

Virginia Beach VA250 Committee
Meeting Minutes
Approved July 10, 2025

12 June 2025, 5:30 PM
Department of Planning and Community Development
Building 3, 2403 Courthouse Drive, Conference Room 110

ATTENDEES:

Members:

James B. Wood, Chair; Chris Pieczynski, Vice Chair; Bobbie Gribble, Secretary

C. Drummond Ball, Suzanne Camden, Linda Carrington (5:55), Robert Dozier, Patrick Hannum, Kevin Kattwinkel, Becky Livas, Bobby Melatti, Michael Winner

Council Liaison: Worth Remick

Staff Liaison: Mark Reed

Public: Florence Reese

Welcome

Jimmy Wood welcomed the Virginia Beach VA250 Committee and called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. He welcomed Suzanne Camden as the newly appointed member of the VB VA250 Committee.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – May 8, 2025

Mr. Wood called for the approval of the minutes of the May 8, 2025 meeting. Chris Pieczynski made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Patrick Hannum seconded the motion. The May 8, 2025 meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Presentation to City Council – June 17, 2025

Council Member Worth Remick said he thought City Council needed to know what the VB VA250 Committee was accomplishing and the plans for the next year leading up to the 250th celebration. He has arranged for the Committee Chair, Jimmy Wood, to make a presentation to City Council.

Jimmy Wood said he has been working with Mark Reed, the Committee's Staff Liaison, to prepare a PowerPoint presentation to present to Council. Mr. Wood went through the presentation slides and the Committee was asked for their feedback.

Council Member Remick said he felt a presentation would be timely as Council Member Barbara Henley had asked where the committee is and what they are doing. He felt all City Council members would appreciate it.

Mr. Wood said the PowerPoint is designed to make City Council aware the VB VA250 Committee is in the business of supporting events financially, not in planning and presenting the events ourselves. He said they have prepared a presentation about what we have supported this past year and what we are anticipating supporting in the coming year.

Updates

Mr. Reed said all of the ordered branded promotional items have been delivered. He had examples of the items for each member and said we will be giving them out at various events to promote VA250 and to help raise awareness about the upcoming commemorations. Mr. Reed suggested we have the promotional items for City Council members at the June 17 Council meeting. Council Member Remick agreed that we should have them for Council.

Mr. Reed said that the identification banners we have ordered have been completed. With the assistance of Drummond Ball, he displayed the 6-foot banner of the horizontal graphic the VA250 Commission had created for us.

They then displayed the 4-foot banner with the oval graphic design the VB VA250 Committee had commissioned. Mr. Reed said that we have a banner for display at events where we are giving out information and the branded promotional items. Table sizes are often 6-foot or 4-foot, so we have a banner for either size table.

Past Events

Mr. Reed said the Rising Sun Pow Wow that was held at Mount Trashmore on May 17 was a successful event. He reminded the Committee that they had donated \$10,500 to bring in several of the performers for the event. He said there was a good crowd in attendance.

Mr. Ball said it was a great event. He said tribal members were present to talk about the Nansemond Indian Nation and another tribe and their history. He said the dances by the performers were magical. Mr. Ball said the younger members did a lot of research to make sure everything was authentic.

Mr. Reed said there was a stage with two drum circles. He also noted that there were vendors of jewelry, clothing, and other items.

Mr. Pieczynski talked about the Run to Remember VB 5K Race that was held at the Military Aviation Museum on May 26. He said the Run to Remember VB is a charitable race, conceived by four widows of Navy SEALs who were killed in action along with 26 other service members. The VB VA250 Committee was a sponsor for this event.

Mr. Pieczynski ran the event. He passed around the event t-shirt that was given to participants. The shirt has the VB VA250 graphic on it. Mr. Pieczynski said they had 900 sign up to run and 639 actually ran the 5K. He said there was a big crowd.

Upcoming Events Supported by the VB VA250 Committee

Mr. Reed then briefly noted upcoming events associated with VB VA250. He said there are flyers and other information in the meeting packet about some of these.

Mr. Reed said coming up on Saturday, June 14, Patrick Henry will be portrayed at 17th Street Park. This year is the 250th anniversary of his famous speech.

Mr. Reed encouraged members to listen in to Fighting for Emancipation, Black Loyalists in the American Revolution, that will air on WHRO on June 26 at noon, (89.5 WHRV-FM). Mr. Reed said Cultural Affairs had requested \$10,000 for VB VA250 programs in the budget and the VB VA250 Committee transferred that amount to them from the budget appropriated for VB VA250 in FY25. Descendants of Black Loyalists that escaped enslavement and served with the British will be talking with Barbara Hamm Lee live for the program.

Mr. Reed said the VB VA250 is sponsoring the Independence Day 5K Run being held at Mt. Trashmore on July 4 by the YMCA. He said he plans to be there to have a table and give out the VB VA250 branded promotional items. He said he will be there at 6:00 a.m. to set up the table. The run starts at 7:30 a.m. Bobbie Gribble and Kevin Kattwinkel volunteered to assist. Chris Pieczynski said he will be running the race.

