Humanities Montana
Board of Directors Special Meeting Minutes
June 25, 2026

Present: Ray Ekness (Board Chair), Esther Beth Sullivan (Finance Chair), Slaven Lee (Programs and Outreach Chair), Karen Reiff (Governance Chair), Sara Bruya, Dan Charlton, David Cates, Mark Johnson, Jennifer Corning, Precious McKenzie, Sabre Moore, and Tim Wilson
Absent: Glory Blue Earth (Vice Chair)
Staff: John Knight (Executive Director)

The meeting convened at 2:01p.m. Board Chair Ray Ekness called the meeting to order and welcomed members. Newly appointed board member and Governor's Appointee Mark Johnson introduced himself and shared a brief overview of his background. Executive Director John Knight noted that newly appointed board member and Governor's Appointee Sabre Moore would be joining the meeting later due to a scheduling conflict.

FY25 Audit & Corrective Action Plan

- At 2:04p.m., Executive Director John Knight presented an overview of the FY25 Audit and Corrective Action Plan. He noted that the audit served not only to verify the accuracy of Humanities Montana's financial statements but also to strengthen the organization's financial systems, internal controls, and long-term financial infrastructure.
- John reported that Humanities Montana received an unmodified (clean) audit opinion for fiscal year 2025. He also reviewed the results of the required Single Audit, noting that the auditors identified no material weaknesses and no instances of noncompliance with federal requirements. John summarized the FY25 financial statements, including the organization's financial position, operating results, cash flow, and functional expenses, and reviewed the supporting schedules and reports included within the audit.
- John then summarized the three audit findings related to cash reconciliations, federal award approvals, and expenditure documentation. He explained that the findings reflected the operational challenges associated with significant staffing transitions and reduced administrative capacity following the April 2025 loss of federal funding, rather than concerns regarding the organization's financial stewardship, the accuracy of its financial statements, or compliance with federal requirements.
- Finally, John reviewed the corrective actions already implemented by management, including adoption of the Finance Procedures Manual and Approval Matrix, expanded contract accounting support, strengthened monthly reconciliation and financial review procedures, centralized documentation and records management, and plans to engage a Fractional Chief Financial Officer to continue strengthening Humanities Montana's financial infrastructure, grant compliance, and executive reporting.
- Beth Sullivan commented on the significant work undertaken by management and the Finance Committee during early 2026 to strengthen financial procedures, implement corrective actions, and establish sustainable internal controls. David Cates echoed

Beth's comments and expressed support for the organization's proactive approach to continuous improvement.

At 2:24p.m., Beth Sullivan moved to approve the FY25 Audit and Corrective Action Plan. David Cates seconded the motion at 2:25p.m. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously at 2:26p.m.

Board Introductions

- At 2:28p.m., Sabre Moore joined the meeting and introduced herself to the Board, sharing a brief overview of her professional background and previous involvement with Humanities Montana.

National Endowment for the Humanities Site Review

- At 2:31p.m., John provided an overview of the upcoming National Endowment for the Humanities Site Review scheduled for late August 2026. He explained that the review is part of NEH's regular evaluation process for state humanities councils and will focus on governance, financial stewardship, grant management, programs, strategic planning, fundraising, and organizational sustainability.
- He reviewed the anticipated timeline, the Board's role throughout the review, and the ongoing preparation process, including completion of the BoardSource governance assessment.

Upcoming Board Meeting

- At 2:35p.m., John reviewed plans for the October 2–3, 2026 Board of Directors meeting in Billings, including preliminary meeting logistics and planning updates.

Sara Bruya congratulated Ray Ekness on his recent appointment to the Montana Broadcasters Hall of Fame. Board members joined in recognizing Ray for this distinguished honor. **The meeting adjourned at 2:37p.m**.