Historic Resources Advisory Committee
Spring Meeting, Glensheen, Duluth
Friday, May 15, 2026

Status: Approved by the Historic Resources Advisory Committee (HRAC) at their Fall Meeting on September 17, 2026.

Historic Resources Advisory Committee (HRAC) members attending: Chair Hillary Swanson, Co-Chair Melissa Christenson Ekman, Bruce Yang, Jennifer Andries, Tamara Halvorsen, Bailey Kinsky, Chris Rico, Kate Thomas, Merlin Peterson; online: Madelyn Sundberg, Co-Chair Tisha Allen, Michaela Day

Staff attending: Carolyn Veeser-Egbide, Melinda Hutchinson, Gillian Maguire, John Fulton, John Beaty, Todd Mahon, Joe Hoover, Ryan Maciej; online: Megan Brakob Narvey; online: Avi Viswanathan, Megan Brakob Narvey, Kimmy Tanaka, David Kelliher

Chair H. Swanson called the meeting to order at 10:01 am and welcomed everyone. Asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Chair H. Swanson asked for approval of the meeting minutes from the November 6-7, 2025 HRAC meeting. M. Peterson made a motion to approve the minutes; M. Ekman seconded. K. Thomas noted that she had a correction to make in the minutes regarding the stakeholder meeting, page 28 paragraph 1. The committee agreed to accept the correction. Vote: 11-0-0. Motion carried.

C. Veeser-Egbide spoke about updates to HRAC Operating Procedures for the first time since 2015. Updates include compensation, accessibility, formalized grant review, and member agreement and values to sign to ensure an inclusive environment. K. Thomas had comments on the Member Agreement–would like a link to the purpose statement. C. Veeser-Egbide noted that the purpose statement is in the operating procedures and they can add a link. K. Thomas would also like the agreement to include the number of work hours expected from the committee members. C. Veeser-Egbide noted that it can go in the marketing materials but not in the operating procedures because the time can vary widely.

K. Thomas took issue with “engage tension, not drama” from a DEI standpoint and would like that removed and something else put in its place. Engaging differences; how do we engage with that respectfully. C. Veeser-Egbide noted that she should make that change part of the motion.

M. Peterson thought the tension/drama could move to the end of that section. Discussion. Differences can be held in tension without drama. H. Swanson asked for a motion to accept HRAC Operating Procedures with that change under second bullet point, engaging different perspectives helps us create dialogue. M. Ekman noted that we can engage with different perspectives. T. Halvorsen thought it's not necessary because it says we address different perspectives. M. Peterson: Engaging in different perspectives helps us support different dialogues. M. Day noted that the syntax needs to be the same "I agree to engage in different perspectives."

New language added: "I agree to engage in differing perspectives to help us progress and support meaningful dialogue." The committee agreed to add this language to the motion. K. Thomas made a motion to approve these changes to the operating procedures, with noted correction. M. Ekman seconded. Vote: 11-0-0. Motion carried.

H. Swanson called on A. Viswanathan to give general MNHS updates.The Executive Council passed a new strategic plan beginning with Fiscal Year 2027, which starts in July 2026. HRAC work is a key part of the strategic plan, strengthening statewide alliances to preserve and share Minnesota history. Expanding relationships and history of people across the entire state. This work is relational (HRAC). Gave an example of an applicant who appreciated HRAC and staff feedback and assistance. Relational aspects and building connections is important. Leverage opportunities to advocate collectively. HRAC is not advocacy-based but their work demonstrates the civic value of history and why history is important. This is the public impact of the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. A. Viswanathan noted that he appreciates the work we all do.

H. Swanson called on K. Tanaka to talk about a strategy for belonging and inclusion. K. Tanaka noted that the throughline for Community Engagement is that we are working to build stronger relationships around the state. Inclusion and Community Engagement builds stronger relationships with historically marginalized communities and staff work to repair and strengthen relationships. This work can't just live in our department, it has to be shared values across the organization. A Belonging and Inclusion strategy is important to have in writing and it is on the MNHS website (mnhs.org/belonging). Preserving and sharing inclusive history is more accurate and a more honest telling of history. Our history is interconnected regardless of who we are. We all have a responsibility to learn inclusive history. It's important for everyone to understand that they are all part of Minnesota history.

K. Tanaka introduced a graphic showing the four core areas.

- We encourage diverse participation in, stewardship of, and shared responsibility for our collective historyMNHS constituents, partners, stakeholders, and team members feel a deep sense of belonging as Minnesotans.
- We build and repair relationships with people we have harmed or excluded as constituents, partners, stakeholders, and team members

- We understand and meet the needs of all communities, particularly those we have harmed or excluded
- We attract and uplift people of diverse identities, perspectives, ways of knowing, and ways of being.

Values are at the core of the strategy. This organization has a 175-year history of exclusionary practices and needs to start acknowledging that. MNHS will be a stronger organization by gaining and learning, honoring expertise and a sense of belonging. HRAC members have diverse lived experiences and expertise. Honor the diverse perspectives of the applicants and acknowledge that.

M. Peterson asked if this relates to the DEI question the committee has been struggling with. K. Tanaka said yes, and she, Carolyn, and Avi have been discussing this. There is an upcoming webinar on community engagement and how the practice shows up in intentional ways.

