

Minutes of Meeting #468

**Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission
Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Center
1800 N 33rd St.
Lincoln, NE
June 24, 2021**

Present: Commissioner Greg Adams
Commissioner Dorothy Anderson
Commissioner Nick Baxter
Commissioner Marilyn Hadley(Chair)
Commissioner Lisa May
Commissioner Heath Mello
Commissioner Paul Turman

Absent: Commissioner Jacque Carter(Retired)
Commissioner Matt Blomstedt
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 #468 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 #467 as held on March 25, 2021. It was moved by Commissioner Baxter and seconded by Commissioner Turman to approve the minutes from meeting #467. Voting aye: Commissioner Adams, Anderson, Baxter, Hadley, May, Mello, Turman. Opposed: None.

COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA

3rd Quarter Budget Report

Chief Financial Officer, Randy Hansen presented the 3rd Quarter Budget Report. It was moved by Commissioner Baxter and seconded by Commissioner May to approve the 3rd Quarter Budget report ending March 31, 2021. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Adams, Anderson,

Baxter, Hadley, May, Mello, Turman. Opposed: None. The Finance Committee met prior to the full Commission meeting to review the report in greater detail.

FY2022 Operating Budget

Chief Financial Officer, Randy Hansen presented the FY 2022 Operating Budget. It was moved by Commissioner Baxter and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the FY 2022 Operating Budget. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Adams, Anderson, Baxter, Hadley, May, Mello, Turman. Opposed: None. 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:

- Project highlights
 - Selecting and installing a new company wide phone system with greatly enhanced features
 - Setting an all-time high membership contributions and total number of members (over 30,000)
 - Design and implementation of a new Nebraska Public Media website
 - Design and execution of a new branding for what was NET
 - Research on ways to best take advantage of the FCC's recent opening of applications for new FM frequencies
 - Research regarding TV channel changes to enhance our coverage area with ATSC 3.0
 - Securing increased federal funding for public media as well as continued full funding from the State
 - Continued upgrading and replacement of transmission infrastructure and lighting across the state
- Staff will start migrating back into the building in a phased approach with the expectation of being fully onsite August 16, 2021.
- The University has just announced they will be rolling out a vaccine registry where students, faculty and staff can register whether they have been fully vaccinated. Mandatory weekly testing will return for any staff or students that have not confirmed their vaccination in the Registry.
- Over the past year our accounting department has been working on implementing a single combined Foundation instead of separate Foundations for TV and Radio. This has required significant legal review, consultation with our auditors as well as receiving the blessing of CPB. This will be effective July 1.
- I believe that Nebraska Public Media not only survived the pandemic, it thrived. I always knew our employees enjoy a challenge, but to look back on what has been accomplished, it is remarkable. As an example, we had reduced our revenue projections for sports production as we anticipated a large reduction in coverage from Big 10 Network. Instead of less, we produced more remotes for Big Ten this past year than the 2 previous years combined! Then our crews finished the season by fielding one full crew and remote truck covering the Shrine Bowl in

Kearney while simultaneously providing remote coverage of the Olympic swimming trials in Omaha for NBC (again with our crew and large remote truck).

- Our finances are strong, our content pipeline is full, we have several large grant applications pending in content and education, and we are finally able to begin adaptation to a world with less Zoom meetings. Among other plans for the coming year is a renovation of the front walk and entryway to bring it up to full ADA compliance, and a renovation of the front lobby to enhance security and freshen our first impression with visitors. A space for Nebraska Public Media Awards and Trophies will be integrated into the lobby redesign.

NET Education Update

Chief Strategy Officer, Debbie Hamlett presented the report:

- **Well Beings: Mental health in the Classroom**
Our fourth panel discussion with video stories from young adults and educators. June 17 at 4:30CT.
Panelists include:
 - Sheri Dawson, Director of Behavioral Health, Nebraska DHHS
 - Dana Tewahade, Mental Health Practitioner, Chadron Public Schools
 - Jamie Mapp, School Psychologist with ESU 5, Southeast Nebraska
- We're participating in **NOVA Science short video** project with content producers. How to produce video for social channels. Supported by a grant from CPB. Nebraska is one of three locations being considered for a public conversation around the topic of Cannabis. If chosen, the NOVA team will do a site visit – the event will be outside in Lincoln.

TOPICS FOR THE PANEL DISCUSSION

Excerpts from the film interspersed with panel discussion.

- Physiological/health aspects of cannabis / brain science
- Agriculture and industrial hemp
- Racial disparities in marijuana prosecution
- Pending legalization of medical marijuana in Nebraska policy discussion
- The **Spanish translation of the entire NebraskaStudies.org** web portal is in the field being tested by teachers. The site will launch in September 2021.
- Three **new 360 degree tours** will be produced for educational purposes, located on both NebraskaStudies.org and the Learning Media Library (national) 1. Ashfall 2. Ft. Kearny 3. Buffalo Bill's Scout Ranch
- Finishing the educational resources tied to the documentary "Beyond the Baton" which include musicians from the Omaha Symphony.

NET Engineering Report

Chief Technology Officer, Ling Ling Sun presented the report:

- Work is in progress providing NET signals to DISH in Denver. This is to support Designated Market Area change in western Nebraska. Update: Establishing fiber feed, SDI signal path exceeds SDI maximum specification distance.

