

**Montana Historical Society
Board of Trustees Quarterly Meeting
April 18, 2024, 9 A.M. MDT
Montana State Capitol Room 152**

CALL TO ORDER:

Jude Sheppard called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM. Jenni Carr took roll.

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

Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees members attending virtually: Norma Ashby-Smith, Carol Donaldson, Jay Russell, Candi Zion

Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees members excused: Tim Fox, Pete Johnson, Rachel Reckin

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 Education Program Manager; Roberta Gebhardt, Library and Archives Program Manager; Jennifer Bottomly-O’looney, Museum Program Manager; Diana Di Stefano, Publications Program Manager; Pete Brown, State Historic Preservation Program Manager

Review of Minutes:

Motion: Bill Jones moved to approve the April 18, 2024, minutes, Ken Robison seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

President’s Report – Jude Sheppard

Jude welcomed the new trustees. Kim Briggeman introduced himself.

Jude notified the trustees that there would not be a MTHS staff picnic this year. She asked the trustees to donate \$150 each to provide food and snacks to staff while they move into the addition. The move is expected to start in July. If any money is left after the move, the funds will be used for a staff celebration after the grand opening.

Jude thanked the trustees and staff for their contributions to the Montana Historical Society and expressed her gratitude toward being the board president the last two years.

Director’s Report – Molly Kruckenberg

MTHS Staff Update: Molly introduced the newest members of the MTHS Staff: Marco Uribe, Security; Scott Kanerva, Security; Kenzie Baker, Accounting; and Aly Arnold, Assistant Store Manager. Unfortunately, none of the new staff were able to attend the meeting to introduce themselves. Molly informed the trustees that Tom Ferris is retiring, and in his place, Rennan Reike will transition into the Photography 2 position and out of IT Support. There are ongoing recruitments to fill the positions requested for FY24.

Molly presented staff longevity awards: Tammy Ryan – 40 years; Christine Brown – 5 years; Larry Ridge – 5 years.

Quarter 1 Statistics: Molly reviewed the most recent quarter’s statistics with the board.

Legislative Update: There was an interim Education Budget Committee meeting where Molly presented MTHS’s second quarter budget. Molly also provided a response to services the Department of Administration could offer MTHS. The 2023 legislature passed a bill allowing a plaque for Chuck Johnson in the capitol building. Jennifer Bottomly-O’looney, Ginny Sullivan, and Molly met with Pat Hunt, Chuck’s widow, to discuss how to proceed with design, casting, and placing the plaque.

Montana Heritage Center Update: A lot of work is ongoing. The high-density storage installation is nearing completion. The North Lobby elevator is nearing completion as well – one of the largest in the state of Montana. The remodel of the Veteran’s and Pioneer’s Memorial Building (VPMB) is well underway with the ground level getting drywall. The historic single pane windows will be getting replaced this summer. The nitrate vault is in the process of getting installed.

Store Update: Due to the construction, the Museum Store needed to move out of the VPMB earlier than anticipated. In February, staff packed up and moved the store to a downtown location on the Last Chance Gulch walking mall.

Schedule: Molly shared the Heritage Center schedule, and thanked the efforts of Kendra Newhall who is planning the move.

Opening Plans: Molly presented some of the tasks that teams have been assigned to in preparation for the grand opening.

Budget: Molly shared the current budget for the project.

Membership-Development Report – Ginny Sullivan

Ginny thanked Jenni for her work on membership and membership engagement. Ginny explained that subscribers are similar to members, so she’s going to combine the statistics. Members and subscribers are down about 150 since last quarter. Jenni sent out a membership comeback letter that included anyone who expired from January 2020 to December 2023. About 1,800 letters went out and we will know the results of that mailing by the July meeting.

Fundraising efforts including the Capital Campaign, Media Enhancement Campaign, People and Lands of Montana Campaign, and annual giving have funds sitting at approximately \$57million. MTHS was awarded a \$115,000 grant for the Megafauna and Me media enhancement. MTHS is

working on bringing the land donated by Thomas Nygard to the Land Board so that it can be put up for sale. Once the land is sold, the estimated \$1.1m profit will be donated to the Montana Heritage Center project.

The People and Lands of Montana brochure went out a few weeks ago, and staff have been engaging with the higher-level donors. The goal is to receive 200 sponsors, and MTHS currently has 68.

