

**Montana Historical Society
Board of Trustees Quarterly Meeting
October 17, 2024, 9 A.M. MDT
Opportunity Bank Conference Center
1550 Vandelay Ave
Helena, MT 59601**

CALL TO ORDER:

Tim Fox called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Jenni Carr took roll.

Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees members present: Kim Briggeman, Tim Fox, Mary Helland, Bill Jones, Lorna Kuney, Steve Lozar, Rachel Reckin, Ken Robison, Jude Sheppard, Bill Whitsitt, Candi Zion

Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees members attending virtually: Carol Donaldson (late), Pete Johnson, Jay Russell

Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees members excused: Norma Ashby Smith

MTHS Staff present: Molly Kruckenberg, Director; Emily McKeever, Administrator; Jenni Carr; Administrative Assistant/Membership Coordinator; Ginny Sullivan, Development Officer; Eve Byron, Public Information Officer; Laura Marsh, Outreach and Education; Roberta Gebhardt, Library and Archives Program Manager; Jennifer Bottomly-O'looney, Museum Program Manager; Jeff Bartos, Publications Program Manager; Damon Murdo, State Historic Preservation Program Manager

Review of Minutes:

Motion: Ken Robison moved to approve the July meeting minutes. Bill Jones seconded.

Discussion of the motion: Bill Whitsitt had an amendment to the last paragraph of page 3, "if there are other areas to increase efficiency and communicate MTHS funding." Jenni acknowledged the correction.

Motion: Ken Robison moved to approve the July minutes as amended; Bill Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

President's Report – Tim Fox

Tim thanked the board for their service to MTHS. He advised the board that the Impact Report would be going out to legislators as well as the members of MTHS. He stated it's an honor and privilege to serve with the staff and board members.

Director's Report – Molly Kruckenberg

MTHS Staff Update: MTHS continues to fill new positions as well as vacancies. In Administration: Peter Van Horn, IT System Support; Rebecca Jones, Assistant Store Manager. In Publications: Shannon Kelly, Assistant Editor (not present). In the Museum: Aaron Rau, Registrar (not present); Elise Perpignano, Graphic Designer; Briar Bell, Intern. The staff took turns introducing themselves.

Motion: Jude moved to approve all new employees; Candi seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Rowena Harrington retired at the end of August. Larry Ridge is retiring effective November 1. Three staff members received longevity awards: Dan Karalus – 5 years; Anthony Schrillo – 5 years; Jessica Bush – 10 years. Damon Murdo received the Governor’s Award for Excellence for creating the E10C Project, which developed a paperless conservation system.

Molly updated the trustees on the success of this year’s 51st Annual History Conference in Great Falls.

Molly continued her report with the quarter’s statistics in visitors, reference interactions, and outreach attendance. She shared current membership numbers, and website and social media interactions.

Montana Heritage Center Update: Work continues this quarter. Landscaping has really come together in the past few weeks, and the large boulders have been placed. Many fixtures and walls are going in internally. There is an optional tour after the meeting if trustees are interested in attending. Renovations in the historic building continue as well. The windows have been replaced, and concrete walls have come down to join the historic building to the new heritage center. Work continues on the interpretation and fabrication of exhibits. The big move has begun as staff move out of the historic building and into the addition. Museum staff are getting settled into their new offices in the new building, and MTHS staff are prepared to move artifacts. Kim asked if items would be moved within the building or if they had to go outside. Molly clarified that most items will be moved within, but a few larger items will need to go out and around the building.

Staff continue to work on administrative changes that will happen in conjunction with the new building – software, fees, and benefits.

Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building Space Use Survey for Non-State Employee Offices –
Molly Kruckenberg

Molly sent a space use survey out to the veterans and pioneers’ entities that are entitled to space within the building. They used the ROWS (remote office workspace) study provided by the state to analyze their use. Tim gave a brief history of the original agreement with the groups. Ken asked if the military artifacts that are going back in can be curated to be more presentable. Molly answered that it is up to the military group, which owns the artifacts, to decide if they want to collaborate with Museum Staff to create a more modern exhibit. Most recently, they have not accepted offers of collaboration. Molly has shared the results with the state space surveys specialist, who will make the allocation of space.

