

Erika Guy

From: J Schultz <jzutana@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 28, 2025 12:52 PM
To: commission
Subject: Please Reinstate Funding for the YAM

Dear Yellowstone County Commissioners,

I am writing to ask you to please reconsider the proposed cuts to funding for the Yellowstone Art Museum. The YAM not only ensures that our community is vibrant and dynamic but also helps connect us to each other. The "Fam at the YAM" evenings are incredibly popular, and in a time when we all lament the increasing addiction of young people to their screens, it is invaluable for young adults to have a safe place to gather and enjoy a shared experience unmediated by technology. I know that you are concerned about public safety, and the arts in general and the YAM in particular are excellent investments in that arena. You are undoubtedly aware of the myriad studies that establish the strong connection between community arts engagement and crime reduction, as I am sure people smarter than I am have shared them with you, and I hope that you use them to resist the pressure of defunding long-term prevention just to enact short-term remedies. By effectively leveraging our arts institutions, we could attenuate the pressure on our law enforcement apparatus in the long term. The wise residents of Yellowstone County clearly voted for long-term support of the arts, and we hope that you respect our wishes.

Sincerely,
Julie Schultz
1294 Yellowstone Ave
Billings, MT 59102

Erika Guy

From: Anne Veraldi <anneveraldi@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 28, 2025 11:32 AM
To: Mark Morse; Mike Waters; Chris White; commission
Subject: YAM
Attachments: Screen Shot 2025-08-28 at 10.17.29 AM.png

Dear Commissioner Moorse, Commissioner Waters and commissioner White,

Billings is very lucky to have such a great museum. I visit many museums around the world and the Yellowstone Art Museum ranks as one of the best. It does a wonderful job of showing both Montana artists and national and international artists. It is a very valuable resource. It deserves your full support and funding.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anne Veraldi

Erika Guy

From: Janice Roberts <janiceroberts@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 28, 2025 10:04 AM
To: BOCC
Subject: Fwd: To our county commissioners

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Janice Roberts <janiceroberts@yahoo.com>
Date: August 28, 2025 at 7:03:06 AM MDT
To: Janice Roberts <janiceroberts@yahoo.com>, jwr_mhs@yahoo.com
Subject: To our county commissioners

Greetings from two good citizens who taught school, and raised five decent contributing humans, and also took in our 2 orphaned nephews,

Since moving to Billings 6 yrs ago from a small Montana town, we have been enriched by the arts in this community! Please visit the Yellowstone Art Museum. It is a peaceful place where our minds can be broadened by viewing the creativity of local and distant artists. The world would be a dismal place without art and music to bring us all together, and inspire our own creativity.

Please do not take away from YAM the county funds that were designated for them. Please visit the YAM very soon. See the amazing large photo on 2nd floor that captures Billings' "Not in our town" movement!

Thank you, Janice and John Roberts
Sent from my iPhone

Erika Guy

From: Matt Queen <mattq2.998@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 3:31 PM
To: commission
Subject: YAM funding cuts

Greetings Commissioners,

As a property-owning taxpayer in Yellowstone County, I want to express my disappointment at the proposal to again reduce county funding for the Yellowstone Art Museum.

The YAM is more than just a building with exhibits—it is one of the few institutions in our community that reaches people of all ages with opportunities for learning, creativity, and connection. From school programs that spark curiosity in children, to exhibitions that draw visitors downtown, to its role as steward of a historic county landmark, the museum adds value that far outweighs the relatively small portion of the budget it receives.

What concerns me most is the long-term impact of repeated cuts. Stripping away resources makes it harder for the YAM to maintain staff, preserve its historic home, and serve the public at the level Yellowstone County residents deserve. This doesn't just weaken the museum—it diminishes the cultural and educational life of our community.

I fully understand the pressures of balancing a county budget and I support strong investment in law enforcement and public safety. If that requires additional tax revenue, I would rather see a modest increase than a steady erosion of institutions like the YAM that also keep our county strong.

For decades, county leaders supported the arts as an essential public good. I urge you to continue that tradition by restoring more equitable funding to the Yellowstone Art Museum. Our community will be stronger for it.

Thanks,

Dr. Matt Queen

638 Alderson Ave

Billings, MT 59101

Sent from my iPhone

Erika Guy

From: Bre Griffin <booksandsuch995@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 8:04 PM
To: Mark Morse; Mike Waters; Chris White; commission
Subject: Support Yellowstone Art Museum

Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners
316 N 26th Street #3101
Billings, MT 59101

Dear Commissioner Morse, Commissioner Waters, and Commissioner White,

My name is Breanna Griffin and I'm a lifelong resident of Yellowstone County, born and raised. I'm sending this message to you after learning about funding cuts to the Yellowstone Art Museum. I am deeply concerned about how this will negatively affect the museum and their programming and activities they offer to our community. Art is very important to people and the YAM works to bring art to the people in this county. As a homeschooler, I can recall field trips our group did to the YAM, and later on as an adult I often bring friends and family to enjoy the YAM. The YAM has always been a wonderful staple of Billings and Yellowstone County, and so many have benefited from it, just as I have. Art brings joy and mental wellbeing to us, both very valuable things in this county and beyond.

As your constituent, I urge you to reconsider the drastic funding cut this board has proposed. Please think of everyone in Yellowstone County and how this would affect us, and provide funding for all museums, including the YAM. With all their hard work, they deserve to have your support and mine.

Sincerely,
Breanna Griffin

Erika Guy

From: Tina DeWeese <tina@deweeseart.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 8:07 PM
To: commission
Subject: Yellowstone County Museum Fund - (YAM allotment FY 24-FY26)

Yellowstone County Commissioners,

I'm finding this news shocking and grievous!!

