



The Douglas Henry State Museum Commission (DHSMC) met at 10:00 a.m. ET on October 15 2025, at Rocky Mount Historic Site; Piney flats, TN with Chairman Bo Watson presiding.

Members Present

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

Ex Officio

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

Members Absent

Phillip Renfro

Participating Guests

Rocky Mount State Historic Site Executive Director Cody Boring
Senior Assistant Attorney General Lauren W. Travis

Participating TSM Staff

Sabrina Hooper, Deputy Director
Sharon Dennis, DHSMC Liaison

Call to Order

Chairman Bo Watson called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m., proceeded with roll call, detected a quorum present, and presided over the following business.

Welcome and Introduction

Chairman Watson welcomed members and thanked former Lieutenant Governor Ron Ramsey for his attendance in welcoming Commissioners prior to the onset of this meeting. The Chair also welcomed former DHSMC Vice Chair Nancy DeFriece in attendance this day.

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.

Boones Creek Museum and Opry/Rocky Mount State Historic Site

Chairman Watson thanked Vice Chair Lottie Ryans for hosting Commissioners at Boones Creek Museum and Opry last evening and introduced Executive Director Cody Boring to share the history of Rocky Mount also known as the Cobb-Massengill House which served as the territorial capital of the Southwest Territory from 1790 to 1792.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Watson identified the July 11, 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 Mr. Price. Upon calling for discussion and seeing none, the Chair called for those in favor of adoption of the July 11, 2025, Quarterly meeting minutes as written. At a roll call vote, all eleven (11) voting members voted unanimously to approve the minutes as written.

Budget Report

Chairman Watson recognized Deputy Director Sabrina Hooper.

Budget Report June 30, 2025

- State Appropriations: 97% of total State appropriated dollars were expended.

Budget Report August 31, 2025

- State Appropriations: 8% of total State appropriated dollars were expended.
- Non-governmental: \$2,259 for donation boxes and other solicitations.
- Current Services: \$55,581 for museum store, rentals, and imaging.
- Inter-departmental: \$5,500
- DHSMC previously approved 1 million dollars to be held from the Legislative Capital Grant of 5 million dollars for 501(c)(3) museums in seven counties impacted by Hurricane Helene. A balance of \$389,000¹ remains carried forward.
- The Lorraine Motel is owned by the State of Tennessee and is one of three buildings on the National Civil Rights Museum campus. On July 1, 2025, the Lorraine Motel² will be included as a General Services Building. Operational expenses to JLL (State vendor/contractor) will be expended through the State Facilities Revolving Fund (FRF), not the TSM budget; from which the final amount paid was \$30,156.
- \$512,000 in cost increases for (5) five additional staff positions for the Capitol visitor's Center and Military Branch museum along with start-up funds for the new store were submitted in the FY27 Budget.

HR Transactions last Quarter

Two (2) new hires.

Ms. Hooper concluded her report and called for questions.

Question and remarks from Chairman Watson on the June 30, 2025 report on p. 11:

- In preparation for the next budget, might adjustments for a Communications increase be in order?
- The miss in Professional Services appears to have been adjusted in the current allotment status on page 12.
- The miss in Stores for Resale/Reissue/Mfg was due to inventory purchases. Currently the

¹ In the July 11, 2025 Quarterly Meeting, The Chair requested the grant recipients damaged by Hurricane Helene to be identified in the final accounting of funding.

² The Lorraine Motel in Memphis is owned by the State of Tennessee. The National Civil Rights Museum (NCRM) is a lessee of the State of Tennessee, and the Tennessee State Museum is the lessor.

store sales are up approximately 20% reflected in Current Services.

Executive Director's Report

Director Howell echoed thanks to Executive director Cody Boring, Commissioners Lottie Ryans and Barbara Street and to former Commissioner Nancy DeFriece.

