

Minutes of Meeting #475

Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission
Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Center
1800 N 33rd St.
Lincoln, NE
August 24, 2023

Present: Commissioner Dorothy Anderson
Commissioner Nick Baxter (Chair)
Commissioner Darrin Good
Commissioner Marilyn Hadley
Commissioner Patricia Kircher
Commissioner Brian Maher
Commissioner Dan O'Neill
Commissioner Clay Smith
Commissioner Courtney Wittstruck

Absent: 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 #475 to order at 10:34 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 #474 as held on March 23, 2023. It was moved by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Good to approve the minutes from meeting #474. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Anderson, Baxter, Good, Hadley, Kircher, O'Neill, Smith, Wittstruck. Opposed: None. Abstain: Commissioner Maher

COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA

4th Quarter Budget Report

Chief Financial Officer, Randy Hansen, presented the 4th Quarter Budget Report. The 4th Quarter Budget report was moved by Commissioner Wittstruck and seconded by Commissioner Kircher to approve. The 4th quarter report was approved by acclamation. Opposed: None. The Finance Committee met prior to the full Commission meeting to review the report in greater detail.

FY2024 Operating Budget

Chief Financial Officer, Randy Hansen, presented the FY 2024 Operating Budget. The FY 2024 Operating Budget was moved by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Kircher. The FY 2024 Operating Budget was approved by acclamation. The Finance Committee met prior to the full Commission meeting to review the report in greater detail.

NET Commission Bylaw Revision, Addition of Treasurer and Duties

It is recommended that the Commission ratify the Bylaws to add Treasurer to the designation. It was moved by Commissioner Good and seconded by Commissioner Smith. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Anderson, Baxter, Good, Hadley, Kircher, Maher, O'Neill, Smith, Wittstruck. Opposed: None.

It is recommended that the Commission ratify the Bylaws to include the addition of Section 9. Duties of the Treasurer. It was moved by Commissioner Kircher and seconded by Commissioner Maher. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Anderson, Baxter, Good, Hadley, Kircher, Maher, O'Neill, Smith, Wittstruck. Opposed: None.

COMMISSION INFORMATION AGENDA

General Manager's Report

General Manager, Mark Leonard presented the report:

- New Commissioner Brian Maher joined. He is the new Commissioner of Education for the State of Nebraska.
- Kristen Hassebrook is the new designee of UNL President Ted Carter. She will be taking over for Heath Mello.
- UNL Budget issues and hiring freeze
 - Nebraska Public Media is in a constant state of recruitment and hiring. Working with the university system to clarify what the approval processes will be.
 - Finished equity study with The Wilson Group. 59 equity adjustments need to be made on both the State and University side. Total cost to implement the findings is \$350k. University funds will not be used to fund the adjustments.
 - On the State side the contract negotiations updated those staff members that needed equity adjustments.
 - Presented findings to EVC Ankerson and UNL HR. Would like to be able to announce and implement the salary equity adjustments in September.
- COO position has been posted and recruited for. A selected final candidate will be put forth to the University for approval.
- Federal funding
 - No update. Congress in recess. Budget process this fall is unpredictable.
- NPR: Alliance of Rural Public Media. Washington D.C. Panelist
 - In June, Mark was asked to be a panelist on a congressional hearing of the Rural Caucus. Co-chaired by Representative Adrien Smith. Was able to speak to the caucus regarding rural Nebraska and emergency alert systems, education and news coverage. Was well received.
 - During the same D.C. trip met with Senator Deb Fischer
- Nebraska Public Media is hosting the next OSBE meeting. This is the Organization of State Broadcasting Executives. Retreat will take place at Mahoney State Park in November.

- Capital Campaign is still in progress. Focusing on updating the Ron Hull studio and Television Remote truck. \$6 million dollar campaign and looking to raise between \$4-6 million.

