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Chase Rose
213 E Main
Bozeman, MT 59715
Chase@bannackgroup.com
406-580-4328
1/10/25

Chair John Fitzpatrick
Vice Chair Senator John Esp
Montana Legislature Heritage Preservation Grant Committee

Dear Chair Fitzpatrick, Vice Chair Esp, and Members of the Montana Legislature Heritage Preservation Grant Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for the approval of the $500,000 Montana Heritage Preservation Grant for the Carter County Museum. This funding represents a crucial step toward the completion of critical renovations to the museum's historic building and serves as a cornerstone of a larger effort to expand the museum by 15,000 square feet, effectively tripling its size. Such an expansion is essential to ensuring the museum's continued status as a world-class institution.

About the Carter County Museum
Founded in 1936, the Carter County Museum holds a unique place in Montana's history as the state's first county museum and the first to display dinosaur fossils. Located in the small ranching community of Ekalaka, with just 400 residents, the museum has become a globally recognized institution. It is a proud member of the Montana Dinosaur Trail, a sister museum to the Museum of the Rockies, and a trusted repository for Bureau of Land Management fossils.

Despite its modest size of 5,800 square feet, the museum's reach is impressive, engaging over 109,000 people in 2023 through in-person visits, school programs, and its signature event—the Dino Shindig. This event draws more than 900 paleontologists and dinosaur enthusiasts from across the globe and has been named Montana's Event of the Year.

The Need for Renovation and Expansion
The museum's ongoing success has created an urgent need for both renovation and expansion:

1. **Space Limitations:** Due to space constraints, only 10% of the museum's collection is on display, leaving the remaining 90% in off-site storage.
2. **Infrastructure Deficiencies:** The current building's roof trusses are overstressed, and it lacks modern climate control, lighting, and adequate storage for preservation.
3. **Staff Constraints:** The dedicated museum staff is operating at full capacity, and additional space is required to support expanded programming and increased visitor engagement.

Proposed Solutions
The $500,000 grant will address critical renovations to the existing building, including:

- Reinforcing roof trusses.
- Installing HVAC systems to protect artifacts and enhance visitor comfort.
- Upgrading lighting to museum-quality standards.
- Adding modern storage and exhibition solutions.
-

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These renovations are part of a $6.7 million phased effort to renovate and expand the museum. The larger project includes new exhibition spaces, a welcoming entrance and lobby, additional restrooms, and facilities to support research and preservation activities. To date, $2 million in financing and $1,249,369 in private gifts have been secured.

Economic and Educational Benefits

The renovation and expansion will have a significant impact on Montana's economy and education:

- **Job Creation:** The project will create 33 construction jobs and support $7 million in in-state spending annually during the construction phase.
- **Tourism Impact:** The museum currently generates $400 per visitor in economic activity. With expanded facilities, this impact is expected to double.
- **Educational Reach:** The museum will enhance its ability to serve over 86,000 students annually through both onsite and virtual programs.

Broad Community Support

The Carter County Museum enjoys widespread local and regional support. The project is included in the Carter County Capital Improvement Plan, the Ekalaka Community Plan, and other regional growth policies. Additionally, letters of support have been submitted by local businesses, community leaders, and organizations such as the Carter County Chamber of Commerce and Visit Southeast Montana.

Conclusion

The Carter County Museum is a vital asset to Montana, preserving our unique cultural and natural heritage while driving economic growth and educational engagement. Approval of this $500,000 grant will address urgent renovation needs and inspire continued private and public investment, ensuring the museum's ability to thrive for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration. I respectfully urge you to approve this funding request.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Chase Rose
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Chase Rose
Bannack Group, LLC
Campaign Manager (Contracted) for the Carter Co. Museum Campaign

Ekalaka, MT
Jan. 10, 2023

Montana Legislature Heritage Preservation Grant Committee

Dear Members,

I am Fulton Castleberry, I was born in 1935, a year before the Geological Society got their Articles of Incorporation. But members of the community had been collecting fossil specimens for a number of years before this and keeping them in their homes.

My parents were very active members of the Geological Society so as a child I knew and observed the early members that were so active in working and building the Carter County Museum as it is today. In early years big museums from out of state were collecting fossils and shipping there finds back to their respective museums. The Carter County Museum was one of the first or maybe the first to have major finds that remained and were displayed in the state of Montana.

I was a director on the board of directors for the Carter County Museum for several years. We were aware of artifacts, both fossil and Native American, that the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management has in storage. A number of these items were found in Carter County. By working to meet their criteria we were able to be recognized as worthy of displaying some of these items if we could provide room.

With the guidance of Dr. Carroll and Dr. Moore it is an opportune time to enlarge the facility and take advantage of growth that is possible which will enrich the community and makes our Museum a point of interest world wide.

Not only does it display fossil artifacts and Native American artifacts, but also local history, recognizes veterans, and has published four volumes of "Shifting Scenes", a huge collection of local historical stories.

Asking for your help and thanking you,

Fulton Castleberry

Fulton Castleberry

MONTANA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
all about Montana's future

January 10, 2025

Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Long Range Planning
RE: Support for the Montana Historic Preservation Grant for the Carter County Museum

Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Long Range Planning:

The Montana Community Foundation (MCF) supports the proposed $500,000 Montana Historic Preservation Grant (MHPG) for the Carter County Museum (Museum). MCF has partnered with the Museum on various projects. We recognize the significance of this world-class museum for both the community and entire state.