Tennessee General Assembly Capital Grants FY25-26

The third 5-million-dollar Legislative appropriation opened for applications July 1 and closed August 25. With 178 applications reviewed, ninety-nine (99) Grant Recipients from forty-six (46) counties were announced yesterday. A full list was distributed and may be found in the TSM Press Room on the TSM website <https://www.tn.gov/museum/news>

Chairman Watson recognized Grants were not awarded in equal amounts throughout the three Grand Divisions due to the fact that East and Middle Tennessee are populated with a greater number of museums than West Tennessee; however, the grants team is acutely cognizant of location as well as institutional needs. The chair made the following requests of the team:

- E-mail Legislators in the House and the Senate the entire list of grant recipients that includes the specific projects that were funded in their districts. In addition, provide a press release template so that Legislators may insert their identifying information to make it available to the press. Copy this information to each individual Commissioner relevant to his or her district.
- Contact those House and Senate members and make every attempt to participate as TSM Management and or DHSMC members at an event at each facility whereby a mock check presentation is made. These grants meet a specific need and we want the communities to recognize how the State is giving these dollars back locally.

Tennessee America250

As Chairlady of the Tennessee Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial, Director Howell reported having combined her work on the Governor's Tour with past Capital award recipients. In addition, there are separate grants for America250. The America250 commission received 220 applications and this grant program is for Tennessee non-profit and county/municipality organizations to fund 250 projects. Grants will support archival collection maintenance, historic preservation and cemetery restoration, exhibits and programs, publications and a wide range of community projects and events intended to serve all 95 counties telling the stories of local Community and State history which are all part of our National history. Grant recipients will be announced in two weeks. State and Community Grants associated with this Commission are posted on www.tn250.com/grants.

The upcoming exhibition slated for January 2026, Tennessee Voices: America's Stories, will highlight Tennesseans and their stories through artifacts from Tennessee's past and how they currently mesh with America250. A companion Traveling Exhibition of this topic is in creation. It will go to museums throughout the State free of charge.

Collection Storage Facility Update

- To date, over 79,000 objects have been moved, which represents 39% of the collection square footage in the Polk building.
- Objects are categorized in separate zones in a system designed to maximize square

footage. The project management team meets weekly to determine and summarize priorities, some of which are competing. This process includes ongoing deaccessioning considerations that are eminent.

- Every item is accounted for each step of the way. Objects are tracked upon departure from the Polk building to arrival at the Collection Storage facility, to its final specific location in the facility. Each item must be logged into the database.
- On the back end of the move, two major objectives are to revise the Collection Strategic Plan and the Collection Management Policy.

Legislative Plaza Renovation

Director Howell shared previews of the new reenvisioned Military Museum, Capitol Visitor Center, and Gift Shop.

- Staff continue to work on the script and actual text of the exhibits, working with visual designers for interactive stations, along with General Services on the store, and all the spaces. In particular, there is a circular area in the Visitor Center that the architectural firm reported could be used for 100 to 200 person receptions. This area is a potential revenue generating opportunity for the Museum and a great basis for expansion. Jurisdiction is in question.
- Management is preparing the FY 26-27 museum budget which includes five additional TSM staffing positions for operations in Legislative Plaza; two Museum Store Sales Associates and three Museum Program Assistants to help facilitate tours and locations.

The deadline for completion is prior to the January 2027 inauguration.

Visitation

- Attendance has increased approximately 5% year-over-year with 872,000 visitors since October, 2018.
- With over 6,000 tours this fiscal year, October remains a busy month for tours.
- As a venue for the Southern Festival of Books TSM hosted 3,000 visitors over a three-day period.
- The museum served 53 counties with K-12 initiatives this fiscal year and continues to look at service county by county in an effort to deepen relationships while gearing up for the Teacher Advisory Committee and Teacher workshops.

Lorraine Motel Update

The Lorraine Motel is owned by the State of Tennessee and the State is in the process of renewing the lease between the State of Tennessee, Tennessee State Museum and the Lorraine Civil Rights Museum Foundation. The initial agreement was signed in 1991 which preexists the DHSMC³. General Services is considering a request to extend the lease from 10 years to 50 years. In addition, a big update to the lease is for capital support for Lorraine Motel facility care. It will now be a FRF, Facility Revolving Fund property that will reflect as a pass through in the TSM budget. The proposed lease will go to the State Building Commission next Monday. Updates include:

- Tennessee State Museum will determine if the use of the building is an approved use.
- Update the assigned tax parcel number.
- Define the relationship by acknowledging that the Lorraine Civil Rights Museum

³ In 2009 through §4-20-301, Tennessee Code Annotated, the General Assembly transferred the supervision of the museum from the Tennessee Arts Commission to an independent Douglas Henry State Museum Commission.

