

Humanities MONTANA

MINUTES

Board of Directors Meeting
Helena, MT
February 23-24, 2024

OUR MISSION: Humanities Montana serves multicultural communities through stories and conversation. We offer experiences that nurture imagination and ideas by speaking to Montanans' diverse history, literature, and philosophy.

- **STRATEGIC PRIORITY ONE [SP1]: RE-ENERGIZE GRANTMAKING**
- **STRATEGIC PRIORITY TWO [SP2]: REALIGN PROGRAMS**
- **STRATEGIC PRIORITY THREE [SP3]: REFINE OUTREACH AND DEVELOPMENT**
- **STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOUR [SP4]: ENRICH ORGANIZATIONAL AND BOARD CULTURE**

Attendance:

Board of Directors: Glory Blue Earth, Carol Bradley, Jeremy Carl, David Cates, Jennifer Corning, David Dietrich, Ray Ekness, Jeanette Fregulia, Linda Grande, Mary Hernandez, Carla Homstad, Lathie Poole, Karen Reiff, Esther Beth Sullivan, Clark Whitehorn, Tim Wilson. Arian Randall was absent on Friday, but attended Saturday's board meeting.

Staff: Jill Baker, Executive Director

Guest: Susan Howlett, Consultant

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23

[SP4] A New Board Member Orientation took place from 10 am to 12 pm in the meeting room at Residence Inn Helena, 2500 East Custer Avenue. The Orientation was led by David Dietrich, Esther Beth Sullivan and Jill Baker. Topics covered included Board Responsibilities: duties, structure and processes as well as an Organizational Overview including a fiduciary, legal aspects as well as accessing guiding documents.

[SP3] A strategic board retreat was held with Susan Howlett beginning at 1 pm. During this highly interactive and engaging session the board learned more about HM's Development Plan including how to be strategic governors, compelling ambassadors and effective donor stewards. This session ended at 5:30 PM.

[SP4] A group dinner was hosted at Benny's Bistro following the retreat.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2024

LOCATION: The Foundation for Montana History, 1750 North Washington Street

A tour of The Foundation for Montana History was provided by Charlene Porsild, President/CEO, before the business meeting started.

[SP4] Board Chair David Dietrich called the meeting to order at 9 am. He welcomed everyone and noted 100% attendance of the board signifying a quorum.

He then asked for public comment. There was no response, so he asked Esther Beth Sullivan to provide the Indigenous Peoples and Land Acknowledgement. Jeremy Carl asked that the minutes reflect his opinion that a land acknowledgement is a leftist activity. David responded by stating that the purpose of a land acknowledgment is to recognize and give respect to the Indigenous peoples who have long lived where we are meeting as well as the significant Native population who live and work in our state. He also reminded the board that he included the history of miners and settlers in Helena for his land acknowledgment during Friday's orientation. Beth provided the land acknowledgment and Mary Hernandez read HM's mission statement.

David provided his opening remarks and expressed his gratitude for the previous day's strategic retreat with Susan Howlett. He thanked Jill, Beth and Mary for their work in putting together the new format for the board meeting agenda.

[SP4] Carla shared board member spotlights for Tim Wilson and Glory Blue Earth. Both Tim and Karen Reiff were recognized and welcomed as new board members.

David asked for approval of the agenda and consent agenda as presented. Carol Bradley so moved. David Cates seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

[SP1/2/3/4] Consent Agenda:

- Board Minutes—Sept 22-23, 2023 and Jan 3, 2024
- Finance Committee Minutes—Jan 24, 2024, with correction
- Governance Meeting Minutes—Jan 31, 2024
- Grants Committee Minutes—Jan 30, 2024
- Community Engagement Committee Minutes—Jan 31, 2024
- Executive Director Report
- Development Plan FY24
- Organizational Strategic Action Plan FY24
- Grants Report
- Programs Report

- Approve the following updates to HM Personnel Policy Manual
 - Employees may use sick leave after 30 days of employment.
 - Employees may use vacation time after 90 days of employment.

