



**Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
September 21, 2024**

Pear Tree Inn Near Union Station • Room 218 • 2211 Market Street, Saint Louis, MO 63139

Missouri Humanities' mission is to enrich lives and strengthen communities by connecting Missourians with the people, places, and ideas that shape our society.

Board Members in Attendance: Trish Erzfeld (Chairperson), Jason Sides (Vice Chair) (Virtual), Betty Coleman, Nicholas Inman (Secretary), Marci Bennett, George Pettigrew, Alicia Starr, Sudarsan Kant, Marilynn Bradford, Dawn Smith-Popielski

Board Members Absent: John Robinson III (Treasurer), Juan Meraz, Peter Hofherr

Staff Members in Attendance: Ashley Beard-Fosnow (Executive Director), Ashley Vogel (Office Coordinator), Chris Kempke (Cultural Community Development Director), Lisa Carrico (Program Director), Christina Highsmith (Marketing Coordinator)

- I. **Welcome Guests, Board Members, and Staff** **Trish Erzfeld**
- II. **Call to Order** **Trish Erzfeld**
- III. **Roll Call** **Ashley Vogel**
 - i. *Ashley Vogel conducted a roll call. A quorum was established.*
- IV. **Approve Agenda** **Trish Erzfeld**
 - i. *Sudarsan Kant motioned to approve the agenda. George Pettigrew seconded. The agenda was approved.*
- V. **Approve June 22, 2024 Minutes** **Trish Erzfeld**
 - i. *Alicia Starr motioned to approve the minutes as presented. George Pettigrew seconded. All in favor. The minutes were approved with no adjustments being made.*
- VI. **Executive Director Report** **Ashley Beard-Fosnow**
 - i. Ashley Beard-Fosnow presented her screen and shared Missouri Humanities' mission and vision statements.
 - ii. We are currently operating on our FY 2024 budget. Our Board approved our FY 2025 budget. Ashley BF discussed anticipated FY 2025 expenses.
 - iii. The fundraiser held by Alicia Starr was incredibly successful – over \$900 was raised and MH gained 12 new members from the event. Alicia encouraged the rest of the Board to schedule fundraisers.
 - iv. MH will be opening a new office in the Kranzburg Art District. Ashley BF asked the Board for permission to change the official business address from St. Charles to 3218 Gladstone Blvd in Kansas City, MO, 64123.
 - *Marci Bennett motioned to approve the change. Marilynn Bradford seconded. All in favor. Missouri Humanities' official business address will be moved to Kansas City.*
 - v. Ashley BF discussed the various ways Missouri Humanities is expanding its connections. Osborn Barr Paramore (OBP) have been meeting with Ashley BF and Christina Highsmith to discuss marketing strategies. Ashley BF presented a schedule for Advocacy Day in 2025. We



are going to work to spread the word of MH on February 4th. On February 5th, MH staff will man the booth in alignment with the Friends of the Arts Advocacy Day. Marilyn Bradford asked if there were criteria on who would be recommended for awards. Ashley BF's recommendation would be for the Board to create an Ad Hoc Committee to define those criteria. Dawn Smith-Popielski volunteered to be on this committee. Dawn suggested Kimberly Ann Collins for an award. This will be brought up in future Advocacy meetings. Marilyn Bradford attended the Jefferson City Air Show, a grant-funded event in which 25k people attended. Ashley BF invited members of the Board to send her their feedback on grant-funded activities they attend.

vi. Ashley BF discussed our upcoming innovative programming, upcoming signature series theme, and our Cultural Heritage Tourism.

vii. **Marketing**

Christina Highsmith

- Christina Highsmith introduced herself to Board Members. She discussed digital KPIs across Constant Contact. The segmentation of CC has been successful. When she started tracking CC, we had 7k contacts, though we are now over 10k contacts. The open rate is 40%, which is similar to when we started. Members tend to open our emails at a 70% rate.
- We had a successful magazine run of the United We Stand magazine. A 960% increase of people signed up for the magazine. We have touched every county in Missouri except DeKalb and Putnam. We have reached various generations and demographics which is great for our outreach.
- The MH website was redone when Christina Highsmith started. It was averaging 5k views per month. Since then, views per month have increased to 20k. She noted how brand awareness measures long-term growth rather than short-term impact. This is important for unaided awareness. Digital programs are best for short-term impact, such as H-Tv, which is still increasing in numbers. OBP will be making digital assets to aid in our online presence. Over the next year, Christina will be working on converting those who become aware of us to attending events and
- Alicia asked if we are doing anything specific with the authors coming for the Heartland Book Festival. Christina noted that we have hired an independent contractor to aid with social media for this.

viii. **In-person Programs**

Lisa Carrico

- Lisa Carrico discussed that we are in year 3 of functioning as the Library of Congress's Center for the Book Missouri Affiliate. She discussed the goals of MH's literature programs. She discussed our Great Reads from Great Places and our attendance at the National Book Festival. There was a significant increase in attendance at the National Book Festival compared to previous years. Our selected Great Reads from Great Places for 2025 are *Mexikid* by Pedro Martin and *Bindle*



Punk Bruja by Desidera Mesa. Pedro designed a photo prop for us – a Winnebago. We also received funding from IMLS for virtual programming. On October 24th, registration will open for a conversation with Desi and Pedro with Maria Vasquez Boyd who will moderate the conversation.

