

Humanities Montana Board Meeting Minutes

Date: September 22-23, 2023

Location: KwaTaqNuk Resort & Casino, Polson, MT

Present: Glory Blue Earth, Carol Bradley, Jennifer Corning, David Dietrich, Ray Ekness (virtual), Jeanette Fregulia, Carla Homstad, Linda Grande, Lathie Poole, Esther Beth Sullivan, Clark Whitehorn (virtual)

Staff: Jill Baker (Executive Director), Megan Sundy (Grants Manager)

Absent: Jeremy Carl, David Cates, Ramey Growing Thunder, Mary Hernandez, Arian Randall

Board Chair David Dietrich called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, September 22. A quorum was present.

Beth Sullivan offered the land acknowledgment.

Consent Agenda

David gave a brief synopsis of utilizing a consent agenda to contract and save time during board meetings. Consent agendas involve a global approval of minutes from the last board meeting, committee meetings facilitated between the previous and current board meetings and other documents or reports that do not warrant additional discussion. David noted that if there are any items in the consent agenda that a board member would like to discuss further that item may be moved to the regular agenda.

At David's request, Lynda Grande gave an overview of the work done by the Governance Committee (formerly the Trusteeship Committee) since the June board meeting. David expressed his gratitude for all that was accomplished over the summer in preparation for the September meeting.

Additionally, David expressed the gravity of having a vote to remove a board member from the board, and that this was something he didn't take lightly. He reviewed the process of removing a board member as stated in the bylaws. The vote on the agenda is the result of the complete absence of participation in committee meetings, board meetings, and regular communications over the past year.

Carla Homstad moved to approve the items listed in the consent agenda and Jeanette seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Executive Director Report:

Jill Baker expressed her gratitude to the board for all their support, and for their volunteer time over the past few months attending committee meetings and reviewing grant proposals. She

acknowledged Randi's work and the positive state of the organization and the smooth transition of the ED role. She informed the board that throughout the board meeting they would be learning of the staff's progress with Humanities Montana's Strategic Plan. She is currently focusing her efforts on Priority Three: Refining Outreach and Development. She has been attending local HM outreach events and networking with cultural organizations, including attendance at the USS Committee Western Heritage Award Ceremony at State Capitol with the Montana Historical Society and traveling to Winnett to attend an HM program at their annual Harvest Dinner on Saturday, September 30th. Additionally, she plans to meet individually with as many current and past board members and staff as possible over the next year.

After the completion of the September board meeting, Jill will focus her time on building a development/communications plan for HM. It will be important to set goals and develop strategies before hiring a Development Communications Officer for HM. She noted that it typically takes two years for new development staff to raise enough funds to cover their own salary before significant ROI is realized.

Programs Report

John Knight was not able to attend the board meeting as he was taking unexpected bereavement leave. Jill Baker and Jeanette Fregulia delivered the report in John Knight's absence.

Jill acknowledged the great work that John is doing and the effort he put into this report. Focusing on HM's Strategic Framework Priority Two: Realigning Programs, Jill reported that she and John are currently reviewing and evaluating existing programs. John has been doing an amazing job conducting outreach and building relationships in rural communities as demonstrated through the program report shared in the board packet.

Jeanette reported on the decision for the Programs Committee to transition to the Community Engagement Committee. She described the challenges of discussing the distinctions between governance and oversight of programs versus the operations of programming. Jennifer Corning and Carol Bradley commented on whether the renamed committee has enough support in terms of committee members and requested increased collaboration opportunities with the grants committee.

Jill mentioned recent conversations with staff at the Montana State University Extension Office on facilitating local civic conversations around the state. This led to a broader conversation about ways in which HM can support building capacity for civil discourse across the state. This is an area of need as organizations have been reaching out to HM to request facilitators for challenging conversations. Jill mentioned [The Conversation Project](#) offered by Oregon Humanities as a model for this type of programming.

Meeting break – 10:50 a.m.

The meeting reconvened at 11:10 a.m.

Finance Committee Business:

Finance Chair, Carla Homstad, reviewed the July 31, 2023, Financial statements with the board. The organization is currently in a good financial position. Jill provided a contingency plan for the board in case of a government shutdown. HM currently has a savings fund available to cover essential business expenses for at least 60 days. Carla provided a high-level overview of the proposal FY24 HM budget and answered questions.

