

**Minutes of Meeting #469**

**Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission  
Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Center  
1800 N 33<sup>rd</sup> St.  
Lincoln, NE  
August 26, 2021**

Present: Commissioner Greg Adams  
Commissioner Dorothy Anderson  
Commissioner Nick Baxter  
Commissioner Matt Blomstedt  
Commissioner Darrin Good  
Commissioner Marilyn Hadley(Chair)  
Commissioner Heath Mello  
Commissioner Paul Turman

Absent:  
Commissioner Patricia Kircher  
Commissioner Lisa May  
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 #469 to order at 10:36 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 #468 as held on June 24, 2021. It was moved by Commissioner Turman and seconded by Commissioner Baxter to approve the minutes from meeting #468. Voting aye: Commissioner Adams, Anderson, Baxter, Blomstedt, Hadley, Mello, Turman.

Opposed: None. Abstain: Commissioner Good.

**COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA**

4th Quarter Budget Report

Chief Financial Officer, Randy Hansen presented the 4th Quarter Budget Report. It was moved by Commissioner Mello and seconded by Commissioner Baxter to approve the 4th Quarter Budget report ending June 30, 2021. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Adams, Anderson,

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

#### Deficit Request for FY2023

Chief Financial Officer, Randy Hansen presented the Deficit Request for FY2023. It was moved by Commissioner Baxter and seconded by Commissioner Mello to approve the Deficit Request for FY2023. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Adams, Anderson, Baxter, Blomstedt, Good, Hadley, Mello, Turman. Opposed: None. The Finance Committee met prior to the full Commission meeting to review the report in greater detail.

#### FY2022 Television and Radio Capital Equipment List

Chief Financial Officer, Randy Hansen presented the FY22 Television and Radio Capital Equipment List. It was moved by Commissioner Blomstedt and seconded by Commissioner Turman to approve the FY22 Television and Radio Capital Equipment List. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Adams, Anderson, Baxter, Blomstedt, Good, Hadley, 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:

- Debbie Hamlett has accepted a position as General Manager and Executive Director of public station WCMU in Michigan. They are a joint Radio/Television University licensee located in Mt Pleasant, Michigan. Debbie has contributed greatly to Nebraska Public Media's success over the 7 plus years she has been with us, achieving consistent revenue growth year-over-year in annual and major giving, hitting a recent new high of \$5 million in revenue and more than 30,000 supporting members, an all-time high. She has established a culture of metrics and elevated the effectiveness of using social and online platforms to increase audience. Hired as AGM for Development and Marketing, her role has expanded significantly with responsibilities for Education, Engagement, and Research added to her portfolio in recent years. We will be updating the job description for the position, and it may be necessary to recruit for two positions due to the breadth and volume of duties currently attached to the position. We plan on conducting a national recruiting effort for the position.
- Federal Funding update:
  - Federal Funding for public broadcasting is contained in the Labor-HHS-Education bill that was passed by the House in late July and now awaits Senate consideration when Congress reconvenes. The House bill included the funding for all of CPB's requests, including an increase in the advance appropriation to \$565 million in annual support. This is the first increase in this funding in over 10 years.
- COVID protocol update
  - As of this past Monday, the majority of Nebraska Public Media have returned to fully on-site work. Due to specific circumstances, allowances have been made to accommodate a limited number of requests to continue off site work. We have attempted to comply with both the University and State Covid protocols, which are not always fully aligned.

We are currently requiring all staff and visitors to be masked in all Nebraska Public Media facilities regardless of vaccination status.

- Recent CPB hire
  - One of NET’s alumni recently accepted a position with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Stacey Decker was Chief Technology Officer for NET prior to Ling Ling Sun. Since that time Stacey has served at CTO for WGBH and more recently, President of Public Media Management base in Denver. Stacey begins September 13 as Corporation for Public Broadcasting Senior Vice President for Innovation and System Strategy.
- PBS Peabody Awards:
  - Public Television received more nominations (12) and more wins (6) than any other media organization including awards for “Asian Americans”, “Frontline”, and the PBS NewsHour. In fact, the PBS NewsHour received the only Peabody for news coverage of COVID-19, with one juror commenting that the “NewsHour provided the best news coverage of a once-in-a century global pandemic.” Judy Woodruff, anchor of the PBS NewsHour, received the first-ever Peabody Award for Journalistic Integrity.
- CPB Audit
  - We were notified recently that the CPB Inspector General’s office is planning to conduct an audit of Nebraska Public Media’s compliance with CPB’s funding guidelines. You may recall that we engaged Bob Winteringham two years ago to do an evaluation of our compliance program. We have implemented his recommendations and are confident that we are well prepared for this review. This is the first time that CPB OIG has conducted an audit of Nebraska Public Media. South Dakota Public Broadcasting was audited a year ago and there audit results were just released this week.

