

Minutes of Meeting #471

**Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission
Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Center
1800 N 33rd St.
Lincoln, NE
March 24, 2022**

Present: Commissioner Dorothy Anderson
Commissioner Nick Baxter
Commissioner Matt Blomstedt
Commissioner Darrin Good
Commissioner Marilyn Hadley (Chair)
Commissioner Heath Mello
Commissioner Paul Turman

Absent: Commissioner Patricia Kircher
Commissioner Clay Smith

Advance notice of the public meeting was sent to Nebraska news media by means of a news release forwarded from the Commission office with Agenda posted on the state and Nebraska Public Media websites.

Chair Marilyn Hadley called the meeting #471 to order at 10:31 a.m.

Following the call of the roll, it was determined that a duly constituted quorum of Commissioners were present.

The Chair called for public comment. There were none.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Chair requested approval of the minutes of meeting #470 as held on December 2, 2021. It was moved by Commissioner Baxter and seconded by Commissioner Good to approve the minutes from meeting #470. Voting aye: Commissioner Anderson, Baxter, Blomstedt, Good, Hadley, Turman. Opposed: None. Did not vote: Commissioner Mello.

COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA

2nd Quarter Budget Report

Chief Financial Officer, Randy Hansen presented the 2nd Quarter Budget Report. It was moved by Commissioner Baxter and seconded by Commissioner Turman to approve the 2nd Quarter Budget report ending December 31, 2021. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Anderson, Baxter, Blomstedt, Good, Hadley, Turman. Opposed: None. Did not vote: Commissioner Mello. The Finance Committee met prior to the full Commission meeting to review the report in greater detail.

NET Commission Nominating Committee Update

Chair Marilyn Hadley presented the nominations. The nominations were as follows: Chair – Nick Baxter. Vice Chair – Paul Turman. Finance Committee – Dorothy Anderson, Nick Baxter, Heath Mello, Clay Smith, Paul Turman. Executive Committee – Nick Baxter, Matt Blomstedt, Marilyn Hadley, Patricia Kircher, Heathy Mello, Paul Turman. Mark Leonard as secretary/assistant treasurer. Randy Hansen as Treasurer/assistant secretary. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Anderson, Baxter, Blomstedt, Good, Hadley, Turman. Opposed: None. Did not vote: Commissioner Mello.

NET Commission Bylaw Revision, Officer Elections

It is recommended that the Commission ratify the bylaw to extend the term of office from a one (1) year term to a two (2) year term. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Anderson, Baxter, Blomstedt, Good, Hadley, Turman. Opposed: None. Did not vote: Commissioner Mello.

COMMISSION INFORMATION AGENDA

General Manager's Report

General Manager Mark Leonard presented the report:

- The FCC opened a window last fall for new FM transmitter licenses; the first time in a decade. We applied for 5 locations and we were recently informed that we received approval for 4 new sites: Broken Bow, McCook, Falls City and Columbus. These are populated areas that do not receive good reception from the existing transmitter locations. We were able to internally fund the purchase and installation of these transmitters and associated tower costs. We will be moving forward soon and begin the purchasing process.
- Federal Funding update:
 - On March 10th the Senate passed a \$1.5 trillion omnibus government funding bill for FY 22. This spending package includes \$525 million in CPB funding, a \$50 million dollar increase from current funding. The bill also provides \$40 million for the establishment of Next Generation Warning system at FEMA, \$30.5 million for Ready to Learn, \$20 million in funding for system interconnection.
 - APTS Summit was held at the end of February. Thank you to Marilyn Hadley, Nick Baxter, Dorothy Anderson and Dan O'Neill for joining the virtual meetings with our Nebraska Representatives Senator Deb Fischer, Congressman Adrian Smith, Congressman Don Bacon and Congressman Fortenberry's Chief of Staff, Alan Feyerherm. Congressman Bacon indicated he would be willing to sign on to the Dear Colleague letter in support of Public Media funding, as he has done previously.
- New Director of Education Jessica Mitchell-McCollough has joined NPM.
- In January new Executive Vice Chancellor Dr. Kathy Ankerson started in her role at UNL. She was previously the Dean of the College of Architecture.
- We are close to completing our search for a new Chief Strategy Officer and hope to have an announcement soon. We worked with a national recruiting firm to help build a strong and diverse set of candidates for consideration.
- With the current threat level for cyber hacking very high both the University and NPM are doing an extensive review of potential vulnerabilities and protection efforts. This is a complex assessment given the unique operation of NPM and its extensive use of the internet in moving

and handling video content-applications that far exceed the university's connectivity needs across its four campuses. Our ITS staff is currently doing research about impact and potential mediating efforts.

