

Board of Directors Meeting
Bozeman, Montana
February 21-22, 2025

Board of Directors: Glory Blue Earth, Carol Bradley, Jeanette Fregulia (virtual, Vice Chair), Lynda Grande, Mary Hernandez, Lathie Poole, Karen Reiff (virtual), Esther Beth Sullivan (Chair), Clark Whitehorn

Excused: David Cates, Jennifer Corning, Tim Wilson, Arian Randall, Jeremy Carl, Ray Ekness

Staff: Jill Baker, Executive Director; Bailey Clarke, Development and Communications Associate; Jon Clarenbach, Fiscal Operations Director; Megan Hill Sundy, Grants and Evaluation Director; John Knight, Programs Director

FRIDAY, February 21st, 2025

A tour of MSU's American Indian Hall was provided by Walter Flemming, past board chair and recipient of the Governor's Humanities Award. After the tour, attendees met for a working session to discuss FY25 strategic priorities for the organization.

Additionally, staff reviewed the Humanities Montana Communications Toolkit with attendees.

A group dinner was held at the Tanglewood with speaker Philip Page and his wife Deb joining staff and board.

SATURDAY, February 22, 2025

Beth Sullivan, Board Chair, welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 8:47 am. A quorum was present.

Beth shared an invitation for public comment. John Knight, Programs Director, introduced Philip Page who spoke about his experience as a speaker with Humanities Montana and performed one of his original songs inspired by Charlie Russell. The board thanked him for attending and sharing his experience.

Beth called for a motion to approve the agenda. Mary made the motion, and Lynda seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Beth then called for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Mary made the motion, and Lynda seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Opening remarks from Beth Sullivan included an overview of the previous day's working session.

Mission Moment: Democracy Project: John Knight [SP2]

John shared the video that he and HM's Program Manager and Democracy Project coordinator, Jenny Bevill, developed to promote the Democracy Project. This is the video that was shared during their well-attended presentation at the National Humanities Conference in November 2024. He also celebrated with the board that HM was a recipient of the national Schwartz Prize at the conference.

John Knight left the meeting after his presentation.

Finance and Audit Committee — Lynda Grande [SP1/2/3/4]

Finance Chair, Lynda Grande, asked Jon Clarenbach to provide a report regarding the October 31, 2024, and December 31, 2024, Financial Reports. Jon shared that the FY24 has been closed out, about 2/3rds through the audit. Revenue of almost \$1.1M, a nearly 17% increase. As a result, there has been a noticeable growth in programs. The October 31st, 2024, Balance sheet shows \$201,000 in cash in savings, or 2-3 months of Cash on Hand. Additionally, there remains a significant amount of carry forward NEH funds to spend in FY25, more than originally projected. Jon then presented the December 31st, 2024, financial statements and answered questions. **Beth called for a motion to approve the October 31st, 2024, and the December 31st, 2024, financial statements. Lynda made the motion, Glory seconded, motion carried unanimously.**

Jill presented her recommendations for budgeting the additional carry forward NEH funds in FY25. She recommends increasing funding for programs including re-grants, Montana Conversations, and Big Sky Reads. Beth mentioned that this recommendation is in line with prior years when this body has prioritized carryover to go to programs and grants. **Beth call for motion to approve the FY25 Budget Revisions, Lynda moved, Mary second, motion carries unanimously.**

Lynda Grande and Jodi Todd, former staff accountant at HM, identified updates to the Financial Policies and Procedures manual last spring before Jodi's resignation. Based on their recommendations, Jon made changes to the manual which also include compliance with the updated CFR 200 grant guidelines and reflect current practices including weekly check writing and NEH grant drawdowns to improve cash flow. Additionally, the manual now includes a goal of working towards at least 3-6 months of unrestricted reserve funds to prepare for any potential gaps in funding. Jill also recommended having a board member added as a check signer in addition to staff.

Jon discussed that the main change was to operating reserve, 1 month of cash on hand is not best practice, ideally 3-6 months of cash on hand consisting of unrestricted funds for general operating. NEH funds cannot be used for cash savings. **Beth call for motion to approve the updates to the Financial Policies and Procedures Manual. Lynda moved, Mary second, motion carries unanimously.**

Grants Committee — Jeanette Fregulia [SP1]

Jill discussed the changing circumstances in operations resulting from the federal funding freeze on Jan 27th that was then rescinded on Jan 29th. The series of events delayed sending review materials to the committee until Wednesday afternoon in preparation for Thursday's committee

meeting. Additionally, she reassured the committee that all language provided in subaward guidelines and contracts states that subawards are dependent on the availability of NEH funding.

Regarding the subaward budget, Jill explained that HM has additional carry over funds from the past fiscal year to support programming and the Finance Committee has recommended an increase to the subaward budget for FY25. This increase will not impact the recommended funding for applications submitted but will allow HM to increase the number of available mini grants this year.

