

Humanities MONTANA

AGENDA

Board of Directors Meeting
Missoula, Montana
September 26-27, 2025

OUR MISSION: Humanities Montana serves multicultural communities through stories and conversation. We offer experiences that nurture imagination and ideas by speaking to Montanans' diverse history, literature, and philosophy.

Board of Directors Present: Glory Blue Earth, David Cates, Ray Ekness, Jeanette Fregulia (vice chair), Mary Hernandez, Karen Reiff, Esther Beth Sullivan (chair)

Excused: Clark Whitehorn, Jeremy Carl, Jen Corning, Tim Wilson

Staff: Jill Baker (Executive Director), Jenny Bevill (Program Manager)

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26TH: Missoula Public Library, 455 E Main St, Level 4, Cooper Room B

1:30pm Welcome, Call to Order, and Initial Business – Esther Beth Sullivan

- Invitation for Public Comment
- Membership updates
- **Action Item:** Approval of Agenda

Consent Agenda:

- Board Minutes: 5/31/25 (with 2 addenda)
- Executive Committee Minutes: 08/09/25, 08/06/25, 09/10/25
- Finance Committee Minutes: 08/27/25
- Governance Committee Minutes: 07/30/25, 08/25/25
- Executive Director Report
- Program Manager Report
- **Action item:** Approval of Consent Agenda

2:00pm Executive Director Report – Jill Baker
Program Manager Report– Jenny Bevill

3:00pm Executive Session – Esther Beth Sullivan

4:30pm Adjournment for the day

5:00pm Hotel Check-in at The Wren, 201 E. Main St.

6:00pm Dinner at Pangea Bar and Restaurant, 223 N. Higgins Ave.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27TH: Missoula Public Library, 455 E Main St, Level 4, Cooper Room B

NOTE: Library opens at 9:00 am.

9:15 am Welcome, Call to Order – Esther Beth Sullivan

- Invitation for Public Comment

9:30am Executive Session – Esther Beth Sullivan

10:45am Break

11:00am Finance and Audit Committee – Esther Beth Sullivan

- Presentation of TY23 990
- Presentation of Financial Reports
- **Action Item:** Approval of Proposed FY26 Budget

11:30am Governance Committee – Mary Hernandez

- **Vote:** Approve 2nd 3-year terms: David Cate, Ray Ekness
- **Vote:** Approve additional 1-year term: Jeanette Fregulia
- **Election:** Chair, Vice Chair
- **Election:** Committee Chairs & Approval of Board Committee Assignments
- **Actions:** as needed for departing members
- Proposals to bring on new members for 2026

12:00pm Final Actions – Jeanette Fregulia

- **Action Item:** Pause Grants Committee for 2026

12:15pm Announcements & Recognitions – Esther Beth Sullivan

12:30pm Adjournment

2026 Meetings TBD

**Board of Directors Meeting
Carroll College, Helena, MT
Saturday, May 31, 2025**

Board of Directors: Glory Blue Earth, David Cates, Jen Corning (via Zoom), Ray Ekness, Jeanette Fregulia (vice chair), Lynda Grande, Mary Hernandez, Karen Reiff, Esther Beth Sullivan (chair), Clark Whitehorn, Tim Wilson

Excused: Jeremy Carl, Lathie Poole, Arian Randall

Staff: Jill Baker, Executive Director

Opening Remarks and Actions

Beth Sullivan, Board Chair, welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:30 am.

A quorum was present. Beth shared an invitation for public comment. There was no response.

Beth called for a motion to approve the agenda. Mary made the motion, and David seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Beth then called for a motion to approve the consent agenda. David made the motion, and Ray seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Opening comments were made by Beth, thanking Jill for her leadership during this challenging time. She also thanked the board for their participation in this meeting given that resources to support their travel were cancelled and expressed great appreciation for their dedication given the recent events. She presented a digest of conversations that she had had with board members across May. That digest is included separately.

Executive Director Updates

Jill thanked the board for all their support during this time of crisis due to the termination of the General Operating Support (GOS) grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) on April 2, 2025. "We are devastated but not defeated." HM's doors remain open due to emergency fundraising efforts. However, there is much work ahead of us as we prepare for a possible future without NEH. As HM plans for the future, we do so with trusted thought partners with the network of 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils as well as the staff of the Federation of State Humanities (FSHC).

Despite the devastating staff layoffs and the necessary pause of the speakers bureaus and grantmaking, the privately funded Democracy Project will continue. Jill also recommends focusing additional efforts on Montana writers and literature as an historical throughline for the organization moving forward including Great Reads from Great Places book selections and author talks, Montana Poet Laureate speaker programming, and One Book Montana programming. Jill also mentioned a potential partnership with Humanities North Dakota's The Study virtual speaker program. Over the next few months, Jill and Jenny will continue to meet with stakeholders to

determine how to best move forward with statewide public humanities programming to increase access to well vetted information and lifelong learning.

Jill reviewed her updated FY25 Executive Director work plan as well as her program downsizing recommendations with the board for consideration and feedback.

Finance and Audit Committee

On behalf of the Finance and Audit Committee, Chairperson Lynda Grande presented the FY24 Audit Report prepared by Carver, Florek, and James, CPAs to the board for discussion and approval. Lynda noted that due to HM's high reliance on federal funding to support operations there is a "Going Concern" notation in this year's report. As a result of the termination of HM's General Operation Support grant from the NEH on April 2, HM was asked to demonstrate that the nonprofit would still be in existence in twelve months and provide a list of actions taken to address the termination of the grant. Jill provided a list of actions taken which is included in the report, and the finance committee approved a revised budget that centers around the privately funded Democracy Project program. These actions adequately addressed the "Going Concern" and avoided a recommendation from the auditor to dissolve the organization.

After Lynda and Jill answered questions, Beth called for a motion to approve the FY24 Audit. Mary made the motion, David seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Lynda and Jill presented the April 28, 2025, Financial reports and answered questions. Jill noted that HM raised over \$120,000 during the month of April due to our emergency fundraising campaign including a \$100,000 individual gift from Susan O' Connor. Ms. O'Connor is a trustee of the Engelhard Foundation which funds the Democracy Project. Additionally, HM applied for and received a \$200,000 general operating grant from the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the Mellon Foundation. HM is also eligible for a matching grant of up to \$50,000. While these gifts greatly help HM's bottom line, it is still significantly short of the funding lost due to the termination of the NEH GOS grant and doesn't change the current plan for staff layoffs.

Lynda called for a motion to approve the May financial reports. David made the motion, Tim seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Lynda asked Jill to report to the board on the need to update signers on HM's First Interstate State Bank accounts. Due to staff layoffs, Jillian Baker will remain the only designated staff person to sign checks.

Megan Hill Sundy and John Knight will need to be removed as signers as they no longer work for Humanities Montana. Carla Homstad, whose board term expired on December 31, 2024, will also need to be removed. Jill asked the board to consider having at least one board member in Missoula as an additional signer as necessary. David Cates and Ray Ekness both agreed to serve as signers on the FIB bank accounts.

Beth called for a motion to approve David and Ray as new FIB bank signers. David made the motion, Jeanette seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Lynda asked Jill to present her recommended “Revised FY25 Budget w/o NEH Funds” to the board for discussion. This budget is based on the yearlong “DP Budget” which was approved by the Finance and Audit Committee on April 30th. This revised budget will guide HM’s operations through October 31, 2025, the end of HM’s fiscal year. Jill updated the budget that had been approved in the Finance committee to include staff travel, website design expenses, and some funding to support the September Board meeting in Missoula.

