

Humanities Montana
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
April 8, 2026

Present: Ray Ekness (Chair), Glory Blue Earth (Vice Chair), Esther Beth Sullivan, Slaven Lee and Karen Reiff

Staff: John Knight (Interim Executive Director)

The meeting convened at 10:01am.

Ray Ekness called the meeting to order and outlined the agenda.

Committee Meeting Updates

- Beth Sullivan provided an update from the Finance Committee, noting that meetings are scheduled for late April and May. She invited John Knight to provide an update on the FY25 audit. John shared concern regarding the length of time the audit is taking and noted that he communicated this concern to the auditors on April 6, 2026. He stated that he still expects the audit documents to be available in advance of the May Finance Committee meeting and ahead of the full board meeting, and that he will remain in close contact with Beth and the Executive Committee should the timeline shift.
- Karen noted that she had no updates since the April 2, 2026 Special Meeting of the Board and shared that the next meeting is scheduled for the summer.
- Slaven provided an update on the first ad hoc Programs and Outreach Committee meeting, noting that discussion focused on the purpose of the committee and on identifying programmatic and fundraising priorities as funding is available. Slaven invited John to briefly speak about the case for support. John noted that a second draft of the document will be reviewed at the next meeting and that it is being developed as a donor-facing resource for staff and board members.

NEH Funding Landscape

- John provided an update on the NEH funding landscape, noting that little has changed since the April 2, 2026 Special Meeting of the Board.
- He shared that the Federation of State Humanities Councils has circulated a proposed FY26 NEH funding plan and noted that it remains the expectation that funding for state humanities councils will become available in May. He also noted that the proposed plan reflects a reduction in the total funding available to state humanities councils

Proposed Agenda for May Board Meeting

- John walked the committee through the May Board Meeting agenda, noting that changes will likely occur. No comments were given by the committee about adjusting the agenda.
- Ray noted that Executive Sessions at May Board Meeting will revolve around how to support Jenny Bevill and John, and grow the organization programmatically.

John departed the meeting at 10:21am.

Executive Director Search Committee

- The search committee (Ray Ekness, Karen Reiff and Slaven Lee (Glory was unable to rejoin the Zoom session after it was accidentally ended) met after the executive committee meeting. There was discussion about ways to move forward with the search. The committee came to unanimous consensus on taking a plan to the full board for their consideration at the next board meeting in May.

The meeting adjourned at 10:40am.