

**Minutes of Meeting #472**

**Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission  
Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Center  
1800 N 33<sup>rd</sup> St.  
Lincoln, NE  
June 16, 2022**

Present: Commissioner Nick Baxter (Chair)  
Commissioner Darrin Good  
Commissioner Marilyn Hadley  
Commissioner Patricia Kircher  
Commissioner Heath Mello  
Commissioner Clay Smith

Absent: Commissioner Dorothy Anderson  
Commissioner Matt Blomstedt  
Commissioner Paul Turman

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 Nick Baxter called the meeting #472 to order at 10:38 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 #471 as held on March 24, 2022. It was moved by Commissioner Baxter and seconded by Commissioner Smith to approve the minutes from meeting #471. Voting aye: Commissioner Baxter, Good, Hadley, Kircher, Mello, Smith. Opposed: None.

**COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Budget Report**

Chief Financial Officer, Randy Hansen presented the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Budget Report. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Budget report was approved by acclamation. The Finance Committee met prior to the full Commission meeting to review the report in greater detail.

## FY2023 Operating Budget

Chief Financial Officer, Randy Hansen presented the FY 2023 Operating Budget. The FY 2023 Operating Budget was approved by acclamation. The Finance Committee met prior to the full Commission meeting to review the report in greater detail.

## **COMMISSION INFORMATION AGENDA**

### General Manager's Report

General Manager Mark Leonard presented the report:

- The PBS Annual Meeting was held in May. The meeting was held virtually. In the final session, Paula Kerger, CEO of PBS, ended the meeting with a quote from Professor Eddie Glaude, Jr. While speaking on a panel about Making Black America, Professor Glaude spoke of the power of helping people “imagine beyond the opacity of the present condition.” I love that phrase, because I think it really captures our work in public media, and this moment in particular, Paula shared. We can “imagine beyond the opacity of the present condition,” to help our country come together with respect for everyone’s diverse perspectives. And as a system, as we confront this pivotal moment in our history, we can imagine beyond the opacity of today. While we cannot predict the future, we can use our creativity, our spirit, and our imagination to get a glimpse of where we are going, and work together to make that vision a reality. As we rise to meet that wonderful challenge, we do so together; inspired by our extraordinary legacy, and united by our essential mission.
- State and Federal Funding
  - There is very little to update since the last meeting. We will begin planning for next year’s unicameral session with preparation for our 5 year technical plan in September.
  - With federal funding attention now turns to the Homeland Security subcommittee and the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education subcommittee for scheduled markup of bills later this month. These subcommittees have authority over the public safety architecture, in which public media plays a role, as well as funding for system interconnect and Ready to Learn.
- Equity Study
  - Many industries, including ours, are experiencing challenges retaining and recruiting a qualified work force. The impact of Covid, inflation, and gas prices have put a particular spotlight on wage equity and competitiveness. In addition, we want to track and monitor our progress in attracting a diverse work force. Some stations began this work over the past year, and we are gathering information about how these were conducted, and what kind of plans emerged for addressing inequities. Julie Thomsen is currently researching an outside vendor to implement the study this fiscal year. From this study we hope to have recommendations for addressing any disparities in FY 2024.
- Strategic Planning
  - Our last planning effort in 2016 began shortly after I arrived here in 2013, and was conducted after recruiting for the open position of AGM of Development and Marketing and AGM for Technology. Once these positions were filled we used a consultative process for the leadership team with facilitation by industry veteran Dennis Haarsager. Key themes emerged and were summarized in a business tactical plan that has guided

our efforts since. Key priorities included planning for on demand content to exceed over the air viewing, planning for ATSC 3.0, expanding service to unserved areas, and more. Looking back, it is satisfying to see how much progress was an outgrowth of that work. Originally, I had envisioned Nebraska Public Media engaging in strategic planning in 2020 or 2021 but Covid had a different plan.

- For this strategic plan we will be working with Ted Krichels, former CPB Sr. Vice President for System Strategy. In addition to CPB, Ted was a long serving General Manager for WPSU, Penn State's public radio and television services as well as General Manager at KBDI Denver. We are in the process of determining the core planning members with initial interviews and a kickoff meeting planned for July. The goal is to complete the work by the end of the calendar year.

### Education Update

Chief Strategic Officer, Molly Delaney submitted the report:

- NATURE: Garden of a Thousand Bees  
As part of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the popular PBS Series *NATURE*, we received a \$7500 grant from WNET, PBS's flagship station in New York City, to fund engagement activities and events that promote native plants and pollinator gardens.
  - June 10 Gering Event: Plants in the Plaza – in partnership with the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum
  - June 22 Lincoln Event: Wild Bees & Wildflowers Open House – in partnership with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) Bee Lab
  - June 25 Gretna Event: Pollinator Party in partnership with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
  - May & June – local events hosted statewide by the Nebraska Regional Library Systems.
- Celebrating Nebraska's Pollinators  
In collaboration with our grant for *NATURE: Garden of a Thousand Bees*, our Education department created an in-depth lesson about bees. It details their anatomy and how they use their senses to find the flowers they need. We will pilot activities from this lesson at our camp day with Family Service Lincoln on July 8th. Visit [www.NebraskaPublicMedia/pollinators](http://www.NebraskaPublicMedia/pollinators).
  - Nebraska State Historical Parks - Virtual Field Trips – visit [www.NebraskaPublicMedia/education](http://www.NebraskaPublicMedia/education)
  - Ashfall State Historical Park is LIVE
    - Includes educational material for supplemental classroom use
  - Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park is LIVE
    - Includes educational material for supplemental classroom use
  - Fort Kearney State Historical Park is in production.
- Hiding in Plain Sight: Screening – Fall 2022
  - In partnership with WETA, the PBS flagship station in Washington D.C. we received a grant for \$10K grant to host a screening and panel discussion around the new Ken Burns documentary, *Hiding in Plain Sight*. The two-part, four-hour film, which airs in June, follows the journeys of more than 20 young Americans, 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.

