

Minutes of Meeting #477

Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission
Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Center
1800 N 33rd St.
Lincoln, NE
March 28, 2024

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 Paul Turman
Commissioner Courtney Wittstruck

Absent: Commissioner Kristen Hassebrook
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 Nick Baxter called the meeting #477 to order at 10:33 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 #476 as held on December 7, 2023. It was moved by Commissioner Maher and seconded by Commissioner Turman to approve the minutes from meeting #476. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Anderson, Baxter, Good, Hadley, Kircher, Maher, O'Neill, Turman, Wittstruck. Opposed: None.

COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA

- **Action Item #1** – 2nd Quarter Budget Report- Chief Financial Officer, Randy Hansen presented the 2nd Quarter Budget Report. The 2nd Quarter Budget report was moved by Commissioner O’Neill and seconded by Commissioner Good to approve. Voting aye: Commissioner Anderson, Baxter, Good, Hadley, Kircher, Maher, O’Neill, Turman, Wittstruck. Opposed: None. The Finance Committee met prior to the full Commission meeting to review the report in greater detail.
- **Action Item #2** – Election, NETC Officers- Chair Nick Baxter presented the nominations. Commissioner Hadley moved to accept and seconded by Commissioner Kircher. It is recommended that the Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission approve the slate of officers as: Chair: Paul Turman. Vice Chair: Dan O’Neill. Secretary/Assistant Treasurer: Mark Leonard. Treasurer and Assistant Secretary: Randy Hansen, through March 2026. Voting aye: Commissioner Anderson, Baxter, Good, Hadley, Kircher, Maher, O’Neill, Turman, Wittstruck. Opposed: None.
- **Action Item 3#** – Election, NETC Executive Committee- Chair Nick Baxter presented the nominations. Commissioner Good moved to accept and seconded by Commissioner Turman. It is recommended the following to serve on Executive Committee: Commissioners Nick Baxter, Patty Kircher, Dan O’Neill, Paul Turman, Clay Smith, through March 2026. Voting aye: Commissioner Anderson, Baxter, Good, Hadley, Kircher, Maher, O’Neill, Turman, Wittstruck. Opposed: None.
- **Action Item 4#** – Election, NETC Finance Committee- Chair Nick Baxter presented the nominations. Commissioner Hadley moved to accept and seconded by Commissioner Wittstruck. It is recommended the following to serve on Finance Committee: Commissioners Dorothy Anderson, Nick Baxter, Dan O’Neill, Paul Turman, Clay Smith., through March 2026. Voting aye: Commissioner Anderson, Baxter, Good, Hadley, Kircher, Maher, O’Neill, Turman, Wittstruck. Opposed: None.

COMMISSION INFORMATION AGENDA

General Manager’s Report

General Manager, Mark Leonard presented the report:

- Congress has passed and signed the budget section related to public media. \$535 million, \$60 million in interconnect, \$31 million Ready to Learn, \$40 million FEMA NEXT GEN warning system.
- APTS Summit at Capitol Hill took place February 26-28, 2024. Met with Senator’s Fischer and Ricketts. The House was not in session. Met with staffers from Congressman Bacon, Smith and Flood. The main pitch is the importance of funding for public media. GM Mark Leonard, COO Peter Clowney, Chief Strategy Officer Molly Delaney, Commissioner Dorothy Anderson and Foundation Direct Hannah Connealy made the trip to Washington, D.C. for the Summit.
- Facebook focus group being marketed to Nebraska Public Media consumers. The National Severe Storm Weather Center is looking to put together a focus group to gather information for

more effective emergency alerting around national disasters. Will be conducting the meeting in the studio.

- Communication Department put together a document that explains some of the softer value that Nebraska Public Media brings to our University relationship. With turnover in administration at the University it is important to tell the full story that might not be apparent in all of the University documents or in our traditional communications and guides. Underscores UNL student impact with internships and reinforces the value that the University and Nebraska Public Media brings to the citizens of the state.
- PBS has proposed a 4% increase in dues.
- Studio renovation is ongoing. At a stall point right now. Supply chain and purchasing issues have paused. The first stage installation of the mechanical, rigging, and electrical is complete. Next piece is the lighting fixtures and equipment that will populate the studio.
- Remote truck project has been pushed back to end of summer 2025. Purchasing issues have pushed the project back one year.
- Continuing to do due diligence with digital newspaper The Reader and El Perico. Nebraska Public Media is pursuing receiving both as a gift from publication founder John Heaston. Both publications went dark last month. Hoping to have more information soon.