Legislative Update: MTHS has provided the state Education Interim Budget Committee with information regarding moving MTHS administrative services from the Department of Education to

the Department of Administration. The study resulted in no significant financial savings or efficiencies by pursuing this. However, Molly has been notified that the Governor's Office would still like to pursue this bill. Bill Whitsitt asked the trustees to review the bill as he has concerns, specifically regarding Human Resources. This is part of an initiative by the Governor's Office to make government "more efficient." Jude pointed out that the bill seems to complicate administrative duties rather than make them more efficient.

Molly reminded the board that appointments to the MTHS board are made by the governor but approved by the Senate. This year's board members up for approval are Kim Briggeman, Bill Jones, Tim Fox, Rachel Reckin, Pete Johnson, and Candi Zion. Molly will check to see if board members can attend virtually to avoid travel in winter months.

MTHS had two Heritage Keeper Award ceremonies – one for Ralph Saunders, and one for Ellen Crain. Tim thanked Steve, Ken, and Kim for their attendance at these ceremonies.

Membership-Development Report – Ginny Sullivan

Ginny provided a Capitol Campaign Update. MTHS continues to raise money (\$58.7 million, although the only active campaign is for the Mobile. A final appeal will go out in a couple of weeks for the Heritage Center. MTHS received a \$1 million donation from Sletten Construction to split among the Heritage Center and the Education Endowment. They will name the Children's Gallery and the amphitheater. MTHS is actively raising money for the People and Lands of Montana project – there were 200 sponsorships initially made available at \$5,000 each. Currently, 83 sponsorships are taken. In addition, there is land for sale in Three Forks, MT that MTHS has put up for auction. No bids have been received, but if there are any, the auction will be held in November. The Montana History and Civics Education Endowment has a goal of \$10 million over the next 5-7 years. As of September, \$2.35 million has been raised.

Ginny updated the trustees on membership. She mentioned the patron survey that is ongoing and will be reported on at the January meeting. She shared current membership statistics.

As part of the Montana Heritage Center, staff have been discussing updating the membership program. The goal is to better serve our members, increase efficiency and ease fulfillment. A new benefit is available through a digital subscription via Project Muse. With the opening, in-person engagement will increase membership interest, but the museum will no longer have an admission charge, which was a primary benefit. Added benefits will include member discounts, curated tours, member-only events and previews of gallery openings. MTHS needs to make this change now as costs have increased, current naming is complicated, there are too many levels, and there are not distinguishable benefits among so many levels.

Ginny shared the updated membership names, and pricing.

Motion: Bill Whitsitt moved to approve the new membership level names, price increase, and benefits to go into effect March 1, 2025. Jay Russel seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion on the motion: Candi asked for clarification on whether the upper levels also received the lower-level benefits. Ginny clarified that yes, they flow down, and all upper levels receive everything from the lower. Tim acknowledged the curated tours and wondered if there should be a

limit. He wondered about the charitable aspect of the tax deduction and if MTHS could accurately depict the cost benefits without a limit. Jay asked if the tours have been charged for previously or if there was a cost for them. Jennifer noted that the very few tours that were provided, there was no charge. Tim had concerns about staff time and whether it would add an additional cost. Jay was in support of the plan. Kim asked if there could be a History Conference discount at lower levels. Jenni clarified that there has been a lot of discussion about discounts and the registration costs are already barely paying for the cost of the history conference so to extend the benefit to lower levels would not work.

BREAK: Tim called for a break to return at 10:48 AM.

Program Reports:

Outreach & Education – Laura Marsh

Laura Marsh introduced herself from O&E as she was filling in for Martha Kohl. She gave a brief presentation on the conference and let the trustees know that they are working on getting through the post-conference survey results. There were 447 people involved with the conference including speakers, attendees, and staff. Public programs are continuing and popular and O&E is reaching out to the public in a variety of ways to encompass everyone from young to old.

