

Montana Historical Society  
Board of Trustees Quarterly Meeting  
January 19, 2023, 9:00 MST  
Montana Wild

**CALL TO ORDER**

At 9:05am, President Jude Sheppard began the meeting, asking Steve Lozar if he would bless the meeting, to which he obliged. Jenni Carr took roll.

**Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees members present:** Norma Ashby Smith, Tim Fox, Mary Helland, Ed Jasmin, Bill Jones, Lorna Kuney, Steve Lozar, Ken Robison, Jude Sheppard, Bill Whitsitt.

**Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees members attending virtually:** Carol Donaldson, Jay Russell, Candy Zion.

**Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees members excused:** Doug MacDonald, Thomas Minckler

**MTHS Staff Present:** Molly Kruckenberg, Director; Emily McKeever, Administrator; Eve Byron, Public Information Officer; Ginny Sullivan, Development Officer; Jenni Carr, Administrative Assistant/Membership Coordinator; Roberta Gebhardt, Library and Archives Program Manager; Jennifer Bottomly-O'looney, Museum Program Manager; Martha Kohl, Outreach and Interpretation Program Manager; Diana Di Stefano, Publications Program Manager; Kate Hampton, Community Preservation Coordinator

**President's Report:**

Jude reminded the board that Heritage Keeper Nominations are due April 1. The whole board will vote on who wins the award. Once nominations are received, they will be compiled together and Jenni Carr will send them out to the board by April 7, 2023 to be reviewed by the trustees. Nominations will be discussed and chosen at the April 20-board meeting.

**Review of Minutes:**

Bill Jones moved to approve the minutes from the October 20, 2023 meeting. Ed Jasmin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Director's Report:**

Staff introductions – Ginny introduced Jenni Carr who is the new Administrative Assistant for the director's office, as well as the MTHS Membership Coordinator. Roberta introduced Patty Davis as the newest Photo Archives Technician to join her team. Jennifer Bottomly-O'looney introduced MaryAnn George as the museum's new Administrative Assistant.

Molly Kruckenberg, Director, discussed this quarter's visitation statistics, which were slightly below previous quarters. Attendance, members, and subscribers all were down, however this was to be expected with the closing of the exhibits at the end of December.

Molly provided a legislative update, informing the trustees on the legislative session and upcoming Governor's budget hearing, which will be held Jan. 31. She discussed a handful of bills that the administrative staff are tracking this session:

- HB3 is a supplemental budget that approved rent and moving expenses for MTHS (\$300,000 appropriation).
- LC987/Senate Bill 185 is a bill that would prohibit the use of state funds for much of the MTHS's programs and staff and require them to be raised privately. Sen. Dennis Lenz is the sponsor of the bill. Molly scheduled a meeting with Sen. Lenz and Dylan Klapmeier (Governor's Education Policy Advisor) to discuss the reasoning behind the bill. Tim Fox offered to sit in on the meeting with his experience in law as he feels this bill violates the Montana constitution and he really wanted to speak with Sen. Lenz. Molly discussed the legislative process if things were to move forward with the bill. The board asked whether or not they should vote in disagreement of the bill and present that at the bill hearing. Bill Whitsitt wanted confirmation on whether they could do an electronic vote. Jude suggested voting on it today just in case it moved forward. Molly clarified that an electronic vote would be acceptable and there wasn't a need to vote on it today. Bill Jones added that board members could testify individually via zoom during the bill hearing if it made it that far. The board members concluded that they would see what Molly's meeting with the Senator would bring before making any decisions.
- US250 Commission Bill: This would be a bill to commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United States and would be administratively attached to the historical society. Molly is working with the Governor's office to work out appropriation. Rep. Linda Reksten, and Sen. Shannon O'Brien will potentially sponsor the bill.
- No Bill Draft: A bill is being discussed to administratively attach the Montana Historical Society to the Department of Administration instead of the Board of Education. Molly requested some language changes. Any questions should be directed toward Dylan Klapmeier.

