**Humanities Montana Board Meeting, Virtual, February 3-4, 2022, Minutes**

**February 3, 2022**

**Present:** Caroline Bitz, Glory Blue Earth-Highley, Carol Bradley, April Charlo, Jennifer Corning, David Dietrich (Vice Chair), Jamie Doggett, Jessica Flint, Jeanette Fregulia, Debbie Garland, Carla Homstad (Chair), Susan Hughes, Ashby Kinch, Lathie Poole, Laura Mitchell Ross, Francine Spang-Willis, and Esther Beth Sullivan. **Absent:** Lynda Grande, Ramey Growing Thunder, and Eric Sanders. **Staff:**  Kim Anderson, Taylor Mudford, Sara Stout, Randi Tanglen, and Jodi Todd.

**Welcome, land acknowledgement, and meeting protocols**

The Humanities Montana board of directors convened over Zoom on Thursday, February 3, at 5:03 pm. Carla Homstad welcomed everyone. David Dietrich offered the land acknowledgement. Carla gave a brief overview of the meeting protocols, asking board members to not use the chat to make substantive comments. The chat will only be used to let the chair know if a board member has a comment to share with the full board.

**New chair goals for 2022**

Carla’s goals for her term as chair are to bring cohesion to the board during a time of virtual meetings and to encourage the courage to question our assumptions as well as the compassion to understand others’ points-of-view.

**Introduction of new board members**

David introduced new board members, Francine Spang-Willis and Esther Beth Sullivan. Both new members gave brief overviews of their family, professional, and academic backgrounds and expressed their excitement to be board members.

**Agenda review and approval of minutes**

Carla asked if there were any questions regarding the agenda for the board meeting.

**David Dietrich moved to approve the minutes of the September 23-24, 2021, board meeting. Jamie Doggett seconded. A poll was administered, and 17 votes were received. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Jamie Doggett moved to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2021, special meeting of the board. Jeanette Fregulia seconded. A poll was administered, and 16 votes were received. The motion passed with 16 votes to approve and one abstention.**

**What do the humanities mean to you?**

Carla facilitated a board discussion on “what do the humanities mean to you.” Board members reflected on the role of the humanities in their lives and the role of Humanities Montana in the state.

**Executive Director report**

Randi Tanglen introduced Taylor Mudford, the interim office manager.

Earlier in the week, the NEH sent its report and close-out letter from the June 2021 virtual site visit. Randi encouraged all board members to read the report and close-out letter on their own, but discussed some of the recommendations offered by the NEH. Some of the recommendations have already been or are being addressed, but others, such as building and expanding core programs and eliminating other programs, will need board input during strategic planning. Beth Sullivan commented on the glowing nature of the report and offered congratulations.

Randi next gave an update on staff transitions and restructuring. Three new positions will be hired over the next few months to account for staff resignations and the July 1 retirement of Kim Anderson. A permanent office manager, a programs officer, and a grants officer will be hired in the coming months. The goal is to have at least some of these new hires onboarded by the spring board meeting.

Humanities on the Hill will be virtual this year, enabling board members and all staff to participate in meetings with Montana’s congressional delegation in early March. Randi will send out an invitation for board participation after the board meeting.

**Strategic planning process committee report**

David Dietrich and Jennifer Corning are co-chairs of the strategic planning process committee.

The committee has been active since the last board meeting and has selected a facilitator, Ned Cooney of Echo Ventures Consulting. The full board will have the opportunity to participate in five virtual strategic planning sessions with Ned to be scheduled between March 2022 and May 2022.

