



Minutes of South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum Commission (January 15, 2026)

The South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum Commission met on January 15, 2026, at 10:30 am in the Education Room located in the Columbia Mills Building at 301 Gervais Street. A notice was put on the website January 13, 2026, and sent out to the news media. The meeting was conducted in person.

Commission Members present: Voight Shealy, Walter Curry, and William Craver

Commission Members attending remotely: Sam Howell, Leland Summers

Staff Members present: Allen Roberson, Rachel Cockrell, Megan Brigman

A copy of the Agenda and Minutes of the September 18, 2025, meeting, as well as all other handouts, were emailed to each Commissioner prior to the meeting.

- I. Greetings to the Commission, Members of the Media, and Visitors
Vice-Chairperson Walter Curry called the meeting to order at 10:35. A quorum was present. Members were thanked for their attendance. William Craver III was welcomed to the Commission.
- II. Review of September 18, 2025, Minutes
Minutes of last meeting on September 18, 2025, were reviewed. Mr. Howell moved to approve the minutes and Mr. Shealy seconded. They were unanimously approved.
- III. Old Business
 - A. The Columbia Mills Construction Project & Museum Carpet Replacement: Completed
 - B. The Collection Storage Project has been completed. Mr. Roberson recapped the project for Mr. Craver. A tour is scheduled for after the meeting.
 - C. The Congaree Room Feasibility Study is in process, we are still awaiting pricing on the flooring. It will be included in the budget process beginning on Wednesday, January 21 at the House Budget committee hearing. Mr. Roberson pointed to the Accountability Report included in the handouts to show the visitation chart. The Report is compiled annually by Mrs. Cockrell

for the Legislature to inform them on what the Museum is doing.

D. Small temporary (Gist) Gallery – renovation is behind schedule, mostly because of the absences of the Director, but the US Army Corps of Engineers just requested a year’s extension for final review of all artifacts from Congaree River archeological project. Mr. Roberson is hopeful that Dominion Energy will contribute to the cost of mounting an exhibit of the Civil War artifacts. The construction project will include a large case, raising the ceiling, and installing new lighting.

E. Personnel

1. Chief Curator Hire – Submitting for posting next week. This is the third attempt in the past five years, but the salary has been increased so we’re hopeful that good candidates will apply.
2. Collections Manager Hire - Submitting for posting to assist Megan with the collection.
3. Requesting promotion for Megan Brigman to Supervisory since she is now in charge of the collection program and will have a full-time and a part-time staff person working with her.
4. Requesting promotion for Rachel Cockrell to Administrative Manager from Administrative Coordinator II. Her duties have increased and she has been covering for Mr. Roberson during his illness.

IV. Ongoing Museum Operation

A. FY26 Approved Non-Appropriated Budget

1. Approved Funds totaling \$1,430,000 due in February. Last year’s budget appropriations for non-recurring items have been held by the General Assembly. The exact release date is still unknown.
2. For Conrad Wise Chapman paintings from the Valentine Museum in Richmond, Vietnam War oral interviews travelling exhibit, Main Gallery Updates, and the International Aspect of the American Civil War exhibit utilizing the McRae and Huey Collections of imported Civil War materiel.

B. Collections (Megan Brigman)

1. General Edwin A. Pollock Collection – donation of all materials including uniforms, letters, personal effects. His history includes Guadalcanal, Korea, and Commandant at Parris Island.
2. Major Edward Brevard Cantey Collection of WWI artifacts first offered in 2022, recently fully accessioned all 500 pieces. The family is also donating funds to conserve and process the collection.
3. Uniforms heading to conservation – Rogers, Desportes, and J. Moore Frock Coats are leaving in 1 ½ weeks. Mr. Summers inquired about the status of the James Chesnut Frock coat. The current

designated amount in the fund for that conservation is approximately \$16,000, donated by a variety of SCV and UDC sources. An old estimate of the conservation cost was \$42,000. It will be much higher now.