MCF is a statewide community foundation with a mission to cultivate a culture of giving so Montana communities can flourish. MCF manages more than $175 million in assets and administers more than 1,400 philanthropic funds and planned gifts. Our work with donors, nonprofits, and communities plays a critical role in both philanthropic and community development across the state.

MCF has partnered with the Museum in numerous ways. First, we manage an endowment for the museum; this is a true endowment, so the corpus cannot be used for capital improvements or other projects, but the annual endowment distribution can ensure that this significant renovation and expansion is maintained over time. Second, we have provided grants to the Museum, such as grants for the veteran's memorial and community garden. The Museum's staff and board have been responsible, communicative, and effective stewards of these grants. Third, the Museum is at the heart of most community development projects in Ekalaka and Carter County, so they have participated in our programs, such as Reimagining Rural which equips small towns with the resources that they need to chart a bright future.

Beyond these projects and partnerships, MCF recognizes the importance of the Carter County Museum for Southeast Montana. In 2023, the museum generated over $1 million in economic impact for this region, particularly through the "Dino Shindig" that brings thousands of visitors from across the country to Ekalaka. In addition, in 2023, the museum educated 109,271 individuals and students; it is an important historical resource for residents and visitors alike. Renovating and expanding the Carter County Museum will increase exhibit space, guest amenities, and operational areas; these investments will, in turn, increase the economic and educational impact of this museum for Southeast Montana.

MCF encourages the Joint Subcommittee for Long Term Planning to support this grant for the Carter County Museum. The Carter County Museum, along with its staff and board, is an anchor institution for Ekalaka, Carter County, and Southeast Montana. This project epitomizes the purpose of the Montana Historic Preservation Grant (MHPG) program. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Mary Rutherford
President & Chief Executive Officer

PO Box 1145 Helena, MT 59624 p 406.443.8313 f 406.442.0482 e info@mtcf.org www.mtcf.org

January 10, 2025

Joint Appropriations Long-Range Planning (LRP) Subcommittee
P.O. Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620

RE: Montana Historic Preservation Grant Program (HB12)

Dear Subcommittee Members,

It is my pleasure to write this letter in support of the Yellowstone Art Museum's application for a Montana Historic Preservation grant for funding to reroof their historic building. The Yellowstone Art Museum is a valuable member of Downtown Billings and instrumental in providing an important layer of culture, art, and economic support to our vibrant community.

The Downtown Billings Alliance is honored to have the Yellowstone Art Museum as a member of our Downtown Membership Association and partners regularly with the organization to further Downtown revitalization. This organization and their crucial programming aligns perfectly with the Downtown Billings Alliance Strategic Plan and our transformative goals, including "A Vibrant and Connected Downtown", "A Strong Downtown Identity", and "A Diverse Economic Engine". This cultural asset is a valuable commodity to our community and the Yellowstone Art Museum succeeds in bringing a lineup of exciting and diverse programs that enrich our downtown's historic arts & culture scene, driving tourism and visitors to our urban center. This organization is invaluable to not only the downtown core, but the city, and region as a whole.

The Yellowstone Art Museum is a respected and beloved amenity to our community. Funds from the Montana Historic Preservation Grant Program to reroof a large portion of the museum's red tile roof are critical to the long-term stewardship of one of Billings' and Montana's most prominent cultural destinations and repository of Montana's art. This historic preservation grant will only enhance this venue and service and the Downtown Billings Alliance is honored to support their efforts. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

Katy Schreiner
Chief Executive Officer
Downtown Billings Alliance

CITY OF
Billings
MAYOR'S OFFICE

Bill Cole, Mayor
P.O. Box 1178
Billings, MT 59103-1178
Phone 406.657.8296
FAX 406.657.8390

January 10, 2025

Joint Appropriations Long-Range Planning (LRP) Subcommittee
P.O. Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620

RE: Montana Historic Preservation Grant Program (HB12)

Dear Subcommittee Members,

I am writing to support the Yellowstone Art Museum's application for a Montana Historic Preservation grant for funding to reroof their historic building.

The Yellowstone Art Museum (YAM) in Billings recently celebrated its 60th anniversary. YAM is the biggest and most active contemporary art museum in Montana. Originally home to the 1884 Yellowstone County Jail, the museum is located on a busy city thoroughfare, the 27th Street West corridor, which connects our airport, downtown, and Interstate 90. YAM's signature red tile roof is a landmark feature of the building. The museum is open six days a week and offers exhibitions, youth and adult art education programs, artist talks, and many special events, with free admission through 2026. YAM's permanent collection includes over 3,500 works of art, along with thousands of invaluable sketches, photographs, letters, and archival materials. YAM is fully accredited.

Funds from the Montana Historic Preservation Grant Program will make it possible to reroof a large portion of the YAM's red tile roof. This project is critical for the long-term stewardship of one of Billings' and Montana's most prominent cultural destinations and repositories of Montana art. The funds will ensure that downtown Billings continues to have a safe, attractive, and welcoming space for Montanans and visitors alike.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

William A. Cole

William A. Cole, Mayor