

Community Engagement Committee Minutes
Wednesday, Jan 31, 2024 via Zoom.

Attendees: Jeanette Fregulia, Chair, Jen Corning, Lathie Poole, Arian Randall and guest Clark Whitehorn.

Staff: Jill Baker, Executive Director, John Knight, Programs Director

Chairperson Jeanette Fregulia welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:34 pm.

Discussions:

Programs Update:

An end-of-the-year program report was provided to the committee. John was available to answer any questions about the report. The committee provided positive feedback and Jill noted the percentage of programs that were taking place in rural communities. Additionally, she and John noted that they have been recruiting new speakers to build up HM's agricultural humanities and veteran offerings. John left the meeting at 3:45 pm.

A question was then raised about the vision and purpose of this new committee. Jeanette and Jill reviewed the language in the by-laws:

Community Engagement Committee. There shall be a Community Engagement Committee. The chair shall recommend directors to serve on the Community Engagement Committee and recommend its chair. The board shall appoint the committee members and its chair by resolution. Specific duties of the Community Engagement Committee include:

- A. Provide oversight of Humanities Montana programming;
- B. Serve in an advisory capacity for any new programming;
- C. Provide support with special events, including the Governor's Humanities Awards;
- D. Provide support with donor outreach and communications with stakeholders.

Jill explained that the committee would be focusing on the board's role in supporting externally facing activities like advising programming, supporting special events, and donor outreach. This may also include connecting staff with communications and marketing opportunities. Staff will still be responsible for getting the work completed, and the board will have more of an advisory role in the various areas of focus. Jeanette noted that because it is such a new committee there will be some time spent further refining the purpose, especially in its first year. Jill mentioned that the committees will be reviewing their draft charters at the upcoming board meeting so that may be an opportunity to further define their role and duties.

MT Center for the Book

Jill shared that Humanities Montana is the state affiliate for the Library of Congress' Center for the Book. The purpose of MT Center for the Book is to promote literature, reading, libraries, and the literary arts, through publications, events, media, In the past, HM coordinated the Montana

Festival of the Book as its main activity until 2015. Now the Montana Festival of the Book is its own nonprofit organization based in Missoula. Since then, the program has continued to offer the Montana Center for the Book Prize (Great Reads from Great Places), Big Sky Reads book clubs, the Montana Authors Project (MAP), as well as disseminate information about Montana writers and literature.

Jill reported that the Library of Congress Great Reads from Great Places book prize is due by March 28, 2024. Previously, HM staff have chosen the recipient of this book prize. However, this is an opportunity for the board to engage in and help to redefine this process, especially in 2025. The turnaround is quite short this year so staff will gather a short list of recommended books from local independent bookstores across the state that have been published in the last year by authors who live in Montana. Jill will present the list to the board at the upcoming board meeting and discuss how to best move forward with the decision this year.

Review FY24 Development Plan

Jill requested feedback on the Development Plan for FY24. The committee had no questions or concerns about the plan. Jill wrote the plan so that once a Development Director is hired, they will have direction and guidance for how to best move forward with fundraising. Currently, there are over 20 applications for the position and at least 10 who are well qualified. Phone interviews will start next week, and final interviews will take place Feb 28 and 29.

Jill then asked the committee for their feedback regarding the future of the Governor's Humanities Awards. While the awards were appreciated and raised awareness of the humanities in the state, it is a time intensive event that has not raised enough money to cover expenses. She recommended that the board discuss this further and explore other ways to recognize humanists. The committee agreed that the gala format is a thing of the past in fundraising. There was some discussion about the original purpose of the Governor's Humanities awards and concern about honoring the legacy of the previous honorees. As a result, it was recommended to add this topic as a discussion item at the upcoming board meeting.

Schedule Meetings for FY24

The committee discussed scheduling a regular meeting either monthly or bimonthly in order further discuss its charter and develop the Great Reads for Great Places process for the 2025 book prize. Jill and Jeanette will touch base in the next week to make recommendations to the committee.

Jenette adjourned the meeting at 4:38 pm. JB