

Dear MHPG Long-Range Planning Committee,

Blaine County Museum is requesting to use our \$60,240 MHPG award for a project that differs from our original proposal. In 2020, we had requested funds to repair our facility's aging foundation, as seasonal water intrusion poses a risk to our collection. However, since that time we have consulted with architectural and engineering firm Space Planning for People of Billings who determined that a) the repair will be more costly than anticipated and b) repairs will likely not yield permanent results. In lieu of rehabbing our current facility, a 2021 report made by the firm suggested it may be more feasible to build a new, one-story facility elsewhere in the community of Chinook.

The Blaine County Commissioners have suggested Blaine County Museum consider an unused portion of Blaine County Fairgrounds situated on U.S. Highway 2 as a possible building site. It should be noted that the fair board is in favor of the museum potentially utilizing this site. The museum board has yet to come to a consensus to proceed with plans to build at this site, nor have funds been secured to pursue this alternative in earnest. However, the county commissioners, board, and I have reached the conclusion that the museum must be relocated for the sake of its irreplaceable collection.

If the museum were granted permission to repurpose our MHPG award, we would use 10% (approximately \$6,024) to go towards planning for a new facility, and the remaining \$54,216 plus our match obligation to begin construction. At this time, we are unsure of when or where construction would begin, or what the first phase of construction would entail. A potential project for the fairgrounds site would include installation of water and sewer lines. Planning, however, would begin as soon as possible and would include a study that gives us an accurate cost estimate for constructing a facility that meets our needs, a project timeline, and architectural renderings.

While we regret that we do not have firm plans in place at this time for the use of our award, we are certain that we have a need for the funding given our circumstances. Our collection includes invaluable materials related to the Battle of Bear's Paw, one of the most historic events in our state's history, as well as an extensive archive of photographs that document the history of North Central Montana and its people. During the past several months, I have been working with an intern to begin moving materials out of our facility's basement into a temporary off-site storage location. It is our hope that we can soon use our MHPG award to begin the process of building a suitable, permanent home for our collection to be stored safely, and used in perpetuity to tell the story of our great state.

Respectfully,

Samantha French

BCM Executive Director