Ginny has been working with the marketing team, Sovrn, and they are working on donor videos for the Major Donor Wall. Sovrn will be meeting with individual donors at the \$25,000 and up level to create the videos.

Montana History and Civics Education Endowment (MHCEE): This endowment has currently raised \$2.3 million. These funds will be used to help students from all over Montana make a trip to the Montana Heritage Center to experience history firsthand.

Jay asked if the Nygard land was valued appropriately when it was originally added to the Montana Heritage Center campaign. Ginny explained that the land was valued higher than the estimate.

Steve asked what the update was on the endowment the governor announced. Ginny clarified that it was the MHCEE, and that money is coming in, but the goal is \$10 million. The governor continues to promote the endowment.

Bill Whitsitt asked where the total for the pledge is located on the brochure. Ginny explained that it might be a slip up and is missing, but Ginny and Claudia have been following up with phone calls.

Naming Opportunity: Exhibit Design Center & Museum Shop named for Owen and Gayle Robinson

Motion: Jay Russel moved to approve the naming opportunity. Carol Donaldson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Ken added that Owen and Gayle saved the Tribune collection when it shut down.

Public Relations Report – Eve Byron

Eve began her report and welcomed Kim Briggeman as the newest trustee. Eve has been working with the Office of Public Relations which handles all of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Eve is also meeting with Visit Helena to get the word out beyond Montana's borders on the Montana Heritage Center.

Since the beginning of 2024, MTHS's Facebook page has grown by almost 7,000 followers. Eve shared the statistics of the Facebook and Instagram pages during the past quarter.

Election of Officers: Jude began the discussion on the election of officers via a voice vote. The nominating committee requested to nominate Tim Fox as President; Bill Jones as Vice President; Bill Whitsitt as Secretary; Mary Helland and Steve Lozar as Members at Large.

The nomination committee moved to nominate Tim Fox as President. The motion passed unanimously.

The nomination committee moved to nominate Bill Jones as Vice President. The motion passed unanimously

The nomination committee moved to nominate Bill Whitsitt as secretary. The motion passed unanimously.

The nomination committee moved to nominate Mary Helland as Member at Large. The motion passed unanimously.

The nomination committee moved to retain Steve Lozar as Member at Large. The motion passed unanimously.

BREAK: Jude called for a break at 10 a.m. Jude reconvened the meeting at 10:15 a.m.

Heritage Keeper Awards: Molly reviewed the Montana Heritage Keeper award criteria, and the purpose of the award. She also clarified the difference between the Heritage Keeper Award and the Heritage Guardian Award.

Steve Lozar asked to consider a Heritage Guardian and a Heritage Keeper in this meeting. He proposed to consider Ellen Crain as the Heritage Guardian.

Motion: Steve moved to award Ellen Crain a Heritage Guardian Award. Bill Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: Bill Whitsitt moved to award Ralph Saunders the Heritage Keeper Award. Bill Jones seconded.

Discussion on the motion: Ken asked if there was a written definition of the two awards. Molly clarified that the Heritage Guardian is more of a lifetime achievement award. Bill and Molly will be cleaning up the definitions before the 2025 award.

Motion: Bill Whitsitt moved to award Ralph Saunders the Heritage Keeper Award. Bill Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Program Reports:

Publications – Diana Di Stefano

Diana began her report by sharing that they have been without a graphic designer since December and are currently interviewing for that position. The publications department is busy at work in the press and has been working with former trustee, Douglas MacDonald, on his book. Another upcoming book project is a collaboration between Publications and Outreach & Education, titled

101 Places. It is a photography book that looks at significant historic sites in Montana. Diana is also working with the Montana Arts Council on an anthology of Montana Poets Laureates.

Shane Dunning won a prestigious Wrangler Award (for outstanding short nonfiction) and Amber Bell is the Emerging Scholar winner for 2024.

Diana talked about the decline in subscribers, and stated that as a journal, *Montana the Magazine of Western History* has three to four times as many members and subscribers as other institutions.

Ken asked when Roger Henderson's book is set to be released. Diana is continuing to work with him and has ideas on how to move forward, but his health is affecting the collaboration a bit.

Bill Whitsitt commented on the Yellowstone article in the most recent magazine and asked to be connected with the author. Diana is happy to link them.

Centralized Services Division – Emily McKeever

Financials: Emily reviewed the financial documents presented to the board members.

