

**ILLINOIS AMERICA 250 COMMISSION**  
**COMMISSION MEETING**  
**November 18, 2024, 1:00 p.m.**

**Webex Meeting**

**Attending: Officer:** Chair Gabrielle (Gabe) Lyon; **Commission Members:** Brad Cole, Michelle Donahoe, Jenn Edginton, Jessica Harris, Sara Phalen, Christina Shutt, Dick Simpson, Amber Smock, Senator Doris Turner, and Andy Van Meter; **Department of Natural Resources staff:** Meghan Lindstrom and George Sisk; one member of the public: Erin Drain

**I. Welcome**

Chair Gabe Lyon called the meeting to order at 1:38 p.m.

**II. Roll Call**

A quorum was present.

Christina Shutt joined the meeting at 1:41 p.m.

**III. Review September 16 Commission Meeting Minutes**

The Minutes from the September 16 meeting were presented for approval. Brad Cole moved to approve the Minutes, Jessica Harris seconded, and the Minutes were approved unanimously.

**IV. Chair's Update**

Gabe shared a timeline of "Near Term Priorities" to be completed between fall 2024 and spring 2025. She recommended the Commission focus on building a social media and internet presence, finalize themes and goals, draft a budget, and engage in outreach and promote the work of regional and local agencies.

Erin Drain provided information about the Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn accounts created for the Commission. She emphasized they would help the Commission fulfill the "encourage and promote" part of the mandate. Erin encouraged the Commissioners to add the Commission to their LinkedIn accounts.

Jenn Edginton shared the URL for the new Illinois America 250 website. Gabe recommended a bitly link be created so people can access the site through a shorter and more manageable URL.

Gabe shared a plan to create a tool kit for Commissioners, including a folder with relevant information to share at outreach opportunities, which would include the Illinois America 250 logo designs and sheets with QR codes to the Commission's website.

Gabe reported that she is working with the communication team at the Department of Natural Resources. They are formulating a press release and have completed a draft. The next step is to coordinate with the Governor's Office to determine how and when to make the press announcement. Gabe confirmed the Commissioners have been authorized to continue with outreach to spread the word before the official announcement.

Gabe shared a networking opportunity with the Commission. The American Association of State and Local History is planning "250 Con" to be held in February. Gabe will send information about attending that meeting to Commissioners via email.

#### **V. Commission Bylaws**

Gabe opened the floor for discussion of the proposed bylaws for the Commission.

George Sisk noted that his suggestion for article four section four that any new working groups or advisory groups be Chaired by a Commissioner was missing from the provided draft. The Commission discussed the wording to clarify that non-Commissioners could not Chair any working or advisory groups.

Brad moved to approve the proposed bylaws with George's suggested edits.

Christina asked if the Commission would need to add any language to the bylaws to allow them to continue meeting virtually. George said that it would not need to be in the bylaws considering the Commission has statewide jurisdiction and does not make binding recommendations so it would be able to meet virtually under the Open Meetings Act.

Sara Phalen asked why article 3 made officer positions appointments by the Chair instead of full votes from the Commission. The Commissioners debated the merits of changing the method of filling positions. Gabe proposed the issue be revisited at the January retreat.

Sara directed the Commission to article 8 to discuss funding and expenditures. After some discussion it was determined that no definite language changes could be made without a budget. Gabe proposed the Commission reevaluate the bylaw language once a budget was in place.

Dick Simpson proposed the Commission adopt the current bylaws with the intention of amending it in January after more research and discussion.

Christina seconded Brad's motion to approve the bylaws with George's addition requiring a Commissioner to Chair any new working or advisory groups. The motion carried with a 10 to 1 vote.

#### **VI. Goals for in-person retreat in January**

Gabe opened the floor for discussion on the agenda for the January retreat.

Dick suggested the Commission discuss the project to record oral histories. He provided estimated budgets that could cover different projects that have been suggested in previous Commission meetings, including funding for training for all counties to run meetings and filming a documentary. Dick also suggested the Commission review and adopt the principles that have been reworked in the Education Subcommittee.

Amber Smock supported Dick's suggestions and recommended the agenda be kept short to allow time for discussion.

Michelle Donahoe suggested the Commission focus on identifying two or three statewide initiatives that can be used to spread awareness and drive excitement for the 250th anniversary. Christina seconded the project limit and reminded the Commissioners that the Commission's term expires in 2027.

Michelle proposed the Commission follow Wisconsin's America 250 efforts and join the national Two Lights for Tomorrow initiative, as it could be an easy statewide project that would not require a great deal of funding.

Sara recommended the Commission do more research on what 250 projects are being planned throughout the state and reassess their project priorities based on their findings, to ensure they are not repeating work already being completed.

**VII. Opportunities for engagement with Higher Education**

Dick reported that he and Gabe had met with many deans and other administrators in higher education institutions to discuss the 250th. Several are planning out relevant courses, speaker series, and civic engagement efforts such as registering voters. He recommended the Commission designate those as “anchor institutions” for their regions. Jessica offered to be part of those conversations to bring in the Southern Illinois University system.

**VIII. Public Comment**

None given.

**IX. Adjournment**

Christina moved to end the meeting, Jenn seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 2:31 p.m.