This news is sending shockwaves across the Montana Arts community! The Yellowstone Art Museum has been an anchor and a buoy for a community long sustained by the history and spirit of revered artists and supporters of the arts for many decades. In a broader culture of commerce, sports and and entertainment which so little values the impact of the arts in our collective and personal lives, it's never been an easy task to sustain! With this drastic financial cut, it will lose a long valued momentum of it's fiscal capacity to respond to (responsibility to!!~) the appreciation and support from local and state artists and arts advocates. YAM has long served Montana's public!

Please know the impact of your actions!!

With deep dismay...
Tina DeWeese, artist

"Responsibility - the ability to respond."
quote, Bob DeWeese

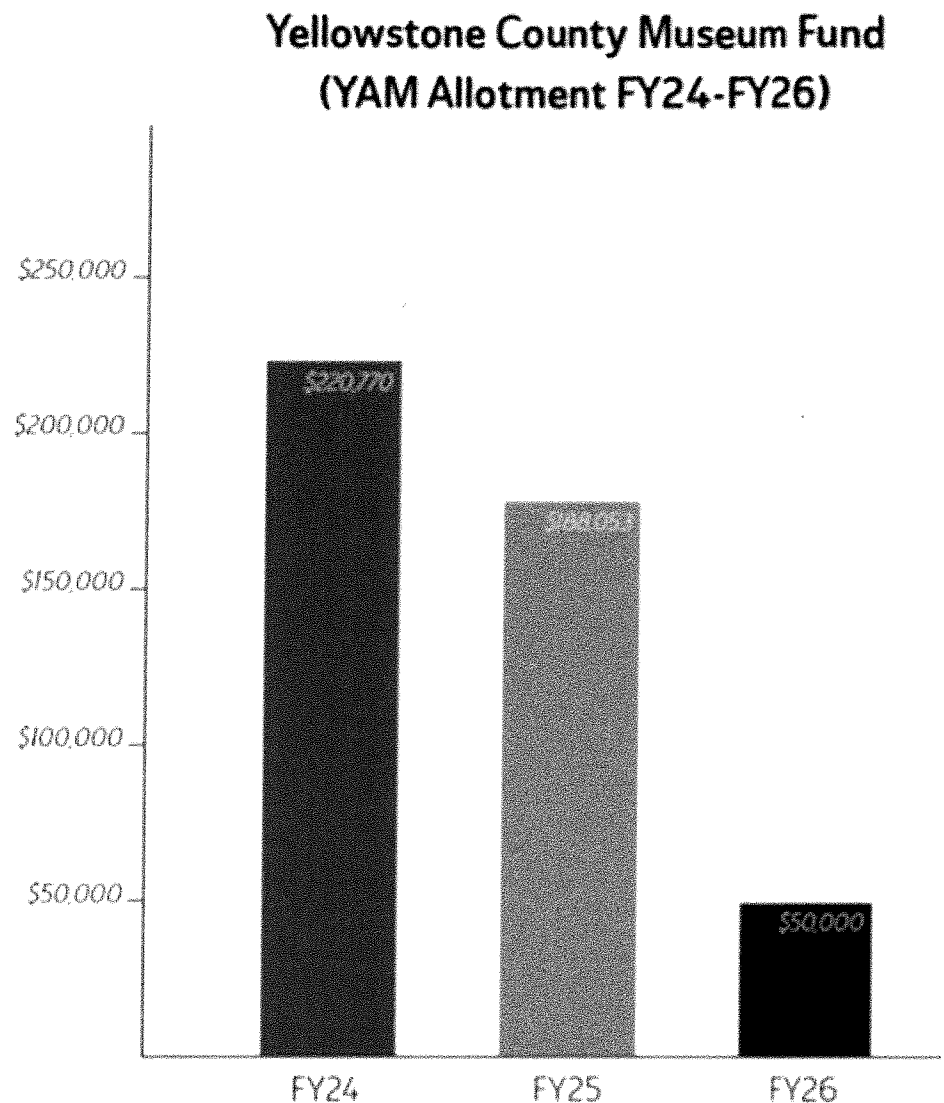
(Robert and Gennie DeWeese among the revered contemporary artists of Montana, and long beloved contributors to the YAM historical permanent collection of ART!)

I'm sure you've read this statement and seen this stark graph of these recent intentions of your commission from the fact sheet link on the YAM website:

<https://www.artmuseum.org/act-now/>

https://www.artmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/FACT-SHEET_The-Impacts-of-Continued-Funding-Cuts-from-Yellowstone-County5-8-19-2025.pdf

On July 15, the museum received a letter, addressed to Jessica Kay Ogden, of intent to further reduce funding. This is the second significant reduction in two years.



The YAM planned for a reduction to 15% of the museum fund after funding cuts in 2024. Further reduce funding to \$50,000 (roughly 6 percent of the fund) is more drastic and

Unfortunately, the Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioner is not operating with the level of care, transparency, and attention to detail that supports the museum during this already difficult moment. Their proposed split of the museum fund will

Erika Guy

From: Dan Brunkhorst <dbrunkho@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 9:02 PM
To: commission
Subject: Critical Need for Yellowstone County

Please continue and restore investment in the Yellowstone Art Museum. Like any good investment, the YAM provides multiple-fold returns to Yellowstone County. The YAM is important to the integrity of downtown Billings. A culturally viable, thriving downtown is essential in making Billings a community worth living in, moving to and visiting. My fiancé and I had our first date there. We take visiting friends and relatives there. People go out to eat, spend money. There has to be something worthwhile to see and do downtown. The YAM provides education, a better quality of life for residents and is a foundational element in building a thriving downtown economy. Please rethink defunding.