[SP1/2/3/4] Finance and Audit Committee Action Items— Finance Chair Lynda Grande and Executive Director Jill Baker presented the October 31, 2023 and December 31, 2023 financial reports as recommended, with correction, from the finance committee for approval. Mary Hernandez seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Jill noted that HM has significant NEH Carry-Over Funds- \$293,620. This is a result of the suspension of live programming during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as staffing transitions. Jill recommended that HM continue to spend down funds through qualified re-grants and programming over the next two years to put money into Montana communities and cultural organizations as much as possible. Jill is also considering additional one-time organizational investments in HM will serve the nonprofit in the long-term as well as building up the Montana Center for the Book program. It is best practice to spend federal funds in the year that they are awarded and to avoid having significant carry over funds with NEH as these dollars may only be used as expensed; they cannot be saved or invested. She will build additional spending recommendations that align with HM's strategic goals into the FY25 budget.

[SP4] Governance Committee Action Items— Committee Chair Mary Hernandez facilitated the annual signing of the Conflict of Interest, Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct Forms. She reviewed the importance of completing the board travel reimbursement forms and recording board cost match for volunteer hours on a regular basis.

She then asked each committee to meet for 30 minutes to review and update their committee charter/job description, determine if any bylaws changes are necessary, discuss their strategic priorities for FY24, and report back to the Governance Committee by April 1st.

[SP3] Community Engagement Committee Discussion Items— Committee Chair Jeanette Fregulia reported that HM is rethinking the Governor's Humanities Awards, including how to best move forward with recognizing outstanding public humanities work in Montana. There was a passionate discussion about the meaningfulness of the awards for the honorees and concerns that HM has not yet replaced the event in terms of legacy. Jill reported that galas are no longer the best practice for nonprofit fundraisers, as was stated by Susan Howlett during Fridays' strategic session.

Therefore, she and the new Development Director will be researching other types of recognition events that will continue to honor awardees and their legacy.

Jeanette also reported that the Montana Center for the Book, a program of HM, is in the process of choosing an adult and youth book for the 2024 Great Reads from Great Places event during the National Book Festival hosted by the Library of Congress. In the past, staff has chosen this book based on recommendations from independent book stores in Montana. However, the Community Engagement Committee is researching other processes for choosing books in FY25.

[SP4] Mission Moment—Carol Bradley provided a Program Observation Report. She attended a Speakers in the Schools program in Belt on December 20th, 2023. She reported that Ednor Theriault’s program, “Finding Montana” was well received by high school students during their Career Day event. She noted that the students hooted and hollered when he was done.

[SP1] Grants Committee Action Items— Committee Chair Carla Homstad gave an overview of the four Community Project Grant applications (4 received, \$28,966 requested) that were approved and recommended from the committee for full funding which included:

- The Centering Indigenous Knowledge Webinar Series, University of Montana’s MT Campus Compact \$7,666 - Weighted Score: 91.0%
- The Montana Anthology, Working Quiet \$9,000 - Weighted Score: 90.2%
- Bringing the World to Eastern Montana and Eastern Montana to the World \$5,000 - Weighted Score: 89.8%
- 2024 Dillon Community Story Stroll, Dillon Public Library \$7,300 - Weighted Score: 89.3%

During the discussion, board members voiced concerns about The Montana Anthology application from Working Quiet, including Clark Whitehorn who raised questions about readiness and feasibility of the project for funding. As an executive editor for a nonprofit publishing business, he expressed that the applicants should have provided more information to justify funding. He felt the applicant needed to provide greater clarity about essay content, evidence of each author's commitment to the publication, and a letter of commitment from the publisher (including a target publication date and project timeline). He recommended that the board remove this grant from consideration for this round of funding and amend the motion to fully fund the other three projects. There were no objections from the other members of the board. The amended motion was seconded by Lynda Grande and passed unanimously.

[SP1/2/3/4] Executive Director Q & A– Jill Baker provided an update about the hiring process for the Development Director and answered questions from the board about best practices for programs and administrative costs as well as the staffing needs of the organization. With the pending hiring of the new Development Director, it was recommended that HM have a plan to receive an exceptional gift when the occasion presents itself.

David Dietrich offered his closing comments and thanked everyone for a productive meeting. He asked everyone to complete the board meeting evaluation form before they left and reminded them of the dates for the next two board meetings:

- Spring Meeting: June 14-15, 2024, Copper King hotel in Butte
- Fall Meeting: September 27-28, 2024, Grand Union in Fort Benton

David adjourned the meeting at 12:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted, JB