

Board Meeting Minutes
August 25, 2025 11:00a MDT
Zoom Meeting ID: 817 1433 3608
Passcode: 404654

Members Present: D. Walcheck (V Chair) Logan Health, M. Marsh (Secretary/Treasurer) Midland Claims Service, K. Bartsch MT Schools Group Interlocal Authority, V. Evans MT Contractor Compensation Fund E. Grinde, Missoula County and P. Strauss (Exec Dir) ex-officio and non-voting member. D. Haeder (Chair) Northwestern Energy joined late.

1. Approval of the 7/17/2025 Board Meeting Minutes

The DRAFT 7/17/2025 meeting minutes were attached to the invitation to this re-scheduled 8/25 Board meeting on 8/22. a reminder about the meeting sent on 7/16/2025. This meetings highlights include the review of the Business & Annual Meeting material prepared to be sent to the membership. We also discussed a desire for a broader stakeholder meeting on CAH charges and an idea Marsh has to provide mental-mental coverage through the WC system with costs spread to all employers in an SIF assessment type of plan. Strauss reviewed the updates to the Budget proposed and adopted at the 7/17 meeting (investment income was not updated in the original – we have earned more money than was reported).

Evans moved and Marsh seconded a motion to adopt the 7/17/2025 Board meeting minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

2. Director's Report:

Financials

The July monthly statements from our Valley Bank operations checking account, our Wells Fargo Advisors money market account, and our DADCo Savings and Investment accounts were attached to the meeting invitation. An updated Financial Transactions spreadsheet, which is more current, was also attached to the meeting invitation.

Valley Bank Balance	= \$35,357.78
DA Davidson Savings	= \$10,529.89
DA Davidson Investment Acct	= \$28,356.27
WFA Money Market	= \$28,438.04

July expenses included the monthly SquareSpace Domain Name \$8.40, lunch with the WCRI President while Strauss was back east with family, registration for the Univ of MT Bureau of Business & Economic Research summer seminar and our sponsorship for the Governors Conference. That sponsorship also includes registration for me. The total was \$1077.06.

August expenses included the CE credit applications to both DOLI (\$78.01) and CSI (\$77.63) and our D & O Insurance coverage at \$746. That charge was estimated to be \$1000 in the budget, so we are already

positive in our projections. Total expenses for August were \$901.64. The monthly SquareSpace domain name fee did not make it to the expenses timely enough for August, so we can expect two months charges in September.

3. Business & Annual Meeting

The Business & Annual Meeting is sponsored by Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry & Hoven, Definiti Comp Solutions/Definiti Comp Rx and our guest speaker, Dr. Claire Muselman, is sponsored by Midland Claims Service new WC Claims Division, Wrenwell Claims. We will start at 8:15a on September 3 at the Doubletree in downtown Billings. Currently we have 12 proxies, so we are confident we will have a quorum. We will be meeting on the 20th floor of the Doubletree. Strauss will be sending out a calendar meeting invitation requesting attendance, or a proxy if the member is not able to attend. Our Bylaws provide that for quorum purposes, all members have equal weight.

Our members only Business meeting precedes the Annual Meeting, which is open to the public. The Governor's Conference agenda incorrectly identifies our Annual Meeting starting at 8:30 – Strauss will likely post a notice that the meeting actually starts at 9a. We have received confirmation that Dr. Claire Muselmans' presentation will receive CE credit for the DOLI MT WC Claims Examiner license.

A copy of the draft agenda, minutes from the last B & A Meeting, FY financial report, CY YTD financial results, the budget and annual membership survey for our B & A Meeting to were attached to this meeting invitation. We reviewed the changes to the Budget as adopted by the Board at the July 17 meeting – Strauss had failed to update the investment income results with the June 30 information and corrected that error in this draft. We have earned more money than had been reported, which results in a better budget result from last year.

Three board seats are up for election this year including the Chair, and two at large seats, currently held by Haeder, Bartsch and Grinde respectively. All have indicated a willingness to continue, although Bartsch is threatening to retire next year and if he does, that may create a Board vacancy for us. Bartsch is Helena representative, which works well as a backstop for our banking and other business purposes. Should he retire, we will want to consider a Helena, or relatively local, replacement for him.