Beth asked that consideration of the amended 2025 budget be continued after the working session, providing more opportunity to discuss priorities for 2025.

Working Session: What We Want or Need to Know

Mary Hernandez led a board working session discussing the question, “What we want or need to know?”

To start this session, board members offered questions that they wanted to be addressed before they left this meeting, but with an eye on the future of the organization.

Executive Session

The board took a break at 12:30 and went into executive session at 12:45. The executive session concluded at 1:15 pm.

Working Session: What We Want or Need to Know

Based on the questions raised during the morning’s working session, the board broke into small groups for further conversation. A summary of the discussions is included separately.

Finance and Audit Committee

Lynda and Jill presented the “Revised FY25 Budget w/o NEH Funds” for further conversation.

Beth called for a motion to approve the Revised FY25 Budget. Clark made the motion, David seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Concluding Remarks

Beth and Jill thanked everyone for their time, travel, dedication, and thoughtfulness during the meeting. The next board meeting will be held in Missoula on September 26-27. Board travel, Friday dinner, and hotel arrangements will be covered if requested.

The meeting was adjourned at 3 pm. JB

HM board chair outreach:

Brief notes from Informal Conversations, May 2025

From Esther Beth Sullivan, HM 2025 board chair

I was able to catch up with a majority of board members for informal conversations in the first weeks of May. Thanks to everyone who worked me into your very busy schedules! These are the notes I have from those conversations. Not surprisingly, many ideas echoed across conversations. There are some thoughts that I'm sure I've missed; apologies! Hopefully we will have the opportunity to continue these trains of thoughts in Helena.

What are opportunities for HM apart from its connection to NEH?

General Impressions:

- We do good work, we can do more good work; we have a year to think through our good work and reconfigure; that's an opportunity, and it's worth our time and attention.
- Prioritize and focus on the coming 12-18 months; plan hopefully for good outcomes and strategically for 'the pivot'; don't set up impossible goals or benchmarks that lead deterministically to a sense of disappointment.
- Given the current crisis, anything we do to maintain momentum is better than nothing.
- Our circle of influence is relatively small; use this time to consider how we got here given our 50+ year history; consider how we can become responsive to our state in new/expanded/accountable ways. Bring along potential advocates for the whole journey. "If you want me on the landing, be sure to include me on the take off."

Strategic Opportunities:

- HM can engage in more/better PR and outreach through local press; keep the name out there; keep programs in front of MT audiences/readers; develop a 'cheer-leader' base in local communities to 'talk up' HM activities; get Jill and other advocates on podcasts; we are fortunate to have board members with expertise in this area.
- Coordinate projects and outreach with other defunded or low-funded organizations in the state that have similar humanities-based missions; our expertise in technology systems such as Foundant and the development/donor tracking system, is an asset to other organizations.
- Continue to build on community connections through programs like Democracy Project; expand this program to involve adults and/or seniors in something like community history projects.
- Package speaker programs to match sponsor or foundation interests.
- Package speaker programs for 250th anniversary.
- Develop more online offerings from our speakers bureau; coordinate online delivery of programs in conjunction with other initiatives.

- Support and/or galvanize Montana authors *collectively*, to foster energy around local festivals, asking how MT writers develop a sense of place this place, how they write “for, by, near, and about” Montana; identifying the economic benefit of book festivals and book programs.
- Develop an online archive of Montana Poet Laureates; maintain a speaking program focused on the work of Montana Poet Laureates.
- Develop the Center for the Book as an umbrella for our multiple reading programs.
- “Sing our song in another way” – reuse some of our existing work in new packages that might attract foundation funding; cross-promote programs with other initiatives state-wide.

Development of Human and Financial Resources Opportunities:

- We had already begun the conversation to diversify our funding base, we can use that momentum to move forward.
- “Reel in a few people” for the board who really care and have financial means to help.
- Look for board members and advocates who can help us maintain authentic relations with the ‘majority voice’ in any given governmental administration; reconsider board make-up to align with elected administrations; we need a lot of friends no matter who’s in office.
- Identify ‘friends of HM’; educate friends and donors in order to retain interest.
- Strategically connect with foundations, particularly those located in Montana; collaborate with other MT organizations to attract foundation support for their dedicated interests.
- The 200K Mellon award gives us breathing room by supporting operations, with further benefit of 50K in potential matching funds; this provides operational support while we focus on building programs.

With or without NEH defunding, what challenges does HM face?

Fundraising challenges:

- For fundraising: people in Montana don’t know who we are or what we do; we don’t have staff or ‘man-power’ for fundraising; we are competing against bigger organizations that have significant fundraising operations and big targets; we need to support the people who do give to us and better educate them as to the value of our work and their contributions.
- Uncertainty of the funding environment (not just for HM and NEH) is profound; competition for donor dollars is significant in unprecedented ways with all the federal programs, grants, and research projects that have been cancelled.

Mission and operations challenges:

- The funding crisis means a loss of HM’s breadth of activities and programs; we won’t have the ability to do as much work in as many places.

- HM is not necessarily a well-known organization around the state despite sponsoring so many different programs; with our ability to fund programming mostly gone, it's more difficult to get our name and organization in front of people.
- In conversations, HM has had support from our current congressional delegation, but that support has not carried over to legislative actions or legislative support in the current administration; there is no state governmental support or state advocacy to intervene on behalf of HM.
- A lot is placed on the shoulders of the Executive Director to maintain the mission, operations, programs, finances . . . a lot!

Challenging questions that echo across conversations:

- Can HM exist only on donations and sponsored projects?
- What's the appropriate way to think about HM's ratio of administration costs to services or offerings? What's the best comparison? When we think of HM's administrative costs, are we like a library, a think tank, Red Cross, or some other kind of nonprofit?
- How do we grow HM away from the 90% risk (ie., NEH funding as the sole source of funding)?
- Humanities councils were born as mechanisms to funnel federal dollars in to states through state block grants. Do these councils have purposes without the charter of the NEH?

Priorities for the May 31st board meeting in Helena:

- Where dose HM go from here? What is the board role now?
- Provide an overview and talking points about current funding and finances
- Have fun thinking what to do next, all in the same room, developing a sense of adventure
- Identify short term goals; identify small projects and programs that have maximum visibility; what are opportunities for public events in combination with 'free press'
- Identify concrete ways that the board can be productive as volunteers
- Attend to the budget to ensure we are maximizing available funding to maintain small programs and visibility
- Set budget with knowledge of how the organization is maintained, at what levels, for how many months
- Maintain hopeful outlook, rather than planning for disappointment

HUMANITIES MONTANA
NOTES FROM SMALL GROUP CONVERSATIONS
Carroll College, Helena, MT
May 31, 2025

Board members were asked what their greatest concerns or questions are at this time. Responses included:

Dave:

1. The Program Downsizing Recs
2. What our core program focus will be
3. Democracy Project—Books
4. Core Programs

Clark:

1. What is it about the subject matter/structure/operations of the Democracy Project that allowed it to survive the purge?
2. Who can HM join with besides the other organizations deeply damaged by state/federal governments.

Linda:

1. How can we continue to fund projects statewide with limited staff & funding to gain social media, press & local attention about our continued existence?

Beth:

1. What is HM apart from NEH?
2. What distinct or unique purpose can HM serve in MT for Humanities and MT communities?

Jen:

1. Specific goals/scope for next 6 months and year.
2. A budget
3. Revised job description for Jill and Jenny
4. More info about ND collaboration
5. What can the board do to help Jill?
6. Committee responsibilities

Jeannette:

1. Composition of the Board / roles of the Board (very specific)
2. How, even with limited programs, do we tell our story?
3. Narrative (story) for fundraising
4. If/when funding grows, how do we prioritize which services to bring back?
5. Support for staff
6. Do we need to rethink our offerings?

