initiatives.

b. Civic Engagement, Education & Community Service

Commissioner Tighe reported ongoing efforts to include the Arizona America250 logo on this year's high-school diplomas and noted that Arizona's MyAmerica participation remains strong, with other states beginning to increase their engagement.

c. Fundraising

No report.

d. History, Heritage & Historic Preservation

Commissioner Harder reported that the subcommittee discussed the traveling museum and acknowledged strong involvement of members at tour stops; the Youth Council is pursuing the process to list a site in Gilbert on the National Register of Historic Places. She also noted the [publication of an Arizona America250-related issue of the Journal of Arizona History](#) by the Arizona Historical Society and announced an upcoming May 6 trivia night.

e. Military & Veterans Affairs

Chair Fontes reported participating in Operation Freedom Trail and walking a portion of the Arizona Trail as part of a co-branded America250 event.

f. Municipal Outreach & Tribal Affairs

Staff and commissioners continue one-on-one outreach with municipalities and tribal partners; no additional report was provided.

g. Travel & Tourism

Commissioner Carney reported that the Outdoors250 initiative continues to grow and has surpassed 250 sign-ups. He shared information about Freedom250 and the Great American State Fair in Washington, D.C., where the Arizona Office of Tourism is leading the state's activation and seeking volunteers, and announced a joint meeting of the Travel & Tourism and 3H committees on April 23 in Flagstaff. Commissioner Carney also highlighted an upcoming "[Yuma Salutes America's 250 – A Star-Spangled Celebration](#)" event in Yuma.

11. Report from Executive Director

a. National Initiatives

Executive Director Terech reported on national America250 initiatives, including "America's Potluck" and "America Gives," which aim to coordinate a July week of service focused on neighbors and food, noting strong sponsor interest.

b. Arizona Initiatives

Executive Director Terech stated that Arizona-specific initiatives had been covered under previous agenda items and had no additional updates.

12. Call to the Public

Chair Fontes opened the floor for public comment. Jim McPherson invited community members to a public forum, “A New Life for the Mystery Castle,” to be held Saturday, May 2, 2026, from 2:00–4:00 p.m. at the South Mountain Community Library in Phoenix, where new owner Erick Harrell will present plans for preservation and future use of the site as a destination event venue, followed by a Q&A session.

No additional members of the public requested to speak.

13. Adjournment

Chair Fontes adjourned the meeting at 10:17 a.m.

DRAFT