

**Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund
Board Meeting
Conference Call
Wednesday, March 21, 2007
3 p.m.**

Board Members Present: David Reetz, Chair; Tom Empey, Susan Hladky, Sara Needles, Mike Shonsey

Staff Members: Renée Bovée

Guests: Milward Simpson, Director, Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources

Chair Reetz called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

Simpson took a moment to introduced Sara Needles who has recently been appointed at Administrator of the Division of Cultural Resources. Needles now succeeds Simpson as the member of the Cultural Trust Fund board.

The agenda was approved by consensus, with the addition of a discussion on the Cultural Trust Fund developing a separate granting pool for endowment support.

Minutes

Moved by Shonsey and seconded by Needles to approve the minutes of February 2-3, 2007 as written. Approved unanimously.

WCTF Grant Applications: Establishment of Deadlines

The WCTF Board continued their discussion from the February board meeting as to whether there should be one deadline or two deadlines this calendar year. Empey reiterated his concerns that he expressed at the conclusion of the February meeting, that given the projected \$400,000 of available funds for Fiscal Year 2008, perhaps the board should review grants only once a year, versus having the funding pool essentially cut in half with two deadlines per year.

General discussion was held on the potential pros and cons of not holding the June 20 deadline. The general concern was that if the June 20 deadline brings a comparable number of applications, with only approximately \$200,000 available, would it be a good use of not only WCTF resources but also on constituent resources to have applications for such a limited funding amount? There was a balancing concern that the WCTF has already promoted a June 20 deadline, and would it cause consternation among the constituency to have that deadline dropped.

After considerable discussion, it was suggested that the June deadline remain, and then if needed, the WCTF could establish as once-a-year deadline that would fall around August of the following year. There is also the potential of retaining two deadlines a year if indeed the Wyoming Legislature appropriates additional resources to the Cultural Trust in the next legislative session.

Hladky moved and Shonsey seconded that the WCTF retain the June 20, 2007 deadline and then transition to a once-a-year deadline for 2008. The motion passed unanimously. It was further suggested that future deadlines not be promoted in advance, as had occurred with the June 20, 2007 deadline, simply so the board will have the flexibility in setting the next deadline dependent upon available resources.

WCTF Grant Applications: Modifications to Grant Application

Bovée noted the need for several revisions to the actual grant application based on information the board and agency reviewers had noted at the February meeting and through subsequent conversations. She noted five specific areas of modification: 1) Whether the WCTF wished to continue with the Review Agency process or establish separate panels for grant review; 2) Whether the WCTF wished to establish funding caps for the applications; 3) How to integrate the issue of quality or value into the questions; 4) If the WCTF wishes to promote innovation, how to further develop the Relationship to Strategic Plan and Overall Financial Health question to include a modified “risk analysis”; and 5) How the application needs to better stress that an applicant must provide a match to WCTF funds, if not in cash, then in in-kind or donated goods/services.

Shonsey also noted the concern the board had expressed that any salary assistance requests be structured to illustrate diminishing WCTF support over 3 years; and to require the applicant to demonstrate how they will sustain the position in the long term.

It was suggested that Bovée revise the application to demonstrate how to include the issues of quality or value; innovation and risk analysis; applicant match; and salary assistance, for the board’s review.

Chair Reetz then suggested the board concentrate on the two other main issues: 1) Review of the grant applications; and 2) Funding caps.

As Needles had served as an agency reviewer for State Historic Preservation, Reetz asked her for her specific recommendations to the review process. Needles noted that all three reviewers (Historic Preservation, Arts Council and Humanities Council) had felt quite comfortable with reviewing their applications, however all had felt uncomfortable with establishing a recommended funding amount. All reviewers also had challenges with conflicts of interest, as all had a certain level of familiarity with the applicants.

Simpson noted the value of the comments made by the review agencies and how they had provided critical information for the decision making process. Simpson reminded the board that if the WCTF establishes outside grant panels, such as the model used by the

Arts Council, there is an administrative workload to running panels which must be acknowledged. However, agency review also requires the time commitment of staff from those agencies.