Jill:

1. If/when federal funding ends—permanently—who will we be? Who will we serve? How? (audiences)
2. What are the core programs & services that HM will continue moving forward

Tim:

1. I'd like to learn what the "other 55" councils are doing, i.e. Can we learn from them, or them from us.
2. What we are going to do to raise awareness and appreciation.

Others:

1. How much funding do we "need" yearly

2. Our direction focus plan for the next 2-3years
3. Where do we go from here?
4. How can we identify other funding sources?
5. How do we grow our private donor base?
6. What is the best way to stay in front of the public?

The board was asked to keep the following points in mind as conversations continued.

- Core programs: models, books
- Role of the Board & Structure
- Budget/Grantmaking
- Structure/Benchmarks
- How much funding is needed?
- Marketing/Promotions
- Communication
- What is HM apart from the NEH
- Priorities for the next 6 months to year

Discussions captured additional thoughts.

GOVERNANCE

- Board Size
 - Too big??
 - Not aligned with strategic plan
- Change board/background duties
- Better define
- Board size
- Change to board backgrounds
- Better define board member roles for better buy-in
- Balance the board--\$\$ vs. humanities background
- Vetting process for board members
- Accountability
- More “togetherness”—more virtual meetings
- Face-to-face meetings in central location(s)

COMMUNICATIONS

- Communicate successes while advocating overcoming challenges
- Take advantage of social media to promote HMs-related activities
- Stakeholders/partners invited to join in promotions
- Federation:
 - Set up “clearinghouse” of ideas that are opportunities
 - Workshops on that are working

PROGRAMS

- Humanities-Based MT Specific
- Democracy Project
- Center for the Book → MT Poet Laureate
- Mini Grants
- North Dakota Program—virtual
- Virtual Re-runs:
 - Social media pushes
 - Promoted by board members, etc.
- Available at Home or Libraries
- Publishing partnerships
- Benchmark: our place in MT in larger conversations (world, national, regional)
 - bigger field programs
- ✱ Keep mini grants suspended—grant-making creates a problem for fundraising

FINANCE

- Assume NO NEH \$\$
- Plan in a way that allows for taking \$\$
- Maintain full-time ED: nothing works without Jill
- Board staffing needs to meet 2 needs: humanities & funding
- Identify primary operating expenses: find grants to fund them

Summary

After sharing synopsis of the groups' conversations, the following priorities were identified:

GOVERNANCE

- Identifying & recruiting candidates
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Structure
- Priorities:
 - 6 months
 - 1 year

COMMUNICATIONS

- Marketing
- Promotions
- Priorities:
 - 6 months
 - 1 year

PROGRAMS

- Models, books, structure, benchmarks
- Grantmaking
- Priorities:
 - 6 months
 - 1 year

FINANCE

- Budget
 - FY 2026
 - FY 2027
 - Beyond
- Priorities:
 - 6 months
 - 1 year

Humanities Montana
Board Executive Committee Meeting
July 9, 2025

Present: Esther Beth Sullivan (chair), Jeanette Fregulia (vice chair and Grants), Lynda Grande (Finance), Mary Hernandez (Governance), Jill Baker (ED)

Meeting Convened at 10:05am

Executive Director Updates

- NEH Grant updates:
 - HM received word in June that its termination as a grantee has been rescinded (although there is much confusion about what that means); it appears the organization is reinstated as a program in good standing;
 - HM has been notified that it can receive up to 50% of the remaining, previously authorized FY2025 budget; Jill has submitted and received drawdowns through June 30, 2025; this reinstated amount is not enough to cover lost staff positions and is not guaranteed for future years;
 - Given the uncertainty of the NEH funding, Jill will be developing 2 budget scenarios for FY26: one will include the possibility of 50% (of previous grant amount) funding from NEH; the other will include zero NEH funding.
- Budget/Fundraising updates:
 - With NEH reimbursements, our bank account stands at approximately 500K
 - All current bills have been paid, including audit, UM expenses, FSHC dues, etc.
 - Private fundraising since April: \$128K
 - Grants since April: \$200K FSHC/Mellon; \$30K Lewellyn (for Dem Project)
 - \$50K FSHC/Mellon match (Apr. 29 – Dec 31): we are up to \$6.3K
 - MT Cultural Trust: \$13K over 2 years for MT Poet Laureate
- Communication updates:
 - Ray Ekness will be volunteering to help with outreach through MT public broadcasting networks;
 - FSHC is offering some consulting for communications and outreach;
 - Jill is working with a consultant for outreach regarding the Great Reads program in the fall;
 - Jill will be featured on upcoming podcast and Public News Service pieces;
 - Jill (in consultation with Exec Committee) will develop a Communication Plan or Communication Calendar taking us through the end of 2026; consideration of how to better use our e-newsletter will be addressed.

Finance and Audit Committee:

Lynda explained that the 990 IRS form (our tax report) was completed after the audit and our last full board meeting. It must be approved and submitted by September 15. Given our bylaws, she and Jill recommended the following process for review, approval, and submission:

- Send the form to the whole board prior to next Finance and Audit Committee meeting asking for any questions;
- The Finance Committee will review the form and address any board questions at their August 27 meeting; assuming there are no substantial concerns, the committee will approve the 990 on behalf of the board;
- The 990 will then be submitted by the Executive Director.

Governance Committee

Mary will be convening the Governance Committee in July or early August as well as on the scheduled August 25 (noon) meeting, to address:

- Leadership roles and nominations for 2026;
- Consideration of board members who might rotate off (or not);
- Consideration of whether new board members might be brought on, in relation to organizational priorities (as expressed in the May board meeting);
- Nominations and board rosters will be finalized before the Executive Committee meeting on September 10.

Executive Director Annual Review

- A simplified survey, with mostly narrative questions, to go to all board members for input;
- The Executive Committee will review that input no later than the September 10 meeting;
- The findings and any recommendations will be reported to the full board at the September 26-27 meeting.

September 26-27 meeting and full board meetings for 2026:

- The September meeting will be held in Missoula on the 26-27th; hotel rooms will be arranged as well as dinner on Friday night; sessions will be held Friday afternoon and Saturday morning; agenda will be discussed at the Executive Committee meeting on August 6.
- For 2026:
 - The Executive Committee will determine the 2026 line-up of full board meetings at the August 6 meeting.
 - Beth recommends holding the Winter meeting (usually the weekend after President's holiday in February) via Zoom due to travel and weather constraints.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00am

Humanities Montana
Board Executive Committee Meeting
August 6, 2025

Present: Esther Beth Sullivan (chair), Jeanette Fregulia (vice chair and Grants), Lynda Grande (Finance), Mary Hernandez (Governance), Jill Baker (ED)

Meeting Convened at 10:01am

Beth circulated a document, "Operational Priorities," which is being drafted by Jill. This document will be circulated to standing committees, and reviewed further by the Executive committee on September 10. This document will hopefully form the basis for priorities across the remainder of 2025 and into 2026.

Executive Director Updates

- Center for the Book program activities this year will include 2 presentations focusing on the 2025 chosen books; the first will be in Wolf Point with Chris Latray; the other in Belgrade with Janet Fox on September 20. Both events will be in-person and recorded.
- Jill has been meeting with stakeholders and other organizations to explore opportunities for HM around the 250 Commission activities; HM will be submitting grant applications to develop a focused speakers' program, with presentations related to the 250th history.
- Jill is working with advisors from FSHC and local providers to assist with communications in general and press releases more specifically.

