



Montana-Ireland Trade Commission

The official meeting minutes may be accessed on the recording.

Commissioners Present Virtually: Senator Mike Cuffe (Chair), Senator Ellie Boldman (Vice Chair), Representative Gary Parry, Representative Josh Seckinger, Tony Brockman (Director Bertoglio's Proxy), Andy Fjeseth (Director Streit's Proxy), Commissioner Clayton Christian, Jim McCormick and Paddy Fleming

Montana Department of Commerce Staff Present: Mandy Rambo, Mackenzie Espeland, and Syerra Stroud (minutes)

Montana Department of Commerce Staff Present Virtually: Katie Willcockson

Guests Present Virtually: Senator Mark Daly, Shannon O'Brien and Director Traolach O Riordain

Call to Order, Role Call, Notice of Recorded Meeting

00:00 Vice Chair Boldman called the meeting to order. Syerra Stroud called role for Commission members.

Review of Meeting Minutes from 8/15 and 9/18 – vote to accept minutes

01:20 Mr. Fleming moves to approve both minutes 8/15 and 9/18. Senator Boldman moves by acclamation to approve both minutes, minutes approved.

Financial Report

02:40 Deputy Director Mandy Rambo presented the Montana-Ireland Trade Commission fund activity detail as of December 1, 2025. There's a cash balance of \$500, and a donation from Town Pump hasn't been received yet, but should be coming in.

Montana Department of Commerce | commerce.mt.gov | montanarelay.mt.gov (711)

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Reports from other Commissioners

05:00 Commissioners went through the work they have been doing since the previous September meeting.

Chairman's Report, Chair Cuffe

17:38 Chair Cuffe presented additional information on the Town Pump grant.

26:30 Chair Cuffe went over some of the larger companies that are interested in international trade, and had Andy Fjeseth go over updates on the agriculture side. There was a brief discussion over education between the commissioners.

Mark Daly Updates

34:10 Senator Mark Daly went over the Ireland updates and some future collaborations with Montana, commissioners asked Senator Daly questions on some of their ideas.

Info from Shannon O'Brien

46:32 Shannon O'Brien is currently serving as one of the co-chairs for the National Association for the American Irish State Legislative caucuses. Ms. O'Brien presented the purposes of the caucus as well as the economic development and shared policy opportunities.

01:00:40 Chair Cuffe asked for public comment, there was no public in attendance.

01:01:24 Chair Cuffe asked Ms. Rambo for updates from Commerce, there was no updates from Commerce staff.

01:01:50 Commissioners shared ideas for trade mission items. Ms. Rambo stated the Commerce has no funds budgeted to go to a trade mission. Ms. Willcockson shared the process for starting a trade mission.

Report on West Virginia judge on training program

01:19:04 Jim McCormick and Senator Boldman briefly went over the report of the West Virginia judge on the training program.

01:20:24 Commission discussed the trade mission to Ireland in August. Senator Boldman will be sharing the itinerary from the Irish delegation to the commission. Ms. Willcockson offered to take a look at the itinerary for the trade commission and provide some feedback.

01:33:28 Chair Cuffe asked for public comment, there was no public in attendance.

Next Meeting Date (to be set), Chair Cuffe

01:33:42 Next meeting will be a virtual meeting on Thursday, March 12th at 9am.

01:39:50 Senator Boldman suggested to have some goals of some partners to have for the delegation in August for the upcoming March meeting.

01:41:52 Jim McCormick spoke briefly on the Irish studies program.

01:44:28 Chair Cuffe started a discussion with the commission on ideas of how to generate money for the group.

01:52:09 Senator Boldman proposed the idea for the commission to be an independent agency. Additional discussion was had by commission members.

01:56:20 Deputy Director Rambo stated that Commerce Staffs time is nearing the \$9,000.00 range, and a large portion of the Town Pump funding will go towards the Commerce staff time. There was additional discussion of lowering Commerce's involvement with the commission between the commission members and Commerce. Senator Boldman will have a proposal on the Commission being more independent for the next meeting in March for the commission members to vote on.

02:02:50 Ms. Rambo presented the specifics on the Commerce staff hours and amounts. There's a total of 137.25 hours that the Commerce's staff has put into support of the Montana-Ireland trade commission, the total amount comes to \$8,446.85 for the current staff hours. Commerce provided a fiscal note for Senate Bill 320 that showed an estimated cost of \$39,197.00 for fiscal year 26, and then lower expenditures for fiscal years 27-29. The commission wants to have a discussion with Director Bertoglio regarding Commerce's involvement with the commission.

02:07:24 Each commission member stated their thoughts for the commission becoming independent.

02:21:28 A discussion was had between Chair Cuffe, Senator Boldman and Commerce on where the money is going, if less money can be spent and could there be less commerce staff involved.

UM Irish Studies Program

02:36:30 Director Traolach O Riordain of Irish studies at the University of Montana, gave a presentation on Irish history in Montana.

Meeting Closure, Chair Cuffe

03:01:09 Meeting adjourned by Vice Chair Boldman at 12:11pm