

Hampton VA 250

Meeting notes

February 26, 2026

In attendance, Vice Mayor Steven Brown, Marty Tennille, Amy Jordan, Dr. Jennifer Oliver, Demetria Sweat, Asa Jenrette, Sarah Martin (for Steve Mallon), Dr. Vanessa Thaxton Ward
Regrets: Pat Leary, Dr. Jeffrey Smith, Samantha Snead
Absent: Gaylene Kanoyton, Aaron Whittington, Ryan Taylor Fontes, Tim Receveur, John Golden

Staff in attendance: Ryan Gregory, April Receiver, Cpl. Nick Kennedy, Amanda Green, Luci Cochran, Mariah Roederer, Sarah Martin, Gabe Diaz, Genevieve Diaz, Jody Madaras, Mary Fugere, Beth Austin, Maggi Tsosie, Yuri Milligan

Mary shared that all future meetings will be in Zoom in order to maximize everyone's time as events draw closer.

New partnerships: Mary shared information about Christopher Phillips' **Civic Residency** program under the brand name Socrates Café. This is a unique opportunity for Hampton students and may fit with the Neighborhood Office's Youth Commission's work. It may be timely for high school students who have just completed their associate degree prior to HCS graduation. Mary asked whether there were any questions or any objections to proceeding with this initiative and there were none.

Jody Madaras shared that during the **John Rollison** presentation to elementary and high school students, there was much more discourse and conversation went on a good 35 minutes. Many

students had questions and were interested to know the actor's perceptions. Mary shared that the **Mid Atlantic Quilt Festival** was slated to begin this week at the Hampton Road Convention Center with a 250 Anniversary quilt theme. On March 15, Mary Fugere Amanda Green, Victoria Richardson and Bethany Austin are slated to present to the **Virginia Association of Museum Conference** in Williamsburg. The theme is Revolutionary Partnerships.

Hampton History Museum is presenting an initiative entitled **Exploration: From the Sea to the Stars** as their March community engagement initiative related to America's 250. It is scheduled March 14 and will include free admission. This coming Monday they will have a Port Hampton lecture presented by Mike Steen. On March 11, Poisoned Dwarf will perform. They are additionally preparing traveling exhibits.

Blackbeard Pirate Festival will include two visiting ships, including *AJ Meerwald* and *Lynx*. Efforts are under way to contract a floating barge for the vessels. They will be available for touring during their visit and captain and crew will participate in the Pirates' Bash, festival pirate street skirmishes, and the pirate supper in Mill Point Park. The visiting ships will serve as venue for VIP receptions aboard. Hampton Yacht Club is interested in hosting a ship if additional docking space is needed. Sarah Martin shared that a flea market will take place on Queens Way on June 13-14. A Virginia tourism grant of \$8000 has been received for marketing the pirate festival. **Celebrate Juneteenth and Hampton VA250 Sail** details are being worked on by the committee. Juneteenth pageant play has been produced by Marie Saint Clair and will be shown on June 19 and 20 at The American Theater. It should be included in all Celebrate Juneteenth promotions/advertising.

July 4 will involve activating the downtown waterfront from the Booker T. Washington Bridge to Carousel Park; closing Settlers Landing from the bridge at Eaton Street to Bridge Street. There will be fireworks, show with 400 drones. Bleachers on Settlers Landing Road, cocktail tables in Carousel Park and on the street so that people can enjoy the live entertainment on the Coliseum's portable stage. We have invited military bands and smaller entertainers on Queens Way. The Maritime Center will be used for a VIP reception. We are looking at a cornhole tournament in the courtyard by The Landing or possibly other spaces in downtown. Sarah discussed alcohol license for a beer garden, and the need for a designated outdoor refreshment license that extends from Settlers Landing to The Landing Hotel. We will need to identify VIP parking for the Hampton Maritime Center. Sound company will be contracted for performances and patriotic soundtrack to be heard along the waterfront. Marty Tennille with master gardeners offered their services and an exhibit at the event. Fireworks will be provided by Pyro Shows Inc. and drone show by Sky Elements.

The fireworks barge the barge should be 30 to 40 feet wide and 130 feet long length. It may also be portable bridges in 20-to-40-foot sections. The budget for fireworks is \$30,000. Barges are more adaptable to wind; tug boats are expensive. Fireworks company requires 50% deposit with contract with the balance due payable 30 days after the show. The barge requires a Coast Guard permit and two days set up prior to the event. We need crowd control, boat control, and fire marshal must approve the plan in advance. Follow up meeting will be required of Hampton police department, marine and fire marshal.

Dr. Oliver shared that the VA 250 Choral event would take the place of the drumline event that had been scheduled by music department leader Kelly Dee. Dr. Oliver reported that on May 20, at

Jones Magnet School a choral presentation of **Swinging into Freedom** will be free and open to the public. There will be 130 choral performers; they will also perform during the Mosaic Festival on May 2. Hampton City Schools' 250 touch points initiative by Rho Kappa Social Studies Honor Society is set for the fourth quarter. They are also working on a living library.

Hampton Public Library's 100th anniversary is slated for July 11 and will involve working with their foundation to plan a Roaring 20's Themed Dinner event, as 1920 is the year the library was founded. It will include a dinner with heavy hors d'oeuvres and will be funded by grants and personal request for funding.

There has been no recent movement on the **Crabs on King and Queen/Crabtown Capers**, but Mary asked Sarah Martin if the two of them could meet soon to discuss the potential for Downtown Hampton.

The art contest did not result in full committee response. Mary committed to providing the most popular of the artwork and offered to initiate another contest that is more far-reaching and allowed additional time.

Hampton History Museum reported that they were finalizing their documentary script, generating b-roll, and is still looking for a major sponsor. The documentary will include 26 minutes of historical information and interpretation, and will be presented to all regional schools and ideally on WHRO.

Yuri reported that Hampton VA 250 videos with Marie St. Clair had been produced and were airing on 400YearsForward.com. Mary advised that pole banners will be displayed throughout the city to

follow the All-America City banners that are going up. A direct mailer will be distributed to all residences.

Mary is scheduled to present to Hampton Rotary on March 12. She provided a presentation to the Peninsula Rotary on February 4. Hampton City Council coins feature the 250th anniversary of America were provided to the Council office for distribution by Council throughout the year.

The overall marketing budget is \$95,000; the direct mailer will cost approximately \$20,000; \$10,000 will be spent for signage, radio, social media, print ads, regional digital, digital focused out of VA, Peach Jar, Veer magazine, and targeting Raleigh Charlotte, North Carolina audiences.

Mosaic Festival pursued a VA 250 Grant and are lining up performances to showcase the cultural community, food, vendors, exhibitors. Hampton Arts, Libraries, Unity Commission, and the CVB and Marketing offices. It will be held at Mill Point Park on May 2; participation is free to nonprofits,

Hampton Education Foundation is providing the fundraising mechanism for **the Freedom Dinner** which will be held on May 29. Master Gardeners are set to participate. We will promote through Peach Jar as well as all of the other Marketing strategies shared.

Mary indicated that Hampton CVB is working on a Hampton history driving tour to begin in May and will run through early fall. On March 9 at 1 PM a historic marker for the Battle of the Ironclads will be unveiled in Olde Wythe.

A presentation of the VA 250 organization will take place on April 24-25 at the Williamsburg Lodge. The program is entitled **Season of**

Civic Renewal, and is a signature semi quincennial VA250 event. Several people requested to receive the event information.