

Colorado Humanities Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Date: February 28, 2026

Location: Virtual Meeting

Board Members Present: Deb Kalish, Jim Carpenter, Jordan Letschert, Nick Saenz, Jennifer Cook, Beth Etter, Cristina Goletti, Andrew Magaña, Juliana Fajardo, Taylor Voss

Board Members Absent: Leah Davis-Witherow, Vernon Jones Jr., Amy Hoeven, Candice Bannister

Staff Present: Sarah Olivier

Actions taken

Approval of the agenda (page 1)

Approval of the September 13, 2025 Board minutes (page 2)

Approval of preparation of materials for NEH (page 2)

Approval of budget (page 3)

Approval of withdrawals from reserves (page 3)

Next meeting

June 6, 2026

Approval of Agenda

Motion by Etter to approve the agenda. Seconded by Fajardo

Action: Unanimously approved

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Goletti to approve the September 13, 2025 Board minutes. Seconded by Etter

Action: Unanimously approved

Motion by Letschert for the Chair and Executive Director to prepare board materials for NEH. Seconded by Carpenter

Action: Unanimously approved

Board Chair Report

Chair Kalish thanked board members for their ongoing service and highlighted recent contributions by board members in support of fundraising, strategic planning, programming, communications, governance, and community partnerships.

The Board discussed upcoming meeting dates and agreed that the June 2026 board meeting will be held in person to accommodate officer elections and recognition of departing members.

Executive Director Report

Executive Director Sarah Olivier provided organizational updates, including:

- An unofficial update from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) indicating that Colorado Humanities may receive approximately \$500,000 in federal funding, comparable to the prior year's allocation, though no Notice of Action has been issued.
- Preparations for Humanities on the Hill meetings with Colorado's congressional delegation.
- Resolution of a lease dispute with the organization's landlord through a negotiated settlement of approximately \$35,000.
- Completion of a substantial accounting reconciliation and cleanup effort in preparation for the annual audit.
- Reinstatement of some core programming.
- Launch of the organization's first major fee-for-service contract, creating a new earned-revenue stream and expanding community engagement work across Colorado.

The Executive Director emphasized that fundraising, partnership development, and implementation of the organization's relaunch strategy remain top priorities.

Finance Committee Report

Jordan Letschert presented the Finance Committee report.

The Board reviewed financial statements prepared by the organization's new accounting firm and received an update on accounting reconciliation efforts and preparations for the annual audit.

Motion by the Finance Committee to extend the previously approved FY2026 operating budget through June 2026.

Action: Approved unanimously.

Motion by the Finance Committee to authorize the Executive Director to access up to \$225,000 from organizational reserves, as needed, for continued operations through June 2026.

Action: Approved unanimously.

Development Committee Report

Taylor Voss presented the fundraising report.

Key updates included:

- Receipt of a \$15,000 competitive capacity-building grant from the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the Mellon Foundation.
- Successful completion of the November facilitator training and planning for an April training cohort.
- Full funding of the living history tour through grants, sponsorships, partner support, and donations.
- Ongoing fundraising efforts for the Center for the Book programs and organizational operations.
- Continued emphasis on leveraging board networks and relationships to support fundraising and partnership development.

Program Committee Report

Beth Etter presented program updates.

Highlights included:

- Successful statewide living history tour.
- Opening of Colorado Book Awards submissions and volunteer recruitment.
- Continued development of Colorado 150 programming in partnership with the Aspen Institute and other statewide organizations.
- Expansion of partnerships with Metro State University Denver, Denver Film, Colorado Creative Industries, and other organizations.
- Continued planning for Chautauqua programs and community engagement initiatives across the state.

The committee also discussed shifting part of its focus toward strategic communications to support the organization's relaunch and fundraising efforts.

Governance and Nominating Committee Report

Juliana Fajardo provided governance updates.

The Board reviewed upcoming board term expirations and officer elections scheduled for the June 2026 meeting.

Updates included:

- Identification of board members continuing into second terms.
- Formation of an Officer Nominating Committee to develop a slate of officers for election in June.
- Discussion of board recruitment priorities aligned with the organization's strategic direction and fundraising needs.
- Ongoing conversations with the Governor's Office regarding potential board member recommendations and appointments.

Other Business

Board members discussed staff wellbeing and organizational capacity. The Executive Director reported that staff are managing significant workloads but remain committed to the relaunch strategy and organizational mission.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.