**Grants committee report**

Jennifer gave an update on the grants committee report. Humanities Montana has received 12 grant applications for the April 20 deadline. The committee recommends funding the following:

* James Welch Literary Festival, Aasaisstto Language Society, East Glacier, $10,000
* First Voices, Thresh Inc, NYC, $2,000
* Talk Series: Language Reclamation and Beyond, UM, Missoula, $5,000
* Story of Butte, Butte Citizens for Preservation and Revitalization, Butte, $7,500
* Blackfeet Ethnoecology Mapping Project, Blackfeet Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Browning, $6,100
* Philosophy Symposia Series, Merlin CCC, Helena, $3,750
* Buckskin and Cloth Dresses, April Martin, Busby, $4,000 (research fellowship grant)

Jennifer provided a brief overview of each application. Carla asked why Unreserved’s application was not funded; Kim explained that the application’s budget was not clear, but that Unreserved would be encouraged to resubmit at the next grant deadline.

Kim shared data regarding grants awarded in 2021. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of grants awarded in 2021 were to BIPOC-led or BIPOC-focused projects. Thirty-six percent (36%) of awards went to youth projects. Eighteen percent (18%) of awards went to rural communities. The goal is to keep rural grant funding around 33%.

Carla asked if there was crossover between BIPOC-led projects and rural grant applications. Kim confirmed there was some overlap. Debbie Garland asked if Kim had ideas for increasing rural grant applications and projects. Kim indicated it would be a good topic for strategic planning to address.

**Program committee report and programs update**

Jeanette Fregulia thanked the committee for their work. She highlighted that several upcoming program events will be virtual and encouraged board members to attend. She announced that the committee will schedule a “Bring Your Own Book” club meeting for board members to build community, since the board has not been meeting in person.

Kim gave a few updates on programs. Despite programs being virtual, 25 Montana Conversations have been booked so far in fiscal year 2022, along with 15 Speakers in the Schools programs. Kim gave an overview of the A More Perfect Union (AMPU) initiative, a special program funded through the NEH. AMPU funding will support this year’s Gather Round DIY toolkits. The kits will include U.S. poet laureate Joy Harjo’s anthology *Living Nations, Living Word*s and will be launched through two outdoor “humanities in the wild” events. There will also be a series of virtual discussions with Mandy Smoker Broadus and a possible culminating event with Mandy and Joy Harjo. The second aspect of this program is a partnership with the Big Sky Film Institute’s Native Film Club in high schools and panels with Indigenous filmmakers at their documentary film festival in February.

The Democracy Project is active at three libraries—Missoula, Billings, and Whitehall. The groups will showcase their processes and projects in late spring.

**Closing comments**

Carla gave a brief overview of the February 4 meeting agenda and then concluded the meeting at 6:45 pm.

**Friday, February 4, 2022**

**Present:** Glory Blue Earth-Highley, Carol Bradley, April Charlo, Jennifer Corning, David Dietrich (Vice Chair), Jessica Flint, Jeanette Fregulia, Debbie Garland, Lynda Grande, Carla Homstad (Chair), Susan Hughes, Ashby Kinch, Lathie Poole, Laura Mitchell Ross, Eric Sanders, Francine Spang-Willis, and Esther Beth Sullivan. **Absent:** Caroline Bitz, Jamie Doggett, and Ramey Growing Thunder. **Staff:** Kim Anderson, Taylor Mudford, Sara Stout, Randi Tanglen, and Jodi Todd.

**Welcome and Public Comment**

The meeting was called to order at 1:02 pm. Carla Homstad welcomed the board and thanked them for their attendance. She asked for public comment; there were no public participants or comments.

**Board member spotlight**

Carla provided a board member spotlight of Jessica Flint, highlighting her background and her connection to the humanities and Montana.

**Trusteeship committee report**

Laura Mitchell Ross pointed out the NEH’s recommendation from the site visit report that Humanities Montana become more self-sufficient for funding and not as reliant upon the NEH. For several years, the trusteeship committee has been discussing the formation of a committee on philanthropy to enhance Humanities Montana’s outreach and fundraising, especially in rural parts of the state. The trusteeship committee has asked Sara Stout to create a process for moving forward with this initiative in the coming months.

Laura next highlighted the importance of board giving. In 2021, board giving was at 85%, compared to 100% in 2020. The trusteeship committee has developed a board participation document for the board members to sign, which was included in the board meeting notebook.