Eve Byron, Public Information Officer, updated the board on statistics regarding marketing and public relations. There have been several news mentions, and she's working on more advertising to engage the public and get more interest going. Eve is preparing for 2024 marketing to build excitement regarding the new Heritage Center. She's making a push on social media to engage the younger generation. The MTHS's Facebook page has reached 8.6 million people in 2022. Eve let them know we have exceeded our goal of having 10,000 new followers this year and actually reached 13,000 by the end of December. Norma asked if there would be any advertising of the Charles Russel loan to the CMR Museum, Eve clarified that it would be up to the CMR Museum for any paid advertising.

Ginny Sullivan, Development Officer, had a fundraising goal of \$50,000 for the end-year appeal with a conservation theme. The appeal went out to 8,000 people, and as of Jan. 18 we are only \$400 short of that goal. Ginny is confident we will make the goal in the coming weeks. Ginny presented a request from a donor to name a seating area in the Heritage Center in honor of Mignon Waterman.

**Motion:** Ed Jasmin moved to name the seating area in honor of Mignon Waterman. Norma Ashby Smith seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Ginny described the mobile and the significance of it as a fundraiser and art installation. The goal is to see the Helena community step up and support the Heritage Center and Montana Historical Society. There is a centralized donor recognition system to display donor names. Ed Jasmin explained the opportunity to have your name easily viewed within the Heritage Center. He asked trustees to get involved in supporting this display if possible. There are 164 panels left. Ginny appealed to the trustees to donate to the Heritage Center.

Molly updated the trustees on how the construction is going. Everything is dried in and there is a lot of interior progress as well as exterior. The remaining exhibits in the VPMB have closed as of Dec. 31. The museum store is open at least through June 1, 2023. The Original Governor's Mansion will remain open. Renovations began on the VPMB this week. The contractor will break through the VPMB exterior wall, joining the Heritage Center sometime between May-June. Most of the MTHS staff will need to move out of the building to accommodate construction. Staff will move to 910 Helena Avenue starting March 1. Jerry McGee is heading the move.

Montana Heritage Center Proposed Media Updates: Molly went through the proposed enhancements and funding, which are being presented to the Washington Foundation. The enhancements will not go forward unless funding commitments are made. The Governor is on board to help raise money and is working to open doors for Molly and Ginny to meet with entities that previously were inaccessible. Jude requested a list of banks that have contributed.

**BREAK:** The meeting paused for a 15-minute break.

### **Program Reports:**

Diana Di Stefano, Publications Program Manager, discussed the Winter 2022 issue of the Montana Magazine. She also shared news about the Editorial Board, which is made up of academic historians from across the country. They donate their time, wisdom, and money on occasion. These include Elise Boxer, an enrolled citizen of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes and Director of Editorial Studies at the University of South Dakota; and Patrick Lozar, a CSKT member and Instructor at Salish Kootenai College. Diana talked about the emerging scholar contest, which encourages graduate students, faculty, and independent scholars to publish their work in the magazine as well as an invitation to speak at the History Conference. The prize has gone from \$300 to \$1,000 due to a generous donor. There were seven entries this year and the winner will be announced at the next board meeting.

On the press side of things, Tom Minckler's book is published and in circulation. All of the proceeds come back to the publications program. The book is \$65. Printing costs are up 35% in recent years.

There are several more books in the works: *Catastrophe at Custer Creek* by Ian Wilson as well as four to five others. Diana has hired a new editor, Cody Dodge Ewert from Power, Montana, who will be starting in the coming weeks. Ken Robison congratulated the staff on the Tom Minckler book. Molly is working with Tom in hopes to raise the money to acquire Tom's collection at a discounted rate so that it can be enjoyed by generations to come. Jude asked if Tom Minckler could do a book signing, and Molly recommended an MTHS public program at the Lewis and Clark library.