- 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. Update: Phase one of the project was completed on June 8, 2021.
- Radio Remote Broadcast – A Grant awarded to News. Phase 1 equipment orders placed.
- 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. Update: Cutover was completed on March 19, 2021. Works continue on debug and remaining issues. Omaha office phone switch over is planned for August, 2021.
- NET Network Monitoring and Control System (NMCS)
 - NMCS has entered its 2nd implementation phase. Work has started in ITS, Production, Master Control functional areas. Progress continues on Facilities.
 - MNC webinar “Behind the Scenes at NET: Total Monitoring and Control of Broadcast Systems and Beyond” was held on May 20, 2021.
- UNL NEXTT Grant Application
 - NET is a partner of UNL for National Science Foundation Grant application for Mid-Scale Research proposal, grants to research 5G advanced wireless technologies. NET has proposed to use the KUON-TV tower near Ithaca and the KHNE-TV tower near Giltner for 5G broadcast research. Mid-Scale Research proposal was submitted on April 23, 2021.

NET Content-Television and Radio

Chief Content Officer, Nancy Finken presented the report:

- NSAA High School Championships returned this spring with basketball in March and soccer in May. In June, we broadcast the 63rd annual Nebraska Shrine Bowl live from Kearney. Our sports department and production services crew have continued to do excellent work throughout the pandemic. They have worked harder than ever to maintain viewer services and to do so in ways that have kept our staff safe. On radio, we are testing a system that will lead to off-site hosting of newscasts and news magazines. While we prefer to have staff in the studio, the pandemic has forced us to expand our remote working capabilities which we can employ for non-pandemic reasons when we need fill-ins for vacations and unplanned absences. We received a grant to obtain equipment to test doing off-site newscasts and show hosting and hope to have this implemented this summer.
- Vaccine hesitancy was the focus of a special edition of Speaking of Nebraska, recorded on location at Lincoln High School in late April and broadcast on all platforms in May.
- In April, we premiered a new local documentary on television and radio, Ernie Chambers: Through the Years. Ernie Chambers has been challenging, inspiring and sometimes outraging Nebraskans for more than a half-century. He spent several hours talking with legislative reporter Fred Knapp looking back at his life and career. First elected to the Legislature in 1970 by his North Omaha constituents, and forced out for the second time this year by term limits, Chambers is the longest serving legislator in Nebraska history.
- NPR is 50! From NPR’s website on May 3, 2021:

- On the same day, in 1971, we started holding up our microphone to America. Just outside our doors, on the streets of Washington, DC, one of the biggest antiwar protests in American history was taking place. NPR's story is that of a ragtag network — born in the era of the Vietnam War and Watergate — one that came of age during the explosion of the 24/7 news cycle.
- Long-time television production manager, executive producer Joe Turco is retiring. His more than 40-year career with the station leaves a proud and important legacy of content, leadership, and mentorship. Joe is a multi-award winner, a journalist, executive producer, and sports broadcaster who has dedicated his career to serving public media. He will receive an award from the Nebraska Coaches Association this summer and we paid tribute to Joe during his last sports broadcast this spring.

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

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
 - Slated for release in September 2021
- Paleo Sleuths Profiles – additional profile videos for our Paleo Sleuths website, that focus on female paleontologists
 - Three short videos releasing between June 2021 and February 2022
- Morrill Hall: The 5th 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 available for private beta (June) and another ready by October public launch
 - A corresponding virtual tour of the entire museum will be created during the summer of 2021
- George Washington Palmer Homestead Experience – a potential spatial media collaboration with Homestead National Historical Park to recreate an 1870s Nebraska homestead
 - Anticipated launch of v1 in June of 2022

NET Administrative

Chief Administrative Officer, Julie Thomsen presented the report:

- All Staff- an All Staff Zoom meeting was held on April 8th. The meeting started with the introduction of former employee Alex Epperson’s family. They provided staff with the specifics

of the annual Alexander W. Epperson Memorial Kindness Award they are funding in his honor. A 4th Quarterly Employee Excellence Award was presented to Videographer Editor Justin Cheney for his problem solving during the pandemic getting four new episodes of “What If” ready to air. The annual A James Ebel Employee of the Year award was presented to News Director Dennis Kellogg for his tireless work during the pandemic to ensure audiences, on radio, television and online, received life and safety information necessary during the pandemic.

- Transitioning to onsite work- The University and State’s direction received in late May for a full return to onsite work. Currently 60% of staff have returned and the remaining staff is in process of transitioning to full time onsite work. A UNL EAP facilitator was invited to present a session on Stress – Resilience on May 24th to provide staff with strategies related to learning resilient traits, reducing anxiety, practicing positive thinking, and gratitude. Leaders also requested staff feedback to help prepare for the return. An updated Business Continuity Plan was submitted to the University that included information on the return. Communication of the plan began with the Leadership Team in late May, Sr. Managers on June 9, and All Staff on June 21.
- CPB Compliance Training – the annual Harassment and Bias Prevention Training ensuring compliance for our FY 2022 CSG Certification will be provided again by CPB through EVERFI. The training covers three important topics: what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable workplace behavior; how to recognize harassment and bias when it occurs; and how to report and respond to violations. All employees, officers/board members, and interns will be required to complete Harassment and Bias Prevention Training by September 30, 2021. Initial communications were sent by CPB on May 17, 2021.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

Then next Commission meeting is August 26, 2021.

There being no further business, Meeting #468 was adjourned at 11:29 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