Erika Guy

From: Max Gibson <max.irwin.gibson@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 9:17 PM
To: Mark Morse
Cc: Mike Waters; Chris White; commission
Subject: Funding for Yellowstone Art Museum
Attachments: Yellowstone Art Museum Letter.pdf

Hi there,

Attached is my letter addressing the cuts Yellowstone Art Museum is facing from Yellowstone County. I would appreciate it if you took the time to read mine along with many others who advocate for the Yellowstone Art Museum and to address the cuts you want to inflict upon the Museum that has been nothing but an important and historical landmark to the City of Billings. Please provide us some transparency as to why this is being considered.

Thanks,
Max Gibson

Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners
316 N 26th Street #3101
Billings, MT 59101

Dear Commissioner Morse, Commissioner Waters, and Commissioner White,

My name is Max , and I'm a resident of Yellowstone County.

I'm sharing this message with you after learning of your plan to cut funding from the Yellowstone Art Museum. I'm deeply concerned this decision will negatively affect the museum and hinder programming and activities it offers to our community.

The YAM is an undeniable asset for our county and deserves fair-minded financial support from the Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners.

As your constituent, I urge you to reconsider the drastic funding cut this board has proposed. Please seek a solution that benefits all museums that call Yellowstone County home. Thank you for your work in service of our community.

Sincerely,

Max Gibson

305 29th Street West Billings MT 59102

Erika Guy

From: Angie Buckley <angie@buckleylcpc.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 2:52 PM
To: commission
Subject: YAM

Dear Yellowstone County Commissioners,

I am writing today as a small business owner, voter, taxpayer and citizen of Yellowstone County. I am very concerned about the commission's plans to reduce funding to Yellowstone Art Museum. This decision will negatively affect not only the museum but the entirety cultural and art community of Yellowstone County. Please reinstate fair financial support for this important asset. Please seek a solution to benefit all Yellowstone County museums.

Angie Buckley, LCPC

Holistic Health & Healing
902 Wyoming Avenue
Billings, MT 59101

406.672.9998
www.buckleylcpc.com

Erika Guy

From: karen lyncoln <lyncolnforsd26@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 2:21 PM
To: commission
Subject: Save the YAM

Please retain funding for the YAM in the budget. It is very short sighted to swap a renown cultural center for a temporary (we hope) concentration camp!

Karen Lyncoln
1736 Songbird Dr.
59101

Erika Guy

From: Julie Van Keuren <vankeurens@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 2:02 PM
To: commission
Subject: YAM funding

I'm a longtime Billings resident, and one of the things I most enjoy about this city is its art scene. The Yellowstone Art Museum is the cornerstone of that, and I attend classes and events there several times a year, as well as visiting during ArtWalk.

I don't see how the County Commission can possibly justify using the money taxpayers specifically approved for museums and spending it on something else. If more funding is needed for jails, perhaps you should attempt a public safety mill levy. Or you know what would really improve this community and save money? Funding substance abuse treatment programs rather than mass incarceration.

Julie Van Keuren
Billings

Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners
316 N 26th Street #3101
Billings, MT 59101

Dear Commissioner Morse, Commissioner Waters, and Commissioner White,

My name is **Christine** , and I'm a resident of Yellowstone County.

I'm sharing this message with you after learning of your plan to cut funding from the Yellowstone Art Museum. I'm deeply concerned this decision will negatively affect the museum and hinder programming and activities it offers to our community.

The YAM is an undeniable asset for our county and deserves fair-minded financial support from the Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners.

As your constituent, I urge you to reconsider the drastic funding cut this board has proposed. Please seek a solution that benefits all museums that call Yellowstone County home. Thank you for your work in service of our community.

Sincerely,

Your Name Christine Stephens

Your Address 507 S. 33rd St, Billings, MT 59101

Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners
316 N 26th Street #3101
Billings, MT 59101

Dear Commissioner Morse, Commissioner Waters, and Commissioner White,

My name is **Grayson** , and I'm a resident of Yellowstone County.

I'm sharing this message with you after learning of your plan to cut funding from the Yellowstone Art Museum. I'm deeply concerned this decision will negatively affect the museum and hinder programming and activities it offers to our community.

The YAM is an undeniable asset for our county and deserves fair-minded financial support from the Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners.

As your constituent, I urge you to reconsider the drastic funding cut this board has proposed. Please seek a solution that benefits all museums that call Yellowstone County home. Thank you for your work in service of our community.

Sincerely,

Your Name **Grayson Proctor**

Your Address **817 Custer Ave., Billings, MT 59101**

Erika Guy

From: Steve Paulson <stevendpaulson@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 1:01 PM
To: commission
Subject: Yellowstone Art Museum

Greetings,

I'm writing to urge the Commission to reconsider the withdrawal of funds to the Yellowstone Art Museum.

Withdrawing funds of such an amount and with no warning is a serious blow to an institution that serves Yellowstone County to the degree that the YAM does. True, it is not a county-run institution, but people from all over the county (and beyond) avail themselves of the exhibits and events offered at the YAM.

It's the kind of institution that makes the Billings area more attractive to businesses and families who consider relocating here..

The Commission does have wide discretion in the allocation of the funds from the levy that voters passed a few years ago. But targeting the YAM for such a major cut, from my perspective, steps away from the stated intention that voters approved.

I hope you will take another look at this cut and reconsider whether it really serves the interests of Yellowstone County.

Sincerely,
Steve Paulson
1024 N. 25th Street
Billings, MT 59101

Erika Guy

From: Saskia Boogman <saskia.boogman@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 12:28 PM
To: commission
Subject: Museum Funding Concerns

Dear Commissioner Morse, Commissioner Waters, and Commissioner White,

As a resident of Billings and Yellowstone County since my youth, I am deeply concerned about the planned funding cut to the Yellowstone Art Museum (YAM). The negative impact of this short-sighted decision on our community is significant.