Finance and Audit Committee:

- Jill reported that HM has approximately 450K in the bank, including the portion of reimbursements that were finally approved by NEH for 2025.
- Lynda and Jill will be working to get procedures back on track for monthly bank statement and credit card review.
- Jill is talking with accountants and bookkeepers to provide a few hours a month of contracted work for HM's financial operations.
- Lynda and Jill will be meeting to develop the 2026 budget, to be reviewed at the August 27 Finance committee meeting.

Governance Committee:

Mary reported that the Governance committee will be interviewing all board members across the next couple of weeks to identify board interests in:

- Leadership roles for 2026 (chair, vice chair, committee chairs)
- Consideration of board members who might rotate off (or not);
- Consideration of board members whose terms may be renewed;
- Interest in working on standing committees;

- Interest in assisting with 3 new work groups: fundraising, communications, program development.

Grants Committee:

Beth recommended that the standing Grants Committee be placed on pause for 2026. She will bring an official resolution to the next Executive meeting for consideration.

Board Meeting Updates:

For the September 26-27 full board meeting, plans for the agenda will be circulated via email prior to the next Executive Committee meeting (Sept 10). Executive members should contact Beth and Jill with ideas and items that should be on the full board agenda.

- The September meeting will be held in Missoula on the 26-27th;
- hotel rooms have been reserved at the Wren Friday night, the 26th;
- dinner on the 26th will be covered by HM;
- sessions will be held Friday afternoon and Saturday morning.

Looking ahead at board meetings for 2026:

- Beth recommends holding the Winter 2026 meeting (the weekend after President's holiday in February) via Zoom due to travel and weather constraints. She will bring a resolution to the next Executive meeting to be considered, and if approved, advanced to the full board.
- The Spring and Fall 2026 meeting locations are still to be determined. Mary suggested holding those meetings in locations where we might have significant donor bases; the committee concurred; Beth and Jill will follow-up and have recommendations for the Sept 10 Executive meeting. Beth also requested that the date of the Fall 2026 meeting not conflict with the Montana Historical Society conference.

The committee went into executive session at 10:30am for consideration of the ED annual review.

Humanities Montana
Board Executive Committee Meeting
September 10, 2025

Present: Esther Beth Sullivan (chair), Jeanette Fregulia (vice chair and Grants), Lynda Grande (Finance), Mary Hernandez (Governance), Ray Ekness, Jill Baker (ED)

Meeting Convened at 10:01am

Beth presented the revised agenda. Jeanette moved to approve the agenda. Lynda seconded. Motion passed.

Executive Director Updates:

- Jill talked about her resignation (effective Nov. 3) and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve as HM executive director. She said she would work to ensure a smooth leadership transition.
- Jill identified the strengths of the organization: partnerships, especially with libraries; our program manager; financial stability for the coming year with foundation support.
- HM will receive a \$25K grant from the Federation of State Humanities Council to support humanities programming with the Montana Folklife Area at the Montana Folk Festival (in partnership with MT Arts Council).
- HM will be submitting a grant proposal to the MT 250 Commission, to support a curated speaker program for the 250th anniversary.
- A sample of items on Jill's 'to-do' list before departing:
 - Contract with a bookkeeping service
 - Ensure we are up to date with NEH (eGMS system) and prepared for the NEH 'Activities and Outcomes' report (due January 31)
 - Finalize 990 and other IRS reports
 - Ensure transition of bank accounts, credit cards, etc.

The committee then went into executive session.

Reporting out from executive session: the board chair will seek to identify an interim director as soon as possible (per bylaws); the board chair will reach out to former staff to see if any might consider the position; if there is no interest from prior staff, the position will be posted. The committee recommended delaying a search to permanently fill the position until later in 2026.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:59am.

Humanities Montana
Board Finance & Audit Committee Meeting
August 27, 2025

Present: Lynda Grande (chair), David Cates, Tim Wilson, Beth Sullivan (board chair), Jill Baker (ED)

Excused: Karen Reiff

Meeting called to order at 10:01am

Agenda:

- TY23 990
- Finance reports to date
- Proposed FY26 budget

Lynda asked Jill to provide background on the 990. Jill introduced Angel Sharp, who had prepared the 990. Angel provided an overview of the 990, which covered the fiscal year ending on October 31, 2024 (for 990 purposes '2023'). She explained how expenditures and income were captured according to IRS regulations. She noted that there were no 'red flags' or concerning issues in the report.

David Cates moved to approve the 990 form; Tim Wilson seconded; motion approved.

Lynda asked Jill to provide an overview of the Profit & Loss (11/24 through 07/25) and Balance Sheet (as of 08/31/2025). Jill noted where we had received donations and funding to date, and answered questions about line items.

David Cates moved to approve these finance reports; Beth Sullivan seconded; motion approved.

Lynda introduced the proposed FY26 budget that Jill had prepared.

Jill explained that some of the revenue included in the budget had not yet been received, but all delineated donations were expected to be received. If those donations don't materialize, then related programs would not be offered. Jill went through the entire proposed budget, explaining how it aligned with the priorities that she has outlined for the coming year.

Many questions were raised about particular line-item expenditures including:

- Board related travel for meetings: concern was raised that this might be too much; Jill and Beth explained that a proposal to convene 1 or 2 board meetings online in 2026 might decrease this expense.
- Lynda was concerned about the elimination of mini-grant funding, which could help get our name out into rural communities. Jill said that without NEH funding, there was no way to support this outreach, either with HM funding or HM personnel. This remained

an area of concern: how to develop momentum for the organization while cutting all of the usual ways in which HM has functioned in the past with 'pass-through' sub-awards.

- There was discussion of the items related to consulting and a potential part time employee. Jill is proposing contracting services for bookkeeping, communications, and fund-raising, as well as 10 hours a week of hourly help to assist with data entry and administrative tasks. Jill was particularly clear that she needed the contracted services for bookkeeping as soon as possible in order to focus on program development.
- Insurance costs may increase per employee by the end of November. Beth asked that the Executive Committee take up the policy issues in the Personnel Handbook, and then if recommended, a budget increase might be considered later in the year as an amendment to the budget.

David Cates moved to recommend this budget to the full board for consideration during the September meeting; Tim Wilson seconded; motion approved.

Meeting adjourned at 11:35am. ebs

Humanities Montana
Balance Sheet
As of July 31, 2025

	Jul 31, 25
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
1020 · Checking-FIB	70,069.32
1021 · FIB Savings	473,668.61
Total Checking/Savings	543,737.93
Other Current Assets	
1310 · Grants Receivable	12,223.38
1650 · Endowment Funds-MCF	96,822.97
Total Other Current Assets	109,046.35
Total Current Assets	652,784.28
Fixed Assets	
1620 · Accumulated Amortization	-12,634.00
1625 · Website	36,477.00
1600 · Furniture and Equipment	7,863.88
1610 · Accumulated Depreciation	-5,168.88
Total Fixed Assets	26,538.00
TOTAL ASSETS	679,322.28
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
2100 · Accounts Payable	-1,386.15
Total Accounts Payable	-1,386.15
Credit Cards	
2370 · MC - Jillian Baker - 3687	223.94
Total Credit Cards	223.94
Other Current Liabilities	
2120 · Payroll Liabilities	5,648.96
2140 · Retirement Payable	1,548.48
2142 · Health Insurance Payable	-1,914.08
2155 · Vacation/Sick Payable	14,507.71
2400 · Deferred Revenue	202,197.22
Total Other Current Liabilities	221,988.29
Total Current Liabilities	220,826.08
Total Liabilities	220,826.08
Equity	
3010 · Unrestricted Net Assets	228,343.15
3020 · Perm. Restricted Net Assets	58,605.48
3040 · Temp. Restricted Net Assets	43,612.00
Net Income	127,935.57
Total Equity	458,496.20
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	679,322.28

