

Maine Historical Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

 September 11, 2024

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

 Location: Zoom

**Board Members Present:** Kat Stefko, Steve Bromage, Larissa Vigue Picard, Kevin Johnson, Jill Piekut Roy

**Board Members Absent:** Earl Shettleworth, Anna Faherty, Pat Dunn

**MSA Staff Members Present:** Kate McBrien (ex-officio), Tammy Marks

**Public Attendance:** None

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 pm by Kate McBrien.

**Welcome**

Kate welcomed everyone to the meeting and recognized a quorum.

**Approval of May 8, 2024, Meeting Minutes**

Steve Bromage moved to accept the meeting minutes; Howard Lowell seconded. Tammy did a roll call with the six Board members; the decision was unanimous.

**MHRAB Funding**

Kate verified that the MHRAB fund's current balance was $28,862. To date, $31,000 has been spent on grants in 2024, following a $40,000 disbursement from NHPRC earlier this year.

**Grant Program Update**

Kate announced the hiring of Jacob Lusk as the state programs coordinator by NHPRC to support state records boards, noting that the grant program has spent $31,000 of its total budget of $60,862, leaving $28,862 available; however, the program's progress has been delayed due to staffing turnovers in Maine's procurement and controller's office, which are necessary for grant approvals, prompting her concern about launching another grant round on time.

Steve inquired about the status of grants and projects. Kate reported 11 applications received, 9 of which were approved. Recipients are awaiting checks, which is delaying their reporting timeline to NHPRC. Kate suggested requesting an extension for final reports, moving the deadline from December to March.

The Board discussed the importance of extending the first round of grants to ensure meaningful impact on the asking communities, particularly since some projects are planned after the busy summer season, emphasizing the urgency of submitting invoices to prevent losing any unspent state funds by June 30, 2025. With $28,000 still available, they considered another grant round with Jacob and NHPRC's support, potentially broadening the focus beyond assessments to include supplies, which Howard suggested could help advance the agenda for many organizations that feel limited by the current focus. The Board expressed optimism about the first round's positive effects and acknowledged the need to promote the archive grant program, as half of the funding remains untapped due to a lack of applicants.

Larissa suggested establishing a regular grants program supported by a roving archivist to assist organizations with their applications, while Kat raised concerns about the billing process and whether other organizations could serve as fiscal agents for NHPRC-approved projects; Howard confirmed that any NHPRC-approved organization could act as a fiscal agent and proposed creating a database of applicants to address funding needs systematically. Kate agreed on the necessity of this database and committed to moving forward with regranting efforts and planning for the roving archivist to facilitate collections assessments.

**Discussion - Remaining Funds**

The board has approved a second round of grants to support archival needs. Steve made a motion to do a second round of grant funding, Howard seconded the motion. Tammy did a roll call with the six Board members; the decision was unanimous.

This grant cycle will be open to a wide range of projects, including funding for supplies, processing collections, rehousing materials, and digital preservation. This approach aims to attract a diverse range of applications and maximize the funds' impact on the archival community in Maine. Details on the application process and deadlines will be provided shortly.

**Sub-Committee Reports**

During the meeting, Kate provided an update that the Roving Archivist Subcommittee still needs to meet and is hoping to schedule a couple of meetings for the fall to discuss details if a grant application is being processed in the spring.

Tammy provided an update on the Website Content Planning Subcommittee. The group faced challenges with the web page due to behind-date training and Felicia's retirement. Changes were not made, and meetings were canceled. Kate added that the Secretary of State website redesign was supposed to be completed by now, but it has not been completed. The state has experienced a massive retirement block, with many employees reaching retirement age, leading to new employees trying to navigate the new processes. Changes in the procurement office have slowed down processes, requiring state agencies to obtain permission from leading IT and undergo security reviews before purchasing new technology or equipment. This has had a statewide impact.

The Grant Application Subcommittee has completed its review of the submitted applications and brought them to the table during the recent meeting. If a second round of evaluations is necessary, the Subcommittee will reconvene for further discussions. Kate and Pat will lead the way in ensuring everyone remains aligned with our overarching goals.

**Update on Board Reappointments**

On the Board front, all reappointments are confirmed, but we received news that Donald Soctoma has resigned due to time constraints. Kate urged the Governor's Office to consider appointing someone from Northern Maine to improve our geographic representation.

During the meeting, Kate gave an update to the Board on the America250 Project. Sarah Hansen, the state coordinator for the Semiquincentennial Commission, provided an update on their progress. Sarah is currently working on program planning and traveling to Mobile, AL, to further these efforts. It’s worth noting that the federal America 250 initiative has not secured funding for states and is trying to copyright the term “America 250.” Consequently, Maine will pursue collaborations with other states directly but anticipates limited support at the national level.

Jill has proposed an exciting suggestion: our leading contemporary archives group could partner with two other organizations to develop training programs. Jill is considering inviting Anna and Greta Schroeder from the Bangor Public Library to discuss this collaboration, which could be beneficial as we plan our next grant application and seek funding opportunities.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 3:48 pm.