Education Update

Chief Strategic Officer, Molly Delaney presented the report:

- Education staff finalized the RTL Statewide grant proposal (an extension of earlier grant funding offered to CPB by USDOE) and submitted it in mid-November. In early March, we received notice from CPB that we were awarded the grant! This proposal will extend our work in Fremont across the state to provide family engagement opportunities bridging the school to home connection and professional development to help strengthen the quality of the early childhood workforce. We will work with additional statewide partners, including the Early Learning Child Connect Coordinators serving all regions of the state. The statewide RTL extension will begin on April 1, 2024.
- The Family Engagement Initiative is an opportunity for Nebraska Public Media to serve as a statewide partner with multiple agencies to support early learning. We curate early learning resources from Ready to Learn, PBS KIDS, and some locally by created Nebraska Public Media for children ages 2-8 thematically with timely learning goals for each event. After receiving facilitator training with us, partners host the event for children, families, and caregivers to learn together through play. Resources are bilingual in English and Spanish; partners are able to host the event in the language that best serves their community. Events are planned to be 1.5-2 hours in length. We provide pre-event facilitator training, electronic resources including activity instructions, activity files for printing, anchor media, links to videos, games, etc. All kits come with a pre-made PowerPoint to serve as a guide for event facilitators including a script if needed for additional support. Nebraska Public Media follows up after each event to learn and grow along with partners to continue to improve this program. To date 23 events have been hosted by partners across 18 separate communities serving more than 700 attendees.
- Planning for On the Road is in full swing. We will be working with partners in Grand Island, Lexington, Hastings, and Kearney to provide bilingual (Spanish/English) family engagement events that include a photo opportunity with Alma from *Alma's Way*. Learning goals include

demonstrating how art can be integrated into early learning around civics, informational texts (like maps), and STEM. These events will take place from June 6-11th.

- We are working in partnership with Film Streams to bring a free screening of *The Magic of Murals* to the Ruth Sokolof Theater on Monday, April 15 at 6 p.m. The film will be followed by a discussion on the importance of public art in building communities. Confirmed panelists at this time include Sarah Rowe, the artist behind the *Starseeds* mural featured in the documentary, and Lauren Martin, co-director of Omaha's Amplify Arts.
- We submitted a proposal for a community engagement grant of up to \$15,000 from WETA to create programming connected to the November 2024 premiere of Ken Burns's *Leonardo da Vinci*. Our proposal is to present two events that explore the connections between art and science. A November 2024 event in Omaha will explore the relationship between art and new technologies, particularly AI. The second event will be created in partnership with the Museum of Nebraska Art (MONA) in Kearney and be held in December 2024 or January 2025. We will curate a hands-on event where people can engage in conversation and activities with experts in disciplines that reflect the diversity of da Vinci's interests. An alternate event will be planned in Lincoln in partnership with Labs and UNL's Carson Center for Emerging Media Arts if MONA is not able to partner on an event due to their renovation and reopening timeline.
- Capital Campaign is live. New website address: nebraskapublicmedia.org/imagine. The title of the Campaign is Imagine the Possibilities. There is a 3 minute video on the new site. Doc and Inez Boyd kicked off the campaign with their lead gift of \$1 million from their estate. Raised \$1.8 million. The Foundation contributed an additional \$2 million. Currently applying for numerous grants. Studio premiere and 70th anniversary of Nebraska Public Media will take place in November 2024 with an open house.

Engineering Report

Chief Technology Officer, Ling Ling Sun submitted the report:

- 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. Submitted grant in November 2023.
- The FCC implemented new EAS regulations in November 2022, stipulating that all EAS Participants must transmit EAS messages in an IP-based format, wherever feasible, from December 12, 2023 onwards. Moreover, the current technical terminology employed for the national alert originator code, national test code, and national emergency code must be replaced with plain language versions. To comply with these updated regulations and FCC rulemaking on EAS cybersecurity, our SAGE ENDEC devices will necessitate a firmware update, and we are presently collaborating with the manufacturer to ensure the update is executed before the deadline.
- Completed KQNE antenna installation on March 9, 2024. Next steps include coordinating schedules for antenna tuning, surveyor, and tower crew for station cutover.

- A revised Invitation to Bid for Media over managed IP routing systems was submitted to the State Purchasing on Feb. 20, 2024, adjusting the project timeline to account for a one-year delay in purchasing the new Production Trailer.
- Microsoft Office 365 licensing - On August 1, 2024, Microsoft will retire their Office 365 A1 Plus program, a free Office subscription currently used by NPM under the university contract. NPM ITS has identified Microsoft 365 A5 as the required license for upgrade and is currently exploring options with the university and third-party license providers for the license change.

