

The Douglas Henry State Museum Commission (DHSMC) met at 10:00 a.m. CT on April 14, 2025, in the Bill Haslam Center conference Room with Chairman Bo Watson presiding.

Members Present

Ambassador Victor Ashe
Cathy Cate
The Honorable Gary Hicks (phone)
Michael Keeney (phone)
The Honorable Steve McDaniel (phone)
Scott Price (phone)
Lottie Ryans
Barbara Brown Street
Chairman Bo Watson
Derita Coleman Williams

Ex Officio

Anna Durham Windrow, Tennessee Historical Society Chair
Ashley Howell, TSM Executive Director

Members Absent

Danielle Barnes
Phillip Renfro
Laura Travis

Participating Guest

Peter Heimbach

Participating TSM Staff

Sabrina Hooper, Deputy Director
Sharon Dennis, DHSMC Liaison
Jeff Sellers
Richard White

Call to Order

Chairman Bo Watson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., proceeded with roll call, detected a quorum present, and presided over the following business.

Welcome and Introduction

Chairman Watson welcomed members along with new member Chairman Gary Hicks.

Mission Statements

In an ongoing effort to level set, Chairman Watson began by reading the Mission Statements of the Tennessee State Museum and the Douglas Henry State Museum Commission.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Watson identified the January 13, 2025, Quarterly meeting minutes draft emailed in advance of this meeting, also included in the meeting booklets, and entertained a motion to adopt the meeting minutes as written. Ambassador Ashe moved to adopt; seconded by Ms. Ryans. Upon calling for discussion and seeing none, the Chair called for those in favor of adoption of the January 13, 2025, Quarterly meeting minutes as written. The motion carried unanimously with no abstention.

Budget Report

Chairman Watson recognized Deputy Director Sabrina Hooper.

Budget Report February 28, 2025

- State Appropriations: 62% of total State appropriated dollars were expended; a slight decrease over this time last year
- Non-Governmental Earned Revenue: approximately \$5,500 for donation boxes and other solicitations
- Current Services Revenue: approximately \$183,000 from store sales, event rental, and other small items like imaging (does not reflect unearned revenue)
- Inter-Departmental Revenue: approximately \$13,700 for State agencies (excludes all pass-through expense).

HR Transactions last Quarter

Two (2) hires, one (1) resignation.

Currently advertising for eight of eleven open positions.

Tennessee General Assembly Capital Grants FY25

\$4,000,000¹ in grant awards

\$636,000 for seven grants earmarked Hurricane Helene Relief

Collections/Acquisitions Committee (CAC) Report

Chairman Watson recognized CAC Chairman Victor Ashe who began by identifying Meeting Booklet 2 of 2 - - Proposed Deaccessions - - emailed to the full commission in advance of this meeting and called upon Director Howell for object description.

Proposed Deaccessions

Group 1: with Transfer

Director Howell described the Al Jolson Collection of 1,404 items for deaccession with transfer to Ohio State University who maintains an Al Jolson Archive of holdings of the International Al Jolson Society: Registration Number 2010.291 (grouping)

Group 2:

Director Howell described the hunter collection grouping of ten items for deaccession. During a conservation analysis, these items were determined to have active mold. The cost of treatment outweighs the historic or intrinsic value of the items. Registration Number 2004.137 (grouping)

Chairman Watson entertained a motion to adopt the two (2) proposed deaccession groupings: Al Jolson Collection of 1,404 items for deaccession with transfer to Ohio State University, Registration Number 2010.291 (grouping), and the hunter grouped collection with registration Number 2004.137 (grouping). Moved by Ambassador Ashe; Seconded by Ms. Cate.

¹ The 5 million has not been awarded for the purpose of carving out funds to allow museums in East Tennessee to assess damages and greatest needs from Hurricane Helene. TSM has connected with TEMA and is part of the State economic and cultural recovery group.

Upon calling for further discussion and seeing none, the Chair called for those in favor of the motion to adopt the two (2) proposed deaccession groupings: Al Jolson Collection of 1,404 items for deaccession with transfer to Ohio State University, Registration Number 2010.291 (grouping) and hunter collection with registration Number 2004.137 (grouping). The motion carried unanimously with no abstentions.

Artifact /Acquisitions Report

The volume of the Artifact/Object Acquisitions Report continues to be reduced as the collection is moved. Noting the importance of deaccessioning in order to accession, Director Howell showcased two acquisitions purchased with funds from the Tennessee State Museum Foundation; a pot inscribed with “I AM FROM 10EC,” a pot from the Craven family of Henderson County, and a piece from Cain Pottery of Sullivan County. These significant pieces of Tennessee history collected by Carole Wahler were acquired at two auctions.

Red Grooms Fox Trot Carousel² Discussion

Director Howell informed Commissioners she has completed an RFI draft that must now be vetted through the Attorney General’s office and with the Central Procurement Office. Next step will be to post, to solicit relevant parties interested in partnering with the TSM on “placemaking of the Carousel”.