Foundation runs the National Civil Rights Museum. The TSM and the NCRM are both accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) adhering to the best practices of museum operations. Therefore, the State recognizes the Foundation as the responsible party for the day-to-day operations of the Museum, including the duty of ensuring its programs, and general administration is consistent with the shared accreditation standards established by the AAM.

- The Foundation shall offer free and open programs for the community throughout the year consistent with the mission of the museum.
- The Tennessee State Museum will facilitate the FRF funding.
- The Foundation agrees to acknowledge the State of Tennessee and the Tennessee State Museum for its financial support.
- The Foundation shall post notices of its board meetings at least 7 days in advance of such meetings.

Chairman Watson confirmed the Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) draft has been updated since the meeting booklets were printed. Director Howell distributed a new MOU draft and the Chair called for discussion.

- The State of Tennessee owns the Lorraine Motel building where the museum is built. There are two buildings where expansion has occurred that are not State property and the State of Tennessee is not funding care of the supplemental building's roofs or facilities maintenance. Nor will the State include any future buildings. The MOU explicitly states the Lorraine Motel receives facility support, not operating support.
- Commissioners were unclear as to exactly what "acknowledge" entails when stated, "*The Foundation agrees to acknowledge the State of Tennessee and the Tennessee State Museum for its financial support.*" All agreed significant signage is in order since the Lorraine Motel is owned by the State of Tennessee and is a State Museum Facility. It is an extension of what the State Museum does, and it is an extension of what the State of Tennessee does. Commissioners agreed that acknowledgement should include Logo and credits on all publications.
- Commissioners agreed that the lease is doable at 50 years; however, the MOU should be renewed year-to-year particularly this first year where evaluation is critical.
- The annual appropriation is based on the cost per square foot.

Following discussion Chairman Watson entertained a motion then moved to adjust the MOU between the State of Tennessee, Tennessee State Museum, and the Lorraine Civil Rights Museum Foundation according to the discussion; seconded by Ambassador Ashe. At a roll call vote, all 11 voting members voted unanimously to approve with no abstention.

Collections/Acquisitions Committee (CAC) Report

Chairman Watson recognized CAC Chairman Victor Ashe who deferred to Director Howell to report on Acquisitions and the Red Grooms Tennessee Fox Trot Carousel.

Artifact/Object Acquisitions

Director Howell reflected on how staff continue to be judicious in acquiring acquisitions especially during the move. During preparation for this move, staff continues to discover artifacts and they categorized on the report as "Found." This demonstrates the backlog whereby former staff put the acquisitions aside and they were never processed or tracked. They were not accessioned which explains the 2025 "found" notation in the report. There were a number of

acquisitions from the Tennessee Arts Commission categorized as “Transfers.”

Red Grooms Tennessee Fox Trot Carousel⁴ Discussion

Director Howell informed Commissioners the Tennessee State Museum and the State of Tennessee have issued a Request for Information (RFI) to solicit responses from parties interested in partnering with the Museum in the restoration, placement, and operation of the Red Grooms Tennessee Fox Trot Carousel. The Tennessee State Museum is now exploring the options of a public-private partnership to successfully plan for the future of the carousel that prioritizes public benefit.

Audit Committee (AFC) Report

Chairman Watson recognized AFC Chairman Gary Hicks to report on the Audit Committee. Chairman Hicks announced the AFC met earlier this day, approved the minutes from October 14, 2024, and discussed the AFC responsibilities. Two meeting booklets were emailed in advance of this meeting for review from which the Committee discussed the following.