Humanities Montana

Profit & Loss

November 2024 through July 2025

	Nov '24 - Jul 25
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
4603 · Unrealized Gain/Loss	707.64
4015 · Co-Pay Income	4,350.00
4600 · Interest and Dividends-Non Fed	2,610.59
4602 · Realized Gain/Loss	643.48
4700 · Misc Income	
4740 · Royalties	109.80
4700 · Misc Income - Other	850.00
Total 4700 · Misc Income	959.80
4701 · Federal Grant Income	444,332.58
4703 · Misc Grant Funding	8,000.00
4730 · Donations-Unrestricted	
4732 · Exp Reim Donations-Board Member	2,155.39
4731 · Expense Reim Donations-Speaker	841.07
4730 · Donations-Unrestricted - Other	343,311.95
Total 4730 · Donations-Unrestricted	346,308.41
4735 · Donations-Restricted	32,500.00
Total Income	840,412.50
Gross Profit	840,412.50
Expense	
50000 · Salary and Benefits	
5010 · Payroll Expenses	324,978.77
5020 · Payroll Taxes	27,639.06
5021 · Work Comp Premiums	2,320.51
5022 · Health Insurance Premiums	64,960.62
5025 · Retirement Plan Expense	31,921.16
Total 50000 · Salary and Benefits	451,820.12
60000 · General and Administrative Exp	
5097 · Interest Expense	50.00
5208 · Facility/Room Rental	375.00
5055 · Employee Insurance Admin Fees	90.00
5027 · Parking	5.00
5033 · Travel-Other	
5031 · Travel-Staff	9,651.96
5032 · Travel-Board	3,975.44
5033 · Travel-Other - Other	30,833.64
Total 5033 · Travel-Other	44,461.04
5034 · Meals/Food	3,398.05
5225 · Website Expense	10,614.94
5219 · Marketing	13,460.06
5999 · Miscellaneous	-150.00
5112 · Copies/Printing Expense	1,150.29
5217 · Endowment Expense	508.46
5190 · Federation Dues	16,711.00
5180 · Dues and Subscriptions	5,044.19
5170 · Insurance	1,442.00
5151 · Professional Development	8,218.44
5152 · Professional Meetings Staff	130.00
5150 · Professional Services	
5220 · Audit Expense	21,400.00
5150 · Professional Services - Other	2,575.00
Total 5150 · Professional Services	23,975.00

3:01 PM

08/21/25

Accrual Basis

Humanities Montana
Profit & Loss
November 2024 through July 2025

	Nov '24 - Jul 25
5144 · Database Expense	2,552.32
5143 · Network Expense	5,454.10
5026 · Campus Parking Decal	3,875.00
5096 · Bank and Credit Card Fees	1,236.17
5080 · Postage	1,014.16
5060 · Supplies	1,290.60
5050 · Rent and Administration	7,447.98
Total 60000 · General and Administrative Exp	152,353.80
5155 · Award Expense	9,350.00
5160 · Honoraria Expense	40,790.96
6010 · Subaward Expense	58,162.05
7000 · Void	0.00
Total Expense	712,476.93
Net Ordinary Income	127,935.57
Net Income	127,935.57

Humanities MONTANA

Humanities Montana Operational Priorities FY26

Goal: To demonstrate the value of a statewide council focused on access to and advocacy for public humanities programming in Montana.

Objectives:

- **Advocate for continued public support for humanities programming, focused on Montana's writers, literature, history, and cultural traditions**
 - Collaborate with humanities organizations around the state to co-design and offer programs that speak to and about Montana's writers, literature, history, and cultural traditions.
 - Cultivate relationships with elected officials including MT's Congressional Delegation and the Governor's Office to develop humanities programs that support Montana civic education and other educational goals in the state.
 - Participating in Humanities on the Hill and other advocacy related activities with the Federation of State Humanities Councils
- **Increase visibility and tell our story of the impact of public humanities in Montana**
 - Better define and articulate the mission of HM and value of public humanities (focusing more specifically on Montana's literature, writers, history, and cultural traditions)
 - Refine our messaging to be more accessible to public audiences
 - Be proactive in telling our story
 - Clearly brand HM programming/partnerships
 - Develop a monthly communications calendar for HM and an annual report for stakeholders
- **Increase diversified funding and improve organizational and program sustainability by securing a 6-month reserve fund of \$600,000 and developing a viable and ongoing comprehensive \$1.5M annual development plan that will:**
 - Meet the \$50,000 match with FSHC and Mellon Foundation by December 2025.
 - Focus on major individual gifts and retain and engage current donors.
 - Identify 12 new private foundations for funding of HM programs
 - Build the case for state funding, particularly with funding for civic education programs, teacher education programs, or other educational outreach based in the humanities
- **Stabilize Humanities Montana programming focusing on key programs with external funding**
 - Provide statewide, high quality, public humanities programs offer opportunities for enrichment, connection, and learning for all Montanans:
 - The Democracy Project, a teen-led civic engagement program; with funding from private foundations including Engelhard Foundation and Llewellyn Foundation

- Montana Center for the Book; with funding from Library of Congress and Federation of State Humanities Councils with support from the Mellon Foundation.
 - MT Great Reads from Great Places Book awards featured at the Library of Congress' National Book Festival
 - One Book Montana—statewide read/public book clubs, offering small grants for book clubs
 - Re-envision HM's Speakers Bureau to align with sponsored programs:
 - Montana Poet Laureate Speaker Program with funding from MT Cultural Trust
 - Great Reads from Great Places authors (funding from LOC)
 - One Book Montana author or speaker (seeking private funding)
 - Montana 250th Speakers (exploring funding from Washington Foundation and/or MT 250 Commission)
 - "The Study" virtual programming (overlapping with 250th and MT Poet Laureate speakers)
 - Public Humanities Fellowship (funding from FSHC with support from Mellon Foundation, with potential individual sponsors)
- **Explore program development to align with sponsored funding opportunities or revenue generation/contracts, and model after successful programs across the country**

May be done with current staffing and modest added private funding:

 - Develop an adult version of the Democracy Project
 - Teacher Scholarships for Professional Development in the Humanities

These ideas offer examples of programs that would require more substantial sponsorship to bring on additional staff or contracted services; some may be possible if NEH funding is restored on a consistent basis:

 - Book Festival
 - Museums on Main Street with Smithsonian
 - Clemente Course for the Humanities for MT veterans
 - Living Room Conversations (Wyoming Humanities)
 - Humanities Teachers Summer Institutes (Humanities Idaho)
 - Regional Humanities Networks/ Humanities Corps (Missouri Humanities + AmeriCorps partnership)
 - HM Podcast; ex. Human Powered – Humanity Unlocked (Wisconsin Humanities)
 - **Pause general grantmaking indefinitely, unless partnered or supported with sponsored programs.**

Humanities Montana

FY26 Budget DRAFT Justification Narrative

Jill Baker, Executive Director

I am pleased to present a balanced budget for FY26.

