

Humanities Montana
Board Executive Committee Meeting
November 5, 2025

Present: Esther Beth Sullivan (Chair), Ray Eckness (Chair-elect), Lynda Grande (Finance), Mary Hernandez (Governance), John Knight (Interim ED)
Absent: Jeanette Fregulia (Vice Chair and Grants)

Meeting Convened at 10:02am

Beth called the meeting to order and outlined the agenda, which would focus on updates regarding the leadership transition, recent grant submissions and the year-end fundraising campaign, board openings, and the consideration of staff insurance benefit policies. Beth noted that this would be the last Executive Committee Meeting of the calendar year.

Interim Executive Director Updates

- John provided an update on his workflow and schedule during his transition into the Interim Executive Director role. He noted that since returning to Humanities Montana, the software used to manage records and policies has changed. He has maintained a structured schedule to learn the new systems and review organizational documents.
- John has also been meeting with HM partners, contractors, and staff as part of his onboarding process and to align with workflows previously established by Jill.
- He shared that he will travel to Washington, D.C., during the second week of November to attend the FSHC Annual Business Meeting.
- John reported that the MT250 grant was submitted during the last week of October and provided an overview of the proposed program's timeline and scope, contingent on funding.
- Finally, he noted that the End-of-Year Appeal would be sent to AlphaGraphics by the end of the day, with printing and mailing expected to begin in the second week of November.

Finance and Audit Committee:

- Lynda noted that it has been standard practice for the Finance and Board Chairs to receive credit card and invoice statements from the accountant during the third week of each month. She also reported that no budget reconciliation has been received since July 2026.
- Beth and Lynda added that reconciliations are typically completed about one week after those statements are distributed. John confirmed he will work with the accountant to ensure the monthly reconciliation schedule is maintained.
- The committee reviewed the FY26 budget, emphasizing the need for clearer reporting of actual bank balances. It was recommended that a portion of available funds be placed in a certificate of deposit (CD) to serve as a three-month reserve.
- John shared that he had reviewed the FY26 budget with Jill prior to her departure and noted that it remains fluid due to projected revenue. The board agreed to establish stronger metrics for tracking and interpreting budget actuals in the new calendar year.

- Mary estimated that Humanities Montana will need approximately 350 recurring monthly donors to sustain operations.
- Lynda asked about donor giving categories. John confirmed he will include program categories and the Mellon Match narrative in all upcoming website and social media updates.

Governance Committee

- Beth reported that three applications have been received for appointments to the Board of Directors. She noted that Humanities Montana is awaiting at least one additional appointment from the Governor's Office and plans to review 2-3 more applications in 2026. The goal for 2026 is to maintain a 12-member Board of Directors.
- Mary noted that she would like to follow up with John to determine whether he is familiar with any of the current applicants and to discuss their potential fit for the board. This discussion would be scheduled before the next Governance meeting on November 10.
- Mary further discussed reaching out to previous applicants for board appointments.

Other Agenda Items - Insurance Rates and Policy Discussion for FY26

- Beth noted that employee benefits are expected to become more expensive in the new year and recommended that the Executive Committee affirm the current insurance policy for FY26.
- Lynda asked clarifying questions about how Humanities Montana currently covers staff benefits. Beth explained that past changes to benefits had been a sensitive issue among staff and that any adjustments would require a formal policy revision.
- Beth moved, and Lynda seconded: if 2026 health insurance rates exceed the \$1500 cap as laid out in the policy handbook, HM will cover the staff member's premium; and across the coming year the policy handbook will be revised to cover the staff member's premium only for health benefits (not dependents or spouses). Motion approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:41am.