Dylan Klapmeier, Education Policy Advisor, tried to clear up any questions on the legislative bills discussed by Molly previously. He began with the undrafted administrative attachment bill. The MTHS is currently attached to the Board of Education, which Dylan said isn't appropriately staffed to provide administrative services to the State Library, Historical Society, or Arts Council. The new bill would attach MTHS to the Department of Administration (D of A) for administrative purposes only (human resources, payroll, and legal support). Tim Fox commented that the MTHS staff does an incredible job, and he wants to make sure there won't be any changes on how things are run. The Historical Society has handled audits and financials without issues, so he doesn't want to cede control to the D of A. He would like the language cleaned up. Dylan agreed that the language could be cleared up. He clarified that the intent is to have the D of A if needed, but the Board would remain separate from the D of A. They could continue to operate with the legislative sub-committee that is associated with the Board of Education (Section E). Tim wants the board to continue to have the authority to hire the director and Dylan stated that that is the idea with the bill. That includes the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Dylan moved on to discuss the 250 Commission bill. He stated that Congress started a 250<sup>th</sup> Commission to celebrate 250 years since the founding of the United States in 2026. Many states have started these commissions. Rep. Reksten and Sen. O'Brien have agreed to carry the bill in a bipartisan fashion for Montana's 250<sup>th</sup> Commission. This commission would be attached to the MTHS. The Governor would appoint the commission and provide a fundraising mission for the commission. They will work with schools, tribes, museums/libraries, etc. working at the local level to engage with the groups to promote the history and culture of the United States and weaving in Montana history and culture with that. The current draft suggests \$75,000 for a biennium to fund the position; however, they are requesting \$150,000-\$175,000 so it can be a full-time position vs. part-time. Bryan Baldwin (O&I) researched other states and how they celebrate these milestones.

Tim Fox asked Dylan if he could discuss Sen. Lenz's bill that would remove public funding from much of the MTHS support staff. Dylan wants to learn Sen. Lenz's intent with the bill, but the legislature has the authority to grant funds. Tim reiterated that it's constitutionally required that the legislature has that ability, and the bill would contradict that.

Roberta Gebhardt presented an update on Library & Archives. They had to move up the closing of the archives, which when word got out, a lot more visitors piled in to research before closing so they've been very busy. Library & Archives is closed to the public now, but they are monitoring the voicemail and emails and helping the public in any way they can until items are completely packed away. At this point, 159 boxes have been packed and are stored in the lobby. Everything needs to be packed and moved by April 1. Work continues to digitize Montana newspapers. Two employees resigned this quarter. The library tech position is evolving so they got it approved as a Library 1 position. They are waiting on hiring the Technical Services position for now but are hoping to have both positions hired by

the summer. Bill Whitsitt asked how they hire out their positions and what they expect. Roberta clarified that the salaries are low, and the housing costs are high in Helena, so it's a little difficult to fill positions. There is a lot of digital cataloging, so a lot of younger people don't have the necessary experience to provide what is needed in that position. They need two years of experience but we're not paying them enough for that experience. Roberta believes it just takes time to find the right fit for the right position. Roberta presented the deaccession list to the board.

**Motion:** Ed Jasmin moved to approve the deaccession list. Bill Jones seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Jennifer Bottomly-O'looney, Museum Program Manager, informed the Board that the Museum staff needs to begin moving by March 1 so they will be moving to the first floor of the VPMB. As soon as Sletten empties the galleries, they will be able to begin that move. Other than working through the move, they are working on designing the new Russell gallery and changing gallery exhibit spaces for the Heritage Center. Jennifer said that the Russell loan originally was supposed to happen later in the year, but as we were closing and packing the Russell Gallery, the CMR museum staff asked if they would be able to have pieces earlier for their March celebration. The preferred art shipper was available before this Quarterly Board meeting, which is why Molly asked for an electronic vote to approve the loan. Everything has been safely packed and is safely at the CMR museum in Great Falls. Steve Lozar complimented Amanda Trum and the value she brings to the team. She's been able to meet with tribes across Montana to discuss how tribes will be represented in the Heritage Center.