Mr. Reed noted that numerous performances of the play, “Racing the Night”, will be held at the 13th Street Virginia Legends Stage between July 24 and August 16; It will be presented on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings. There will be two 30-minute performances each evening at 8:00 and 9:00 p.m.

Bobby Melatti said “Racing the Night” is about a young lady in Virginia who warned people about the British coming. Five local people are cast for this. It is 100% paid for by the Virginia Legends Association.

Mr. Melatti said he has created a listing of all the VB VA250 events that are being done at the oceanfront. He said he will make sure that Beach Events will highlight everything they do that can be attributed to VB VA250. He said he had talked to the state tourism folks, and they said they weren’t seeing anything from Virginia Beach.

Other events noted by Mr. Reed were National Lighthouse Day at the Cape Henry Lighthouse on August 7 and a presentation by the Marquis de Lafayette at 17th Street Park on August 16.

Old Business

Under Old Business, Council Member Remick asked about what is being done to bring in Clay Jenkinson to perform as Thomas Jefferson. Mr. Reed said he will follow up about pursuing that.

New Business

Under New Business, the Committee has received several requests from community organizations for event funding in FY26 that VB VA250 discussed and considered.

Mr. Reed said the Kempsville Family Fun Fest has requested \$5,000 for their event that is taking place on September 20. He said their request letter is in the meeting packet. He also noted that they had attended a previous VB VA250 meeting to discuss their event.

Mr. Reed said there is a request from the Virginia Chorale for \$6,000 to support a special VA 250 performance in Virginia Beach that will present music from the American Revolution era. It is being planned for Saturday May 2, 2026, at the First Presbyterian Church of Virginia Beach.

Mr. Kattwinkel noted that the venue is fairly small. There was some discussion about the size of the request for the number of people attending. It was noted that the Chorale has a revenue line in the budget they submitted, so it appears there will be tickets sold for this event. Additional discussion was about potentially supporting the request if it was held at a larger venue.

Mr. Reed said there is a request that has been discussed at previous meetings to produce a plaque to recognize local Patriots. He said the request is for \$5,000.

Suzanne Camden said she felt this is an important project to show local patriots who fought in the Revolutionary War. Michael Winner said we need to agree on where the plaque will be placed. Mr. Wood said he thought approval of funding is premature. He said we need to get more answers to our questions.

Mr. Reed said we have a request for \$4,000 to support the Battle of the Virginia Capes event in September. He said VB VA250 supported the event in 2024.

Ms. Camden said the tent that VB VA250 paid for last year saved the event because of the rain. Dr. Hannum said they have a backup facility for bad weather but holding it outside accommodates a larger crowd and a bigger crowd is expected this year. Mr. Pieczynski said he thinks this request should be approved.

Mr. Reed said we have a request from the World Affairs Council of Hampton Roads for \$5,000 to help fund a panel discussion of experts on foreign policy to discuss 250 years of foreign policy with special emphasis on the role and impact on Hampton Roads. Mr. Reed noted that VB VA250, with the approval of the officers, provided a letter of support for WACHR's grant application to Virginia Humanities for funding for this event.

Mr. Wood said he is intrigued by the program being proposed. He asked when the event would be held and where. Mr. Reed said he had met virtually with WACHR and they are looking at the February/March 2026 timeframe and they had mentioned the Sandler Center, but those seemed to be preliminary plans.

Mr. Wood made a motion to fund the request to support the Battle of the Virginia Capes event in the amount of \$4,000. Mr. Pieczynski seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wood made a motion to decline funding for the Kempsville Family Fun Festival. He said he felt this is a very local event and would not have the total community impact we are looking for. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ball. There was no additional discussion. The motion was approved unanimously. Mr. Wood asked Mr. Reed to draft a letter of support for the event, but declining to provide monetary support as VB VA250 has a limited budget.

Mr. Wood made a motion to address the other requests. These were:

- To get additional information on the proposed local Patriots plaque, including location and if the DAR would be providing financial support
- To discuss alternative, larger venues for the Virginia Chorale performance, and potentially lower funding
- To get additional information on the proposed panel discussion on 250 years of foreign policy from WACHR, including potential locations and dates for the event

The motion was seconded by Becky Livas.

Mr. Kattwinkel said the WACHR seems to be geared more towards looking at the whole 250 years of foreign policy.

There was no additional discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wood then discussed potential student involvement with the VB VA250 Committee. Council Member Remick asked, “How do we engage the students more?” Mr. Wood said we need to come up with a plan. He said he will talk to Sharon Felton, a Committee member who is on the Virginia Beach School Board.

There were then some ideas discussed for increasing student involvement. These included:

- The 250 historical facts leading up to July 4, 2026. These could be provided to students to read in the morning announcements.
- History essays – the Friends of Historic Homes at one time said they would provide an award for essays.
- Historical marker challenge, which would be like a scavenger hunt. Students could run that event. We would have to figure out the rules, which markers people would find.

Mr. Reed asked Council Member Remick if student involvement might include appointment to this committee. Council Member Remick said it should be considered.