The store has a negative balance due to timing as some credit cards did not process, and staff took the opportunity to buy additional inventory during the store move in February. Emily expects this to even out in the coming months.

Emily presented the final page, the budget to actual results. There are plans in place to spend down extra dollars.

Jude asked about the Lewis and Clark license plates. Under "State Special Revenue" funds, we have Lewis and Clark license plates. The revenue from selling those license plates has continued to decline. Currently, the state no longer manufactures these license plates. Emily will work with Nancy Hall to get the budget adjusted to reflect this change.

New Employees: Emily asked the board to approve the hiring of new employees.

Motion: Lorna moved to approve the hiring of new employees, Marco Uribe, Scott Kanerva, Kenzie Baker, and Aly Arnold per MCA 22-3-108. Steve seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Emily thanked Rennan for his work as the MTHS IT Administrator. She is working on filling the vacant positions. They take a lot of time as several positions need to be approved by the Department of Administration, which is a tedious process. Security staff has been spread from the Heritage Center, VPMB, 910 Helena Ave (temporary location), and the downtown store.

Bill Whitsitt asked about the nature of the Labor Management Committee (LMC), staff gatherings, and anything that might indicate concern in terms of personnel. Molly clarified who the LMC is made up of, including herself, Emily, and Roberta. As the MTHS is separated into different locations, the LMC is looking at ways to bring everyone together. There have not been concerns about the additional workload yet. No one will need to work outside of their normal hours, and staff will be able to sign up for tasks that they can do.

Library & Archives – Roberta Gebhardt

The Library and Archives staff continue to work in a difficult working environment. Construction poses a challenge with lack of temperature control, noises, smells, etc. They have come together as a team to navigate the changes with humor and food. Staff are working on making one accession record and processing procedure, instead of several for each area. Previously, there were different ones for Library, Archives, and Photo Archives. They will all be one now. This will create clarity and efficiency.

There is currently an influx of rolled maps that are taking up a lot of space and are difficult to use. Staff are working on hydrating these maps to flatten them for better storage and access.

The Library & Archives are buying equipment that will help digitize images.

Photo Deaccession

Motion: Ken Robison moved to approve the photo deaccession of the Great Falls Tribune photos to the Great Falls History Museum. Jay Russel seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Steve asked if there would be access to the images. Roberta clarified that yes, there will be access through the Great Falls History Museum.

Museum Program – Jennifer Bottomly-O’looney

The interpretation of the Homeland exhibit is ongoing, led by Amanda Trum and Aaron Genton. Yesterday, there was a Tribal Stakeholders meeting. Amanda led the meeting and MTHS is grateful for their support and input on the exhibits. The artifact mounts are under construction and work is ongoing. Heather Doyle is working on conserving artifacts for the exhibits. Museum staff are working on interpretation and design.

There will be a walkthrough and sign off on the compact storage on May 20, which is the final step before cleaning and prepping for use in July.

Jennifer stated that they were able to return artifacts to Pablo after their fire.

Steve remarked on the fire at the facility in Pablo and stated that the Montana Historical Society had arranged conservators within a day. He thanked MTHS on behalf of the Salish Kootenai tribes.

Big Medicine – Molly Kruckenberg

Big Medicine was returned to the Confederation of the Salish Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) in October of 2022, and when that happened there was discussion of creating a holographic image of Big Medicine to use in the MHC. As Big Medicine is still on site but owned by CSKT, the holographic image is currently unnecessary, and MTHS would need permission from CSKT. Big Medicine is in rough shape, so MTHS doesn’t want to move him before necessary. Once he is moved to CSKT, at that point they will determine if they could get an image. A holographic image would cost around \$50,000. Ken asked if MTHS could plan to include the holographic image in the future exhibit at MHC. Bill Jones clarified that they need to get permission from the tribe before doing anything.

Candi asked if a photograph would also diminish the spiritual value of Big Medicine. Molly reiterated that even a photo would require permission from CSKT to display.

Outreach & Education – Martha Kohl

Martha began her report with a photo of the Hands-on History Footlockers. Staff changed the distribution of footlockers from free (teachers paid shipping) to \$25, but MTHS pays shipping. Shipping was upward of \$90 so the footlockers were not getting circulated. Since changing to the flat fee of \$25, footlocker check-outs are up 30%.