Growing up, the services and programs offered through YAM were instrumental to my education and development. As an adult, weighing whether I wanted to return to Billings after completing graduate school, institutions like the YAM were a significant consideration in deciding where I wanted to settle as a professional. This is an asset to our community that helps us attract talent, develop our youth, and promote public safety.

This decision not only negatively affects public art institutions but also our community as a whole. I urge you to reconsider your decision as a concerned taxpayer and proud Billings-grown citizen.

Saskia Boogman
Billings, MT

Erika Guy

From: Steve and Candace <hills2prairie@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 12:32 PM
To: commission
Subject: Please restore YAM's funding

Good afternoon Commissioners,

I attended yesterday's meeting and was pleased by the turnout of voters who support the restoration of funding for the Yellowstone Art Museum. I, also, offered my testimony.

I write to restate my thoughts on the matter and to urge you to honor the levy that we voters put in place many years ago.

I can not too strongly state how important it is to keep those commitments intact. As you know, we voted to support all four of our museums at approximately the same levels. We were well aware that three were owned by the county and one was a nonprofit stand alone.

The YAM has honored our funding by becoming a crown jewel in our city. They have worked very hard to keep improving and providing invaluable service to our community, both economically and culturally.

Consider the economic engine it has become if that is what is most important to you. Also consider how much it offers culturally. Are you aware of how important cultural institutions are when professionals decide to locate to an area? The YAM is one of many institutions that help attract people to live here!

I can not remember a levy that I did not support. I believe in supporting my community and I do not feel levies are put before the public lightly. I know how difficult they are to pass. Please consider the damage that will be done if the museum fund is not honored. I want to trust, but trust should not be taken for granted.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,
Candace Forrette
1024 N. 25th St
Billings

Erika Guy

From: Nadine Smith <nadine@naycrochet.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 10:10 AM
To: commission
Subject: Concerned about defunding museums

Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners
316 N 26th Street #3101
Billings, MT 59101

Dear Commissioner Morse, Commissioner Waters, and Commissioner White,

My name is Nadine Smith, and I'm a 17-year resident of Yellowstone County.

I'm sharing this message with you after learning of your plan to cut funding from the Yellowstone Art Museum. I'm deeply concerned this decision will negatively affect the museum and hinder programming and activities it offers to our community.

The YAM is an undeniable asset for our county and deserves fair-minded financial support from the Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners.

As your constituent, I urge you to reconsider the drastic funding cut this board has proposed. Please seek a solution that benefits all museums that call Yellowstone County home.

Thank you for your work in service of our community.

Sincerely,

Nadine Smith
Nay Crochet
106 Alderson Ave
Billings, MT 59101
406.794.6902

nadine@naycrochet.com
nay.crochet.couture@gmail.com
<https://www.naycrochet.com>
https://www.instagram.com/nay._.crochet
<https://www.facebook.com/naycrochetcouture/>
<https://linktr.ee/naycrochet>

Erika Guy

From: Kimberly Gaitonde <kpgaitonde@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 10:04 AM
To: Mark Morse; Mike Waters; Chris White; commission
Subject: YAM Funding

Dear Commissioner Morse, Commissioner Waters, and Commissioner White,

My name is Kimberly Gaitonde and I am a resident of Yellowstone County. I am also the Associate Curator at the Yellowstone Art Museum.

A little bit of my story with the YAM-- I moved to Billings, MT with my husband 5 years ago from Georgia. We both graduated from Undergraduate studies and decided to take on a new adventure in Billings where his family resided. I studied Art History in school and had gathered experience working in museums. Prior to our arrival in Billings, I researched institutions in the area where I could continue to serve. Although I knew little about the area, it was very clear that the Yellowstone Art Museum was bringing groundbreaking national and local exhibitions to Billings and that the level of support provided to the arts was unmatched in the region. After sending several incessant emails to the museum staff, I was able to "get my foot in the door" as an unpaid volunteer in 2020.

At that time, I saw firsthand the detriment to the institution that COVID-19 and revenue/funding losses created. However, despite all of this, the YAM has remained resilient. Due to the hard, *hard* work and care of the very small skeleton staff through that time, the museum managed to make it through.

I have been on-staff since 2023 and have witnessed firsthand what it has taken to rebuild following the 2020 losses; in many ways, we are still working to rebuild and maintain those services while facing new and everchanging problems that arise. Every single staff member at the YAM is dedicated, caring, and an essential part of maintaining this institution and its services to the community.

All of this to say-- it has been my absolute dream to work here at the YAM. The arts community in Montana is special and rare. The YAM has been a center for artists throughout the region. In recent years, our exhibitions have been featured as must-see by the New York Times. Our guestbooks collect signatures of visitors from all over the nation and even abroad.

Please reconsider the proposed funding cuts to the YAM and seek a solution that benefits all museums in Yellowstone County.

Thank you for your work in service of our community.

Best,
Kimberly Gaitonde

Erika Guy

From: Dennis Nettiksimmons <nettiksimmons@icloud.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 7:46 AM
To: commission
Subject: Restore YAM funding

Commissioners:

I am writing this email to urge you to restore funding to the Yellowstone Art Museum. It is an invaluable asset to our community.

Sincerely,

Dennis Nettiksimmons

Sent from my iPhone

Erika Guy

From: C. Courtenaye <ccourtenaye@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 4:23 PM
To: commission
Cc: Jessica Ogdin (Ruhle)
Subject: proposed funding cuts to YAM

Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners
316 N 26th Street #3101
Billings, MT 59101

Dear Commissioner Morse, Commissioner Waters, and Commissioner White:

As the Commission works hard to balance budgets and allocate funds, I thank you for the opportunity to provide my perspective on the proposed funding cuts to the Yellowstone Art Museum.

