

Montana Historical Society
Board of Trustees Quarterly Meeting
July 20, 2023, 9 A.M. MDT
Montana State Capitol Room 455

CALL TO ORDER:

At 9 a.m., Jude Sheppard called the meeting to order. Jenni Carr took roll. Steve Lozar gave a blessing.

Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees members present: Jude Sheppard, Tim Fox, Carol Donaldson, Mary Helland, Ken Robison, Lorna Kuney, Bill Whitsitt, Steve Lozar, Jay Russell

Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees members attending virtually: Norma Ashby Smith

Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees members excused: Bill Jones, Candi Zion

MTHS Staff present: Molly Kruckenberg, Director; Emily McKeever, Administrator; Jenni Carr; Administrative Assistant/Membership Coordinator; Ginny Sullivan, Development Officer; Eve Byron, Public Information Officer; Martha Kohl, Outreach and Interpretation Program Manager; Rich Aarstad, Archivist; Jennifer Bottomly-O'looney, Museum Program Manager; Diana Di Stefano, Publications Program Manager; Pete Brown, State Historic Preservation Program Manager

Review of Minutes:

Motion: Carol Donaldson moved to approve the meeting minutes from the April 20, 2023, board meeting. Jay Russell seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

President's Report:

Jude Sheppard began the meeting by thanking staff and board members for the picnic.

Bill Whitsitt asked to move any excess funds from the board sponsored staff picnic to provide for staff enrichment and growth. The board agreed this was a good idea. Monica will note the fund be used for that purpose.

Jude thanked the new members of the executive committee.

Jude noted the upcoming history conference and reminded the board to reserve a room early if possible. Jude asked that the trustees donate to the silent auction if they have something available.

Jude asked the board to sign the cards for the former members who left the board.

Director's Report:

Molly began her director's report with a thanks to the board members for sponsoring the staff picnic.

New Staff: Pete Brown introduced Lindsay Tran as the new Historic Architecture Specialist. Lindsay stepped forward to provide a little of her background.

Molly discussed this quarter's visitor statistics. The numbers have decreased from previous quarters, but that's to be expected with the closure of the museum and the inability to access research documents. There has been great program participation and social media posts continue to grow.

Molly discussed the legislative updates since the close of session. We had a successful legislative session with an increase in FTE. The FY 24/25 biennium budget was approved for \$16.9m. Molly gave a brief overview of the bills that impacted MTHS – HB2, HB5, HB377, SR31, HB946, HJ9, and HB855/920.

Bill Whitsitt asked if there would be any difficulties of moving FTE around to fill positions as the Heritage Center nears completion. Molly confirmed that there were plans in place for hiring new employees, and some flexibility with hiring dates.

Bill Whitsitt asked if the trustees could have a little tour and explanation of operations of the Governor's Mansion. Molly said they would set this up.

Martha Kohl introduced two new staff members to O & I: Laura Marsh is the new Community Engagement Specialist, and Melissa Hibbard is an Interpretive Historian. Laura introduced herself and shared that she moved to O & I from SHPO and is excited to continue working with the MTHS. Melissa introduced herself and shared a bit of her background.

Montana Heritage Center Update: Molly pointed out the tiles going up on the exterior of the building. Over the summer site work will continue around the exterior of the building. The interior finishes are going on at the same time.

About 30 staff members moved to 910 Helena Avenue to accommodate renovations at the Veterans and Pioneers Memorial building. The museum and research staff stayed at the VPMB to work with the collections.

If interested, the BOT can let Molly know if they want a tour of the jobsite and she will arrange that for the October meeting (or really any time).

The MTHS budget has increased, as well as fundraising, so we are in good shape for the completion of the Heritage Center.

Bill Whitsitt asked about furniture and what would happen to the surplus. Molly clarified that surplus does have to go through General Services Division (GSD). Jerry McGee, facilities manager, has been tackling the furniture surplus. Molly and Jerry are working with Cushing Terrell (CT) on the new furniture designs. Every employee will receive a sit/stand desk, and a new task chair. Each new workspace has a meeting space in it, which will receive new meeting tables and chairs. There will be some reuse of good quality items that remain.

Heritage Keeper Awards Ceremony Update: Gene Thayer's ceremony was last week and it had a great turnout. The next event will be for Ellen Baumler at Reeder's Alley on August 1. Ramona Holt's event is in planning. The USS Montana Committee will be September 14 in the Capitol rotunda.