Education Update

Chief Strategic Officer, Molly Delaney presented the report:

- Education staff finalized the process of assessing community assets and needs (using the CANA tool) in our selected Learning Neighborhood site, Fremont, NE. We met with partners including Nebraska Department of Education’s Community Learning Centers, Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Fremont Family Coalition (United Way), Fremont Chamber of Commerce, Keene Memorial Library, and Washington Elementary’s Dual Language Program. Our Learning Neighborhood proposal (phase II of the Ready To Learn grant was submitted in late May, 2023. If awarded the next phase of the project will begin October 1, 2023.
- Education was awarded a \$10,000 grant from PBS SoCal to support math literacy development for children ages 2-5 by sharing their *Family Math* program. *Family Math* is a bilingual program that focuses on supporting families, caregivers, and educators to build positive everyday experiences that support foundational math skills. These skills include number sense and counting, patterns, spatial sense, measurement, shapes, and sorting and collecting. Broadcast spots began running during our kids’ programming in early June. Education staff have partnered with Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, NSEA, and libraries across the state to begin sharing resources including math games, hands on activities, and an activity book. The grant runs through October 31, 2023, and will get at least 1,000 print materials into the hands of children, families, and educators.
- As part of the station’s participation in the NOVA Science and Society project, we partnered with the Midwest Theater for a screening and discussion of the *Weathering the Future* documentary on Monday, July 17. The film was followed by a panel discussion featuring Dr. Martha Durr, the Nebraska State Climatologist; Dr. Mitchell Stephenson, associate director of UNL’s Panhandle Research, Extension and Education Center; and local rancher and farmer Joe Burford. The event also screened Nebraska Public Media’s short film on pallid sturgeon, produced by Elizabeth Rembert and Kay Hall as part of the NOVA grant.
- On July 16, we guest hosted the Flyover Brewing Company’s regular trivia night, holding a special public media-themed event. Bill Kelly was the guest host, which featured general knowledge questions and a special round of Memorial Stadium trivia in honor of the upcoming film *In the Deed, the Glory*.

Engineering Report

Chief Technology Officer, Ling Ling Sun submitted the report:

- Nebraska Public Media successfully restored Satellite teleport to its standard operational state on June 14, 2023. It is now fully prepared to resume Nebraska Public Media up linking activities. The restoration was necessary after supporting PBS’s system wide satellite transition period between March 31, 2023 and May 31, 2023, which involved simultaneous dual up linking to two distinct satellites, AMC-21 and Galaxy-16.
- CPB announced on Monday, August 7, 2023 “that FEMA’s Next Generation Warning System (NGWS) competitive grant program is ready for applications. This grant program will enable public television and public radio stations to replace and upgrade infrastructure that enhances

critical alerting and warning capabilities in your communities.” The total amount of NGWS grant funds available is \$34 million for Fiscal Year 2023. In the coming weeks, CPB will host a series of informational webinars for prospective applicants, and training from FEMA will be available as well. We will be submitting an application for this grant.

- The National EAS Test for this year is set to take place on Wednesday, October 4, at 2:18 pm EDT. All EAS Participants are required to file in the FCC’s EAS Test Reporting System (ETRS) by the specific deadlines. Our plan includes submitting an amended ETRS no later than September 15, 2023. Additionally, file Form Two by October 5, and Form Three by November 20, 2023.
- Works are continuing on multiple projects, including Invitation to Bid and RFP for Media over managed IP routing systems, AI-based Closed Captioning for LB254, File transcoding upgrade in conjunction with the Ai-based Closed Captioning project, KXNE FM Transmission Line & Antenna replacement, KLNE and KRNE tower lighting replacement, EAS Codec upgrade. Crawford & Wauneta Shelters are in manufacturing stage. Shipping estimated to be in October.