H. Swanson called on C. Veeser-Egbide to discuss the recent HRAC feedback survey. This was the first survey but staff plans to keep doing these. The scoring system and DEI/Belonging and Inclusion is a continuous improvement process. General agreement that the hybrid meeting was challenging because it is hard not having all committee members in the same space. K. Thomas asked why they can't give zeroes during scoring; C. Veeser-Egbide explained and said could still discuss how to make that work.

H. Swanson asked for questions/comments. K. Thomas wondered if the committee members can start using their expertise in a better way. C. Veeser-Egbide noted that we could have a field that everyone could see, not just the person writing the comment. M. Ekman asked if the applicants can see the staff comments. C. Veeser-Egbide said no, they are written for the HRAC, not the applicants. M. Ekman noted that they could use this new field to speak to staff comments and add their own. Additional discussion. M. Sundberg said she was unsure how to weigh the belonging and inclusion sections because some applicants mark all boxes and some mark none. Would like some clarity so applicants don't feel that they need to check every box.

H. Swanson called on G. Maguire to briefly discuss the peer review process, who noted that this process is only for applications that are requesting $100,000 or more. The Grants Office finds the peer reviewers, who are experts in the field and mostly in Minnesota. They review applications at the same time that the HRAC is reviewing. Applicants can now request anonymized peer review comments. Explained the difference between MHCHG peer reviews and peer reviews for projects like HVAC and the letters of critical review for certain projects. M. Day asked if peer reviewers are available to clarify what they mean. H. Swanson noted that this process is another tool to help HRAC review the applications.

D. Kelliher logged in and explained the Legacy Amendment and the legislature. Noted that it is not too soon to start thinking about the future and reupping the Legacy Amendment. Now is the time to contact legislators.

C. Veeser-Egbide asked to talk about an applicant's concern from the agenda since it's close to lunch. The applicant's concern is that we do not allow sole sourcing, and they think we should follow the Office of Grants Management policies. This program does not allow it because these are public funds awarded through a competitive process. If we offer sole sourcing then we will need to audit. Grants Office feels there is an alternative offered through the Pre-existing Contract clause in Appendix I. Long discussion about the pros and cons of procurement, ending with a decision that the grants program doesn't require the applicant to choose the low bid, but rather go with best value, and it is helpful to have comparisons. C. Veeser-Egbide noted that the Grants Office will issue a new manual this year with a clarification that the grants program chooses to require procurement and not allow sole sourcing.

Chair H. Swanson called for a lunch break at 12:12 pm with a tour of the site at 12:30 pm. Reconvene meeting at 1 pm.

Reconvened at 1:22 pm. C. Veeser-Egbide gave an update on the small grants rounds since the cap was raised to $20,000. Increased amount of requests. Fewer grants awarded because there is not enough funding. This information will be part of the manual changes.

M. Peterson asked if this will be part of the legislative proposal and will the sales tax income be reduced–will this be a double-whammy for this program? C. Veeser-Egbide noted that D. Kelliher will bring this to the legislature. H. Swanson asked if this change affected the numbers for the large round? C. Veeser-Egbide said no. Discussion about the effect of loss of federal funding. M. Peterson asked if HRAC wants to consider the split between large and small rounds–adjust the amount of funding for each? C. Veeser-Egbide said that the HRAC can consider that, but probably not until the next Spring meeting.

K. Thomas asked about the differences between small and large rounds. C. Veeser-Egbide explained. No pre-applications for smalls. Staff review only for smalls. Application form is the same, and there is also a Structured grant application. Explained levels for procurement.

H. Swanson called on J. Fulton to talk about copyright and intellectual property. Applicants need to figure out if they have the rights to the materials. The Grants Office does not control the intellectual property, it is negotiated through the contract between the grantee and their contractor. HRAC can add conditions to the project if they have concerns.

H. Swanson called on C. Veeser-Egbide to talk about grant data review of project impact and demographic trends. The Grants Office wants to make sure that we are telling full stories and expand the organizations we are hearing from, particularly underrepresented groups. One thing to find out is why applicants are marking "unknown" in their applications.

C. Veeser-Egbide discussed short- and long-term goals (manual changes, training, better demographic tools and long-term reporting). Discussion about underrepresented groups. C. Veeser-Egbide noted that HRAC will probably still use the check boxes in the application, although those sections are self-identified by the applicants.

H. Swanson called on C. Veeser-Egbide to talk about the standardized application scoring system and comments from the HRAC survey. What should staff be preparing for HRAC to discuss next Spring? Discussion. M. Peterson suggested allowing comments but having them non-identifying. M. Ekman noted that it would be helpful to get a bit deeper into the process, with a bit of time. B. Yang suggested a half-day boot camp with sample applications. C. Veeser-Egbide noted that the new members will get an orientation closer to the fall meeting.

H. Swanson called for any last comments or announcements. M. Day asked if staff takes names of people who might be interested in serving on HRAC. C. Veeser-Egbide says yes, please, they can apply anytime.

H. Swanson announced that Sept 17-18, 2026 is the Fall HRAC meeting for the large round, 10 am-4 pm in the 3M Auditorium at the Minnesota History Center, St. Paul. Please plan to attend in person. A virtual format is possible but in-person is strongly preferred.

H. Swanson called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. M. Ekman made a motion to adjourn the meeting. M. Peterson seconded. Vote: 11-0-0. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 2:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Carolyn Veeser-Egbide, Grants Manager