Public Relations Report – Eve Byron

Eve provided the statistics from online, tv, and radio promotions. The D'Ambrosio case has been a popular topic, as well as Capitol Tours. Eve continues to work with Sovrn on brochures and rack cards for the programs. There is a strong presence on social media with 110k followers between Facebook, Instagram, and twitter.

Administration – Emily McKeever

Emily presented the FY24 financial report. Tim stated that the numbers changed from yesterday's Executive Committee meeting, and Emily answered that there was an error that she has since corrected. Tim expressed concern with a large amount of the budget remaining. Molly clarified that the remaining funds are allowed to roll forward, so we will not lose the funding in the next fiscal year. Steve advised that there is concern with remaining money left as it's difficult to ask the legislature for more if MTHS didn't spend what they had and to just be wary of that moving forward.

Emily continued her presentation with the 1st Quarter's financial report (July 1, 2024-September 30, 2024). She noted that MTHS has 75% of the budget remaining, which is right on track. Candi asked if the new bill would eliminate personnel costs. Emily clarified that the costs would still be there, but HR staff would be moved to the Department of Administration. MTHS would have the added expense of paying the Department of Administration for those services.

Museum Program – Jennifer Bottomly-O’looney

Aaron Genton and Amanda Trum continue working on the Homeland Gallery interpretation and preparation. Aaron and Jacob Franklin traveled to Los Angeles to meet with Cinnabar, that is working on the exhibit preparation. Jacob also traveled to Quebec to work with another designer. Museum staff were able to move the tractor into the building with the help of Sletten and A1 Towing. Kleen King will be doing a deep clean next week of storage areas. The move will start at the end of the month and will take 6-8 weeks.

Motion: Lorna Kuney moved to approve renewing the loan of 12 items from the Capitol Art Loan Collection to the Governor’s Budget Office. Candi Zion seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Steve commented that the tractor is remarkable. Ginny added that Sletten helped move boulders, which was a monumental effort. Sletten has been amazing, and Ginny encourages all to do a tour today. Tim offered to track these efforts and bring a thank you card for the board to sign for them.

Publications – Jeff Bartos

Jeff provided a publications update. He is thrilled about his new associate editor hire. Jeff is also making efforts to increase subscribers. He shared upcoming articles that will be in the magazine. Publications produced a special conference issue for the Great Falls history conference. He gave a brief of what would be in the winter issue of the magazine. Project Muse is now offered through the magazine. Any trustees who would like a digital subscription are encouraged to reach out to Jeff or Jenni Carr and they will get them signed up. There are 3 books at the printer: “Land of Beginnings”; “A Black Woman’s West”; and a collaborative poetry book with the Montana Arts Council. Staff are working with O&E for the “101 Places” book. Jeff is working on a collaboration to reprint a Little Shell book by Nicholas Vrooman. The original author passed, but Chris LaTray will be involved in the reprint. There were 23 attendees at the writer’s workshop at the History Conference. Candi asked if there was any response on the Yellowstone article. Kim asked if there was a program tonight. Jeff answered that he was presenting at the Myrna Loy at 6:30 p.m.. Kim asked if there was something in the works such as the bicentennial books in 1976 as 2026 approaches. Jeff answered that there was nothing in the works at this time. Molly added that there is a request in at the governor’s office for grant funding to give counties and sovereign nations the ability to update their history books.

Break for Lunch The meeting broke for lunch at noon to reconvene at 12:45 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

Administrative Attachment Bill – Dylan Klapmeier, Education Policy Advisor, Governor’s Office

Tim introduced Dylan and gave a brief on the Administrative Attachment Bill that would attach MTHS to the Department of Administration instead of the Department of Education. Dylan

explained that the idea came about several years ago as they sought efficiencies in government. The background relates to three boards: the MTHS Board of Trustees, the Library Commission, and the Montana Arts Council. Dylan explained that the Board of Education is not a state department. The boards are unique in that they are not attached to the executive agencies. The idea is that being attached to an executive agency, they would have access to resources they normally would not have – legal, HR, and IT. The language would say “for administrative purposes only” MTHS would be attached to the Department of Administration instead of the Board of Education. The MTHS trustees would retain their authority over the Montana Historical Society, its budget, the staff, etc., and have access to the Department of Administration only in the extent that they would like. There is not currently a bill drafted, and the Governor’s Office is requesting feedback before they proceed.

