

The Douglas Henry State Museum Commission (DHSMC) met at 10:00 a.m. CT on April 13, 2026, in the Museum Storage Facility Conference room with Chairman Bo Watson presiding.

Members Present

Ambassador Victor Ashe
Michael Keeney
The Honorable Steve McDaniel
Scott Price
Lottie Ryans
Chairman Bo Watson
Derita Coleman Williams

Ex Officio

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

Members Absent

Danielle Barnes (Webex attendee, muted)
Cathy Cate (Webex attendee, muted)
Chairman Gary Hicks
Phillip Renfro (Webex panelist muted, camera off)
Barbara Brown Street (Webex attendee, muted)

Participating Guests

Deputy Attorney General Carolyn Smith

Participating TSM Staff

Sabrina Hooper, Deputy Director
Sharon Dennis, DHSMC Liaison

Call to Order

Chairman Bo Watson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., proceeded with roll call, detected a quorum present with no identified panelists via Webex, and presided over the following business.

Welcome and Introduction

Chairman Watson welcomed members, staff and guests and called for announcements.

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 12, 2026, 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. Mr. Price moved to adopt; seconded by Ambassador Ashe. Upon calling for discussion and seeing none, the Chair called for those in favor of adoption of the January 12, 2026, Quarterly meeting minutes as written. Members voted¹ unanimously with no abstention to approve the minutes as written.

Budget Report

Chairman Watson recognized Deputy Director Sabrina Hooper.

Budget Report April 1, 2026

- State Appropriations: 72% of total State appropriated operational dollars were expended.
- Non-Governmental: approximately \$8,100 from donation boxes and other solicitations.
- Current Services after reduction of Unearned Revenue: approximately \$186,182 for museum store, event rentals, and imaging.
- Inter-Departmental: \$11,400.
- \$4,800,000 paid to General Assembly Capital Grant recipients
- 1.8 million paid to America250 Grantees

HR Transactions last Quarter

One (1) promotion

One (1) anticipated resignation

Five (5) positions will be posted in the upcoming week

Executive Director's Report

Leadership

The Tennessee State Museum, with the Tennessee State Library and Archives, East Tennessee Historical Society, Tennessee Historical Society, and Middle Tennessee State University, received the prestigious President's Award from the Tennessee Association of Museums for the Tennessee America 250 Voices and Volunteers Teacher Workshop

Collection Storage Facility Update

Artifacts are continuing to move into the new Collections Storage Facility. Crozier Fine Arts has moved 55% of the collections area square footage with 112,019 artifacts moved. The Museum team continues to work with Crozier Fine Arts on preparing the collection for the move

Acquisitions

With support from the Tennessee State Museum Foundation and the Douglas Henry Trust, the Museum was able to purchase a significant collection of early Tennessee pottery

Tennessee America250

As Chair of the Tennessee Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial, Director Howell announced the Museum facilitated the second round of Tennessee America250 grants for a total amount of \$4,000,000 in awards for both rounds to recipients in 77 counties. The Museum continues to be central to the state planning for the nation's Semiquincentennial while the goal to distribute awards in 95 counties remains paramount.

Exhibitions

The Museum opened its newest traveling exhibition, Our American Story, a traveling component of *Tennessee Voices: America's Stories*. The Tennessee America250 exhibition, *Tennessee Voices, American Stories* demonstrates the importance of collecting Tennessee's stories through its material culture, how these stories connect to the American story, and why it is essential that we continue to care for and interpret that collection.

¹ Roll call votes were not taken due to lack of identified voting panelists present on Webex. All were muted and off camera for various reasons.

Visitation/Outreach this Fiscal year

- From July 1, 2025, through March 31, 2026, the Museum welcomed 102,308 visitors, which is a 1.8% increase over the previous fiscal year, even with an eight-day closure due to Winter Storm Fern early in the calendar year.
- The Museum also served over 25,000 people with tours at the Tennessee State Capitol this quarter and engaged with close to 30,000 students, teachers, and other participants statewide.
- The K-12 initiatives have served 89 counties with more on the horizon for next quarter.

