

## Minutes of Meeting #467

### Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Center

1800 N 33<sup>rd</sup> St.

Lincoln, NE

March 25, 2021

Present: Commissioner Greg Adams  
Commissioner Dorothy Anderson  
Commissioner Nick Baxter  
Commissioner Matt Blomstedt  
Commissioner Marilyn Hadley(Chair)  
Commissioner Patricia Kircher  
Commissioner Heath Mello  
Commissioner Clay Smith  
Commissioner Paul Turman

Absent: Commissioner Jacque Carter(Retired)  
Commissioner Lisa May

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 NET websites. The meeting was held by remote electronic means as provided for in Governor Ricketts' Executive Order No. 21- 02 which is attached to these minutes.

Chair Marilyn Hadley called the meeting #467 to order at 10:02 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 #466 as held on August 27, 2020. It was moved by Commissioner Baxter and seconded by Commissioner Turman to approve the minutes from meeting #466. Voting aye: Commissioner Adams, Anderson, Baxter, Blomstedt, Hadley, Kircher, Smith, Turman. Opposed: None. Did not vote: Commissioner Mello.

### **COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA**

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Budget Report

Chief Financial Officer, Randy Hansen presented the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Budget Report. It was moved by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Baxter to approve the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Budget report ending December 31, 2020. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Adams,

Anderson, Baxter, Blomstedt, Hadley, Kircher, Smith, 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.

#### BKD Audit Report ending June 30, 2020

AGM-Administration and Finance Randy Hansen presented the BKD audit report ending June 30, 2020. It was moved by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Baxter to approve the BKD Audit report ending June 30, 2020. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Adams, Anderson, Baxter, Blomstedt, Hadley, Kircher, Smith, 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 – Marilyn Hadley. Vice Chair – Nick Baxter. Finance Committee – Nick Baxter, Patricia Kircher, Marilyn Hadley, Lisa May. Executive Committee – Nick Baxter, Matt Blomstedt, Patricia Kircher, Marilyn Hadley, Paul Turman. Mark Leonard as secretary. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Adams, Anderson, Baxter, Blomstedt, Hadley, Kircher, Smith, Turman. Opposed: None. Did not vote: Commissioner Mello.

## **COMMISSION INFORMATION AGENDA**

### Swanson Russell Presentation

Katie Sands and Charlie Stephan gave a presentation during the Commission meeting regarding the new NET Brand and Website. Will launch May 15/16, 2021.

### General Manager's Report

General Manager Mark Leonard presented the report:

- The new branding process started about 2 years ago. PBS changed its branding and NET went through a process to co-brand with them. The Nebraska Public Media name will brand us as a full multi-platform media entity.
- The NET Foundation for Television and the NET Foundation for Radio are merging in to one NET Foundation. Expect that transition to be completed by the new fiscal year on July 1, 2021.
- The Public Media Summit took place in February. Was held virtually and hosted by APTS. Met with all of the NE elected representatives virtually. The appropriation ask was for \$560 million dollars. First increase in 10 years.
- In the American Rescue Act there is \$175 million dollars that has been allocated for public media. CPB will assemble a panel to determine the right way to distribute the funds. In the first Cares Act, NET received \$512,000. Once NET knows how much funding it will receive from the American Rescue Act NET will keep the Commission updated.
- State funding at this point is relatively secure. Most of the operating request made it through the budget. Capital requests will be fully funded.
- Federal funding is still unknown.

- Covid-19 planning update. Following both the University and the state recommendations. Have de-densified the building. Will continue to monitor the situation and will continue to be cautious.

### NET Education Update

Chief Strategy Officer, Debbie Hamlett presented the report:

- A cross-departmental team has been working diligently on our new brand and website. Our first meeting with our agency Swanson Russell was on August 14, 2020. The public launch will be May 15/16, 2021.
- Well Beings Mental health panel discussions with video stories of young adults mental health journeys. You Are Not Alone and Mental health in communities of color. Both events had attendance of 3,000+ through Facebook, YouTube and our website.
- Indie Lens Pop Up Films and panel discussions. 9 to 5: the story of a movement = 132 attendees. Mr. Soul! = 126 attendees.
- **The Black Church** –supported by a grant from WETA. Clips of the program and discussion of Omaha’s Black churches. Attendance = 119
- Participation in **NOVA Science short video** project with content producers. How to produce video for social channels. Supported by a grant from CPB.
- **Sesame Street in Communities online workshops** for early childhood providers. Reading, Writing and Resilience with partner UNL Extension service. Week of April 11<sup>th</sup>.
- NETA’s 52nd annual Public Media Awards. (National Educational Telecommunications Association)
  - Overall Excellence in Marketing and Communications and Sesame Street 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary” family event in O’Neill, Nebraska.
- MarCom Awards is an international creative competition that recognizes outstanding achievement by marketing and communication professionals. MarCom Awards are administered and judged by the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals. The Platinum Award is presented to those entries judged to be among the most outstanding entries in the competition, recognized for their excellence in quality, creativity, and resourcefulness. The Gold Award is presented to those exceeding the high standards of the industry norm.
  - Digital Media | Social Media (PLATINUM) Special Event: *Prehistoric Road Trip Virtual Screening*
  - Print Media | Annual Report (PLATINUM)
  - Strategic Communications | Communications/Public Relations (GOLD) Social Media Campaign *Speaking of Nebraska: COVID-19 Town Hall Series on Facebook LIVE*

### NET Engineering Report

Chief Technology Officer, Ling Ling Sun presented the report:

- DDMS monitoring & control are being successfully migrated from MaxView to Mosaic, the new NET Network Management Control System (NMCS).