**Motion:** Ed Jasmin moved to agree with the electronic vote and approve the Russell Loan to the CMR Museum in Great Falls. Ken Robison seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Martha Kohl, Outreach and Interpretation, updated the trustees on the program and the Gallery of Outstanding Montanans. March 1 we will be inducting Ivan Doig and Dolly Smith Cusker Akers (first native American legislator to serve). One of Martha's goals is to increase partnerships statewide and locally.

Kate Hampton, with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), gave a presentation in lieu of Pete Brown. She gave a shout out to Candi Zion for saving the Teton bridge outside of Choteau and thanked all of the Board's efforts. SHPO released the past/present/future plan 2023-2027. The public identified several challenges, including lack of financial resource, public knowledge, and identifying more historical places. The 2022 report was released. *Hidden Stories* will air on PBS on February 13. Ken Robison thanked Kate and congratulated the SHPO team on *Hidden Stories*. The Great Falls Library Foundation has funded a 30-minute documentary on the first African American Librarian. Ed Jasmin asked if SHPO was moving back into the VPMB. Molly clarified that yes, all MTHS programs will be in one building.

Molly thanked the staff for the effort they're putting in doing jobs they weren't necessarily hired to do such as packing, moving, and inventorying – which is a huge process.

**BREAK:** The meeting broke for lunch at 12:20pm

President Jude Sheppard reconvened the meeting at 1 p.m.

Emily McKeever, Administrator, gave her financial report. Emily presented the trustees with a complete financial breakdown for the quarter and the past six months. For net revenue, the MTHS has nearly broken even. Emily feels the Historical Society is on track and financially sound. She broke down revenue, trust funds, income, and expenses. There is 59% of the budget remaining to finish the fiscal year. Tim asked why there was an Education Enterprise Fund deficit of \$23k. The History Conference in Red Lodge was budgeted low, and the attendees were capped so the MTHS was unable to offset the higher expense. Emily continued with an overview of the Human Resources report. There were eight employees who resigned/retired from MTHS, and there have been several new hires as well. The MTHS is working through re-classifications and approvals for new employees. There haven't been any work comp injuries and staff are aware that moving could cause injuries, so we have implemented training to help everyone stay injury free. The fiscal office is researching and refreshing some of their accounting procedures. Jerry McGee is organizing the move as well as leading the Security team, who are helping where they can and doing extra patrols in areas of construction and where exhibits are being packed and stored. Emily notified the trustees of the shortened store hours of 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. She is continuing to look for a temporary location for the store starting in June 2023. Sales are steady and higher than previous years. There will be an emphasis on online sales in the coming months.

**Motion:** Norma Ashby Smith moved to approve the hiring of new employees. Ed Jasmin seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **New Business:**

Jude Sheppard asked the new trustees to introduce themselves. Bill Whitsitt, Mary Helland, and Steve Lozar introduced themselves and their excitement of being a part of the Board of Trustees team.

With the departure of Denise King, Emily requested a motion to empower Molly Kruckenberg and Emily McKeever to have the authority to manage a D.A. Davidson account.

**Motion:** Bill Jones moved to authorize the Board Secretary, Jay Russell, and Board President, Jude Sheppard, to execute a resolution authorizing MTHS employees Molly Kruckenberg, Director, and Emily McKeever, Administrator, be approved to transact and manage the MTHS's account at D.A. Davidson. Norma Ashby seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Motion:** Ken Robison moved to approve Tim Fox to join Molly Kruckenberg and Dylan Klapmeier in meeting with Sen. Lenz regarding SB 185. Ed Jasmin seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Bill Jones asked if the store positions were paid through revenue. Molly clarified that the store manager position was paid through store funds, but Dianna Berry's position is paid through the General Fund.

The Board was informed that on Jan. 25 in the rotunda at the Capitol, the sculptor Garth Curtis will be having a demonstration of his sculpture of Judy Martz.

**Motion:** Ed Jasmin moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:10 p.m.



Jude Sheppard, President, signed 4/20/2023