Total Income: \$544,300

Total Expenses: \$522,153

Net Surplus: \$22,147

Background:

- Humanities Montana (HM) has improved its financial position since April 2, 2025.
- The individual gift from Susan O'Connor of \$100k and the \$200k grant from the FSHC and Mellon have offered HM a runway as we approach FY26 and beyond.
- With the reinstatement letter from NEH in June, HM has been able to access a portion of the funding that was approved for FY25 which has reimbursed our reserve funds of \$200k.
- There remains hope that future NEH funding will be restored, although the amount and timing of that decision remain uncertain. I am offering 3 budget scenarios: No NEH funding, 20% of NEH funding, and 50% of the FY24 funding.
- With so much uncertainty with federal funding, I am recommending that the finance committee approve the "No NEH funding" budget.
- HM will need to closely monitor its finances over the next year. I am proposing a conservative budget that doesn't yet include hiring staff. Until the organization's funding is more stabilized, HM should consider contracting as an alternative to support administrative and additional program support.
- Contracting for Accounting and FR/Comms expertise and support as HM diversifies its funding and pivots to a new funding model will greatly increase the capacity of the organization to be successful over the next year and beyond.
- Maintaining a healthy reserve fund into FY27 will be important to allow time to cultivate relationships necessary to continue improving private fundraising.

Revenue:

- The \$200k FSHC/Mellon funding will provide the foundation for the next fiscal year. With access to the FY25 NEH funding, HM hasn't needed to spend the Mellon funding yet.
- HM expects \$65k from the Engelhard Foundation to support DP as well as \$30k from the Llewellyn Foundation.
- HM has been cultivating relationships with foundations over the past year and will continue to do so. Included is a list of prospective private foundation funders.
- Increasing individual contributions will be key to the long-term sustainability of HM. The \$50k Mellon Match provides an opportunity to engage major donors and receive up to \$100k in general operating revenue.

Expenses:

Salary, Benefits and Payroll Taxes

- Full-time Executive Director
- Full-time Program Manager
- Part-time Program Assistant @10 hours per week
- No raises budgeted

General and Administration

Dues and Subscriptions

These expenses are largely based on the previous year's actual costs with an adjustment for inflation. I have included a breakdown of each of these expenses for your reference.

Programs

Proposed program budget is based on the proposed **HM Operational Priorities for FY26** with the objective of providing statewide, high quality, public humanities programs that offer opportunities for enrichment, connection, and learning for all Montanans:

- The Democracy Project, a teen-led civic engagement program; with funding from private foundations including Engelhard Foundation and Llewellyn Foundation
- Montana Center for the Book; with funding from Library of Congress and Federation of State Humanities Councils with support from the Mellon Foundation.

- MT Great Reads from Great Places Book awards featured at the Library of Congress' National Book Festival
- One Book Montana—statewide read/public book clubs, offering small grants for book clubs
- Re-envision HM's Speakers Bureau to align with sponsored programs:
 - Montana Poet Laureate Speaker Program with funding from MT Cultural Trust
 - Great Reads from Great Places authors (funding from LOC)
 - One Book Montana author or speaker (FSHC with support from Mellon and/or other funders)
 - Montana 250th Speakers (exploring funding from Washington Foundation and/or MT 250 Commission)
 - “The Study” virtual programming (overlapping with 250th and MT Poet Laureate speakers)

Additional program development opportunities will continue to be explored and will include input from HM Advisory or Working Groups over the next year as additional funding is secured.

Articles on Nonprofit Overhead:

[A Board Member's Guide to Nonprofit Overhead - Blue Avocado](#)

[\(Mis\)Understanding Overhead | National Council of Nonprofits](#)

[Nonprofit Financing and Fundraising Perspectives - BoardSource](#)

Humanities MONTANA

FY26 Budget DRAFT		No NEH	20% NEH	50% NEH	Notes
REVENUE AND SUPPORT					
	FY25 Reserves	\$300,000.00	\$300,000.00	\$300,000.00	April FR, Reserve Funds
Revenue	Speaker Co-Pays	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	
Support	FSHC/Mellon Funds Carry Forward	\$200,000.00	\$200,000.00	\$200,000.00	Spend by Dec 2026
	NEH GOS Grant	\$0.00	\$200,000.00	\$465,000.00	
	MT Cultural Trust	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00	MT Poet Laureate
	Private Foundations	\$175,000.00	\$175,000.00	\$175,000.00	
	Monthly Giving	\$4,800.00	\$4,800.00	\$4,800.00	\$400 per month currently
	Individual Contributions	\$136,000.00	\$136,000.00	\$136,000.00	\$50k Match + Annual Giving + 100% board giving
	Board Travel Donations	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	
	House Parties/Events	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	
Other	MCF Endowment	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	
	FIB Savings Acct Interest	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	
	FY26 Total Income	\$544,300.00	\$744,300.00	\$1,009,300.00	
	FY25 Reserves + FY26 Income	\$844,300.00	\$1,044,300.00	\$1,309,300.00	
EXPENSES					
	Payroll	\$177,618.00	\$177,618.00	\$177,618.00	No raises FY26
	Payroll Taxes	\$17,881.80	\$17,881.80	\$17,881.80	
	Health Benefits (Health, Dental, Eye)	\$36,000.00	\$36,000.00	\$36,000.00	\$1500 per employee/per month/ 2 employees
	Life Insurance/LTD	\$1,550.00	\$1,550.00	\$1,550.00	HM provides 100%
	Retirement Benefits	\$16,981.80	\$16,981.80	\$16,981.80	10% of Salary
	Other Benefits	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00	Cell phone stipend
Subtotal Personnel		\$251,831.60	\$251,831.60	\$251,831.60	
	Board Expenses incl. Travel	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	2 in-person, 1 virtual meeting
	Staff Travel	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	Humanities on the Hill, donor meetings, DP site visits, MLA
	DP Library Stipends	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	Llewellyn Grant
	MT Center for the Book (One Book Montana/Statewide Read)	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	Mellon or NEH
	MT Poet Laureate Honoraria/Travel	\$36,500.00	\$36,500.00	\$36,500.00	MT Cultural Trust + Heyneman
	250th Speaker Honoraria/Travel	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	Fundraise or NEH
	The Study Honoraria	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	Fundraise or NEH
	Public Humanities Fellowships	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	\$16,000.00	NEH
	Mini-Grants	\$0.00	\$24,000.00	\$36,000.00	NEH
	Marketing/Website	\$17,280.00	\$17,280.00	\$17,280.00	Digital Spark Creative
	Comms/FR Consultant	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	Comms and FR support
	Executive Consultant	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00	Executive Consultant
	Liability Insurance including D&O	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	
	Accounting/Bookkeeping	\$12,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$12,000.00	Est. 20 hrs per month
	Printing	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	Fundraising/Outreach
	Postage	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	Fundraising/Outreach
	Office Supplies	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	
	UM Lease/Parking/IT Support	\$11,000.00	\$11,000.00	\$11,000.00	
	Dues & Subscriptions	\$4,441.00	\$4,441.00	\$4,441.00	
	Federation Dues	\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00	Based on FY25 Expenses
	Administrative Expenses	\$9,850.00	\$9,850.00	\$9,850.00	
	Audit/990/5500	\$12,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$12,000.00	Federal revenue less than \$1M - no single audit is required
	Professional Development	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	NHC Cancelled 2025
	Miscellaneous	\$250.00	\$250.00	\$250.00	
Subtotal Other		\$270,321.00	\$298,321.00	\$322,321.00	
	TOTAL FY26 EXPENSES	\$522,152.60	\$550,152.60	\$574,152.60	
	FY26 NET SURPLUS	\$22,147.40	\$194,147.40	\$435,147.40	
	Reserves/Savings Balance	\$522,147.40	\$694,147.40	\$935,147.40	

Humanities Montana
Board Governance Committee
July 30, 2025

Present: Mary Hernandez (chair), Clark Whitehorse, Jen Corning, Beth Sullivan, Jill Baker
Absent: Jeremy Carl

Convened at 12:32pm

Mary asked Jill to update the group and share how board members could be helpful across the coming year. Jill replied, focusing on:

- Communications
- Fundraising
- Preparing for the organization to pivot to a new business and operations model
 - Consideration of how to incorporate revenue generation in programs
 - Opportunities for state funding and relations with the Governor's office
 - Advocacy in general, but particularly to help open doors and build relationships

Jill also provided updates on funding, finances, and program priorities for the coming year.