Pete Johnson asked if Molly feels the agency currently has issues with lack of services. She answered that she doesn’t feel MTHS is lacking anything and are operating efficiently. Bill Whitsitt asked for clarity as when he read the background, he was concerned it was mandatory to use the services provided – for example, Human Resources for the staff. To have a “centralized services” it could add “another layer” to reach HR and in effect hinder efficiencies. He asked how this would affect a timely interaction and if there was enough staff at D of A or if they would add staff. Dylan stated that they would not take on any staff to support the attachment, as MTHS currently has its own staff. There would be no additional requirements on the agency unless it was something required across the executive branch. MTHS would remain in “Section E” of the attachment where it would only affect the agency at their request. As requirements come out (contract negotiations, pay bands, ITSD), MTHS would have more access to professional support.

Rachel asked for clarification and asked if MTHS would retain the current staff in HR and IT but could access the D of A staff in a supplementary nature. Dylan confirmed that yes, that is true. Rachel followed up by asking about handling of legal issues that come up since MTHS does not have an attorney. Molly informed her that MTHS uses Agency Legal Services. Tim added that as attorney general, he had to utilize the D of A’s HR and in terms of responsiveness, he did not see a difference in their responsiveness to not being administratively attached.

Candi asked about the benefits of this attachment as she was failing to see how it could benefit the D of A and how it could benefit MTHS. Tim mentioned it was important to stay in “section E” of the bill, and not section A. Dylan has not met with the other two agencies to get their viewpoint. As of his last contact a couple of years ago, all three agencies expressed the same concerns.

Tim added that the interim committee’s study concluded that there were no benefits to making this change to both the D of A and MTHS, so with that study it’s his opinion that it is not necessary. Candi asked if this is something the board can approve or reject or if they’re subject to the decision. Tim said that although they cannot lobby, the trustees can talk with their own legislator or show up at meetings regarding the issue for public comment as it does involve them directly. Dylan added that the Governor’s office is not asking the trustees to endorse it, but hopefully not oppose it. He asks the board to provide informational context during the legislature on how the process currently works and how the change would affect MTHS. Bill Whitsitt remarked that he’s in favor of increasing efficiency, and thanked Dylan for coming and explaining in more detail the effects of the bill.

Dylan stated that he will meet with leadership staff later this month, and there will be a bill draft available by January for the trustees to review.

Tim thanked staff for providing information to the interim committee, and thanked Dylan for his presentation.

SHPO – Damon Murdo

Damon stated that he would be presenting for Pete, who is on vacation. Kate Hampton has been successful in obtaining grants. The historic preservation review board meeting was in September, and they have added the following to the historic registry list: Riverside Park, Manley's General Store, and Regis Grocery in Red Lodge. Castle Rock Lodge is pending approval. There have been a handful of interns working in the SHPO office helping.

SHPO work on the horizon includes the Revitalizing Montana Heritage Brick and Mortar Grant. This will be used to give money back to the local communities.

Molly congratulated Damon for his Governor's Excellence Award.

Library & Archives – Roberta Gebhardt

On Tuesday this week, the Library and Archives staff relocated from the Historic Building into the Event Center in the Heritage Center addition. They will remain there until their offices are complete. Throughout the quarter, staff members have been working on projects that will enhance the user experience. Dave Colamaria is making photo collections more accessible by cataloging collections. Maggie Meredith and Noni Hodges are updating catalog records by adding holding statements to catalog records. L&A hired Terrance Kratz as a Digital Records Archivist, and he is looking at what kind of electronic records have already been taken into the state's official archives. Roberta provided an example of his work providing access to electronic records. Tim asked if anyone within the Secretary of State's office could help with this. Roberta answered that the Secretary of State's office does have one employee, however the person is part time. Bill Whitsitt mentioned that there was a lack of efficiency in this process, and he thinks the Governor's Office should be looking at this efficiency.

