

Montana Historical Society  
Board of Trustees Quarterly Meeting  
April 20, 2023, 9:00 MST  
Montana Wild

**CALL TO ORDER**

At 9:05 a.m., Bill Jones called the meeting to order. Jenni Carr took roll. Steve Lozar blessed the meeting. Tim Fox asked for the blessing to be added to future board meeting agendas.

**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, Bill Whitsitt, Doug MacDonald, Thomas Minckler, Jude Sheppard

**Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees members attending virtually:** Carol Donaldson, Candi Zion

**Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees members excused:** Jay Russell

**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; Amanda Trum, Museum Curator; Martha Kohl, Outreach and Interpretation Program Manager; Diana Di Stefano, Publications Program Manager; Pete Brown, State Historic Preservation Program Manager

**Director's Report:**

Molly Kruckenberg welcomed the committee and thanked staff for their efforts at the legislative event the previous evening, and thanked the trustees who were able to attend. Bill Jones requested that the board of trustees receive nametags for future events. Jenni Carr is going to order them prior to the next meeting.

Diana Di Stefano gave an introduction of her newest staff member, Cody Ewert, who was unable to attend the meeting today.

Molly continued with her report, updating the board on MTHS's visitor numbers, subscribers and members, and records requests. MTHS is continuing to receive artifacts even though we are packing, moving, and closed. Member numbers have dropped slightly; however, this was to be expected with the closure of the museum.

**Legislative Update:**

Molly updated the trustees on the legislative session. They are trying to wrap up the session by the end of next week. The final possible day is May 6. Molly briefed the board on the bills that pertained to the Montana Historical Society.

- HB2 – The state’s primary two-year appropriations bill. There were no further amendments to MTHS’s budget.
- HB3 – The state’s supplemental appropriations bill.
- HB377 – A bill establishing the 250<sup>th</sup> Commission to coordinate statewide efforts to celebrate the United States’ semi-quincentennial. This commission would be administratively tied to MTHS.
- SR31 – Confirmation of governor’s appointees for the historical society board of trustees.
- HJ9/HB933 – Addressed an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that was put to a vote in 1810. “The original 13<sup>th</sup> amendment.” The bill passed through the legislature, and MTHS was named as creating a repository for the bill. Funding was not needed, however, we will create a webpage with information on the amendment.
- HB855/HB920 – Hold funding for the creation of plaques or busts for Montanans of importance. There is \$100 in the budget, and further fundraising is needed. The first of these bills is to recognize former trustee Chuck Johnson.

Ginny Sullivan, Development Officer, reported on the current fundraising efforts by MTHS. She said that \$38.6m has been raised for the Montana Heritage Center. She advised the trustees to take a look at [montanamuseum.org](http://montanamuseum.org) to see the detailed list of funding. As we have diverted efforts to other areas of fundraising, we are taking a short break from the People of Montana mobile fundraiser and will re-launch that effort in the fall of 2023.

With the help of Martha’s team in O&I, MTHS has opened a Business Partnership opportunity. Ginny offered the trustees a hand-out detailing this new program.

Eve Byron, Public Information Officer, reported on the current outreach efforts of MTHS. Social media is picking up as we share the goings on of MTHS and the Heritage Center Construction. The Facebook and Instagram counts are both increasing significantly.

Molly asked the trustees to take a look at the new Heritage Center as contractors have started installing exterior stone. The stone is from a Harlowton, MT, quarry. Interior finishes are also going on. MTHS staff have been working with the tribal stakeholders and engineers to finalize design aspects of the building.

Other than Collections and Security staff, MTHS will be moving to 910 Helena Avenue so that renovations can begin on the Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building. The American Legion and Sons and Daughters of Pioneers will move out of their third-floor offices by May 5.

Molly reiterated that we’ve developed a good working relationship with Gov. Gianforte as he aids us in finding funding for the media enhancements for the exhibits.

**Nutter Shore Memorial Trophy Hall Update:**

Rowena Harrington has provided time and training to the American Legion to help them pack their space. The room will be renovated, and we are going to work with military folks in the area to create a more modern exhibit space for their artifacts.

Bill Whitsitt commented on the legislative event, and commended the MTHS staff, the state, architects, designers, and contractors for working together on the Montana Heritage Center project for a really smooth outcome. Bill Jones agreed that the space is going to be a great asset to the community.

### **President's Report:**

Jude Sheppard, board president, thanked Molly and her staff for their hard work in packing and contributing to the Montana Heritage Center.

Staff Picnic: Jude announced that the staff picnic will be held on July 19, 2023. No location has been decided yet, but we will look at different venues. Jude asks that each board member gives \$150 toward the picnic.

History Conference: The 50<sup>th</sup> Annual History Conference is coming up this fall. Jude would like to send out special invitations to past trustees.

Recognition of trustees completing their terms: Jude thanked Tom, Doug, and Ed for their dedication to the Montana Historical Society and asked them to say a few words about their experiences. They thanked the board individually, and Steve Lozar offered a few words of thanks. Tim Fox shared his appreciation as well.