In terms of 'organizational pivot': board members will want to think forward, with open minds about the future of the organization; as a statewide council focused on humanities outreach; whether or not it exists as a singular entity or works in collaboration with other agencies/nonprofits; and how it meets its mission given the new reality of federal funding.

Discussion proceeded about surveying ongoing board members to determine interest in leadership roles, committee assignments, and possible workgroups. Board members will be asked about their interest in:

- Leadership roles: Board Chair, Vice Chair, Finance Chair, Governance Chair
- Committee assignments for: Finance, Governance (Grants will be paused for now)
- Workgroups focusing on: Fundraising, Communications, Program Development

Each committee member will contact a group of board members prior to August 15th.

Board members who are interested in serving for a second term are asked to submit a brief letter/email, addressed to the Board (but sent to Jill), by August 21st.

The committee will develop nominations for the chair and vice chair at the next meeting, on August 25th.

Meeting ended at 1:39pm.

Humanities Montana
Governance Committee
August 25, 2025

Present: Jill Baker, Beth Sullivan, Jen Corning, Clark Whitehorn
Excused: Mary Hernandez

Meeting convened at 12:00pm

Beth Sullivan chaired the meeting in Mary's absence.

The group summarized their outreach calls to board members, relaying each board member's interest or availability to continue on the board for 2026 and their interest in leadership roles. The discussion focused on how HM needs to identify key initiatives in order to strategically bring on new board members and develop funding streams for those particular initiatives.

From the discussion:

The following board members are unable to move forward for 2025:

- Lynda Grande (term expiring)
- Mary Hernandez (other commitments)
- Lathie Poole (other commitments)
- Clark Whitehorn (other commitments)

The committee was unable to reach the following board members, and the expectation is that they will not be moving forward on the board for 2025. Jill and Beth will reach out to these to confirm:

- Jeremy Carl (other commitments)
- Arian Randall (other commitments)

The committee was unable to reach the following board members, but they have previously expressed interest in moving forward on the board for 2025. Jill and Beth will reach out to these again to confirm:

- Glory Blue Earth
- Karen Reiff

The following board members will be submitting a request (per the Bylaws) to renew their membership for a second 3-year term:

- David Cates
- Ray Ekness

The committee recommends asking Jeanette Fregulia (term expires at the end of 2025) to extend her term for another year, which requires board approval.

The committee asked Jill to contact the Governor's office again to identify/confirm ongoing and new governor's appointees.

With a smaller board roster, the committee discussed the possibility of overlapping standing committee assignments in order to condense workload obligations for the Finance & Audit and Governance Committees. Some ideas were generated about how that might work, but no final arrangements were developed. Beth will recommend that the Grants committee be on pause for 2026.

Recommendations for leadership and committee composition for 2026, which will be a transitional year:

Board Member	Nomination	Standing Committee
Ray Ekness	Chair	
Jeanette Fregulia	Vice Chair	
Beth Sullivan	Governance Chair	
??	Finance Chair	
Glory Blue Earth		Governance
David Cates		Finance
Jen Corning		Governance
Karen Reiff		Finance
Tim Wilson		Finance
New Governor's appointee TBD		
New Governor's appointee TBD		
New Elected member mid-2026		
New Elected member mid-2026		

Meeting concluded 1:00pm
Submitted by EBS

HM board of directors

From David Cates <dacates@q.com>

Date Sun 8/10/2025 10:03 AM

To Baker, Jillian <jill.baker@humanitiesmontana.org>

Hi Jill,

I received an email from Clark letting me know my three year term was up, and directing me to send an email of interest to you if I wanted to serve another term. Well, I do. So please consider this my telling you that indeed I am interested in serving another term on the Humanities Montana Board of directors. It's going to be an interesting time.

I am happy to continue to serve on the finance committee, and I have no interest in a board leadership role.

Thanks for all you do.

David

HM board service for second term

From Ekness, Ray <ray.ekness@mso.umt.edu>

Date Wed 8/20/2025 1:04 PM

To Baker, Jillian <jill.baker@humanitiesmontana.org>

Cc clark.whitehorn.cw@gmail.com <clark.whitehorn.cw@gmail.com>

Hi Jill,

I have enjoyed my first term as a member of the Humanities Montana board. I am interested in continuing on the board for a second term. I'm also open to any committee assignment or leadership position that the board sees fit. If you have any questions, please reach out to me. Thanks so much for your consideration.

ray

Ray Ekness

ray.ekness@umontana.edu

Executive Director's Report

September 2025

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as the Executive Director of our beloved organization. During my tenure, Humanities Montana has reached constituents in all 56 counties through stories and conversations. I am proud to have been a part of HM's incredible legacy of serving our state for over 50 years. I am especially proud of our expanded outreach in rural communities over the past 2 years. I appreciate getting to know each of you as board members during this time. I have had the opportunity to work most closely with Beth as both my Vice Chair and Chair. Her dedication and passion for the humanities are inspiring. She was of great support as difficult decisions were made after receiving our grant termination letter from the NEH in April. I have learned much from her steady and calm leadership approach. I have also had the privilege to get to know Ray Ekness better this summer when he volunteered to help as HM reorganized after downsizing both staff and programming. I am grateful for his courage in raising his hand to be nominated to lead the board over the next year. I am confident that I am leaving the organization in both his and Beth's good hands as HM searches for its next leader.

Since May, I have focused my time on gathering information and planning for the next fiscal year. Humanities Montana's funding challenges continue, but I am confident that the organization will be able to weather the next fiscal year with the funds secured over the past 6 months including:

- HM's first personal gift from Susan O'Connor of \$100k
- FSHC/Mellon funding of \$200k
- HM's first ever grant of \$30k from the Llewellyn Foundation to support the Democracy Project. Effectively diversifying funding for DP.
- Continued support from the Engelhard Foundation to support the Democracy Project, including \$70k received in September 2025.
- By the People: Conversations Beyond 250 funding of \$25k from FSHC and Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in partnership with the Montana Arts Council to support humanities programming at the Folklife Area of the Montana Folk Festival.
- Montana Cultural Trust funding, through the Montana Arts Council, to support speaker programming in rural areas (Montana Poet Laurette), \$20k over two years.

As of September 15, 2025, our account balances at First Interstate Bank are \$590,875 compared to \$166,433 on April 21, 2025.