Meeting Booklet 1 of 2

The Audit Committee Charter, Overview of key responsibilities for the Audit Committee, DHSMC, and TSM Management, the Audit Report, 2025 DOHR Annual policies and procedures Acknowledgement by staff, 2025 Management and Employee responsibility for identifying Fraud, TSM Code of Ethics, Collections Staff Annual CMP Acknowledgements, DHSMC Quorum Standards report July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025, Collection of DHSMC 2025 Annual Code of Conduct verification forms, and a Letter from TSMF Chairman Thomas S. Smith verifying MOU compliance⁵.

Meeting Booklet 2 of 2

2025 Form 2 - - Objective Setting

2025 Form 3 - - Risk Assessment, Risk Response, Control Activities.

The AFC approved the Risk Assessment. The Committee agreed to draft a letter to the Commissioner of General Services which will include the signatures of Executive Director Howell, DHSMC Chairman Bo Watson, and AFC Chairman Gary Hicks calling attention to Risk number 93 regarding security for the Collection and Control 93.2 in which TSM is provided a secondary third-party contract with State vendor security explaining there is an ongoing issue in need of remedy.

Museum management prepared written responses to twenty questions submitted by the Government Operations Joint Evaluation Committee on Education, Health and General Welfare for a Sunset Review. There were no findings in the 2025 Sunset Review. The Douglas Henry State Museum Commission, which is created under Section 4-20-301, will now continue to operate until June 30, 2030, based on the government's summary.

Without objection, Chairman Watson accepted the Audit Committee Report.

Nominating Committee Appointments

Calling for objection and seeing none, Chairman Watson rolled the announcement of the

⁴ The Red Grooms Tennessee Fox Trot Carousel was transferred to TSM whereas the museum has been custodian for over 21 years.

⁵ Section IV. REQUIREMENTS - - 2. *Ensure that no more than 15% of the total non-designated revenue or funds raised by the Support Group are utilized for Support Group expenses, costs, wages, administration, and other solicitation/fundraising expenditures. The Support Group shall provide support to the Museum, defined as direct financial contributions or in-kind support as approved by the Director equal to 100% of designated funds and a minimum of 85% of the non-designated revenue or funds raised by the Support Group. The Support Group's compliance with this requirement shall be determined on an annual basis.*

Nominating Committee slate to the next Quarterly meeting.

Media Coverage

Chairman Watson acknowledged the Quarterly Newsletter and Media Booklet. The media booklet will be emailed to all Commissioners participating by phone.

Other Business

Chairman Watson asked members to consider and propose ideas on how to connect the State Museum to a college-level “Fellowship” credential focused on academic and career development like Museum Professional Development.

Chairman Watson revealed that every County in this State is supposed to have a “County Historian” and asked members to consider a convocation of County Historians from all 95 counties to TSM for conversation and sharing of information on America250, the State Museum and the State Library and Archives on the roles each play and the services each offer. Perhaps as a form of continuing education, this might be an ongoing annual convocation.

Ms. Windrow, as President of the Tennessee Historical Society, volunteered to help identify and contact the 95 County Historians. Director Howell and Chairman Watson thanked Ms. Windrow and the Chair invited all members to offer their skill sets to advance these two initiatives.

No Public Comment

Announcements

Regularly Scheduled Quarterly meeting dates:

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

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

Chairman Watson asked members to suggest alternative locations for April, July, and October, 2026, Quarterly meetings particularly in Northwest Tennessee for one.

Adjournment

Seeing no other business for the good of the order, Chairman Watson entertained a motion to adjourn. Ms. Barnes moved to adjourn, and the Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:02 a.m. ET

Main Motions Summary

Motion #1: Ambassador Ashe moved to adopt the July 11, 2025, Quarterly meeting minutes as written. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote with no abstention.

Motion #2: Chairman Watson moved to adjust the MOU between the State of Tennessee, Tennessee State Museum, and the Lorraine Civil Rights Museum Foundation according to the discussion. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote with no abstention.

Motion #3: Ms. Barnes moved to adjourn.

Senator Bo Watson

Chairman Douglas Henry State Museum Commission