Megan Hill Sundy presented the following overview:

December 2024 Grant Application & Review Summary:

- Total number of applications reviewed by board members = 20
- Average number of evaluations (scores and comments) completed by board members for each application = 10
- Sum of funds requested from all applications = \$130,658
- Recommended available funding for Community Project grants = \$34,000
- Recommended available funding for Public Humanities Fellowships = \$16,000

Public Humanities Fellowships

Megan shared an overview of engaging experts to fellowship grant applications. This was Humanities Montana's second opportunity to involve external subject experts in the evaluation process and the first-time experts were involved in review of fellowship applications. Experts provided scores and comments for each application which were shared with the grants committee and referenced during discussion of each application. Humanities Montana recruited, trained, and involved the following expert reviewers in evaluation of the 2025 Public Humanities Fellowship applications:

- Mary Murphy, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor of history at MSU Areas of expertise include U.S. women's history, history of the American West, history and culture of food.
- Micah Chang, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of History at MSU Areas of expertise include the history of the American West, agricultural history, public history, and religious history.
- Crystal Alegria, Executive Director of The Extreme History Project Areas of expertise include community history, women's history, western social history, the history of place, archaeology education, participatory action research, and public archaeology.

Megan shared that fellowships are annual. The period of performance will be April 1st-Sept 30th. Added the public programming aspect to engage communities. Revised format gives us more confidence that we are increasing public aspect and carrying out HM mission.

HM received 8 applications total; 4 fellowships are being recommended by the Grants Committee including:

- Unequal and Unruly: Working Class Women Create Meaning in Montana 1910-1960
- The Lives of James P Beckwourth & the Disappearance of the Black West
- A Cheyenne Review: Producing Historical Articles Related to the Reservation Area
- Mapping Indigenous Montana

Community Project Grants

Megan reported that HM received 12 applications total. No projects scored less than 80%.

Megan walked through each recommendation from the Grants Committee:

- Centering Indigenous Knowledge webinar series
- Japanese Festival in Western Montana
 - Dillon, MT. Second year of the festival. First year had over 600 attendees
- River Arts & Books 2025 Speaker Series
 - New org in Roscoe, created a bookstore & a nonprofit for community programming
- Academic WorldQuest 2025: Honoring Indigenous Cultures in Montana and Around the World
- The Montana Tapestry: People & Places from 1776 to Today

Megan shared that it was a very competitive group of proposals and that the grants that don't get funded can reapply as long as their project timeline aligns with the award timeline

Total subaward recommendation: \$50,658

Public Humanities Fellowships: \$16,000

Community Project Grants \$34,658

Beth called for a motion to approve the Grants Committee's recommendations for Public Humanities Fellowships & Community Project Grants. Carol moved, Glory second, motion carries. Clark Whitehorn recused himself out of conflict of interest with authors.

The board took a short break. Jon Clarenbach and Megan Hill Sundy left the meeting.

Governance Committee — Mary Hernandez [SP4]

Mary shared that the Finance and Audit Committee recommended the revisions to their committee's responsibilities to the by-laws last fall. The Governance Committee has approved the changes and recommends them to the full board for final approval. **Beth called for motion to approve the changes to the by-laws, Clark moved, Lynda second, motion carries unanimously.**

Jill handed out the Annual Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Documents for board members to review and sign.

Mary asked Jill to review the proposed 2025 Board Standing Committee Calendar. As meetings are scheduled, she will fill in the dates. Jill recommended two changes to the committee calendar this year.

- First, Jill recommends that the executive committee meet on a regular basis. This will help address the recommendation from the ED evaluation to stay in regular communication with the board between meetings and provide an opportunity for increased coordination and alignment with committee work throughout the year.
- Jill's second recommendation is to hold a virtual regular board meeting in December each year to review the end of year financials and make budget adjustments if needed. Five months between the Fall and Winter board meetings creates a gap in communication and has resulted in calling special meetings in December for the past

two years.

The committee agreed to consider the December meeting recommendation, but no action was taken at this time.

Mary asked the board to review the 2025 Board Matrix to update your experience, skills and interests. The committee will use the updated matrix and responses to determine organizational needs to assist with recruitment for board openings in 2026.

Board Executive Session:

Jill and Bailey excused themselves. The board discussed the Executive Director annual review process for 2025. Staff were invited to return after the executive session ended.

Executive Director Q & A – Jill Baker [SP1/2/3/4]

Jill reported that she will attend Humanities on the Hill March 4-6, 2025, in Washington DC to lobby for the Federal State Partnership line item in the NEH budget which supports humanities councils including Humanities Montana. While HM cannot use any NEH funds for lobbying, unrestricted private funds may be used. Part of our Federation dues are used for lobbying at the federal level on our behalf. It was discussed that finance should include budget for next year to have a board member join.

Language included in the last newsletter encouraged supporters to call their representatives and share their stories about HM's impact. Jill expressed to board members a need for them to reach out to connections they may have in offices, call, or write a letter to our representatives in support of HM

Reviewed Communications Toolkit. Includes development language to assist board members with advocacy on HM's behalf, grant and program examples, and statewide impact data

Closing Comments – Beth Sullivan

Beth has been reviewing the NEH founding documents: the act that created the NEH & the NEA. "The purpose of this act resides in the fact that the arts & the humanities belong to all people of the United States. Not just the sciences, a great democracy is focused on arts and culture. And not just arts and cultures, but that you make decisions wisely."

Beth call for motion to adjourn, Carol moved, Mary second, motion carries

Adjourned at 11:53am. BC and JB

2025 Board Meeting Schedule

- Spring Meeting: May 30-31, 2025 (weekend after Memorial Day) Bonanza Creek Ranch, Martinsdale
- Fall Meeting: September 26-27, 2025 (last weekend in September) Missoula