In conclusion of her report, Molly said that she had visited our artifacts on loan at the Russell Museum and is hoping to reach out and collaborate with their board in the future.

### **Election of Officers:**

**Motion:** Ed Jasmin moved to re-elect Jude Sheppard as the Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees president; Bill Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Motion:** Ed Jasmin moved to elect Bill Jones as Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees vice president; Candi Zion seconded. Jude asked to make a substitute motion, Ed withdrew his motion.

**Motion:** Jude Shepard moved to re-elect Tim Fox as the Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees vice president; Ken Robison seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Motion:** Ed Jasmin moved to elect Bill Jones as the Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees secretary; Bill Whitsitt seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Motion:** Ed Jasmin moved to nominate Bill Whitsitt and Steve Lozar to join the Executive Committee, Tim Fox seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**BREAK:** The meeting paused for a 20-minute break at 10:15 a.m. The board meeting reconvened at 10:37 a.m.

### **Montana Heritage Keeper Awards:**

The board began discussion of the Montana Heritage Award Nominees. Bill Whitsitt stepped out as he is a chairman of one of the nominated committees.

Steve Lozar asked to withdraw his nomination. The board accepted the withdrawal.

Norma Ashby Smith moved to remove active board members ability to be nominated. The board discussed this option and opted not to vote on an official motion. Jude Sheppard appointed Bill Jones to head a team to review the nomination criteria. Bill requested two volunteers to assist these efforts. Norma and Ken Robison volunteered. This team will review the award criteria prior to the next meeting.

The board asked Bill Whitsitt to rejoin the discussions, as his input was still valued for the other nominees. He returned to the room.

Candi asked about a committee to handle all Heritage Keeper Award Nominations. Tim reminded the board that the committee was disbanded last year as everyone wanted a say.

**Motion:** Candi Zion moved to nominate Ramona Holt for a Heritage Keeper Award, Bill Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Motion:** Doug MacDonald moved to nominate Ellen Baumler for a Heritage Keeper Award, Bill Jones seconded. Lorna, Candi, and Norma opposed. The motion passed 11/3.

**Motion:** Carol Donaldson moved to nominate Gene Thayer as a Heritage Keeper Award, Candi seconded. Tim opposed. The motion passed 13/1.

**Motion:** Candi Zion moved to nominate the U.S.S. Montana Committee for the Heritage Guardian Award, Bill Jones seconded. Tim Fox and Bill Whitsitt abstained from voting due to conflict of interest. The motion passed unanimously.

Candi requested a motion to go back to the committee process to select a short list, Norma seconded. Bill Jones requested to wait to vote until we can review the current award process before going to a committee process. Bill Jones asked for time to review the award criteria and nomination process. He requested the current nomination documents from MTHS. Jenni Carr will send the requested documents to Bill.

**Motion:** Candi moved to go back to the committee process to select a short list. Norma Ashby Smith seconded. Steve Lozar, Bill Whitsitt, Jude Sheppard, Tom Minckler, Mary Helland, Doug MacDonald, Ken Robison, Bill Jones, Tim Fox, and Ed Jasmin opposed. The motion failed 4/10.

### **Program Reports:**

Roberta Gebhardt presented an update on the Library & Archives program. She talked about packing and inventorying the archives and the move process. She updated the board on staffing and their plans for filling new positions. Roberta reviewed the deaccession lists.

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

**Motion:** Steve Lozar moved to approve the Dolly Smith Cusker Akers deaccession. Ed Jasmin seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Motion:** Bill Jones moved to approve the Madison County Index deaccession, Ed Jasmin seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Bill Whitsitt asked for clarification on the cataloging position. Roberta stated that it's a Librarian 1 position that would take a first pass at the cataloging and assist with returning used reference materials.

Mary Helland asked if the Dolly Cusker papers were asked to be returned by the tribe or if MTHS was requesting the deaccession. Roberta clarified that it was a mutual decision.

Emily McKeever, Administrator, gave a general report on Central Services and thanked her staff. Many thanks to Jerry McGee for organizing the huge move, with Buddy Rivera and Chris Johnson as his support staff. Thanks to Rennan for his work coordinating the IT aspect of the move. Thanks to Jen Simmons, Monica Latham for their financial expertise. Emily told the board how Carol Loomis, Molly, and Emily have been analyzing positions, reclassifying them and working on adjusting their pay appropriately.

Emily went through the Financial Report with the board members.

Tom asked about the Charlie Russell painting in the capitol and how the Land, Museum, Art & Library collection total is \$113,330,052, and that painting alone has a high value. Tom Minckler is offering his expertise in checking these values. Bill Whitsitt would like a breakdown of the insured value, not only of the collections, but of the building and its contents. Bill Jones commented that at another museum he worked at, he would have to have his artifacts appraised every two years for insurance purposes. Tom stated that the photo archive is very undervalued and he would be interested in taking a look at the values. Lorna asked if items being moved are insured. Emily clarified that nothing of high value is being moved – everything of high value is staying with the collections staff and security staff at the Vets building.

