

**Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund
Conference Call
Thursday, March 17, 2010
2 p.m.**

Board Present on call: Nancy Schiffer, Acting Chair; Dave Kathka; Sara Needles; Susan Stubson.

Staff Present on call: Renée Bovée

Guest Present on call: Milward Simpson, Director, Dept. of State Parks and Cultural Resources

The meeting was called to order at 2:08 p.m.

With David Reetz not on the call, Nancy Schiffer agreed to act as Chair for this meeting.

Agenda:

The purpose of this call is to make a decision on a grant revision proposal from Wyoming Public Television, grant #131-08-H. If the public joins the call public comment will occur at the conclusion of the grant revision discussion. Minutes from the previous meeting were not presented at this call and will be reviewed at the next WCTF physical board meeting in June. The agenda was approved by consensus.

Grant Revision Proposal:

Renée Bovée had provided the documentation on this proposed grant revision to the WCTF Board via e-mail. All board members acknowledged receipt of the material. Bovée provided a verbal summary of the history of the project, the original grant proposal, the first extension given on the grant and this new proposed extension. The original grant proposal was well received by the board, ranked relatively high and a full grant award was made. The project is the creation of a documentary for WY Public Television on a "Wind River Virtual Museum" which reunites tribal elders with artifacts in the hands of national museums and of which the tribal elders have had no contact with for generations. The original project was scheduled to occur within one year. In 2009 the WCTF Board approved an extension on the grant, given the primary producer, Geoff O'Gara's inability to deal with the project given personal medical issues, which having been resolved, it was estimated the work on the project could be completed by May of 2010. Since that approval of the extension, Bovée had heard nothing further on the project. As of July 2010 she had been requesting a final report from WY PBS, per standard practice. No response was made. In early March, 2011, O'Gara made a personal visit to her in the office, as he was in town reporting on the Wyoming Legislative session. O'Gara informed her that no progress has been made on the project, the project was stalled. Bovée then prepared a letter to WY PBS, which was sent via O'Gara and through the US Mail, that essentially asked for a decision on this project – whether the project had stalled to such a degree it needed to be "declared dead" and a refunding of the grant dollars be made, or for WY PBS to prepare a comprehensive work-plan for handling the project for the WCTF Board to review and determine if a second extension is warranted. WY PBS responded with a letter explaining the delays in the project and a proposed work plan for concluding the project.

Sara Needles asked Bovée to give some explanation of process with grant extensions and how this proposal relates to other requests. Bovée explained that about 70% of grant extension requests occur

during the normal course of the project, when the organization recognizes problems or delays in their plans. Most extension requests are a simple e-mail or telephone notification of the developing problems, and then a submission of the request for extension via e-mail, with the subsequent approval of the extension occurring either with her approval as administrator if under a one-year extension, or with the approval of the board if the request extends a grant beyond a one year time frame. There have been a few exceptions where the projects have stalled out, but picked up again at the very last minute of the original project time frame, thus an extension request is occurring just as a contract is concluding or shortly after its concluding date. These late requests for extension are rare and usually have strong extenuating circumstances and there has rarely been a serious problem in extending the grant period as the project is getting back on track and progressing well. What is unusual about this request is the project stalled for so long with no communication on the status of the project, and in this case the request is coming in 9 months after the extended project date expired.

Acting Chair Nancy Schiffer noted that in the proposed work plan the new producer has not been named as they are going through an RFP process. This makes it hard to determine the artistic merit behind the project – and what their experience is with Native Americans. That makes the work plan a bit sketchy.

Susan Stubson notes that the cover letter explains their limited luck in hiring a producer in the past and she wonders about how they will get someone for this project. In the work plan they expect to have this producer and project up and running in 45 days, which is a bit unrealistic.

Dave Kathka explained that this would be a special project contractor. He expressed his concern with the current Congressional stance to de-fund the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, how that will further hinder this project.

Bové explained that she learned from O’Gara that there is a private foundation that has put money into this project and WY PBS has asked and received an extension on those funds. Bovée does not have the name of that foundation or the dollar amount involved, but there is another source of funding going into the project.

Needles asked Bovée to confirm what the match for this grant was originally. Bovée reviewed the file and explained that the match was the staff time of production, which while they listed it as in-kind, by our grant application process that would actually be a cash match to the project.

Acting Chair Schiffer asked if O’Gara will be associated with this revised production now. Bovée explained that O’Gara had expressed interest in the project when he met with her, but the letter from Ruby Calvert, Executive Director of WY PBS, states that he will not be overseeing this project.

Needles noted that they seem to have lost the original inspiration for this project and the product may change significantly from the original proposal.

Kathka also noted that O’Gara has a relationship with the local tribal members, and how is that relationship going to be replicated with an independent producer? This is sensitive information that will be dealt with in this production and the tribal elders are very concerned about this. How will this interaction be handled now?

Acting Chair Schiffer inquired whether it would be appropriate to not extend this grant and ask them to reapply with the next grant deadline with a more fully developed grant proposal? Bovée concurred that

would be an option. Needles asked if we could have them submit a revised extension request after they have hired the new producer? Bovée noted that we would probably be dealing with the same time frame, either a revised extension request or a new proposal, would need to be considered by the Board in June. If they are coming in at basically the same time period, Bovée suggested it would be cleaner to have them come in with a new proposal. Needles noted that a new proposal means they would have to compete in the grant process, whereby with the extension it is non-competitive. Bovée agreed that would be the situation.

Kathka noted that given their lack of response to the project, and the potential cutting of federal funds, perhaps they will want to reconsider completing this project.

Acting Chair Schiffer also noted that we need to consider the precedent of having project languish and expecting our continued support of that project.

Bovée noted the presence of Milward Simpson, who has joined the meeting.

Stubson asked Bovée relationship of WY PBS with the State of Wyoming and why they would have experienced the 10% budget cut from the state, as explained in their cover letter. Bovée explained the relationship of WY PBS with Central Wyoming College and the basic staffing structure there and how they would be impacted by the state's budget cuts.

Acting Chair Schiffer asked that if we pulled the money now, and in anticipation that they would be able to identify a new producer and come in with a new application in May, would we be adding to their basic problems? Bovée responded that she could not easily respond to that. There is the other foundation which has given to this project, so perhaps not. If they come in with a new grant proposal that has to go through the competitive process, those processes take things out of their control and ours, and they may or may not compete well and received comparable funding.

Needles remarked that we can't assume the foundation match at this point, as we do not have full details on that other foundation's commitment.

Kathka moved and Stubson seconded to deny the extension of this grant and have them return the grant funds; and the Board would encourage them to come in with a clean, fully developed application in the next grant cycle. The motion was approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Simspon noted that he believed the board has acted responsibly and shown due diligence on this request.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for June 9-10, 2011 and Bovée is working on setting it up in Sundance.

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.