Membership and Development Report:

As membership and development are closely related, membership now falls under Ginny Sullivan. Ginny updated that there were currently 3,000 members. We are integrating subscribers into the membership database to save costs, offer better service to our supporters, and streamline efficiencies. We're excited to work with publications on this collaboration.

Development: We started something called a business partnership program as an opportunity to capitalize on the businesses that have supported us while simultaneously supporting education and public programs.

Capital Campaign update: Ginny passed around a packet that illustrates how we recognize donors. We were able to partner with the governor's office on a Media Enhancement Campaign. The goal was to create an immersive, and yet respectful experience. With the governor's assistance, we have reached the \$18M goal. Norm Asbjornson is the largest contributor with a \$10.43m donation. Ginny and Molly have been busy giving tours to potential donors. Ginny continues applying for grants and reaching out to potential donors.

The People and Lands of Montana Campaign is for the mobile in the lobby. We took a break from the campaign to focus on the media enhancements, but now we're back on track.

Donors will be recognized on a central plaque in the common area to keep the exhibits true to Montana history.

Jay Russell asked if Ginny has been in contact with US Bank. Ginny confirmed that they did reach out, but it is time to circle back to them.

Jay congratulated Ginny and her team for the fundraising efforts and for surpassing the fundraising goals over the life of MTHS.

We have raised \$57.3M for the Heritage Center.

Tim Fox suggested that we add Jude's signature to donor letters.

Naming Opportunities: By statute, any named spaces must be approved by the BOT, and then they need approval from the Capital Complex Advisory Counsel.

Motion: Bill Whitsitt moved that the board approve the naming opportunity and recognition plan. Jay Russell seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Molly reiterated the importance of tours and her willingness to give them whenever someone makes that request. She's excited about the impact the Heritage Center presents.

Jude commented that Molly and Ginny are inspirational.

Bill Whitsitt asked about the governor's endowment plan. Molly answered that when wrapping up the media campaign with Governor Gianforte, he suggested an endowment for education – specifically raising \$10M for the sole purpose of allowing every student in Montana to visit the Heritage Center and the Capitol at some point in their school career. The endowment is still under development, and Molly is hoping to announce the campaign for it in the fall. Something like this would mean a lot of tours and a lot of extra work, but MTHS staff are excited to tackle it.

Public Relations:

Eve Byron updated the trustees on her efforts working with the tourism industry as they are hoping to have the 2025 Governor's Tourism Conference in the Heritage Center in 2025. Although the Heritage Center won't be open then, it would be a good excitement buzz to host the conference before the grand opening. She went through social media statistics, which have been continually increasing.

Jude asked about increasing numbers by paying for advertising. Eve clarified that that is something that will be addressed in the near future as we work with a marketing firm.

BREAK: Jude announced a break at 10:14 a.m. to reconvene at 10:30 a.m. Jude called the meeting to order at 10:33 a.m.

Rich Aarstad, Senior Archivist, gave the Library and Research report in Roberta Gebhardt's absence. Rich updated the trustees on the goings on in research. They've been working with newspapers.com to digitize all newspapers. They have also been increasing digital images on the Montana History portal.

Rich introduced four items that need motions from the board.

Motion: Steve Lozar moved that we approve the Memorandum of Understanding for Library and Archives, Carol Donaldson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: Jay Russell moved to approve the Deaccession list. Mary Helland seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Steve Lozar asked if there was an issue with keeping the microfilm. Rich clarified that it is a space issue as we need more room for incoming collections. Molly advised the dissertations are at the colleges that they were created. They're not being used in the research center.

Motion: Bill Whitsitt moved to approve the deaccession of the Helena maps. Ken Robison seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: Mary Helland to approve the deaccession of the Valley County maps. Lorna Kunej seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Central Services Report:

Emily McKeever, Administrator, presented the central services report. She began with the HR report, and advised the trustees of which employees have resigned, been hired, and positions we're currently recruiting. The labor union negotiations were ratified last night, July 19, 2023. Emily is working on reclassifying employees and adjusting their pay rates accordingly.

IT: Emily thanked Rennan Rieke, IT, for his efforts in moving staff from the VPMB to 910 Helena Ave.

Security: Emily also thanked the security team, Jerry McGee, Buddy Rivera, and Chris Johnson for their efforts during the chaos of the move. They jumped in to assist anyone in need, and it was greatly appreciated.