In addition to taking over the day-to-day administrative duties, and based on the board's recommended areas of focus over the summer, accomplishments include:

- Communications:
 - An interview with the Public News Service which was shared with radio stations throughout Montana.
 - An interview on Russell Rowand's podcast, ["The State of Montana"](#)
 - An article in the [Bozeman Daily Chronicle](#) regarding the Democracy Project
 - A television [interview with KPAX](#) in Missoula, which also ran in Great Falls and Helena.
 - Press releases were sent out regarding Great Reads from Great Places author events in Wolf Point and Belgrade.
 - Staff have worked to update the website over the summer to accurately reflect current programming. Additionally, access to the Grant Report portal, and the roster of Speakers are still available to grantees and constituents.
 - The Monthly e-newsletter has been adjusted to reflect current programming.
 - Social media presence is being maintained with 1-2 posts per month.
- Fundraising:
 - Funding has been secured from Llewellyn Foundation, Engelhard Foundation, and FSHC Smithsonian Center for Folklife totaling \$125k
 - Meetings with the Phyllis and Dennis Washington Foundation, Heyneman Foundation, and Montana250 Commission have occurred. Proposals are in process.
 - Since April 29, 2025, HM has raised \$7,623 in unrestricted gifts toward the Mellon's \$50k Match which expires December 31, 2025. HM has an opportunity to leverage this matching grant during its year-end appeal.
 - Ray Ekness volunteered to call and thank donors who gave in response to HM's emergency fundraising appeal letter.
- Program Development
 - The Democracy Project continues to provide an anchor for programming. After reviewing applications, gathering MOUs, and updating toolkits over the summer, HM is pleased to move forward with seven libraries in the full program and six in the soft launch option. The soft launch assists libraries with building their youth audiences and is especially helpful to small, rural libraries.

- HM is re-launching [One Book Montana](#) with our Great Reads from Great Places book selections. Currently, 26 libraries are interested in participating in the program.
- Proposing a Montana 250th Speakers Bureau for 2026
- Partnering with “The Study” with Humanities North Dakota which will go live in January 2026.
- Additional details are available in the following Program Manager Report from Jenny Bevill.

As the board moves forward in FY26, I am hopeful that NEH funding will become available again to state humanities councils. Maintaining at least a 6-month reserve fund and diversifying funding sources will greatly improve HM’s financial position in the future. Additionally, as the Board and Interim Executive Director consider future nominations, I’d recommend adding members who have:

- Strong connections and/or networks in communities across the state to expand HM’s outreach and/or funding opportunities. Possibly someone who lives in Bozeman, Flathead, and/or Eastern Montana.
- Entrepreneurship and innovative experience to bring creative thinking to the organization as HM considers a pivot in serving the state with limited to no NEH funding.
- Strong financial backgrounds in banking, financial advising, and/or accounting.

These skills will round out the excellent foundation that it currently has with humanities and art backgrounds, legal, business, communications and nonprofit experience.

Looking forward to seeing many of you in Missoula on September 26th and 27th. Thanks again for the opportunity to serve as your leader for the past two years.

Sincerely,

Jill Baker, Executive Director

Programs Report

September 2025

Since June 2, 2025, the Programs Manager has focused on two programs: the Democracy Project and the Montana Center for the Book. The Democracy Project is privately funded, and the Montana Center for the Book is a Library of Congress affiliate program. Both programs lean into relationships staff have spent years cultivating with librarians across the state, particularly in rural areas. The focus and outcomes are listed below.

The Programs Manager has continued to build statewide relationships with essential partners such as the Montana State Library and the Office of Public instruction to share resources and work together to create content. Humanities Montana has leaned into partnerships with the Montana State University Extension Office, Civics Under the Big Sky, The Montana Constitution Roadshow and former Humanities Montana speakers to continue offering substantive, non-partisan, civic education content.

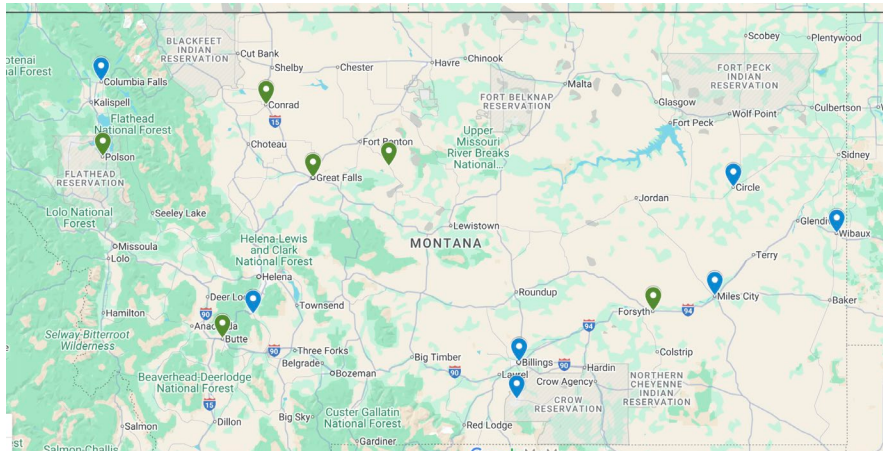
Continued relationship building on the national level includes:

- The Democracy Project was invited to be featured on the Federation of State Humanities podcast: [Humanities =](#) in an episode on exemplary teen programming.
- The Democracy Project was invited to present to [Museum on Mainstreet: Voices and Votes](#) participating libraries in Georgia as a model for teen engagement.
- The Democracy Project was invited to meet with Andy Mink, Director of [Smithsonian Rural Initiatives Program](#) when he visits Montana in October.
- Two Democracy project libraries were selected to participate in [Democracy in Dialogue](#), a virtual exchange program pairing sister sites across the country to collaborate on a civic project.
- The Democracy Project continues our relationship with the Los Angeles Public Library [Teens Leading Change Program](#) by exchanging ideas and best practices.

Democracy Project: Summer 2025 Accomplishments

The Democracy Project program runs from September to May. In the summer months staff conduct debriefs and reviews feedback from the previous program year. Updates and changes are made in response to this feedback. At the same time, outreach is conducted, applications are reviewed, and site selections are made for the upcoming program year.

The year five cohort includes seven libraries participating in the full program (blue pins): Columbia Falls High School, Miles City Public Library, Wibaux High School Library, McCone County Library in Circle, Plenty Coups High School in Pryor, Boulder Community Library, and Billings Public Library. Six libraries will be participating in the soft launch option (green pins): Conrad Public Library, Geraldine Branch Library, Butte Silver-Bow Public Library, Great Falls Public Library, Rosebud County Library in Forsyth, and North Lake County Library in Polson.



[Democracy Project Toolkits](#) (PW: Civics2025) were reworked and resources expanded:

- **Civic Education:** In collaboration with the Montana State University Extension Office, a new Local Government template was created.
- **Montana State Constitution:** In collaboration with Upper Seven Law, this toolkit is expanded into a fuller representation and understanding of the Montana State Constitution, how it was created and what the upcoming 2030 vote means. The Roadshow presentation will be available to all DP sites in person or virtually.
- **Media Literacy:** In collaboration with the Montana State Library and former Humanities Montana speaker Courtney Cowgill has created an asynchronous version of her Newstrition presentation and worksheet on consuming a healthy media diet.

[Montana Center for the Book:](#) Summer 2025 Accomplishments

National Book Festival and Statewide Read

The Great Reads from Great Places: Roadmap to Reading is a program of the Library of Congress and is administered through the [Affiliate Centers for the Book](#) in each state and jurisdiction. Humanities Montana is home to the [Montana Center for the Book](#). Each year, the

affiliate centers for the book select an adult and a youth title to represent their state at the **National Book Festival**. The chosen titles celebrate the unique literary heritage of the state.

- Organized [Festival Near You](#) events for the Montana Great Reads authors
- Planned and implemented (ongoing) a statewide read of the Great Reads titles: [One Book Montana](#)
- Built a new webpage to leverage the launch as a reminder to constituents of the important work that Humanities Montana has been doing for 50 years.
- Consulted with other state councils and the Montana State Library to plan the statewide read maintaining a mission-aligned focus on public libraries
- In consultation with both authors, created video content, negotiated discounts with publishers, prepared Reader's Guides for participants.
- To date, 26 libraries have submitted a Survey of Interest to host a book club.