The Yellowstone Art Museum, ever since it acquired museum accreditation in 1982, under my aunt—the legendary Donna Forbes—has played a significant role in the cultural landscape of our great state of Montana. In 1995, this institution received the Montana Governor’s Award for Service to the Arts. It continues its strong exhibition and educational programming under the able leadership of Jessica Kay Ogdin.

A successful and popular art museum is the result of great leadership, an avid audience, and a generous community. The Yellowstone Art Museum richly deserves support from the County that it can count on. Please consider, when making your final decisions, that the YAM is a rare treasure for Montana artists and all visitors, and its multi-layered successes must be allowed to flourish. This museum has put Billings on the cultural map. It's part of the proud identity of Billings. Please don't endanger this hard-won success by amputating the support the museum was counting on.

Sincerely,
Catherine Courtenaye
311 S 8th Ave
Bozeman, MT 59715
510-517-8057
www.catherinecourtenaye.com

Erika Guy

From: Sharon R. <amazngrC33@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 9:13 PM
To: commission
Subject: YAM

RESTORE YAM FUNDING!!! End of story!!!!

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

Erika Guy

From: Amber Degges <amber.degges@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 9:23 PM
To: commission
Subject: Restore the yam funding

Hello,

The YAM is an important part of our community and does not deserve to have its funding cut and placed elsewhere. As a citizen of Billings, I am very disappointed that our county commissioners feel art is not an important part of Billings.

Amber Degges

Erika Guy

From: Dustin Ogdin <dustinogdin@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 9:24 PM
To: commission
Subject: Please reconsider funding cuts to the Yellowstone Art Museum

Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners
316 N 26th Street #3101
Billings, MT 59101

Dear Commissioner Morse, Commissioner Waters, and Commissioner White,

I am a Yellowstone County resident who is concerned, frustrated, and confused by your proposed cuts to the Yellowstone Art Museum (YAM). Your body is tasked to facilitate and oversee the distribution of funds provided by Yellowstone County residents through a museum mill levy that citizens voted to enact decades ago. Residents expect fair and wise stewardship of our tax dollars to implement this levy. Unfortunately, allocation decisions made in the previous two years appear to lack both of those qualities. In public comments both this year and last, some commissioners have acted as if these funds are personal gifts bestowed by the commission to museums. They are not. These are public funds legally mandated by voters for distribution to county museums.

Last week, when one commissioner was interviewed by the *Billings Gazette* regarding cuts to the YAM, he spoke of the need to divert funds to public safety. Either that commissioner doesn't have a basic understanding of the museum levy or he was deliberately evading questions about his motivations. Either scenario is troubling. In fact, it's hard not to question whether his allocation decisions are based on personal interests rather than fiscal stewardship given his bizarre misdirection.

The YAM is not only a beloved local cultural institution. More than any other institution within the four museum levy framework, the YAM generates many of the very tax dollars your body is charged to distribute. Travelers across the region visit the YAM, spending extra dollars at restaurants, hotels, grocery stores, gas stations, and retail stores. The YAM provides amenities essential to attracting and maintaining employees to our largest businesses. The YAM itself is also a significant employer with twenty full and part time staff. It also contracts numerous services creating jobs for security guards, cleaning agencies, educators, caterers, building maintenance professionals, and more. If enacted, these cuts will lead to job losses, plain and simple.

The YAM also provides direct service to Yellowstone County schools with arts education outreach programs for grades K-12. Programs will be scaled back or cancelled if these cuts proceed. These are services that our schools will either go without or will require additional taxpayer funds to implement.

And, even though the previously mentioned commissioner's reference to public safety funding was confusing at best and obfuscation at worst, the issue does have relevance. A thriving and vibrant downtown is essential to public safety. Criminal activity often rises within dilapidated urban areas with sparse activity. Billings' downtown business community is already challenged by a lack of foot traffic and civic investment. Why would commissioners ensure diminished activity at one of the city's anchor institutions?

The YAM also provides programming and activities for local youth at no cost, giving young people a productive, meaningful place to socialize, learn, and congregate. Law enforcement experts name these opportunities as indispensable tools in preventing youth crime.

I hope that the commission will re-evaluate the economic and social implications of these proposed cuts and reconsider what appeared to be a hasty decision to reallocate funds away from the YAM. You are three

individuals, but the power and responsibility bestowed on each of you has real life consequences for our entire community.

Now more than ever, this is an opportunity for new leadership and a forward-thinking vision for Yellowstone County from this body.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Sincerely,

Dustin Ogdin
2224 Pine St.
Billings, MT 59101

Erika Guy

From: Sharon R. <amazngrC33@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 5:43 AM
To: commission
Subject: THE YAM

Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners
316 N 26th Street #3101
Billings, MT 59101

Dear Commissioner Morse, Commissioner Waters, and Commissioner White,

My name is Sharon, and I'm a resident of Yellowstone County.

I'm sharing this message with you after learning of your plan to cut funding from the Yellowstone Art Museum. I'm deeply concerned this decision will negatively affect the museum and hinder programming and activities it offers to our community.

The YAM is an undeniable asset for our county and deserves fair-minded financial support from the Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners.

As your constituent, I urge you to reconsider the drastic funding cut this board has proposed. Please seek a solution that benefits all museums that call Yellowstone County home. Thank you for your work in service of our community.

Sincerely,

Shar Rose
4 King Arthur Dr.
Billings, MT 59105

Erika Guy

From: Kim Redding <kimr@citybrew.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 6:24 AM
To: commission
Subject: The YAM

Dear Commissioner Morse, Commissioner Waters, and Commissioner White,
I'm a resident of Yellowstone County and I have been going to the Yellowstone Art Center (aka the YAM) since 1977.

It is a valued part of my family's life and our community, please reconsider cutting their funding.