Empey noted that when he first started serving on grant review panels for the Arts Council he was very excited about this use of peers in reviewing grants. However, over the years, he has seen the panel process falter because of the difficulty in finding good panelists and the difficulty in creating a balanced panel whereby one or two panelists do not dominate the review process.

Needles suggested that perhaps the agency review system could remain, but release the agencies from establishing a funding recommendation, and simplify their review so it does not mirror the board review process, but rather they just illustrate the applications strengths or weaknesses.

At 4:15 p.m. Empey excused himself from the conference call due to another appointment.

The WCTF Board agreed by consensus to continue the agency review process, but to simplify the process so that the reviewers are not required to recommend funding levels or to utilize the same detailed evaluation form, which is used by the Board. However, the review agencies are still to establish a basic ranking between applications (for example, if 12 applications are reviewed by one agency, they must rank those applications from best to least best). It was also agreed that if applications merit, additional panelists could be brought in to provide a missing expertise – or to avoid an outright conflict of interest. It was also suggested that if appropriate the agency reviewers be convened as a group to allow cross-expertise discussions.

The WCTF Board then discussed the need to established funding caps. Bovée noted this is an important tool for the grant applicants as it establishes realistic funding expectations. Simpson noted that the top award given in February was \$50,000, but to establish \$50,000 as a cap would equate to one-quarter of the anticipated available funds for the next grant round. It was noted by Bovée that certain categories, such as “bricks and mortar” and organizational infrastructure really require significant investment and perhaps there will be that strong application which would deserve receiving the full \$50,000.

It was suggested that apart from establishing a cap, the WCTF should also publicize in the application what the average grant award is, to reiterate the realistic range of grant awards given.

It was moved by Shonsey and seconded by Hladky that for the June 20, 2007 application deadline, that \$50,000 be established as the cap, and that the average grant award also be promoted. Unanimously approved (Empey absent).

Endowment

Shonsey explained his idea to the WCTF Board. He suggested establishing a separate funding pool, created by soliciting donations, at the Wyoming Community Foundation. Then using that pool and a portion of our available interest from the Trust Fund, to create a larger grant pool in support of creating endowments. Shonsey was wondering first, if this was within the parameters of the WCTF enabling legislation; and secondly, if this was an idea the Board wished to pursue.

Simpson spoke to the recent experience the Wyoming Arts Council went through with their “100 Days of Arts” grass-roots fundraising campaign. There was concern raised during that campaign that the Arts Council was competing with local organizations for donated dollars. However, the counter-argument was that certain donors may have different interests and may be willing to support such statewide efforts without impacting the dollars given locally. Simpson also commented on the availability of staff resources for the WCTF to be soliciting donations and grants.

Simpson also noted that he had heard from the State Treasurer’s office, and that our initial inquiry made in January about re-investing trust fund dollars with the Wyoming Community Foundation in the hopes of gaining a higher interest rate, was not to be allowed.

Bové noted that another issue to be discussed with the Wyoming Community Foundation would be whether this would be seen as an “encroachment on their turf” as they are in the business of establishing endowments and soliciting those donors.

The WCTF enabling legislation does allow the WCTF to solicit grants and donations. Simpson suggested that the first issue, prior to any further discussion on creating separate grant pools, would be to solicit an Attorney General opinion on where private donations received the WCTF are invested: are they deposited into the corpus, or are they available as a separate grant line.

No further action was taken.

Simpson took a moment prior to the adjourning of the meeting to express his congratulations to Needles for her appointment, and his confidence in her ability to work with the diverse agencies within Cultural Resources. Simpson expressed his pleasure of having served on the Cultural Trust Fund Board and how he was envious of Needles in her position of serving on the WCTF Board. Needles expressed her pleasure at the appointment and her excitement to be part of the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund Board.

Shonsey moved and Hladky seconded to adjourn at 4:33 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.