Mr. Reed said there are a lot of school programs out there. We do not have to create them. He said there were a lot of handouts for programs at the VA 250 Conference that could be used. He suggested the Committee should take a look at existing programs.

Ms. Camden said has a contact that she uses for the entire Virginia Beach School System where she gives DAR programs. She said we could design some programs with VB VA250 graphic on it. She suggested we could make a coloring sheet to hand out.

Council Member Remick said it was a great idea to have several people from the committee meet with the Superintendent. Mr. Wood said he will talk with Sharon Felton about the best way to get into the schools and who we should meet.

Mr. Reed noted that the VB VA250 Committee FY25 Annual Report will need to be approved by the Committee. He said if the Committee does not meet in July, which it didn't last year, he will need provisional approval to take the information from the PowerPoint and create the report. Mr. Wood asked how many members can attend a meeting on July 10. Seeing there would be sufficient numbers for a quorum, Mr. Wood requested Mr. Reed to prepare the report for review and approval at the July meeting.

Mr. Wood said that looking at the time of the evening, he suggested the subcommittees stay together as one group for discussion and reports. Mr. Wood asked if the Civil Liberties and Right subcommittee and Indigenous Peoples subcommittee should be consolidated.

Mr. Winner said he thinks they should be kept separate. Robert Dozier said Indigenous People seems more related to events, but he wasn't clear on if a Pow Wow would be planned as part of the History Fest.

Becky Livas said she is concerned with the name of the committee, Civil Rights. She said she is less interested in Civil Rights and more interested about lifestyle. She is more interested in what food was served and their clothing. Mr. Wood said he felt it is discussion for the subcommittee and could be the topic at the next meeting.

Linda Carrington said there are 5 people at her church in their 100s who can tell us what happened over 50 years ago.

Mr. Wood said Ms. Livas brought forward more questions than answers. He asked her to think about it and what we can do to incorporate her thoughts.

Subcommittee Meetings/Reports

For the Conflict and Independence committee, Mr. Ball and Dr. Hannum asked where we stand with Parks and Recreation for the 2025 Skirmish at Kemps Landing event on November 15 and 16. Mr. Reed said he has not received any feedback from his submittal of the event diagram. He said he will set up another meeting with Mr. Parkman at Parks and Recreation so we can find where we stand.

Mr. Ball said we have 5 regiments that will represent the British. This may total 30 to 40 participants. He said the Colonials will also have about 30 to 40 participants. Mr. Ball said Christi Lyons is helping him put together a 2-fold handout. He said many re-enactors are focusing on the 250th of Bunker Hill. He said he will have more information after that event.

For the request for relocation of the Battle of the Capes interpretive sign, Mr. Reed said a letter has gone out to Superintendent Jerri Marr at the Colonial National Historical Park. He said he provided all the information from the W3R group and the VB VA250 review and recommendation. He noted that the Park has experienced some reduction in staff recently and they are actively working on 250th events and planning. It might be a while before they respond.

Council Member Remick suggested that we identify a potential location on the boardwalk. Dr. Hannum suggested if we are developing Rudee Park, this might be the right place. Councilman Remick also said to consider Neptune Park. Mr. Reed noted that Rudee Park would fall under Parks and Recreation, and they have their own standards for interpretive signs. Mr. Kattwinkel suggested the northern end of the Boardwalk near 40th Street should also be considered. Mr. Wood noted the two likely locations are the very north and very south end of the boardwalk. Dr. Hannum said he will do the exploration and report back.

For the Events subcommittee, Mr. Wood asked Bobby Melatti what they want from the VB VA250 Committee. Mr. Melatti said he needs the advocacy. He said if we are going to do any of these things, History Fest, enhanced 4th of July, we have to be funded. Beach Events is asking to fund these things because this is an opportunity that contributes locally.

Jimmy Wood said in his presentation to Council he will advocate for funding. He also said a letter should be written to Council from the VB VA250 Committee advocating for funding.

Mr. Wood made a motion that VB VA250 draft a letter to Council for the Boardwalk History Festival in 2026 and enhanced July 4, 2026 events. The motion was seconded by Mr. Melatti.

Mr. Reed said the letter should reference the 2007 boardwalk event which was in commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the First Landing and the settlement at Jamestown. Local history organizations had booths along the boardwalk. Bobby's group had created banners for the boardwalk. It was a very successful event.

Mr. Reed noted that there was a big investment in that commemoration by the City. He said there was an exhibit at MOCA including an original Magna Carta. The exhibit also had the baptismal record for Adam Thoroughgood, a draft of the Constitution with handwritten notes from James Wilson, and an original broadside of the Declaration of Independence. He said Mac Rawls eventually talked Jamestown into bringing their ships down and they came ashore in a shallop at First Landing State Park.

There was no additional discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wood said he would bring up the Flags of Freedom initiative at Council on Tuesday.

A subcommittee was established to work on the Countdown to 250. Ms. Camden will chair the group and work with Mr. Ball and Mr. Kattwinkel. Mr. Reed will also assist. The 250th day before July 4, 2026 starts in late October.

Adjournment

Mr. Wood said the next meeting will be here on July 10.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