- ATSC 3.0 planning status-We have applications pending with the FCC for approval of a channel switch from VHF to UHF on four of our TV transmitters as the first key step in our conversion to the next generation television standard.
- LB 777, a bill currently in the 2022 Nebraska Legislature session, would implement a searchable online repository of all legislative sessions and hearings. The Clerk's office has taken responsibility for developing the storage and organizing of this online media repository. Senator Brewer introduced the bill.

Education Update

Director of Communication, Cameron Risher submitted the report:

- Bright By Text– Nebraska Public Media has teamed up with Bright By Text to send FREE activities, games, and resources for children up to age eight right to a cell phone. These texts for parents and caregivers (including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and babysitters) are targeted to their child's specific age. They include information on child development, early literacy, health and safety. To sign up, text the word NEKIDS to 274448. Messages are available in English or Spanish. We are sending these messages in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education's Step Up To Quality Program. In March we kicked off an integrated marketing and promotion plan to increase the number of subscribers. We will be promoting this free service via emails, Spanish-language radio ads, English and Spanish social media ads, PREMIERE member magazine, Smart Scoop eNewsletter and online.
- Celebrating Nebraska's Pollinators – in collaboration with our grant for *NATURE: Garden of a Thousand Bees*, our Education team is producing an interactive lesson to accompany the Prairie Portrait Bee lesson and build out a full collection to support the Outreach events happening this summer in Scottsbluff, Lincoln and Omaha.
- NETA's 53rd annual Public Media Awards. (National Educational Telecommunications Association) Our Communications team won an award for Overall Excellence in Marketing and Communications
- Hiding in Plain Sight: Screening RFP In partnership with WETA, the PBS flagship station in Washington D.C. we are applying for a \$10K grant to host a screening and do teacher trainings around the new Ken Burns documentary, *Hiding in Plain Sight*. The two-part, four-hour film follows the journeys of more than 20 young Americans from all over the country and all walks of life, who have struggled with thoughts and feelings that have troubled—and, at times—overwhelmed them. They share what they have learned about themselves, their families, and the world in which they live. Through first-person accounts, the film presents an unstinting look at both the seemingly insurmountable obstacles faced by those who live with mental disorders and the hope that many have found after that storm. In the process, they will directly confront the issues of stigma, discrimination, awareness, and silence, and, in doing so, support the ongoing shift in the public perception of mental illness today.
- Director of Education – We hired Jessica Mitchell-McCollough as our new Director of Education. She is responsible for managing the education team, grants and projects. She comes to us from

the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education where she was the Project Coordinator for the International Consortium of Multilingual Excellence in Education (ICMEE).

Engineering Report

Chief Technology Officer, Ling Ling Sun presented the report:

- New NCE FM station applications – Received construction permit for McCook, Broken Bow, Falls City and Columbus. Planning build out in conjunction with Falls City site shelter replacement. Falls City Shelter is awarded to Thermo Bond. There will be a 19 week lead time for HVAC equipment.
- NPM data backup – Cold storage will be purchased and installed as a tertiary point of backup in addition to cloud data backup for NPM critical servers. The cold storage will not connect to the internet but for periodic updates.
- Live Linear Streaming NPM digital sub-channels –Soft launch NPM World live linear stream was successful thanks to team collaboration. Ordered two new AWS MediaLink encoders for live linear streaming Create channel. <https://nebraskapublicmedia.org/en/watch/world-livestream/>
- TV Encoding System Replacement - New proposed configuration is put to the bench test for evaluation. The new proposed configuration is to enhance what NPM is currently broadcasting, add audio description, additional audio services, and a fifth television channel to act as the transport for the Radio audio services.
- Network Management Control System (NMCS) project – work continues on integrating Production and Government Services into NMCS. Working with MNC Inc. on extending contract year to June 30, 2022 due to supply and implementation delay mainly caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