- The Heartland Book Festival will take place on October 12th. Multiple panels and talks have sold out. Lisa Carrico will give all metrics to Ashley BF to share with the Board after the festival. A former Board member, Deborah Taffa, is featured whose book is now longlisted for the National Book Award.
- *Proud to Be* has switched presses to Greentower Press with Northwest Missouri State University. *Proud to Be* issue 13 will be out on Veterans Day.
- The renowned Ron Chernow will be brought to St. Louis for a public talk about his forthcoming biography of Mark Twain on June 28, 2025.

ix. AmeriCorps

Chris Kempke

- Chris Kempke introduced himself to the Board. In the time since the AmeriCorps program was created, he discovered there are three major areas for the Operations Grant: program design, organizational capability, cost effectiveness and budget adequacy. Chris had the following major findings from other programs: the AmeriCorps program had a significant impact on the cultural heritage landscape, works well in a variety of cultural settings, and members can complete a wide range of projects for their host institutions. Host site stability is crucial. MH conducted a needs assessment across the state. Many sites expressed similar needs, though there was a gap between expertise of staff and volunteer organizations. Most organizations reported having enough work for a full-time member. Almost all regions reported a willingness to share members and work collaboratively. Chris recommends submitting a grant to the Missouri Community Service Commission for \$250,000. Chris discussed the timeline of the events. Ashley BF expressed thorough support for moving forward with this program.
- Marci Bennett clarified if this is for one year. This is for a 3-year cycle, and we would need to reapply after 3 years. Chairperson Erzfeld expressed excitement for the communities and asked how recruitment will work for host sites. Chris explained that we have a list of all the institutions that expressed interest, and Christina will market the program well. Recruiting members will resemble recruitment for a job. George Pettigrew asked, in 3-years, will we be tied to another \$250,000, or will our growth determine the grant amount. Chris noted that there is no cap on the amount that we request – the program can grow.
- *Nicholas Inman motioned to approve the application. Alicia Starr seconded. All in favor. Motion passed.*



VII. Committees

Trish Erzfeld

x. Advocacy

Marci Bennett

- Marci Bennett expressed excitement regarding the new Advocacy Day schedule. Staff will begin the process of explaining programming and funding to the new legislators. Marci proposed sending out an email asking the Advocacy Committee to meet on Wednesday October 9th at 10:00 AM via Zoom. Ashley Vogel will work with Marci on sending out an invitation.

xi. Finance

John Robinson

- **Financial Report**

1. In John Robinson III's absence, Ashley BF provided an overview of the financials. During the month of August 2024, cash decreased by (\$146,373), leaving an ending cash balance of \$168,641. The decrease in cash stems from expenses exceeding revenue for the month of August. Accounts receivable is \$124,895 as of the end of the month. This balance is made up of the NEH grant receivable and the AmeriCorps Planning Grant invoicing. The Edward Jones investment balance of \$769,412 increased over the month from the prior month balance of \$750,357 due to market fluctuations.
2. The current ratio is 9.71:1 as of the end of the month, representing a healthy ability to cover current liabilities as they come due. The percentage of YTD programming expenses is 86%.
3. Dawn Smith-Popielski noted that individual brokers at Edward Jones can ask corporations how to donate money.

xii. Grants

Betty Coleman

- **August Mini Grants**

1. Betty Coleman announced that Dawn has been added to the Grants committee. This grant cycle was extremely large. Eighty-six (86) grant proposals were submitted. After Clarice's review, sixty-nine (69) were sent to the Grants Committee. The committee recommends approval for full funding for 32 applications for \$396,353.00. Total recommended funding for this round was \$396,353. The remaining amount is \$182,587.92 to be allocated as follows:
 - a. The Major Grants August allocation was \$182,587.92. During the August 28, 2024, the Executive Committee allocated \$213,765.08 from the fiscal 2025 budget for a total of \$396,353 funding approval.
2. Betty will be announcing the 3 people who will be joining the committee to discuss the Semiquincentennial Grants at the Gala. Betty noted that on December 14th, Wreaths Across America will be placed. Board members can go to their website and click on MH logo to see a map of where wreaths are being placed across Missouri. Lisa Carrico asked if there's a Proud To Be



reader in someone's area, if it would be possible to host a reading for them along with the wreaths. Betty and Lisa agreed that they would look into it. Betty explained how the wreaths work.

xiii. Center for the Book

Nicholas Inman

- Nicholas Inman complimented Lisa Carrico on her presentation for the Center for the Book.

VII. Old Business

Trish Erzfeld

VIII. New Business

Trish Erzfeld

- Chairperson Erzfeld is looking for 3 volunteers for a nominating committee for future officers. *Betty Coleman, Alicia Starr, and Sudarsan Kant volunteered for the committee.*
- Nicholas Inman will be terming off the Board at the end of October, though he had an innovative idea to discuss. Nicholas had a conversation with Dorinda Nicholson, who suggested forming an auxiliary for MH. Future Board members could be involved to see how they would work as Board members. Betty asked if they would have a person to come and report to the Board as to what's happening. Marci suggested starting this with former Board members to see how it works. Alicia noted that we will have to decide what staff members would manage this and what their duties would be. Ashley BF would see this falling under Chrissy Sommer, the Community Engagement Director. Ashley BF could see it working, especially under Nicholas' leadership. Dawn Smith-Popielski noted that Mizzou Alumni attempted something like this that was not successful.
- Marci Bennet made the motion to allow Nicholas Inman to provide an outline for forming an auxiliary to present to the Executive Committee, and potentially the Full Board. Betty Coleman seconded. All in favor. The motion passed.*

IX. Adjourn

Trish Erzfeld

- George Pettigrew motioned to adjourn. Nicholas Inman seconded. All in favor. The meeting ended at 1:56 PM.*

Next Board Meeting: December 4, 2024 on Zoom (4:00 PM)

Missouri Humanities is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: 9.21.24 Full Board of Directors Meeting (Gala)

Time: Sep 21, 2024 12:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86707423078?pwd=eFNKeUVUM0xHUEpFWjVJLzBBWjJDdz09>

Meeting ID: 867 0742 3078

Passcode: 013865