Emily continued with the budget to actual report. MTHS is on budget, and we will do everything we can to spend the State Special Revenue Funds down to zero before the end of the fiscal year.

Bill Whitsitt thanked Emily for looking at the position analysis to make our positions more competitive so we can fill them. Emily has a goal to move employees beyond entry level pay to take care of our staff.

Steve Lozar remarked that staff are professional and underpaid. He wants to commend our staff for hanging on all these years. He is supportive of bringing the wages up.

**Motion:** Ed Jasmin moved to accept new employee, Cody Ewert, Bill Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**BREAK FOR LUNCH** at 11:50 a.m. Jude Sheppard reconvened the meeting at 12:32 p.m.

Amanda Trum, Curator of Collections, gave the museum report as Jennifer Bottomly O'looney is on vacation. Museum program staff have settled into their temporary workspaces on the first floor of the Vets building. They are focused on moving into the new space, developing a plan for compact storage,

and planning for unpacking artifacts. All museum staff are working on developing exhibits for the new Montana Heritage Center. They are also coordinating with Sletten on construction phasing so that they can shift around during the renovation and new build.

**Motion:** Bill Jones moved to approve the loan of the Fort Lewis painting by Father Joset to the River and Plains Society in Fort Benton; Ken Robison seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Ken Robison mentioned that there will be two items from MTHS on display at Old Fort Benton this summer, the Buffalo Weathervane (jointly owned by MTHS and the River and Plains Society) and the Fort Lewis painting on loan.

Martha, Outreach & Interpretation Program manager, said that O & I are in the middle of their move to 910 Helena Ave. She thanked her staff, Rennan, and support staff for their efforts in making this move possible. O & I has teamed up with the Helena library to continue presenting public programs. Anthony Schrillo uploads these programs to Youtube, so if the public can watch them online. Martha is going to put the trustees on their email list so they can get all public program updates.

Martha updated the trustees on the success of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade history book for *Montana: A History of our Home* with survey results.

Bill Jones asked how many schools are using the textbook. Martha will get him the exact number, but it's quite a few smaller schools. Jude asked if Martha could advise her if Chinook Elementary has started using this textbook.

Norma Ashby Smith remarked that we are in the 34<sup>th</sup> year of Montana's History Teacher of the Year and she wanted to thank the Montana Historical Society and Martha for their efforts toward this award.

Bill Whitsitt asked for a detailed list of schools using the book. Martha said she would get it out, but also advised that the book and lesson plans are available online for free so send anyone who may be interested to the website to check it out.

Tom Minckler asked for the curriculum director's information for Billings so that he can get the textbooks into that curriculum. Martha will get that to him.

Diana Di Stefano, Publications Program Manager, thanked her team as they are also in the middle of moving to 910 Helena Avenue. She talked about implementing the Emerging Scholar program, and the contest's goals. It started with a \$300 prize, but thanks to donations, they have been able to increase the prize to \$1,000. The 2023 winner, Alex Miller, wrote an article on the evolution and history of snow science and avalanche studies. Diana is pleased to have hosted interns with the higher education system. She is now implementing book review editors on a volunteer basis to reach out and find people to review books.

Candi asked if Diana is publishing an editorial explaining why the magazine's articles are expanding beyond the Montana region and whether or not it's due to losing access to our collections.

Pete Brown, State Historic Preservation Program Manager, reported they are putting goals and objectives into action regarding the State Preservation Plan. SHPO is working on a youth archaeological survey program with DNRC, and the Youth Forest Monitoring Program as partners. Pete is hopeful these

efforts will get some youth interested in archaeology. This is a -six-week program that will be going on in June/July. Pete will update the board at the next meeting.

Several National Register of Historic Places listings have been approved.

Stonewall Hall in Virginia City is looking at getting preserved. This is one of the first places that the legislature would meet. It was built in the mid-late 1860's.

Candi commented on the new reporting forms and thanked Pete and Kyler for their work making everything clearer.

#### **Unfinished Business:**

Candi Zion asked to join the Heritage Awards review committee. Bill Jones agreed.

Norma asked about the History Conference theme, which is "Building on the Past." Christine Brown is working hard to pull everything together. This year's conference will be hosted at the Delta Colonial Hotel.

#### **New Business:**

The board can send their picnic checks to the Montana Historical Society. \$150 minimum donation. Please address the checks to the Montana Historical Society. MTHS will track the donation and use it for the trustee and staff picnic, and it will continue to be tax deductible.

Norma asked if we were meeting at Montana Wild for the July meeting and Molly clarified that this was a temporary location due to the Legislature being in session, and the July meeting would likely be at the capitol.

Bill Whitsitt thanked the board for the Guardian Award for the USS Montana Committee.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion:** Candi Zion moved to adjourn; Tom Minckler seconded. Jude Sheppard adjourned the meeting at 1:31 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jude Sheppard". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Jude Sheppard, President

Minutes approved July 20, 2023