Executive Director’s Report

Visitation

- From July 1, 2024 through March 31, 2025, TSM has welcomed over 100,000 visitors which is on par with the same period last year.
- With a slight decrease in school tour numbers, there is an increase in virtual tour reservations along with K-12 Traveling Trunks engagements.
- While the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) in its “State of Museums Report Post Covid” indicated only 33% of museums have recovered attendance since COVID, TSM has experienced 100% visitation recovery.
- TSM has served 90 out of 95 counties in K-12 with three months remaining this fiscal year.
- Concerns that Capitol tour attendance may be affected due to renovation at Legislative Plaza and the closing of the Motlow Tunnel, has proven to be unwarranted. This fiscal year TSM served over 28,000 people with tours at the State Capitol and in addition, engaged with over 28,000 students, teachers, and other participants statewide.

Capital Maintenance and Improvement Grants

- Staff is reviewing Capital grantee museums interim reports on projects.
- Staff is beginning to prepare visits this spring and summer to view completed projects.

Tennessee America 250

- Director Howell, as Chairlady of the Tennessee Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial³, reported hiring a state coordinator who will begin in May.
- The website launches this day <https://tn250.com/>

Presentation of Military Museum and Capitol Visitor Center

Director Howell introduced Peter Heimbach to update members on the Legislative Plaza (LP) renovation. Mr. Heimbach’s report highlights:

- Water features on the roof have been removed

² The Red Grooms Fox Trot Carousel was transferred to TSM whereas the museum has been custodian for the last 21 years.

- New entrances accessible to Deaderick Street are more prominent on both street and plaza levels
- Organization of the space is primarily around a central lobby with a large Information Desk serving the Military Museum, Visitor Center, Museum Store, Cafeteria, office spaces for three Veterans groups, Tennessee Historical Society, TSM and a Conference Center administered by the Department of General Services
- A loading dock will be added
- The deadline for completion is prior to the January 2027 inauguration.

Public Programs Director Jeff Sellers shared highlights of the Visitor Center. Chief Curator Richard White shared highlights of the Military Museum.

In closing the discussion, Director Howell advised that the museum continues to hire vacant positions. With considerations of LP responsibilities, additional staffing positions for operations of TSM in LP will be requested in the future.

Nominating Committee Appointments, Audit Committee Appointments w/Vote Confirmation

Calling for objection and seeing none, Chairman Watson rolled the announcement of the Nominating Committee slate and Audit Committee slate with vote confirmation to the next Quarterly meeting.

Media Coverage

Director Howell acknowledged the Quarterly Newsletter and Media Booklet. Also showcased:

- A letter of appreciation to the museum from the Mayor of Wilson County for touring the “Building a Bright Future: Black Communities and Rosenwald Schools in Tennessee” traveling exhibition
- On loan from TSM to the DAR museum in Washington D.C. is a Lewis Buckner bed featured on the Opening invitation, and in the *Fighting For Freedom: Black Craftspeople and the Pursuit of Independence* traveling exhibition
- A Gallery Guide of the Frist Museum featuring a George Chambers⁴ painting on loan from TSM.

No Other Business

No Public Comment

Announcements

Photography in Tennessee Exhibition opens June 10, 2025.

Chairman Watson noted the July Quarterly meeting may travel to Dayton TN and the October Quarterly meeting may travel to NE Tennessee.

Regularly Scheduled Quarterly meeting dates:

July 14, 2025, October 13, 2025, January 12, 2026, April 13, 2026

The DHSMC meets the second Monday of the first Month of each Quarter. Dates are subject to change.

⁴ George W. Chambers. *In the Tennessee Mountains*, 1887. Oil on canvas; 47 x 63 x 2 in. Courtesy of Tennessee State Museum

Save the Dates

Patron's Party, Hermitage Hotel

*Saturday, **August 2**, 2025

\$450 per person

A Tennessee Waltz, State Capitol

Saturday, September 27, 2025

\$800 per person

*Patron's Party date was moved from August 16 to August 2 after this meeting.

Adjournment

Seeing no other business for the good of the order, Chairman Watson entertained a motion to adjourn. Ms. Ryans moved to adjourn, and the Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Main Motions Summary

Motion #1: Ambassador Ashe moved to adopt the January 13, 2025, Quarterly meeting minutes as written. The motion carried unanimously with no abstention.

Motion #2: Ambassador Ashe moved to adopt two (2) proposed deaccession groupings: Al Jolson Collection of 1,404 items for deaccession with transfer to Ohio State University Registration Number 2010.291 (grouping), and the hunter grouped collection with registration Number 2004.137 (grouping).

Motion #3: Ms. Ryans moved to adjourn.

Senator Bo Watson

Chairman Douglas Henry State Museum Commission