Jeanette Fregulia moved to approve the July 31, 2023, Balance Sheet and Budget vs. Actual Financial Statements, Jennifer Corning seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Carol Bradley moved to approve the FY24 budget, Jeanette Fregulia seconded, motion passed unanimously.

The board brainstormed high-level fundraising opportunities including bringing in a luminary speaker like David Brooks.

Break for lunch at 12:00 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 1:16 p.m.

Grantee presentation

A thoughtful presentation was provided by AERO/Abundant Montana (see slide presentation). HM previously awarded a grant to fund two articles written in their Local Food Guide publication.

Grants Committee Business:

Committee Chairperson Jennifer Corning provided a summary of the award recommendations including:

FULL FUNDING (6 PROJECTS)

- FILM + VIDEO - \$10,000, The Story of Us: The Women Who Shaped Montana, The Extreme History Project
- FILM + VIDEO - \$5,500, Stars & Stories: Northern Cheyenne, the Morning Star People, Montana State University Billings
- FILM + VIDEO - \$10,000, USS Montana Documentary project, USS Montana Committee, Inc.
- FILM + VIDEO - \$10,000, Connecting the Grizzly, International League of Conservation Photographers
- REGULAR - \$5,000, New Songs for the Butte Mining Camp Essay Book, The Clark Chateau
- REGULAR - \$4,383, Indigenous Heritage Celebration: Language & Art, C.M. Russell Museum

PARTIAL FUNDING (6 PROJECTS)

- FILM + VIDEO - \$5,000, Unearthed: Native Peoples' Ancient Lives Revealed in the Greater Yellowstone, Documentary Educational Resources
- REGULAR - \$3,000, Rocky Mountain Kid Lit Festival, Billings Public Library

- REGULAR - \$5,000, Montana Media Lab's Threatened Podcast, University of Montana
- REGULAR - \$4,000, Native Filmmaker Initiative (NFI) Film Club, Big Sky Film Institute
- REGULAR - \$4,000, 'The Write Question' a Montana Public Radio program and podcast, University of Montana
- REGULAR - \$5,000, Norman Maclean Festival presents 'Finding our Place in Nature: The Power of Story', Alpine Artisans, Inc.

DECLINE FUNDING (9 PROJECTS)

- FILM + VIDEO - \$8,000, Clara Boone, MINT Film MT
- FILM + VIDEO - \$10,000, "Mother Range: Rearing Hope in America's Livestock Industry," AERO
- FILM + VIDEO - \$10,000, Documentary Film "Why Should I Care?" The Homeless in Helena, Hands On Global, Inc.
- FILM + VIDEO - \$8,000, Taking the Reins, Center for Independent Documentary, Inc.
- FILM + VIDEO - \$8,000, Climate Aid: Voices of the Forest, The Montana Project
- REGULAR - \$10,000, Life in the Land, The Common Ground Project
- REGULAR - \$2,275, 3rd Annual Winter Lodge Rendezvous, Montana Playwrights Network
- REGULAR - \$5,419, Expert Lecture Series and Publication for WITHIN: Louis Still-Smoking and Josh Isaiah, Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art
- REGULAR - \$5,000, The Centering Indigenous Knowledge Series, University of Montana

TOTAL RECOMMENDED AWARD: \$70,883.00

David Dietrich asked for a motion to approve the recommended subawards, Lynda Grande motioned, Carla Homstad seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Grants Report

Grants Manager Megan Sundy provided updates on her progress with the HM Strategic Framework Priority One: Re-Energize Grantmaking. Over the last year she has focused on outreach and engagement efforts including co-facilitating grant writing workshops, conducting informational webinars and focus groups with grantees.

As a result, there will be some changes in FY24 including shifting the grant application deadlines to December 1, April 1, and August 1 each year. Increasing the amount for mini (formerly opportunity) grants from \$1000 to \$2000. There will also be updated categories for grants to include project (formerly regular) grants, multimedia grants, and film/video grants. This will assist with the review process. Additionally, Megan and Jill will be looking at revamping the Public Humanities Fellowship offering in FY24.

