

August 20, 2025 - Celebrate Indiana 250 Meeting - 2026 Noble County Celebration

NOTES:

The Celebrate Noble County Indiana 250”- working committee met on August 20, 2025 in the Cole Room, lower level, Noble County Public Library in Albion. Grace Caswell, committee chair, commenced the meeting at 10:04 a.m.

Grace thanked the large group in attendance. A sign-in sheet was passed around, signed by:

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| • Grace Caswell | • Matt Dice | • Earle Franklin |
| • Leigh Pranger | • Judy Richter | • Becca Adair |
| • Jazmin Herrera | • Jan Sweeney | • Saragika |
| • Doug & Pam | • Adam Dunlap | McCullough |
| Younce | • Lisa Krock | • Kristen Johnson |
| • Mike Fitzgibbon | • Katie Schaller | • Lori Gagen |
| • Rhonda | • Tiffany Parker | • Terry Gaff |
| Steinecker | • Cyndi Schlemmer | |

Grace went over the draft Program Outline, a copy of which is published on the America 250 IN Noble landing page at <https://www.visitnoblecounty.org/america-250>. This document will continue to be updated.

UPDATES SHARED BY GRACE:

- The activities proposed by the Old Jai Museum do not require any funding.
- Fundraising to generate income to cover the proposed celebration budget of \$12,000 will begin in full force after Labor Day.
- The planners of the Avilla Freedom Festival Parade have aspirations to grow entries significantly, as their festival kicks off the countywide celebration.
- Avilla also has a goal of 250 vehicles to participate in the 2026 car and motorcycle show. This is a judged show.
- Janet Sweeney, Stone’s Trace, asked to add “Free Admission” to their event promo and to note the organization was organized in 1964.

ACTION ITEMS:

- At some point, the committee needs to decide how many passport spots we have, how many need to be visited to qualify for prizes, and what the prizes will be.

- July 1st and 2nd have no events identified at this point. Cromwell (Kayla) is not sure yet how they might participate – perhaps they can do something to fill this gap on that Wednesday and Thursday. TBD.
- There are no events planned on June 28. Lori asked if perhaps local restaurants could offer special menu items, or re-name items during the celebration to honor the celebration, or create some historic recipe specials. Grace noted retailers could have Red, White & Blue sales as well.
- Adam reported that the Avilla Town attorney is part of a group that preserves historic documents. Adam will reach out to see if they might display documents during the celebration period. The Avilla Branch library said they could host the exhibit.
- Kristen suggested the committee reach out to the Kendallville Heritage Society to get involved. The contact is Ann Butterfield. Kristen will connect Grace.
- Judy Richter reported that small Constitution “books” can be ordered from the DNR. Kristen noted they can also be ordered from Hillsdale College. Kristen will share her contacts at Hillsdale with Grace to follow up on options. These could be distributed at libraries, banks, and the Block Party.
- Lori needs to add the fundraising materials to the website and a link in the fundraising letter to the list of people who are participating in the committee.
- Grace and Lori will begin to work on the digital fundraising campaign to get it going in October. Then, a follow-up can be done.
- Once ready to publish, the fundraising campaigns need to be shared with all committee members, towns, cities, etc. to help blast out to the community.
- Lori will reach out to county historian Sarah Knopp.
- The draft Program needs to be updated to include items noted in today’s Committee Member Reports.
- Share dates of Freedom Festival and Block Party with Jazmin so she can try to recruit P.U.L.S.E. students to do Voter Registration at the events, in partnership with Turbovote.
- Check email distributions to ensure Terry Gaff is on the list; he was not sure.

BLOCK PARTY:

- Lori is going to see if the STAR Team wants to coordinate historic architectural tours of the Courthouse Square District. She will reach out to Terry Householder.
- Family and yard games/Bounce houses to be provided by NCPL in Albion.

PASSPORT:

- The committee decided the passport promotion will be open from Memorial Day through July 4.
- Adam suggested setting a threshold for how many sites must be visited to qualify to win a prize. There could be smaller prizes at X number of visits for everyone, with 1-2 # of sites required and different prizes, and/or a grand prize drawing for all who visit all sites. No decisions were made because not all passport activities/sites are known yet.
- The committee agreed we need a full list of passport check-in points. Those locations need to be manned for people to have their passports stamped or we need to have unique QR codes people have to scan to 'register' their visit.
- We want all Town Halls and Libraries to be passport check-in points.
- Prizes will be handed out the week after July 4 by the CVB.

FUNDRAISING:

- Lori shared a revised sponsorship benefits listing that the committee accepted. It will be published on the landing page, along with other fundraising materials.
- A fundraising letter will be published online so that an email blast can go out to solicit gifts, with a link and QR code to the online resources.
- **The link to sponsor/contribute was shared by Jazmin:**

LINK: <https://go.cfnoble.org/america250nc>

- The timeline will be to launch in October for budgets planned for 2026, then follow up again after that.
- Adam noted that if materials are provided to committee members, they can include the details in their newsletters and communications, too.
- The committee gave permission to Grace and Lori to move forward.
- Terry suggested we keep good track of donors/sponsors so they are not asked subsequent times to give.
- Lori asked who we are targeting?
 - Industries and Businesses – especially long-serving
 - Clubs (Rotary, Lions, etc.)
 - Known philanthropists
- Grace reported that the first \$500 sponsorship was received from Garrett State Bank. They responded to the newspaper article and asked the CVB how to give.

COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS:

Tiffany reported on the Indiana State Historical Society meeting in Columbia City. Program ideas were shared. The state is focused on five themes:

- Unfinished revolutions
- Power of Place
- We the People
- American Experiment
- Doing history

There is no state funding, it's all DIY. Things to keep in mind while planning.

Terry Gaff asked who the county historian is. Lori noted it is Sarah Knopp. Lori will reach out to add her to the email distribution and make a personal plea for her engagement.

Tiffany shared some of what GSP will be doing, with activities. She reiterated it is important to focus events on this community – not trying to attract “tourists”. Foraging in the Forest will focus on foraging and hunting and tweaking with an archeologist to frame it within the scope of America 250.

Grace reported that Chain O'Lakes State Park will do their patriotic tie dye program and possibly move their 'Life Like it Used to Be' activity to line up with the June-July timeframe.

Adam commented on the idea of hosting a voter registration. Lori noted both parties would, as well as the group that has come to NoblePalooza in the past; they are out of Auburn. Jazmin suggested that PULSE students register voters – they can partner with Turbovote – and would just need computers and internet to set up at the Block Party. Dates will be shared with Jazmin to recruit PULSE members. They could possibly also register people at the Freedom Festival.

Adam asked if the libraries will have a reading list; they will.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

- \$500 from Garrett State Bank received

Grants are being considered and gathered to seek out. Lori shared the Southern Pike Solar community grant program info with members.

Next meeting is Nov. 12 at NCPL at 10 a.m.

- Submitted by Lori Gagen