Museum Store: The store is continuing to thrive under Dianna Berry's leadership. Emily complimented her and her hard work as she had a very successful year and smooth inventory count.

Finance: Budget analysis and fiscal year-end close have been the top priorities. All entries must be completed on Tuesday next week. Emily will present the financial reports at the next meeting, as they have not closed fiscal year-end books yet.

Bill Whitsitt asked how long Kyler Mozell was employed and asked if there was an exit interview process.

Molly responded that there is an optional exit interview process.

Motion: Bill Whitsitt moved to approve the hiring of new employees. Carol Donaldson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Museum Report:

Jennifer Bottomly O'looney presented the Museum's quarterly report. She updated the trustees on the current goings on in the Museum department. Next week we will receive the new compact storage for the museum.

O & I Report:

Martha Kohl reported that the online registration for the history conference will open next week. Christine Brown is taking the lead on the conference and has been doing phenomenal work. The Governor's Mansion visitor numbers have been up – likely due to the museum being closed. There will be an open house on Thursday during the history conference. Billings has recently adopted the fourth-grade textbook. Martha is hoping Bozeman and Missoula are next. O & I is collaborating with Montana State University for a history fair for students. A volunteer appreciation event is this Monday.

Molly pointed out that the fourth-grade textbook has won a national award and praised Martha as the author.

Publications:

Diana Di Stefano gave the publications report. The summer magazine was sent out in June. Diana is working with student book reviewers. They recently re-printed Thomas Minckler's book. Staff are working on *Catastrophe at Custer Creek* by Ian Campbell Wilson and *The Quest* by Richard Buswell as the newest fall releases. Some changes have been made to the editorial board.

SHPO:

Pete Brown thanked Molly and Emily for working through the pay adjustments as his recent resignations were likely economic. He is hoping the changes will increase staff retention. SHPO started a student archaeology program, and has recently partnered with O & I, as well as DNRC. They're looking at pre-

contact archaeology and learning how to survey and document their findings. Four high school students are in the program, and one undergrad student as their lead. This program exposes the next generation to cultural resources. Pete is hoping to get younger people interested in history with this program.

In May we hosted a Tribal Historical Officer Summit. SHPO is sponsoring five episodes of a podcast to talk about what's happening in historic preservation.

Unfinished Business:

Heritage Keeper Award Committee: With Bill Jones absent, there is no current report to share.

New Business:

Jay Russell asked about Tom Minckler's book and what was happening with his collection. Molly clarified that we took a step back from the collection and focused on publishing the book. This helped Molly and Ginny focus on the capital campaign. They will revisit with Tom in 2024 about the collection.

Jude asked how many of Tom Minckler's books were printed in the first edition. Diana thought it was around 1,000 copies. She pointed out that the speed at which the book sold out was truly remarkable.

Ken Robison read a positive review in Rare Book Monthly on the collection and the book and stated it was the most important in the public realm since a collection in the 1950s. Ken urged the trustees to help the MTHS raise enough money to acquire the collection. The collection is valued at \$4M. Steve Lozar agrees that it would be philosophically wrong to let a collection like that leave the state of Montana and wants the board to do what they can to acquire it.

Molly and Ginny will do whatever they can to raise the funds for it, but it also comes down to Tom Minckler's decision on where he will sell the collection.

Norma Ashby Smith agrees with the discussion. She noted that there is some competition in acquiring this collection.

Bill Whitsitt asked Norma if there were any interests in Great Falls to aggressively pursuing acquiring the collection. She advised that there were interested parties in Great Falls that she was aware of.

Public Comment:

Jude asked if there was any public comment. There was none.

Closing Statements:

Bill Whitsitt commented that he appreciated the meeting and found the written material very helpful. He also commended Molly and Emily for their efforts in increasing pay.

Tim Fox asked if Tom Minckler's book was sold out. Diana advised the second print is in stock.

Molly stated there is a dinner this evening with the Board of Directors from the Russell Museum. They will join Ginny and Jennifer for a tour this afternoon, and they have invited the MTHS Board of Trustees to dinner at the Silver Star at 6 p.m.

The next meeting date will be October 19, 2023.

Motion: Carol Donaldson moved to adjourn the meeting. Lorna seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:18 p.m.

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

Jude Sheppard, President, signed 10/19/2023