Ad Hoc Governance Committee Business:

Carla Homstad and Lynda Grande gave a final report on the progress that the Ad-Hoc Committee made over the past year. The work of the Ad-Hoc Committee will now be incorporated into the work of the newly formed Governance Committee. David thanked them for all their work. Carla then asked the board to consider a motion from the Ad Hoc Governance Committee:

Motion to approve the change from the Programs Committee to the Community Engagement Committee. Jeanette Fregulia moved to approve, Carla Homstad seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Governance Committee Business:

David asked board members to consider the following motions for approval:

Motion to remove Ramey Growing Thunder from the board of directors due to chronic absenteeism, Lynda Grande moved, Jeanette Fregulia seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Motion to approve the Governance Committee's approved changes to the Bylaws restructuring the committees and their duties as written in the updated Board Bylaws document in the board notebook. The board's standing committees will now include Executive, Governance, Finance/Audit, Grants, and Community Engagement. Lynda Grande moved, Jeanette Fregulia seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Motion to approve a change to the bylaws that increases the grant amount that requires board approval from over \$1000 to over \$2000. Lynda Grande moved, Jeanette Fregulia seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Jennifer Corning moved to approve the nominations from the Governance Committee and appoint Tim Wilson and Karen Reiff to the Board of Directors, Jeanette Fregulia seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Lynda Grande moved to approve e the nominations from the Governance Committee to elect 2024 Slate of Officers of David Dietrich as Chair, and Esther Beth Sullivan as Vice Chair., Jeanette seconded, no nominations from the floor, with no nominations from the floor Lynda passed out the paper ballots.

Jill Baker counted secret ballots; Megan Sundy served as a witness.

Jill announced the results that David Dietrich will serve as Board Chair and Beth Sullivan serve as Vice Chair in 2024.

Discussion ensued about FY24 board meeting locations and ideas about needed board training. Clark suggested discussing how board members can be brand ambassadors and David suggested the group discuss fundraising ideas on Saturday.

David Dietrich motioned to adjourn the meeting until Saturday morning at 9 a.m., Lynda Grande seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 3:19 p.m. MJHS and JB

Saturday, September 23, 2023

Location: KwaTaqNuk Resort & Casino, Polson, MT

Present: Glory Blue Earth, Carol Bradley, Jennifer Corning, David Dietrich, Ray Ekness (virtual), Jeanette Fregulia, Carla Homstad, Linda Grande, Lathie Poole, Clark Whitehorn (virtual)

Staff: Jill Baker (Executive Director)

Absent: Jeremy Carl, David Cates, Ramey Growing Thunder, Mary Hernandez, Esther Beth Sullivan

Board Chair David Dietrich called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 23rd. A quorum was present.

He asked for public comment with no response.

He then proposed the following agenda items:

Discussion about the board's role in Strategic Priority Three: Refine Outreach and Development and Strategic Priority Four: Enrich Organizational and Board Culture. The board agreed to this agenda.

Strategic Priority Three: Refine Outreach and Development:

Clark shared that he would like to do some outreach on behalf of Humanities Montana while he is attending conferences around the state and region. Jill offered to look at the current inventory of marketing materials for him to bring with him. The board brainstormed other opportunities to support HM in their communities as ambassadors at local events and with other community members who are passionate about humanities. They requested some bookmarks and business card sized handouts to take with them to events. Jill will follow up with HM's graphic designer.

Strategic Priority Four: Enrich Organizational and Board Culture:

David recommended that the board focus on building comradery and culture in FY24. Carla agreed to interview board members to share at upcoming board meetings over the next year. The board also discussed coordinating a virtual book club. Carol will coordinate this activity for the board with Jill's support setting up Zoom. Jeanette offered to coordinate a board/community gathering in Helena during the February board meeting.

Jill mentioned that future board meetings will likely be a half day on Friday afternoon, and a half day on Saturday morning with one overnight stay. She and David will determine the agenda for the February meeting and determine if that will fit the needs of the organization and board. Jill

also mentioned an opportunity to collaborate with the Foundation for Montana History in Missoula during the June board meeting. She will gather additional information to share with David and Beth.

Other:

Before adjourning, Carla brought forward a concern about the fairness of having some board members reviewing only a few grants of their choosing and whether that would skew the results. After much discussion, it was agreed that it should be addressed in the Grants Committee charter. The board generally agreed that all members of the grants committee would ideally review every proposal. Jill mentioned that she and Megan were researching ways to make the review load more reasonable for everyone and acknowledged that reviewing the most recent round of applications was challenging due to the high volume and short turnaround.

Jill thanked everyone for their feedback and time.

David adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m. JB