Thank you for your time,

Kim



Erika Guy

From: Jan Kransky <jkransky@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 6:37 AM
To: commission
Subject: YAM \$\$\$

Yellowstone County Commissioners:

I was alarmed to hear of a 77% cut to the funding for the beloved Yellowstone Art Museum. Maybe “beloved” sounds too dramatic, especially if you are not an art lover. Let me explain a little personal history.

As a very young woman, my first encounter with YAM was when it was still just a tiny art gallery in the old prison building. Having come from Moore, a community in Central Montana, and having never left the state, I was charmed. I immediately bought a pair of earrings in the gift shop and made it a tradition to buy something whenever I was lucky enough to get to Billings. Now 60 years later, I bought a beautiful ‘Made in Montana’ charcuterie board as a gift. Gifts aside, the main reason I love the YAM is their ability to bring art shows I would never get a chance to see otherwise. I can’t afford travel to big cities out of state, as I’m sure many Montanans can’t. For years, I stopped after work to simply wander through or sit in front of a breathtaking work of art. It is a point of pride that our state can provide this level of art and culture, and the fact that this is threatened makes me angry and very, very sad. Monet in Montana? Apparently, never again.

Please reconsider this rash and damaging cut to YAM’s funding. There is no way they can just tighten their belt to accommodate this level of funding loss. Montana should not have to lose this wonderful art gallery and all that it says about Billings. Do you really want to remove such a magnet for both visitors and residents? Because 77% loss would either turn it into a joke, or cause it to close altogether.

Thank you,
Jan Kransky
Billings, MT

Erika Guy

From: eveylamont@gmail.com
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 3:11 PM
To: commission
Subject: YAM

Dear commissioners:

The Yellowstone Art Museum is a centerpiece of education and culture in the city. Please do not cut its funds so drastically. We need a robust YAM for ourselves and for visitors to our city.

Thank you,

EVEY LaMont
406 698 1296
Sent from my iPhone

Erika Guy

From: Eric Simonsen <eric@simonsenarchitect.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 2:42 PM
To: Mark Morse; Mike Waters; Chris White
Cc: commission
Subject: Yellowstone Art Musuem Funding

Dear Commissioners,

I write to you today asking for your consideration to keep the current level of funding for the Yellowstone Art Museum and help sustain the programs and benefits that this longstanding institution has on our community and has instilled in me.

As a former Yellowstone County appointed art musuem board member I can tell you that the Museum is very responsible with the funds that are offered to the organization and has a great impact on our local students, community and visitors to our area. The funding is critical to its operation.

The Museum needs ongoing funding to care for the historic building to take care of this community asset.

The visitorship and events related to the Museum bring an economic benefit to the community and offers a great cultural resource to residents that are difficult to access for many residents of Yellowstone County and our rural state.

The programming at the Yellowstone Art Museum affords visitors a glimpse at new perspectives related to art, creativity and consideration of others different than ourselves and this is a critical benefit in our current times. The recent exhibition Tin Types that presented photographs of Native Americans and then introduced high tech videos linked to these images that told more of the story of these individuals is a poignant example of this experience that our residents benefit from and deserve!

Please find a way to continue funding this key part of our County!

Regards,
Eric Simonsen
Eric Simonsen AIA
Principal
Simonsen-Architect
PO Box 2132
Billings, MT 59103-2132
406-256-9060 Office
406-698-5182 Cell
eric@simonsenarchitect.com

Erika Guy

From: lynn w <wproperties@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 2:35 PM
To: Mark Morse; Mike Waters; Chris White; commission
Cc: lynn wiener
Subject: PLEASE FUND YAM AT THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE LEVEL

VIA EMAIL

Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners
316 N 26th Street #3101
Billings, MT 59101

Dear Commissioner Morse, Commissioner Waters, and Commissioner White,

My name is Lynn Wiener, and I think the YELLOWSTONE ART MUSEUM (YAM) is an extraordinary gift for everyone living in Billings, visiting Billings, visiting Yellowstone County and other areas in the wonderful state of Montana. You should be very proud to have YAM in Billings and this certainly includes its artists, staff, events, programming and education and community involvement.

I recently learned of your proposal to reduce YAM's County funding. It's perplexing and disappointing.

I am sharing this message in hopes it will provide a different perspective for you to consider. The YAM is a wonderful art museum and I look forward to visiting each and every time I am in Billings. While I am not a Yellowstone County taxpayer, I do live in Red Lodge for 5 months a year and YAM is a treasure I visit myself and with friends and neighbors.

Your continued funding is critical. Eli Broad, an American Businessman and philanthropist, said "Civilizations aren't remembered by their business people, bankers, or lawyers. They're remembered by their Arts." Beverly Sills said "Art is the signature of civilizations."

Billings is such a vital, active, compelling city and YAM is one of most special things in your city for your residents and visitors alike.

Please reconsider your proposed funding cut. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lynn Wiener
PO Box 1411
Red Lodge, MT 59068

Erika Guy

From: Tyler Urlacher <thetylerurlacher@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 2:25 PM
To: commission
Subject: Keep the YAM funded

This museum is an important part of the downtown and the city as a whole.

Art is needed more than ever.

Cuts to the funding of this establishment will have ripples through the community and state.

Please reconsider cutting funding.

Ty Urlacher

Erika Guy

From: Rita Wells <ritawells5965@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 2:08 PM
To: commission
Subject: Please restore funding for YAM

Dear commissioners,
while we understand that times are particularly tough right now with the high cost of literally everything, we believe our tax dollars that help to fund the Yellowstone Art Museum should NOT be cut. Please reconsider your funding cuts to this budget.

Thank you,
Rob and Rita Wells
572 Tabriz Drive
Billings

Rita Wells

"Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend.

Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read."