The Annual Membership Survey, highlighting the PTSD issue and the SB 394 results, was sent out 8/18 and to date, we have not had any responses. That is not particularly worrisome, as the biggest issue is PTSD, and the Board has provided direction to try to find a resolution to the issue – outside the WC system if possible. The Board again discussed the issue and labor's position that a resolution must be within the system, to avoid co-pays, deductibles and to guarantee coverage. While the latter is far from given, they have a clear economic interest in keeping it in the WC system. Marsh discussed an idea he has, and he has not committed anything to paper as yet, where coverage is provided broadly within the system – as opposed to a presumption for certain types of workers, or a limitation to specific workers, that may provide some limited benefits, retain the exclusive remedy and be paid for through an assessment (like the SIF is paid for) to more adequately spread the costs across our society, within the WC system. In providing an assessment type charge for this coverage, we may have carved out these costs from inclusion in the Experience Mod system as well. This proposal will not be ready for review at our Business meeting.

We will have a Board dinner with our guest speaker on Tuesday evening, September 2. Strauss has made a reservation for 12 at 6:30p at Jake's Downtown – right across the street from the Doubletree. Board members were asked to RSVP, with any guests you might want to join us.

Strauss will be sending out the Annual Conflict of Interest forms for Board members after the Business & Annual Meeting and will include his, as a model for your convenience and knowledge.

4. Membership

We currently have 60 members (a number that seems remarkable), 18 Employer and 42 Associates; 11 Associate members are on the January dues cycle. All but two have paid or communicated the payment is in process.

5. Webinars

We have set an Ethics CE Webinar for September 23 at 10a with Dean Blackaby, a plaintiff attorney in Kalispell. Blackaby provides an intriguing and interesting course on MT medical information privacy, reviewing the *Malcomson* decision with the advantage of 10 years of history since the decision. Larry Jones will receive some attention as having made some poor choices while he was representing Liberty. While some employers/TPAs have taken an approach Blackaby finds questionable, in light of *Malcomson*, he will not be identifying any individual employer/TPA. This was originally planned to be a legal CE course, but Blackaby's presentation leant itself towards an Ethics course. Strauss will work with Danielle Vukonich with Ritsema Law to make her December 10 presentation a legal course, rather than an ethics course.

Blackaby is an interesting and good speaker. He has been on both sides of the workers' compensation advocacy role, representing carriers/employers and injured workers. I have found him to be professional and balanced in his approach and had hired him to be an attorney for MSF years ago. Blackaby left MSF to represent injured workers when he moved to the Flathead.

Two members have committed to sponsorships – Medivest and Clarus IME for this Webinar. As well, we have at least one sponsor already, Arcadia Settlements, for the December Webinar. Solicitations for this 9/23 Ethics Webinar will go out starting this week.

6. Budget

As referenced above, Strauss made an error (to our benefit) in reporting on the investment income in the budget presented last month. The budget adopted by the Board for presentation to the membership included the May 31 results, instead of the June 30 results. The corrected result reflected a \$1,574 budget surplus. That has to be tempered somewhat by the recognition that all of it is from investment income, although it is all covered by realized gain. Our investment results include \$2,253.68 unrealized gain: \$1,747.35 realized gain and total \$4001.

Strauss has also amended the budget proposal per the Board action at the last meeting to increase the accounting costs from \$1500 to \$2500. The corrected budget was attached to the meeting invitation and will be provided to the general membership prior to the Business & Annual Meeting.

7. Old Business / New Business

8. Adjourn –

The meeting adjourned at 11:50a. We are next scheduled to meet for dinner on Sept 2, although that is not a formal meeting. We discussed the potential of meeting while in Billings for the Business & Annual Meeting and the Governor's Conference, and decided to see if an issue presented itself for us to discuss. Barring that, our next scheduled meeting is targeted for October 16 at 11a MST.