Motion: Steve moved to approve the deaccession of the K. Ross Toole cassettes to the University of Montana. Rachel seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: Bill Whitsitt moved to approve the deaccession of seven cartes de viste from the Don Schroder collection not related to Montana to appropriate institutions. Bill Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: Mary moved to approve the quarterly deaccession. Rachel seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Update on theft of Library & Archives theft materials: The major update is that the sentencing hearing for DiAmbrosio has been delayed until December 16, 2024, 1:30 p.m., at the request of the

US Attorney's Office so that they could complete a more thorough restitution statement. The sentencing has been moved to Helena instead of Great Falls. MTHS continues to work with the US Attorney's office. Law enforcement returned about 50 items that were recovered here in Helena and at Brian D'Ambrosio's residence in New Mexico. Law enforcement is working on receiving a list from eBay for additional items. Roberta will help law enforcement contact buyers to see about getting items returned. Bill Whitsitt thanked Roberta for the comprehensive list, and asked if there is concern that there are more items remaining elsewhere such as a storage unit. Special Agent Dudley was confident that everything he still had in his possession had been returned, but it is hard to know. There are some items still in the custody of the FBI and will be returned at the conclusion of the case. Tim asked whether the US Attorney's Office will want resolution for everyone that has any artifacts by the sentencing hearing. There is no way to know if MTHS will get it all back, so it's a challenge on getting a good restitution order. Unfortunately, MTHS will not be fully restored as it was whether it be the taken items, or the changes that now must be made to visitors and the anxiety for the staff. Tim hopes staff can find forgiveness. Rachel thanked Roberta and her staff for completing the work to return as many items as possible. Molly and Tim will be at the hearing. Ken asked Tim if he thought Mr. D'Ambrosio would see jail time. He answered that the plea agreement did not include jail time. Ultimately sentencing is up to the judge. If the defendant disputes the sentencing agreement, it could go to trial, which Tim would like to avoid.

Public Comment: Tim asked for public comment. There was none.

Closing Comments: Ken remarked that he couldn't imagine better organization or execution of the Montana History Conference by Christine Brown. He mentioned that every suggestion was thoughtfully integrated into the program, and she nailed it. The president of the Montana Genealogy Society attended the conference for the first time, and she told Ken she hopes to make every conference in the future and was exceedingly impressed. Steve Kelly of the River and Plains Society had never attended anything regarding the conference and raved about the conference and the Genealogy Workshop. Ken also commented that when he's had the honor of presenting Heritage Keeper Awards, there have been great benefits. He was able to represent the Board of Trustees, as well as meet an extraordinary historian in Ralph Saunders. Ken urged the trustees to participate in presenting Heritage Keeper Awards when at all possible.

Candi asked if there would be a special meeting to discuss the draft bill prior to the January meeting as she feels it is late into the session. Tim stated that trustees are welcome to watch the bill, but as he doesn't see the bill generating a lot of interest, he's not concerned the January BOT meeting would be too late. The first week of session is primarily leadership voting and committee assignments. The real business starts about two weeks into the session so there will likely be plenty of time. Bill Jones suggested a Zoom meeting if trustees needed to discuss the issue quickly. Candi added that she would like to know what to say so a Zoom meeting would be nice. Bill asked if Molly and Tim were surprised by supplemental services versus mandatory requirements. Molly answered that she will learn more at a meeting they have with the Governor's Office at the end of the month. There will be more information after the meeting on Dec. 30 as to if and how the legislation will move forward. Tim asked that Molly have the statutes available that may conflict with the bill. Molly

has a running list of questions from the last time this bill was suggested that she will provide. Tim said that MTHS does not operate politically, but based on the mission, and he wants to stay that way. Emily stated that Dylan didn't touch on the fact that D of A will charge us for services whether we use them or not – this would add complexity to our budget and where the funding originates. Tim said there could be more push from legislators who think MTHS should be strictly donor funded. Bill Jones reiterated Emily's thought and mentioned it is inefficient.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: Bill Whitsitt moved to adjourn the meeting. Jude Sheppard seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 2:19 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Jones', is written above a horizontal line.

Approved 1/16/2025