*Julius Henry "Groucho" Marx, American Comedic Actor
1890 - 1977*

Erika Guy

From: Katy Schreiner <katy@downtownbillings.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 10:52 AM
To: commission; Chris White; Mark Morse; Mike Waters
Cc: Nick Steen; Blake Wahrlich; Sean Lynch
Subject: Yellowstone Art Museum

Dear Commissioner Morse, Commissioner Waters, and Commissioner White,

On behalf of the Downtown Billings Association, Downtown Billings Business Improvement District, Downtown Billings Partnership, and Community Innovations, I write this letter in support of the Yellowstone Art Museum (YAM) and request that you reconsider cutting any funding for this *vital* community asset. The YAM is an essential component of Downtown Billings and instrumental in providing an important layer of culture, art, and economic support to our vibrant community. Additionally, the significant draw of visitors to the YAM activates downtown, contributing to an important factor of public safety. The loss of critical funding will directly affect the YAM's ability to continue programming an active and necessary downtown experience.

The Downtown Billings Alliance is honored to have the YAM as a member of our Downtown Membership Association and partners regularly with the organization to further Downtown and regional revitalization. This organization aligns perfectly with the Downtown Billings Strategic Plan and our transformative goals, including "A Vibrant and Connected Downtown", "A Strong Downtown Identity", and "A Diverse Economic Engine". This historical asset is a valuable commodity to our community, and the YAM 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, county, and region as a whole.

The YAM is a respected and beloved amenity to our entire community, on behalf of Downtown Billings, please reconsider this detrimental funding cut. An intentional and thoughtful approach to public safety, county-wide growth, and long-term regional success must include fair and balanced support of all Yellowstone County cultural amenities. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,



Katy Schreiner
Chief Executive Officer



Downtown Billings Alliance
102 N 29th St
[Billings, MT 59101](https://www.billingsmt.gov)

katy@downtownbillings.com
406 | 294-5060 [office]

Erika Guy

From: Ben Sherman <ben.d.sherman@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 28, 2025 2:41 PM
To: commission
Subject: Yellowstone County Commissioners Must Protect the Yellowstone Art Museum

Dear Commissioners Morse, Waters, and White,

My name is Ben Sherman, and I am a Yellowstone County resident.

I am writing to hold this board accountable for its proposal to cut funding to the Yellowstone Art Museum. This is a reckless decision that undermines one of our county's most important cultural and educational institutions. The YAM brings value not only to Billings but to the entire county. By cutting its funding, you are telling your constituents that the arts and community enrichment are expendable.

As commissioners, you are answerable to the people who elected you. I want to be clear: if you push through this harmful cut, it will not be forgotten when you next seek the trust of the voters. Our community deserves leaders who protect and strengthen our cultural assets, not dismantle them.

I urge you to reconsider immediately and find a responsible solution that sustains the YAM and the role it plays in Yellowstone County.

Sincerely,
Ben Sherman
2802 8th Ave S.
Billings, MT 59101

Erika Guy

From: Elizabeth Halverson <liz.halverson@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 28, 2025 3:30 PM
To: commission
Subject: DO NOT CUT YAM FUNDING

--
Liz Halverson
406-698-9929
liz.halverson@gmail.com

Erika Guy

From: Diane Eichler <deichlerx2@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 28, 2025 5:01 PM
To: commission
Subject: Yellowstone Art Museum - Funding Support

Mr. Morse, Mr. White and Mr. Waters -

As a proud Billings resident, I write to express my strongest support for the Yellowstone Art Museum during this time of reduced funding. The YAM is not only a cornerstone of our cultural identity, but also a vital economic driver that enhances the quality of life in our region and helps attract visitors, businesses, and talent to our community.

In my role as Senior Vice President of Marketing for Kampgrounds of America, Inc. (KOA), headquartered for over 60 years here in Billings, I see every day how vibrant cultural institutions shape the way travelers experience Montana. Visitors come here for our landscapes, but they stay longer—and spend more—when they are also able to connect with our arts, history, and local stories. The YAM plays an essential role in that ecosystem, showcasing nationally recognized exhibitions while nurturing local artists and creative voices.

As the largest private campground operator in North America, KOA welcomes millions of campers annually, many of whom travel through Billings. We know from experience that thriving cultural institutions like the Yellowstone Art Museum make Billings not just a place to stop, but a place to return to. The museum contributes directly to tourism, hospitality, and retail spending, benefiting local businesses and helping sustain the broader economy.

Beyond economics, the museum is a beacon of education and inspiration for youth and families. It fosters creativity, critical thinking, and community connection—all qualities that build a stronger Billings for generations to come. To see its programs diminished would be a loss that extends far beyond the arts community; it would diminish the very fabric of who we are as a city and as Montanans.

I urge our leaders, funders, and community partners to recognize the Yellowstone Art Museum as the invaluable resource it is. Continued and robust support for the YAM is not only an investment in the arts—it is an investment in Billings' future.

Sincerely,

Erika Guy

From: John Henry Haseltine <haseltine.hank@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 28, 2025 5:11 PM
To: commission
Subject: Yellowstone Art Museum Funding

Dear Commissioner Morse, Commissioner Waters, and Commissioner White,

My name is John Henry Haseltine, and although I'm a Livingston resident, Billings and Yellowstone County are substantial parts of my experience and life as a Montanan. It's unquestionably my favorite city to visit and the impact the Yellowstone Art Museum has on the region, the state and the West in general is significant and profound.

I'm concerned about a loss of additional funding for the YAM and the negative impacts that will undoubtedly result from cuts in funding, especially given the limited timeframe museum leadership now has to make up for such unexpected and drastic budget cuts.