Carla asked about updating the board matrix. Laura discussed the work to build a balanced and effective board and what goes into finding and selecting board members. Carla asked a follow-up question from the committee minutes regarding when Eric Sanders and Jamie Doggett started their terms. Randi clarified that Eric’s and Jamie’s terms started in 2020 and expire at the end of 2022, when they will have the opportunity to renew for a second three-year term.

**Development report**

Sara Stout gave an overview of the organization’s development goals and outlook for 2022 and 2021’s development data. There was a 38% increase in donors in 2021 and lapsed donors decreased by 40%. She also gave an update on pending grant applications. When she concluded, she asked for any questions; several board members thanked Sara for her work.

**Finance and audit committee report**

Eric Sanders pointed the board to the October 2021 budget-to-actual report in the board meeting notebook. He reported that Humanities Montana ended FY21 in the black with a preliminary net income of $12,584. This doesn’t include any unspent NEH award funds. The most significant difference between the FY21 budget passed by the board and the actual results was $573,257 in NEH SHARP funding. This was offset by SHARP grantmaking of $531,195 and the difference of about $42,000 used for SHARP administration and SHARP-related programming expenses.

There is more of an NEH carry-forward revenue than originally planned. The actual carry-over is $222,338; Eric noted that the majority of this has already been obligated to existing projects in the FY22 budget passed by the board.

On the expenses side, personnel expenses came in under budget last year because Jodi now separately reports salary and benefit expenses for programs funded by other grants. Due to virtual programming and the pandemic, all direct program expenses, with the exception of grants, came in under budget. Due to NEH SHARP funding, grants were over budget. Eric also reported that the FY21 audit with JCCS is proceeding fine.

With only one month into the current fiscal year, actual expenses are in line with budgeted expectations. Jeanette asked about the negative net income on the December 2021 profit-and-loss sheet. Jodi Todd said the negative balance was because Humanities Montana recorded revenue in previous years that it is spending in the current fiscal year, using the Engelhard Foundation funding as an example. The apparent loss on the P&L sheet is due to accrual (rather than cash-based) accounting, and the negative number does not represent a debt owed.

Eric concluded by calling for the board members to report cost-share to match the NEH grant funds; Humanities Montana is about $60,000 behind in the cost-share and has until January 31, 2025 to make the match. Eric asked board members to consider joining the finance and audit committee and said the committee may recruit non-board members to join the committee in a non-voting, advisory capacity.

**Anti-racism audit report**

Carla introduced the racial equity audit report from Widerstand Consulting. She opened the floor for comment from board members. Several board members noted that the report offered important insights and recommendations to help the organization move forward in its racial equity efforts. There were also some questions and reservations about the report’s recommendations and if they are within the scope of Humanities Montana’s mission.

This discussion continued for about 40 minutes. As a next step, Carla formed an ad-hoc committee to study the report and how to use its recommendations. The committee will be co-chaired by April Charlo and Jeanette Fregulia. A call will be put out next week for five additional board members to join the committee.

**Action Item**

Carla stated that the recommendations for grant funding came to the board from the grants committee as a seconded motion. There was no additional discussion. David called the question and a poll was administered:

**Motion to approve grants committee recommendation to fund:**

* **James Welch Literary Festival, Aasaisstto Language Society, East Glacier, $10,000**
* **First Voices, Thresh Inc, NYC, $2,000**
* **Talk Series: Language Reclamation and Beyond, UM, Missoula, $5,000**
* **Story of Butte, Butte Citizens for Preservation and Revitalization, Butte, $7,500**
* **Blackfeet Ethnoecology Mapping Project, Blackfeet Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Browning, $6,100**
* **Philosophy Symposia Series, Merlin CCC, Helena, $3,750**
* **Buckskin and Cloth Dresses, April Martin, Busby, $4,000 (research fellowship grant)**

The motion passed unanimously.

**Final thoughts and schedule of next meetings**

Carla proposed meeting in person in May or June in Bozeman. A survey will be sent to the board to find a suitable date. Carla adjourned the meeting at 3:20 pm.