Content-Television and Radio

Chief Content Officer, Nancy Finken presented the report:

- The World, public radio’s longest-running daily global news magazine program was added to the FM line up on February 21, airing weekdays at 3pm CT
- Masterpiece: All Creatures Great & Small has been a big hit! Season two of this charming series gave us a strong start in January.
- NSAA High School Championships keep our sports team busy throughout the winter and spring. In February, we brought viewers championships in wrestling, bowling, swimming and diving.
- Nebraska Stories began its 13th season with its usual variety of pieces featuring engaging stories about interesting people and places across the state. One story about a Gretna couple working to raise a rare breed of goats was picked up by PBS NewsHour.
- Nebraska Public Media has secured a partnership with Report for America. As one of 70 newsrooms nationwide selected to be a RFA newsroom, a talented journalist will be placed in our station to report on under-represented communities. In Nebraska, this journalist will help create stories across the state featuring rural areas, urban centers, and communities of color. RFA provides matching funds to support the position.

Labs

Chief Innovation Officer, Chad Davis:

Projects Currently in R&D include:

- Youth Media Initiative: a long horizon project that seeks to create more young, trained media content creators in Nebraska, attract younger audiences to that content, and increase the diversity of voices represented in the content created by Nebraska Public Media
- Expedition Nebraska – Hidden Prairie
 - The “second season” of Expedition Nebraska
 - Focuses on the prairie ecology and stewardship and inspired by the UNL State Museum exhibit of the same name
 - Anticipated release: June of 2023

Projects in Production include:

- Expedition Nebraska – collaboration with the University of Nebraska State Museum to launch virtual exhibits that can be viewed via the web, mobile devices and VR headsets as first-person explorer experiences
 - Headset versions of the initial experience slated for release this spring
 - Currently developing cross-platform accessibility features
- George Washington Palmer Homestead Experience – a spatial media collaboration with Homestead National Historical Park to recreate an 1870s Nebraska homestead
 - Anticipated launch of iOS and Android apps in June of 2022
 - Anticipated launch of web browser version in July of 2022

Administrative

Chief Administrative Officer, Julie Thomsen presented the report:

- An All Staff meeting was held on February 23rd via Zoom.
 - New hires and student interns were introduced and welcomed.
 - The quarterly employee excellence award was presented to Nicholas Thweatt, Transmissions. The following is an excerpt from the nomination made by the Media Services Helpdesk Staff: “Our staff works with callers to identify a resolution to their problem. At times we can’t solve the issue. If that occurs, we contact a Field Technician to assist. Nicholas is one of those people we depend on. Whenever we ask if he could assist us, he responds promptly and engages our viewer to identify a time he can work with them. Then his trouble shooting skills kick in and if needed he’ll make a house call.”
 - The annual A. James Ebel employee of the year award was presented to Ian Edgington, Video Production Specialist. Ian was nominated by a Contract Production Producer - “Ian has consistently shown up for in-person work, without complaint, even while many staff were able to work remotely, through several phases of the pandemic. He assisted with promotion and other editing during the early period of the pandemic shutdown in addition to his daily work on finishing projects. He often led staff training on the new

Avid upgrade – seeking feedback and looking for areas where staff wanted or felt they needed to learn more.”

- Compliance- The annual EEO Reports were completed and filed with the FCC just prior to the February 1st deadline. Those reports are located on the Nebraska Public Media website- [Financials/Public File | Nebraska Public Media](#)
 - Station Activity Survey (SAS) annual information was submitted as required by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. This information is collected from public broadcasting stations about their operations so that CPB can: provide detailed information about public broadcasting to Congress the FCC and the public, help stations and other public broadcasting organizations with planning and evaluation, study and anticipate industry-wide trends and monitor the results of stations’ equal employment opportunity practices. The data helps CPB calculate the next fiscal year’s Community Service Grants for grantees.
- Recruitment/Staffing- Nebraska Public Media Human Resources staff will participate in the Report for American and Current virtual career fairs in March. We will be promoting our radio, content producing and engineering vacancies.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

Then next Commission meeting is June 16, 2022.

There being no further business, Meeting #471 was adjourned at 11:12 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Leonard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark Leonard