

Florida Historical Commission
R.A Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough St., Tallahassee FL 32399
Web Meeting, GoToWebinar, Meeting ID: 899-951-731
Friday, August 15, 2025 - 9:31 a.m. to 12:32 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Commission Members Present In-Person: Dr. Judith Bense, Chair, Kathleen Kauffman, Parker Destin, Dr. Michael Francis, John Phelps.

Commission Members Present Via Webinar: David Hoyt, David Drysdale, John Browning Jr., Frank Terraferma, Rick Gonzalez.

Commission Members Not Present: N/A

DOS Staff Members Present In-Person: Alissa Lotane, Director; Dr. Angela Tomlinson, Assistant Director; John Grandage, Assistant Director; Ruben A. Acosta, Chief, Bureau of Historic Preservation; Dr. Kathryn Miyar, Chief, Bureau of Archaeological Research; Jeremy Heiker, Historical Marker Program Coordinator; Khara Fleming, Executive Assistant; Eric Case, Historic Preservation Grants Supervisor; Alexa Wilson, Historic Preservation Grants Specialist, Nicole Hu, Historic Preservation Grants Specialist; Hope Evans, Historic Preservationist; Lance Adams, Intern.

DOS Staff Members Present Via Webinar: Dr. Sarah Liko, Operations Manager; Dr. Kyr Lucas, Survey and Registration Supervisor; Sam Schmidt, Historic Preservationist; Tyler Smith, CLG Coordinator.

Members of the Public Present In-Person: Ethan Ream

Members of the Public Present Via Webinar: The Florida Channel, Paul Lux

Item I. Call to Order and Roll Call

Dr. Bense called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. and asked Khara Fleming to call the roll. Quorum was confirmed.

Item II. Introduction of Commission, Staff & Guests

Dr. Bense asked the commissioners, staff, and guests to introduce themselves.

Item III. Adoption of Agenda

Dr. Bense asked for a motion to adopt the August 15, 2025, Florida Historical Commission (FHC) business meeting agenda. No additions or corrections were made to the agenda. **Parker Destin moved to adopt the agenda, Kathleen Kauffman seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

Item IV. Approval of Minutes from May 16, 2025, Meeting

Dr. Bense asked for a motion to adopt the minutes from the May 16, 2025, FHC business meeting. Kathleen Kauffman asked for corrections to Items IV and XI. **Parker Destin moved to adopt the minutes with corrections, Kathleen Kauffman seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

Item V. Chairman's Comments

Dr. Bense expressed disappointment at the lack of funding for Special Category grants from the Legislature.

Item VI. Director's Comments

Alissa Lotane was recognized to provide the Director's comments. Lotane discussed the budget signed by the Governor and its impact on the Division. In the FY2026 budget, the Legislature did not include funding for the Special Category ranked list, additional funding for construction of the conservation lab, or design of permanent exhibit updates for the Museum of Florida History. Two vacant career service positions were also eliminated from the Division. She provided updates on the America250 grants cycle, the Federal Historic Preservation Fund grant for Federal FY 2025, the upcoming Special Category grants panel meeting, plans for an America250 exhibit to be held at The Capitol, and upcoming Semiquincentennial commission events.

Item VII. Committee Reports

A. Bureau of Archaeological Research (BAR) Updates

Dr. Miyar provided updates for BAR. Updates were provided on staffing in the bureau, activities in the underwater archaeology program, public lands archaeology program, collections and conservation, and the progress made on construction of the new artifact storage facility.

B. Bureau of Historic Preservation (BHP) Updates

Ruben A. Acosta provided updates for BHP. Acosta gave updates on staffing, the 2025 Preservation on Main Street Conference held in Fernandina Beach in July, the cultural resource management summit held in Tallahassee in May, and the most recent National Register Review Board meeting. He also gave updates on programs of the bureau, including Survey and Registration, Tax Credits, Main Street, and Certified Local Governments, and on planning for the next Preservation on Main Street Conference in 2026.

C. Outreach and Construction Updates

John Grandage provided outreach and construction updates. He gave updates on staffing in the museums, recent outreach events, and on construction projects at sites managed by the Division, including the Brokaw McDougal House, the Messer House, and the new artifact storage facility. He also discussed plans for upcoming projects, events and exhibits for the America250 celebration.

D. Citizen Support Organization (CSO) Updates

John Grandage provided updates on the recent merger of the Division's two citizen support organizations, the Friends of Florida History, Inc., and the Friends of the Museums of Florida History, Inc. The surviving entity is the Friends of Florida History, Inc.

E. Grants Program Updates

Dr. Tomlinson provided updates for the Grants Program. She discussed the FY2026 budget, which includes \$1.5 million for the Small Matching ranked list, no funding for the Special Category ranked list, and \$500,000 for the Abandoned African American Cemeteries Grants ranked list. After vetoes, the FY2026 budget also includes 4 member projects under the Small Matching grants line (\$1.4 million) and 7 member projects (\$2.5 million) under the Special Category line. Commissioners expressed their disappointment at the lack of funding for ranked Special Category grants and discussed drafting a formal letter to legislative leaders to provide information about the role the FHC plays in reviewing Special Category applications and the importance of funding projects that have been vetted and recommended by the FHC. **John Phelps moved to send a letter to the Legislature. Parker Destin seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.** After the vote, Commissioners Bense, Kauffman, and Phelps agreed to meet in a publicly noticed virtual meeting to draft a letter to be presented to the full Commission for approval at the Special Category review meeting on September 24-25, 2025.

Item X. Business Items

A. U.S. Semiquincentennial (America 250 Celebration)

i. America250 Grants

Dr. Tomlinson provided updates on America250 grants. In the FY2026 budget, the Division of Arts and Culture (DAC) received a \$1 million appropriation from the Legislature to award grants for projects related to America250 and the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. DHR staff worked with DAC to develop program eligibility requirements and an application. The application cycle was open for 2 weeks and closed on August 6, 2025. Four hundred applications were received by the deadline. DAC staff performed an eligibility review and determined the 367 applications met the eligibility requirements to be reviewed and scored by department staff.

ii. Capitol Exhibit

Director Lotane provided updates on the upcoming America250 exhibit. DHR will be working in collaboration with the Division of Library and Information Services and DAC to curate an exhibit celebrating America250, to be shown on the 22nd floor of The Capitol, with tentative plans to open the exhibit in January 2026.

iii. Founder Statues Installation

Director Lotane provided updates on the status of procuring statues of founding fathers. A statue of Thomas Jefferson has been installed at the Jefferson County Courthouse in Monticello, Florida, and DHR staff are working to acquire additional

statues of Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, James Monroe, and James Madison.

Item XI. Other Business

Kathleen Kauffman was recognized to speak. She expressed concerns about staff salaries in DHR and how this could make retaining talent difficult.

Item XII. Public Comment

Ethan Ream was recognized to comment. Mr. Ream expressed his disappointment with the prolonged closure of the Museum of Florida History. While he acknowledged the necessity of closing the museum while the R.A. Gray Plaza is under construction, he asked the commissioners and staff to consider reopening the museum as soon as possible and to stagger the planned museum exhibition redesign so that the public may visit the museum again in a limited capacity.

Item XIII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:32 p.m.

Presiding Officer

State Historic Preservation Officer and
Director, Division of Historical Resources

Approved: _____