I hope you will reconsider this proposed funding cut and work with the museum leadership for the sake of the community and the Yellowstone Art Museum's exceptional legacy.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

John Henry Haseltine

319 S. F St

Livingston, MT 59047

John Henry Haseltine
[WESTWARD & MISERABLE BOOK](#)
[WEB STORE](#)
www.johnhenryhaseltine.com

Erika Guy

From: Nicole Rosenleaf Ritter <rosenleaf@aya.yale.edu>
Sent: Thursday, August 28, 2025 6:08 PM
To: commission
Cc: marketing@artmuseum.org
Subject: YAM funding and visitor dollars

Dear County Commissioners:

My son and I traveled to Billings from Bozeman in January specifically to see the John Henry Haseltine exhibit at the Yellowstone Art Museum. My son, who lives in the Twin Cities, had been following the artist on Instagram and was excited to have the chance to see his work in person.

We left the museum incredibly impressed with not only the exhibit we came to see but the museum as a whole. After going through the Haseltine exhibit (twice) we explored the rest of the museum, including the excellent cowboy art exhibit on the main floor. We also enjoyed seeing the student art that demonstrated YAM's commitment to engaging the community with visual art.

While we were in Billings, we had lunch at the Burger Dive and then shopped at some nearby stores. My son purchased a belt buckle at Montana Vintage Clothing.

We would not have come to Billings that day without the enticement of the Yellowstone Art Museum. We would not have spent our money in your downtown or recommended it to friends. Please think twice about what this institution means to your city. You have a beautiful, functional, highly engaging museum that brings people to Billings. Please don't ruin that. Art should be for everyone.

Respectfully,

Nicole

—
Nicole Rosenleaf Ritter
Bozeman, MT

Erika Guy

From: Dar Co <ncbreeze13@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 28, 2025 9:27 PM
To: commission
Subject: Funding for YAM

Hello Commissioners,

I was deeply disappointed to see you are trying to pull funding from the Yellowstone Art Museum. I attended the Tuesday morning meeting and while I didn't comment publicly at the time, I will tell you I see exactly what you're trying to do. As a Yellowstone county tax payer, I know you work for the people. I know you will not work for the people longer than this term. You've all shown with the exception of Chris White; who I assume will fall in line in due time, do not stand with the people of this community. I see three men who only look out for themselves. First, you tried to turn the Metra into an Ice detention center, without public support only a letter to win points with a want to be dictator. Now you are trying to defund our arts program, because you are joyless men looking down at us from your thrones. We don't have kings in the United States of America, you have now shown your racism and disdain for joy. As a lifelong Montanan, I am truly appalled knowing I live among hateful, bigoted, men like you. I demand the funding for YAM go to where it belongs. Our tax dollars are not your bank account to do with what you wish. Make the right choice.

Darci Colbrese
3105 Ave F
Billings, MT 59102

Erika Guy

From: Shay Reiser <shayduncan78@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 28, 2025 9:50 PM
To: commission
Subject: Hands off the Art!!!!

When the citizens of Yellowstone County vote for any kind of mill levy, tax levy, anything really, we are making a choice about what we will support and what we will not with our HARD EARNED MONEY. For example if I decided to vote Yes for a mill Levy for the schools I would expect that that's where the money would go is to the schools. Additionally even if someone didn't even live here to vote for something once they purchase a residence here those Mill levees continue on their property taxes for the entirety of the time that they own a home in this County. So when the citizens of this County voted for a levy to pay for the museums that we all enjoy and the art that we want to look at it wasn't to line your pockets; it wasn't to add more cops to the street to harass the citizens in this community; it wasn't to add more jail cells to throw people into because our county courts are ridiculously backlogged. That money is for the arts and the museums. If there is a need for those other things I mentioned, then you're more than welcome to present a new Mill Levy to the citizens of this County to again vote on. However if you keep misappropriating the funds and not using them for their intended purpose I feel like you're setting a precedent for future levies to be voted NO! You're making yourselves very untrustworthy when you start moving money around because you didn't manage your money properly to begin with.

Also since you commissioners are in the upper class of this County based on your salaries I would expect that the three of you have probably spent some time either in the museums or in art galleries or enjoying even the art walk in downtown billings. If you're going to defund our museums and our galleries then you should keep yourselves out of them and not consider trying to enjoy something that you took away from everyone else. ART IS FOR EVERYONE! Better yet leave the museum funding alone and go back to managing your budget like you should have been from the beginning.

HANDS OFF OUR ART!

Shannon Reiser

Resident of Billings MT

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

Erika Guy

From: Janice Roberts <janiceroberts@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, August 29, 2025 5:30 AM
To: BOCC
Subject: Re: To our county commissioners

Hello again, Commissioners, here is an addendum to our letter

Sent from my iPhone

We frequently have out of town visitors. We almost always take them to see the wonderful Yellowstone Art Museum. Afterward, we check out various downtown shops, and buy a meal.. also downtown! The YAM is good for the heart and brain, and good for downtown business!

Respectfully, Janice and John Roberts

On Aug 28, 2025, at 10:03 AM, Janice Roberts <janiceroberts@yahoo.com> wrote:

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Janice Roberts <janiceroberts@yahoo.com>
Date: August 29, 2025
Subject: To our county commissioners

Greetings from two good citizens who taught school, and raised five decent contributing humans, and also took in our 2 orphaned nephews,

Since moving to Billings 6 yrs ago from a small Montana town, we have been enriched by the arts in this community! Please visit the Yellowstone Art Museum. It is a peaceful place where our minds can be broadened by viewing the creativity of local and distant artists. The world would be a dismal place without art and music to bring us all together, and inspire our own creativity.

Please do not take away from YAM the county funds that were designated for them. Please visit the YAM very soon. See the amazing large photo on 2nd floor that captures Billings' "Not in our town" movement!

Thank you, Janice and John Roberts

Sent from my iPhone