4. Wade Hampton Sword – half paid for. As soon as the second check is received, we should be able to take possession of the sword and receive it in Collections for fundraising. Donations are coming in to assist with the purchase. Mr. Summers has received some donations that he will be sending along. The owner will be bringing it in March. We are also getting two donations from the estate of Andy Rice, a 1798 Starr US contract saber, and an 1807 contract saber.

C. FY27 Budget Request Submitted to the Executive Budget Office: House Ways and Means Education Subcommittee Presentation is next week

1. \$73,000 Increase in Existing Personnel Budget (Annual Recurring) for raises to retain staff.
2. \$1,448,000 (Nonrecurring) for Expansion of the SC Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum into the Congaree Room in the Columbia Mills Building (may increase amount to cover atrium floor updating). The Director of the State Museum is supportive of this project. The space will include program/event space and a small gallery.
3. \$81,279 FTE Position Curator of Interpretation & Exhibits (Annual Recurring) for a new position to assist with relating the collection to our exhibits and programs.
4. \$118,263 Additional Annual Rent for Museum Expansion area (Annual Recurring) for the Atrium and Congaree Room.

D. Solidify Exhibit Schedule – all dependent on staff. With Chelsea's departure, we no longer have dedicated Exhibit staff.

1. Keep A War with No Front Lines: SC and the Vietnam War, 1965-1973 up through August 2026. This has been a very popular exhibit, which we will continue to update.
2. Gist Gallery Possibilities before Renovation (scheduled for late 2026)
 - a. Small WWI (Jim Legg), POW (developed by Museum Consultant Fritz Hamer)
 - b. Rev. War exhibit precursor - Reprise of "Twilight" exhibit of Rev. War Photos is set to open on Rev War Day on March 28.
3. Congaree River Exhibit Fall 2026, will probably have to be delayed because of the Corps of Engineers request.
4. Updates of Main Gallery Fall 2026 - Spring 2027
5. Bid Congaree Room Renovation & complete 2026-2027
6. Exhibit on Huey & McRae Collections for 2027
7. 250th SC Revolutionary War exhibit for 2028, the 250th Anniversary of Revolutionary War Southern Campaign & French entering war.

Funding will be available from the SC250th Commission and the Lafayette Society. Development will be done by a contractor for the interactive components.

E. Visitation & Programs

1. FY25 Attendance: 30,965 – Closed 6 mos. (41,131 FY24)
2. FY26 Attendance so far: 16,965 is low because of no new exhibits and limited programs. Spring is our busiest season, so school groups and tours will increase our visitation dramatically. Some groups are coming earlier this year than usual. Much of our school visitation is overflow from the State Museum. Commission members were encouraged by Mr. Curry to distribute the free passes we have at the Front Desk.
3. The Education Department is getting a part-time assistant and training new docents.
4. Schedule Programs:
 - a. Swordfest Saturday, March 7
 - b. Revolutionary War Day Saturday, March 28
 - c. Vietnam War events Not Scheduled Yet
 - d. Noon Debriefs Fridays once or twice a month, partnerships with local libraries

V. Rebuild SC Confederate Relic Room & Military Museum Commission & Palmetto State Military History Foundation Board goal for next half of FY26
Two more Governor's appointees are in the process of being announced, one is C.W Bowman, one of our frequent speakers on Vietnam. Mr. Roberson is continuing to work with the House and Senate to get the full Commission Roster filled out.

VI. Palmetto State Military History Foundation Treasurer's Report
Total in the account is now \$31,065.05.

VII. Membership Report
Need for increase in numbers of members. Activities include at least two trips a year, plans for member previews of new exhibits. New website will have the ability to take credit card payments for Memberships.

VIII. 2026 Meeting Schedule
Next Commission Meeting Date Thursday, March 19, 2026, at 10:30 AM
Following meetings will be 5/21/2026, 7/16/2026, 9/17/2026, and 11/19/2026. The Education Room will be the site for the next meeting, so the conference phone will be available, although attendance in-person is preferred.

The meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 12:13.