Content-Television and Radio

Chief Content Officer, Nancy Finken presented the report:

- Our newest documentary, “In the Deed the Glory: Memorial Stadium 100” produced by Gavin Felix premiered in August and by early accounts, has been well-received. To mark the 100th anniversary of Memorial Stadium, we take viewers on a journey through the evolution of the stadium, from the original east and west stands to today’s landmark structure that meets the changing expectations of diehard fans. It’s a deep dive into the stadium’s engineering and architecture, while exploring forgotten history.
- In addition to our annual coverage of NSAA High School Sports Championships in basketball, soccer and speech in the spring, Nebraska Public Media ushered in the first NSAA Baseball Championships in May and will broadcast the first NSAA Softball Championships in October. NSAA and coaches worked to make the championships more conducive to television coverage and we are thrilled to showcase these new groups of student athletes.
- Wayne State College was the backdrop for a remote broadcast of “Friday Live” in April. Radio host and producer Genevieve Randall and team set up in the college’s Brandenburg Hall before a live audience featuring performances by the Wayne State College mariachi band Negro y Oro, the WSC Chamber Choir, WSC music department chair and pianist Angela Miller-Niles with singer Sarah Farr, and singer-songwriter Mark Brewer of the Ponca-based band Prodigal Sons. Interviews included Adam Goos from Little Red Hen Theatre in Wakefield, Andy Haslit of WSC’s Nordstrand Gallery, Carolyn Albracht of the Blue Cat Gallery and Marianne Reynolds of the John G. Neihardt Center.
- The NBA inducted Nebraska Public Media Senior Producer/Reporter Bill Kelly into its Hall of Fame.

Labs

Chief Innovation Officer, Chad Davis presented the report:

Projects Currently in R&D include:

- Untitled Environmental Game
 - Potential release: 2025

- **Untitled Civic Game**
 - Response to a Library of Congress call for Entries
 - Potential release: 2024

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
 - Spanish language version launched earlier this month
 - Phase II in development now for 2024 production kickoff
- **The American Homestead Experience** – a game focused on the homestead experience in America from the 1870s to the 1940s
 - Anticipated launch of web browser experience in summer 2024
- **Menominee Homecoming (w.t.)**
 - A general audience game that presents a Native American tribe in a modern light, while exploring traditions and culture
 - Designed for web browser and mobile app
 - This is a co-production with PBS Wisconsin
 - Potential release: 2025
- **Virtual Capitol upgrade**
 - Evolving the Virtual Capitol experience from a virtual tour to a first-person explorer experience
 - Potential release: 2025

Administrative

Chief Administrative Officer, Julie Thomsen presented the report:

- Nebraska Public Media entered into a contract with the Wilson Group last summer to conduct an equity study. The purpose of this study was to understand the external market for compensation and use the data gathered from published surveys to develop a salary structure that reflects the market where Nebraska Public Media competes for talent. The completion of this study will help Nebraska Public Media Leadership effectively manage employee compensation and enhance employee pay satisfaction. The work began last fall with Nebraska Public Media Human Resources supplying data of both our State and University staff positions to the Wilson Group to begin the study. The equity study results show that 17% or 27 employees are below the minimum wage range and 44% or 70 employees are in the lower range. Meetings have been held with University of Nebraska Human Resources and the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs sharing results to request support of adjustments. The request for adjustments included bringing staff below the minimum and in the lower range up to an appropriate wage based upon performance and experience.
- An All Staff meeting was held on August 4th to present the 3rd annual Alexander W. Epperson Kindness Award. The \$1000 award is funded by Randy and Brenda Epperson, Alex’s parents. Alex began working at Nebraska Public Media in 2009 as a student with Vision Maker Media, advancing as an Associate Producer in Labs. Jill Carvalho was selected by the Epperson family as this year’s recipient. Jill is a Customer Service Representative and has been with Nebraska Public Media since 2001. Retirees since March 2020 were also invited back to join staff for this presentation and be recognized since we were unable to do that during COVID.

- The first floor renovation is nearly complete. As you recall, the first floor was being updated to increase the safety and security of our staff and facilities. Double glass doors with badge access and glass around the reception area are complete. Lobby furniture and the panels for the lower portions of the walls are due to arrive and or be installed near the end of this month. Updates to the remaining floors are being planned for in the future as a part of the strategic plan. Those plans will include paint, carpet and décor representing the work of Nebraska Public Media, PBS and NPR.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

Then next Commission meeting is December 7, 2023.

There being no further business, Meeting #475 was adjourned at 11:59 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