Tennessee General Assembly Capital Grants FY25-26

To date, approximately \$4,800,000 dollars have been distributed to 180 Grantees from seventy-three (73) counties. A full list may be found in the TSM Press Room on the TSM website <https://www.tn.gov/museum/news>. Legislative Capital Grants provides another example of how the Tennessee State Museum collaborates with organizations throughout the State strengthening sector-wide collaboration.

Renovations

Construction at the War Memorial Building, Legislative Plaza, and Motlow Tunnel continues to be on time for an early 2027 opening. Museum management is working on exhibit design, interactives and operational details.

Hours of Operation at the new Capitol Visitor Center and Military Museum

Museum management is working with General Services and the Tennessee Highway Patrol on security of all spaces, which includes provisions for the new Capitol Visitor Center and Military Museum to be open for a six-day week.

Following discussion, Chairman Watson entertained a motion to adopt the proposed hours of operation for the new Capitol Visitor Center and Military Museum in Legislative Plaza Monday through Saturday from 9:00 a.m. till 4:30 p.m. Moved by Mr. McDaniel; seconded by Ms. Ryans. Members voted unanimously without exemption to approve the motion to adopt the proposed hours of operation for the new Capitol Visitor Center and Military Museum in Legislative Plaza Monday through Saturday from 9:00 a.m. till 4:30 p.m.

Venue Rental

Venue rental continues to offer a robust stream of revenue. This quarter generated over \$22,000; however, the gross amount is reduced when housekeeping and security fees are paid. Research has shown that the State Museum presents as a low-cost option to the public. This is not a reflection of discounts provided to State of Tennessee agencies and not for profit organizations. Museum management proposed an increase for event rental in the Grand Hall from \$6,000 to \$8,000 for a 4-hour rental commencing July 1, 2026. Mr. McDaniel moved to adopt a 4-hour Grand Hall rental rate of \$8,000 commencing July 1, 2026; seconded by Mr. Keeney. Chairman Watson opened the floor for discussion. Following discussion, Chairman Watson called for those in favor to a 4-hour Grand Hall rental rate of \$8,000 commencing July 1, 2026. Members voted unanimously without exemption.

Collection Storage Facility Update

- To date, the museum has moved over 112,019 objects representing 55% of 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 works Tuesdays and Thursdays per week with Crozier Art Services in the meticulous task of artifact organization and placement. 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 remain; to revise the Collection Strategic Plan which identifies accessioning and deaccessioning scope and focus, and to revise the Collection Management Policy which defines the rules and processes of accession, deaccession, and artifact loans. These changes will reflect the requirements in the new Collections Storage Facility building. The updated Collection Strategic Plan and Collection Management Policy are necessary for the upcoming AAM reaccreditation.
- Also, on the back end of the move:
 - This summer we are launching a new partnership with MTSU for a three-week intensive study working with graduate students to engage with the curatorial team to research objects in our collection.
 - A comprehensive publication of highlights in the collection as well as subcollections within our groupings is vital. Photographing the collection for publication requires better photographs, with description, risk, and condition.

Museum Store

Store sales have proven to be volume dependent. Gross sales for this fiscal year is approximately \$122,000 through February. Discussion included cost of sales, advertising and promotion.

Collections/Acquisitions Committee (CAC) Report

Chairman Watson recognized CAC Chairman Victor Ashe who began by identifying “Proposed Deaccessions” beginning on page 27 in the meeting booklet emailed to the full commission in advance of this meeting and deferred to Director Howell for object description.

Proposed Deaccessions for Disposal

Director Howell described items in the three artifact groupings within this collection. Two of the groupings were each related to a particular donor (Carrie Ritter Collection 101 items accessioned in 2003) and (Harold Saxe Collection 221 items accessioned in 2003), the third grouping is Perishables and Shipping Containers within the collection (81 items from multiple collections accessioned across multiple years).

Ambassador Ashe entertained a motion to adopt the three (3) proposed deaccession groupings listed in the fully executed Deaccession Certification forms for: “Carrie Ritter Collection”, “Harold Saxe Collection” and “Perishables and Shipping Containers within the collection;” seconded by Mr. Price.

