

**Humanities Montana
Special Board of Directors Meeting**

Zoom meeting

December 11, 2025, 12:00pm

Board of Directors Present: David Cates, Jen Corning, Ray Ekness (Vice Chair), Mary Hernandez, Karen Reiff, Esther Beth Sullivan (Chair), Clark Whitehorn, and Tim Wilson

Staff Present: John Knight (Interim Executive Director)

Excused: Lynda Grande

Absent: Glory Blue Earth, Jeanette Fregulia

Opening Remarks and Actions

Beth called the meeting to order at 12:01am, welcoming the board to discussion on board nominees for 2026.

Beth provided an update of the outreach, application and selection process for board openings in 2026. She noted that 15 inquiries were had regarding openings, with eight applications being received.

Mary described the selection process with the Governance Committee in greater detail, and recommended a slate of four nominees; Sarah Bruya, Slaven Lee, Precious McKenzie and Jaci Webb be recommended to the board. Mary described the backgrounds and interests of each nominee.

Mary called for a motion to approve of the four nominees to the board.

David seconded the motion.

Beth asked for further discussion on the four board nominees. Tim spoke of his high confidence in the Governance Committee's recommendations. Clark asked John if he felt confident in working with the nominees. John affirmed his confidence in all four nominees.

Beth asked John to post a voting poll of nominees in the Zoom meeting. The board voted unanimously to elect all nominees to the Humanities Montana board, with terms beginning in January 2026.

Executive Director Report

John provided an update on fundraising efforts as of late 2026, noting that the organization had raised \$37,000 in unrestricted funds between April 29 and December 11 toward the \$50,000 Mellon Foundation match. He expressed confidence in the current fundraising, marketing, and communications strategies and shared his hopefulness about reaching the full match amount by year-end. When Mary asked about social media strategies, John explained that communications through the end of the calendar year will focus on fundraising, the Mellon match, and the relaunch of the Poet Laureate Program. He added that he would inquire with Digital Spark Media about posting an additional social media feature to support the Mellon match.

John provided a budget update, noting that the checking and savings accounts were stable. He also outlined the funds granted for the Poet Laureate Program by the Susan Scott Heyneman Foundation and reviewed the expected timeline for the MT250 Commission grant award notification.

Recognitions

Beth recognized the board members completing their terms on December 31, 2025: Lynda Grande, Jeanette Fregulia, Mary Hernandez, and Clark Whitehorn.

Ray recognized Beth for her leadership during 2026.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20pm.