### Engineering Report

Chief Technology Officer, Ling Ling Sun presented the report:

- Closing the Homework Gap project – partnered with the State Office of the CIO, Nebraska Educational Service Units (ESU) Coordinating Council, Nebraska Dept. of Education and ESU School Districts, this project is Nebraska Pilot of TV Whitespace (TVWS) Wireless Transmission using High Tower, High Power Technologies. Funded by Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) I Funds, the project will test the viability and reliability of bi-directional internet service at various user distances from one or more Nebraska Public Media towers using the TVWS radio transmission spectrum. Radwin equipment has been pre-selected for this pilot project at time of the request as being among the most advanced TVWS equipment on the market and among the first to provide for high tower, high power installation as outlined in the October 2020 FCC Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. Test site(s) will involve Nebraska Public Media tower(s); point-to-point transmission mechanism; Radwin radio(s) and 360o antenna propagation of the TVWS internet service to student or staff domiciles; installation of relevant end user equipment at student or staff domiciles at varying distances from the tower.
- National Science Foundation grant application for The Science and Technology Centers (STC) – Nebraska Public Media has been participating in the UNL School of Computing led NSF grant pre-proposal and working group activities toward a full application proposal submission. The STC is an Integrative Partnerships program that supports exceptionally innovative, complex research and education projects that require largescale, long-term awards.
- 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. New: Engineering is preparing Aug. 1st launch in cooperation with programming and communications.

### Content-Television and Radio

Chief Content Officer, Nancy Finken presented the report:

- National Highlights
  - Ken Burns and his team did not disappoint with Benjamin Franklin, a limited series broadcast on Nebraska Public Media in early April exploring the life and work of one of the most consequential figures in American history.
  - Trauma to Triumph is a national program we acquired for broadcast in March, Women's History Month. Featured in the program is Omaha-native and media giant Cathy Hughes who founded Urban One.
- Local Highlights
  - Gavel to gavel coverage of the Nebraska Unicameral continued through April 20, the end of the session. We offered live broadcasts on World and on our apps, and news

- coverage on “Speaking of Nebraska,” and daily radio and online stories led by veteran Statehouse Reporter, Fred Knapp.
- The Nebraska Public Media News team did a number of stories leading up to the May primary elections and has continuing coverage this summer and fall for the general election as part of our “Campaign Connection 2022” service. In March, four of the Republican candidates for governor were in our studio for a debate broadcast live on all platforms.
  - Nebraska Volleyball Spring Match, KU versus Nebraska was a live special broadcast from Grand Island and was very well received. We hope to make this an annual part of our sports line-up. The Nebraska Public Media Sports team also produced live coverage of Creighton and Nebraska baseball games this spring.
  - Backyard Farmer is 70! The perennial favorite, a partnership production between University Extension and Nebraska Public Media, returned April 7 for the 70<sup>th</sup> season and is the longest running local television series in the country. Among the “road show” plans for this anniversary year include Northeast Community College in Norfolk and the Nebraska State Fair in Grand Island. We are also collecting video stories from viewers and will highlight those on social media and potentially during broadcasts. We are hoping to get “testimonials” from multi-generational families who have shared the tradition of watching the show.

## 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
- Memorial Stadium Centennial XR Project
  - 3D modeling of the original Memorial Stadium for simulation or traditional media usage
  - Potential release: 2023
- Virtual Capitol upgrade
  - Evolving the Virtual Capitol experience from a virtual tour to a first-person explorer experience
  - Potential release: 2025

### 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
  - Updated content and design recently released
  - Currently in development on cross-platform accessibility features
  - Improved sound design slated for roll-out this summer
  - Headset versions of the initial experience slated for release this August
- George Washington Palmer Homestead Experience – a spatial media collaboration with Homestead National Historical Park to recreate an 1870s Nebraska homestead
  - Anticipated launch of web browser proof-of-concept experience in summer 2023

## Administrative

Chief Administrative Officer, Julie Thomsen presented the report:

- Compliance- Annual CPB Harassment Prevention Training, the required training to ensure Nebraska Public Media's Community Service Grant funding, is to be 100% complete by Sept. 30, 2022. The completion of staff and board members to date is 45%.
- Safety and Security – the final plans for the Nebraska Public Media lobby and first floor update have been received. Along with the UNL project manager, we are finalizing finish details with the contractors and work is expected to begin soon. See attached rendering. The project design is intended to increase the safety of staff while providing an inviting entry space to the public. Modifications to the existing lobby include a display case for Nebraska Public Media awards and glass doors with badge access to the studios and network operations.
- Student Opportunities – During the last year, Nebraska Public Media provided 22 UNL students with paid opportunities in departments across the organization that included:
  - News- working with reporters and producers on best practices and hands-on training in producing stories for multiple platforms, pitching story ideas and providing research assistance
  - Broadcast Production - assisting producers in video production, editing content, and supporting remote and studio productions
  - Labs – assisting lab staff with VR projects, software development and graphics
  - Radio - on-air and prep
  - Education - uploading and updating materials for the PBS Learning Media Library and updating educational materials to increase accessibility
  - Business Development- supporting business development staff prospecting, sales proposals and Salesforce database
  - Communications and Social Media – assisting with news releases, advertising, and events to build awareness for Nebraska Public Media programs and activities, creating ads for traditional, new and social media
  - Research - supporting research department with data collection and initial analysis
  - Human Resources- supporting recruitment efforts

## ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

Then next Commission meeting is August 25, 2022.

There being no further business, Meeting #472 was adjourned at 11:19 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark Leonard