Content-Television and Radio

Chief Content Officer, Nancy Finken presented the report:

- A new partnership with the Omaha Symphony and support from Nebraska Public Media donors has enabled us to add the symphony to our television schedule. The Omaha Symphony with guest pianist Emanuel Ax premiered in January. In March, we broadcast the symphony's performance of a work they commissioned in honor of artist Jun Kaneko composed by Andy Akiho.
- The radio stars aligned March 8 for a very special broadcast of *Friday Live* featuring performances by 17-Grammy award winner, banjo virtuoso Bela Fleck who was in Lincoln to perform with Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra. Also performing on Friday Live were area Irish band "General Guinness and the Stout Boys/Paddywhack," and poet Twyla Hansen. Our creative production team made the Nebraska Public Media lobby the site for this special event as our radio studio isn't large enough and our television space is under renovation. The energetic and uplifting show made for a perfect entry into the weekend and a pre-St. Patrick's Day celebration of Nebraska arts and culture.
- Hats off to numerous producers who have had audio pieces picked up by **NPR** recently. It's not easy. It's not a given that Nebraska stories go national. It starts with a pitch and then an editor gets interested in it and then convinces a show that this story should be on *Morning Edition* or *All Things Considered* or some other NPR property. Then the reporter goes through edits and sometimes gathers new/additional sound, script revisions, etc.
- *NSAA Championships* in wrestling, swimming and diving, bowling, girls and boys basketball kept our producers and crew very busy this quarter. Kudos to Donna Devine and to former station staffers Ralph Hammack and Dan Smith who were given NSAA service awards for their decades of work in support of our broadcasts of high school championships! The fun continues with NSAA speech, soccer, and baseball along with Omaha SuperNovas volleyball March 30 and various Nebraska and Creighton baseball and softball games on the schedule. We are thrilled to have the rights to broadcast Nebraska Volleyball's spring match against Denver in Kearney on May 4.
- The studio renovation is coming along nicely though the timeline for completion is shifting and will likely be mid-June. Supply chain timelines, procurement processes, etc., simply take more time than we had hoped. Our producers and our partners at IANR are adapting and will plan to do *Backyard Farmer* from a temporary location in the corner of the studio when the new season begins in April.

Labs

Chief Innovation Officer, Chad Davis presented the report:

Projects Currently in R&D include:

- Untitled Environmental-Themed Game
 - Potential release: 2025

Projects in Production include:

- Civics Scribble (w.t.)
 - Currently undergoing level development and design
 - Anticipated release: August 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
 - Anticipated release: May 2025
- 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 winter 2026
- Virtual Capitol upgrade
 - Evolving the Virtual Capitol experience from a virtual tour to a first-person explorer experience
 - Potential release: 2025
- 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
 - Phase II in development now for 2024 production kickoff for 2026 release
 - Apple Vision Pro adaptation currently under evaluation

Administrative

Chief Administrative Officer, Julie Thomsen presented the report:

- Nebraska Public Media purchased AEDs for each floor in the building. Previously, there were AEDs located on the first and second floors, and the remote truck. Those were replaced and AEDs were added to the lower level, third floor, and fourth floor. In addition to the new AED's, staff have an opportunity to voluntarily participate onsite in First Aid/CPR and AED training facilitated by the Red Cross.
- An All Staff meeting was held on March 19th. The annual A. James Ebel employee of the year award was presented to Gavin Felix- Director of Television Production. This award recognizes an employee who has accomplished an outstanding level of work performance and contributed further to the high standards and mission of Nebraska Public Media. Jennifer Dunlap from DRI Waterstone also spoke with staff about the GM & CEO search.

- Nebraska Public Media continues our long-standing support for paid student opportunities. Currently, there are twenty-seven students from the University of Nebraska Lincoln from the following colleges and departments: Journalism and Mass Communications, Education and Human Sciences, Fine and Performing Arts, Business and Arts and Sciences. These students are experiencing and supporting work across the organization in the following departments: Media Archive, Broadcast and Television Production, News, Labs, Communications, Community Engagement, Education and Accounting.
- Annual EEO Reports were completed and filed with the FCC prior to the February 1st deadline. Those reports are located on the Nebraska Public Media website- [Financials/Public File | Nebraska Public Media](#)
- Nebraska Public Media Human Resources participated in virtual career fairs sponsored by the Nebraska Broadcasters Association - Jan. 8- 16, and Current – March 19. We participated in and supported the Nebraska Broadcasters Association Foundation Scholarship program. This included a financial donation to the program, promoting the availability of the scholarship and involvement in the selection process of the winner of the scholarship. Participation was also continued in supporting the Nebraska Chapter of FBLA judging entries for the PSA (Public Service Announcement).

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

The next Commission meeting is June 27, 2024.

There being no further business, Meeting #477 was adjourned at 11:36 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