- New GPS clock is on order. This is to replace existing failed GPS clock for NET NOC. New update - The new GPS-based Master Sync/Clock generator has been successfully installed in January, 2021.
- Work is in progress providing NET signals to DISH in Denver. This is to support Designated Market Area change in western Nebraska.
- Work is in progress to replace Network Switches reside in NET/OCIO signal distribution area. The switches are critical components of the NET statewide signal distribution system.
- Prep work is ongoing for replacing NET PBX phone systems.
  - New update: Allo phone system was selected as a replacement to the PBX phone system. New phone system has been installed with a planned cutover date of March 19, 2021.
- Invitation to Bid (ITB) is in the works for KRNE FM antenna replacement.
  - New update: Tower study was conducted and tower remediation proposal was received on March 2, 2021. Purchase order has been issued for the tower remediation. ITB for the antenna replacement was posted on March 10, 2021.
- FCC announced lifting TV Freezes on November 27, 2020:
  - Engineering is researching the possibility of moving NET VHF channels to the UHF spectrum. New update: NET is preparing to file a petition for rule making substitute KUON-TV existing VHF channel 12 with an available UHF channel, in the DTV Table of Allotments.

### NET Content-Television and Radio

Chief Content Officer, Nancy Finken presented the report:

- It has been a busy winter for NET with live coverage of **NSAA High School Championships** in volleyball, wrestling, swimming and diving and basketball. NET Sports worked with the NSAA to redesign the wrestling and swimming events to ensure safety for athletes and event staff.
- NET secured rights to broadcast five **UNL Women's Volleyball** matches this season, but due to Covid concerns by the visiting teams, the first two matches were postponed. NET broadcast a match on February 5 and will have live coverage on March 12 and March 20 as well.
- In February, **Big Red Wrap-up** introduced the Husker football recruiting class.
- Our television and radio production services staff, producers, and announcers continue to use best practices in safely carrying out their work.
- January marked the start of new seasons for three series on television: **Nebraska Stories; What If...;** and **Speaking of Nebraska** (also airs on radio).
- Governor Ricketts' Corona virus-related news conferences continue to be carried on radio and online (with Spanish captions) to ensure Nebraskans have the latest information about the pandemic, vaccines, etc...
- **All Creatures Great and Small** has been a PBS audience pleaser this winter on Sundays (and via Passport). Our hope is that PBS will be successful securing a second season for this lighthearted drama.
- The **PBS NewsHour** continues to provide special coverage, in addition to the nightly newscasts. In this reporting period, special coverage has included the riot in Washington D.C. and the impeachment proceedings.

- In February, NET Radio changed its overnight classical music service from KVNO to C24, a highly regarded reliable overnight service originating in Minnesota. Coinciding with this change, **Morning Edition** now begins one hour earlier each weekday at 4am CT.

### NET Emerging Media

Chief Innovation Officer, Chad Davis presented the report:

#### Projects Currently in R&D include:

- Trade (w.t.) – a history podcast series that explores how trade is a fundamentally human activity, as vital to our species as language
- George Washington Palmer Homestead Experience – a potential spatial media collaboration with Homestead National Historical Park to recreate an 1870s Nebraska homestead
  - We are researching the potential for a game layer to be built on top of the core experience

#### Projects in Production include:

- PlainStory Podcast (Season 2 post-script episodes) – two additional episodes profiling the Karen and Vietnamese communities in Lincoln
- PlainStory Podcast (Season 3): Center of Gravity – podcast series looking at the rise of skating subculture in Nebraska and exploring the ways that subculture has enhanced and enriched Nebraska’s mainstream culture
- Paleo Sleuths Profiles – additional profile videos for our Paleo Sleuths website, that focus on female paleontologists
- Morrill Hall: The 5<sup>th</sup> Floor – collaboration with the state museum to launch virtual exhibits that can be viewed via the web as first-person explorer experiences or via VR headsets
  - One virtual exhibit at launch (June) and another ready by October
  - A corresponding virtual tour of the entire museum will be created
- NET Corporate Website and Corporate App redesign

### NET Administrative

Chief Administrative Officer, Julie Thomsen presented the report:

- A Holiday Cheer All Staff Zoom gathering was held on December 22, 2020. Since we were not able to gather in person, we asked staff to join this Zoom to hear and share some feel good stories from 2020. Another All Staff Meeting was held via Zoom on March 5<sup>th</sup> to share the new brand with staff. Swanson Russell led the conversation with NET leaders taking questions.
- As a part of our membership with The Public Media Village, NET attended the AAJA (African American Journalists Association) virtual networking event on March 18, 2021. NET News producers Melissa Rosales and Bill Kelly and myself hosted breakout sessions answering questions about Public Media and NET opportunities.
- Randy, Brenda and Andrew Epperson, parents and brother of NET employee Alex Epperson, who passed away last November, have graciously committed to funding an annual employee award in Alex’s honor. The Alexander W. Epperson Memorial Kindness Award will be shared with NET staff by Alex’s family and begin with a 2021 award.

- On January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021, NET EEO Annual Reports were completed and filed with the FCC. These reports are due annually by February 1. NET received a random FCC audit letter for KPNE and filed the formal response letter with the FCC on March 4, 2021.
- NET efforts to provide a safe working environment for staff continue. Touchless water dispensers were installed in several areas of the building. NET also required all staff working onsite to participate in the UNL saliva based testing. All NET Staff were able to register through UNL for the COVID vaccine. Staff began receiving vaccines the first week in March. NET HR staff continue to attend local and national webinars to gather information to prepare for a safe return to work when that time is determined.

### **ADDITIONAL BUSINESS**

Then next Commission meeting is June 24, 2021.

There being no further business, Meeting #467 was adjourned at 11:40 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