Candi Zion left the meeting at 11:28 a.m. – she will not be a part of subsequent motions and votes.

The Montana History Conference “Central to History: Exploring Great Falls and Beyond” is September 26-28, 2024. Martha passed out postcards for the board members to share.

Martha discussed the Teacher Leader Fellows.

June 1 is the 100th anniversary of the American Indian Citizenship. There will be a ceremony at the Capitol on that day and planning is underway.

Martha asked for a motion to rename “Outreach and Interpretation” to “Outreach and Education” as she feels it is clearer for the public.

Motion: Bill Whitsitt moved to rename Outreach and Interpretation to Outreach and Education. Steve seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

SHPO – Pete Brown

The State Historic Preservation Office is working on a report about state tax credits. They will review state tax credits across the board to propose legislation to amend, create, or kill programs. The tax credit incentivizes the reuse of historically significant buildings that may be languishing in the community.

Added to the National Register this quarter were: Harding Way Historic District in Silverbow County, and Donaldson Hall, Northern Montana College in Hill County.

SHPO is reviewing state agency heritage stewardship reports. They will report findings to the Education Interim Committee.

Bill Whitsitt asked if there was a study on buildings pre-work for the tax credit, and then after the work is done. Pete answered there is not a study, but it would be an interesting finding. Pete will investigate researching this data for the board.

Ken asked if there was a trend in the use of tax credits during the past five years. Is it increasing? Pete answered that they do track it in the database, and SHPO could present numbers. There are always about 10 applicants in processing, up from three a few years ago. Bill Whitsitt offered that

this could be something the Legislative Fiscal Office would have access to or the Department of Revenue.

Jude asked if Pete would do a session at the Montana History Conference on the topic of tax credits. Martha has something special planned.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

ARMS Update: Molly reviewed the ARMS update. It is the Governor's Office initiative to update all State Department rules. The rules that were presented in draft format have been reviewed by staff as well as the Lt. Governor. Some items have been repealed due to being duplicative. Molly is proposing updates to three rules. [exhibit]

Motion: Bill Jones moved to approve the draft changes to the Administrative Rules. Carol Donaldson seconded.

Discussion on the motion: Ken Robison requested a discussion on the motion. Ken had a question on the language presented on 10.121.501 (Acquisitions). He suggested changing the language to say "Sole and final decisions on the acquisition of collections shall be made by the director in conjunction with the program manager and the board." Molly stated that this could complicate things in acquisitions, but the language is unclear. Bill Whitsitt asked if the language can be clarified and then get an electronic vote.

Motion: Bill Whitsitt moved to amend the motion to accept the revisions on everything except the General Guidelines (10.121.501). Ken Robison seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: Bill Whitsitt moved to vote electronically on the revised amendment General Guidelines (10.121.501). Carol seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Break for Lunch Jude announced a lunch break at 12:01 p.m. She reconvened the meeting at 12:40 p.m.

Update on theft of Library & Archives materials: Molly gave an update on the theft at Library & Archives. Brian D'Ambrosio agreed to plead guilty to theft of major artwork as part of a plea deal. His next court appearance is June 17. Jude stated that she is happy he is being prosecuted and hopes this sends a message to others that to not steal from museums. Ken asked if staff knows what he took, and if MTHS will have the items returned. There were 10 items in the indictment, but there are additional items that were for sale on eBay. There are items that were recovered from a local Bed and Breakfast. Everything must go through the special agent, so there is a delay in the return of items, but staff are confident that the items will be recovered. Mary asked if there was a search warrant for his property to see if there were additional items that no one knew were missing. It is unclear if there was a search warrant. MTHS doesn't receive every aspect of the investigation.

Bill Whitsitt asked how staff expect the word to get out to deter further thefts. MTHS will announce it tastefully. The special investigator is also looking at doing sessions around the state on how to mitigate further thefts in other Montana institutions.

Molly stated that the security plan has been approved and the cases will have security systems tied into them.

NEW BUSINESS

Public Comment: None.

Kim Briggeman thanked the trustees for being so welcoming, and he is looking forward to further meetings.

Steve said that as he ages, he realizes how important feelings from the heart are. When Jude lost her husband, he sang an honor song. Now, with Jude stepping down as president, he wanted to repeat this gesture. Steve sang.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: Bill Jones moved to adjourn the meeting. Mary Helland seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 12:58 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, Board President