Upon calling for further discussion and seeing none, the Chair called for those in favor of the motion to adopt deaccession of the (3) proposed deaccession groupings listed in the fully executed Deaccession Certification forms for: “Carrie Ritter Collection”, “Harold Saxe Collection” and “Perishables and Shipping Containers within the collection;” seconded by Mr. Price. The motion carried unanimously with no abstentions.

Artifact/Object Acquisitions

Director Howell highlighted 2026.3 Purchase of two ink on paper sketches by Red Grooms. Both sketches represent early designs for figures on the Fox Trot Carousel.

Red Grooms Tennessee Fox Trot Carousel² Discussion

Director Howell advised Commissioners of the following:

- A Carousel restoration company in New York has been commissioned to visit Nashville and provide an estimate on the cost to repair and conserve the Fox Trot Carousel.
- Two entities have shown interest in hosting the Carousel.
- The interest is a result of the RFI which seeks a partner for the restoration, placement and operation of the Red Grooms Fox Trot Carousel.

Budget Reduction

Chairman Watson explained that every Agency in State Government was asked to propose a 1% reduction in Operating Expenses. The 1% Budget Reduction for the museum is taken from Acquisitions. Director Howell advised the Tennessee State Museum Foundation (TSMF) has stepped up and strenuously supported museum acquisition purchases including the Tennessee Pottery Collection. Chairman Watson added the Commission has worked diligently to deepen the relationship with the Foundation whose purpose is to offset the cost of acquisitions.

Nominating Committee (NC) Report

Chairman Watson recognized Nominating Committee Chair Scott Price to report. Mr. Price reported the Nominating Committee met earlier this day and acknowledged it is the duty of the NC to bring recommendations for Chairman and Vice Chair to the DHSMC for election. The Chair announced the Nominating Committee voted unanimously to recommend to the full commission to reelect Senator Bo Watson, Chairman; and Lottie Ryans, Vice Chair of the DHSMC.

Chairman Watson called for additional nominations. Seeing none, the Chair called for a motion. Ambassador Ashe moved to reelect Senator Bo Watson, Chairman; and Lottie Ryans, Vice Chair of the Douglas Henry State Museum Commission; seconded by Mr. Price. Upon calling for further discussion and seeing none, the Chair called for those in favor of adoption of the motion which carried unanimously with no abstentions.

Media Coverage

Chairman Watson recognized Director Howell who noted the various press clippings in the Media Booklet highlighting both Legislative and America250 Grant announcements. Grant presentations are shared with Legislators in their respective districts.

No Other Business

No Public Comment

Chairman Watson called for public comments. No public comments were made.

Announcements

Regularly Scheduled Quarterly meeting dates:

July 13, 2026, October 12, 2026, January 11, 2027, April 12, 2027

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 the July, and October, 2026, Quarterly meetings particularly in areas where a visit by the DHSMC might bring added

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

value, in the East as well as the West.

Adjournment

Seeing no other business for the good of the order, Chairman Watson adjourned the meeting at 11:18 a.m. CT

Main Motions Summary

Motion #1: Mr. Price moved to adopt the January 12, 2026, Quarterly meeting minutes as written. The motion carried unanimously with no abstention.

Motion #2: Mr. McDaniel moved to adopt the proposed hours of operation for the new Capitol Visitor Center and Military Museum in Legislative Plaza Monday through Saturday from 9:00 a.m. till 4:30 p.m. The motion carried unanimously with no abstention.

Motion #3: Mr. McDaniel moved to adopt a 4-hour Grand Hall rental rate of \$8,000 commencing July 1, 2026. The motion carried unanimously with no abstention.

Motion #4: Ambassador Ashe moved to adopt the three (3) proposed deaccession groupings listed in the fully executed Deaccession Certification forms for: "Carrie Ritter Collection", "Harold Saxe Collection" and "Perishables and Shipping Containers within the collection." The motion carried unanimously with no abstention.

Motion #5: Ambassador Ashe moved to reelect Senator Bo Watson, Chairman; and Lottie Ryans, Vice Chair of the Douglas Henry State Museum Commission. The motion carried unanimously with no abstention.

Senator Bo Watson
Chairman Douglas Henry State Museum Commission