### NET Education Update

Chief Strategy Officer, Debbie Hamlett presented the report:

- NebraskaStudies.org Spanish Captioning – the full Spanish translation of the site has been shared with teachers who are testing it. The launch will be in September.
- Instructional guides and lesson plans are complete and will be added to the Civics 101 content in the PBS Learning Media Library.
- Cannabis in Nebraska: Medicine, Agriculture & the Law- September 21 at 6pm.  
Online screening and discussion (moved from outdoor event)  
Cannabis is becoming more prevalent in the U.S. as medicine and other industries are exploring the possibilities offered by this ancient crop. As we move towards broader social acceptance, we should explore what we know about this plant. What are the potential medical benefits of cannabinoids (the compounds found in cannabis like CBD and THC) for some illnesses, and what risks do they pose to the developing brain? What are the benefits and challenges of cannabis and industrial hemp for our agricultural community? What is the history of cannabis laws, and why have they disproportionately impacted communities of color?
- Aging in Nebraska: planning your future – August 17 at 5:30pm  
online screening clips from “Fast Forward” film and discussion  
hosted by Nebraska Public Media, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, and the University of Nebraska Omaha Department of Gerontology. Two panelists will be from the film: Fast Forward,

director Michael Eric Hurtig and nurse Susan Woodruff. Other panelist include: Margaret Schaefer, managing attorney for the centralized intake Unit at Legal Aid of Nebraska and moderator Lakelyn Hogan, a gerontologist and caregiver advocate with Home Instead.

- Nebraska Public Media September magazine will include our annual report which for the first time shows a new high of more than 30,000 supporting members and five million dollars in member donations. A few highlights: most read story- classic car collection in Central Nebraska auction, most shared story—A Moment of Zen featuring hummingbirds, most liked post-congratulations to Volleyball Head Coach John Cook for his 600<sup>th</sup> win. Our news team won more than 30 regional and national awards!

### NET Engineering Report

Chief Technology Officer, Ling Ling Sun presented the report:

- PBS DDMS - Refresh PBS DDMS WARN equipment is put on hold. Progress continues for PBS DDMS cloud playout project. Renewing DDMS contract is underway, next meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, August 17<sup>th</sup>.
- KUON was selected to be one of phase E alpha stations for PBS sIX interconnection project. The Phase E will be conducting tests on bi-directional live streaming through terrestrial connections.
- After a several month planning and working with a Denver local data center, NPM service on DISH was launched in Denver DMA on August, 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Work continues at the Capitol, updating Hearing Rooms affected by the Capitol HVAC Renovation Project, planning interface to new voting boards in the main chamber.
- Radio Remote Broadcast's first live feed last week was successful.
- Recording/Playout system replacement - Procurement has started to refresh the aging NPM Nexio recording/playout system, critical infrastructure to support record and playout of Nebraska Public Media content including the state legislature content.
- Two service based products will be implemented to support NPM business continuity and device management. 1. Cloud Backup is the 2nd phase to the previous on-prem backup storage replacement project. In this phase online storage is added to the existing backup to offer offsite storage for NPM's enterprise servers & their content. 2. KACE Cloud Mobile Device Manager will give the visibility and control to easily enroll mobile devices, build a comprehensive inventory, systemically manage and configure devices, and secure business resources.

### NET Content-Television and Radio

Chief Content Officer, Nancy Finken presented the report:

- News Highlights
  - Nebraska Public Media premieres two documentaries from our news division in August. The Smell of Money: Mead, Nebraska's Fight for Its Future is a radio documentary produced by Christina Stella examining contamination at the AltEn ethanol plant in Mead, including the stories of the town's residents, the plant's past problems and the regulation and enforcement of the plant by state officials. The Covid Chronicles

produced by Bill Kelly is a television documentary focusing on the efforts of local public health departments and first responders during the pandemic. Both are available online.

- Nebraska Public Media News earned 30 regional/national awards for its reporting during fiscal year 2021 including four national awards announced in June by Public Media Journalists Association (PMJA). All four awards were related to stories or projects associated with our coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Sports
  - The High School All Stars games (basketball, softball, volleyball) were broadcast in July on World featuring stellar athletes, many of whom will be going on to play college ball. Hats off to our production team battling extreme heat for the softball game.
  - Big Red Wrap-Up with host Mike'l Severe returns August 24 to usher in the new season of Husker Football with previews, analysis, and predictions. We are finalizing our plans to broadcast some Husker Volleyball matches and at least one Creighton match this fall as well.
- Radio
  - We filled the vacancies for local hosts of Morning Edition and All Things Considered with Jackie Ourada and William Padmore respectively. William is originally from Arizona and graduated from Arizona State and the Walter Cronkite Journalism School and Jackie is a lifelong Nebraskan who graduated from UNL's COJMC. William vacated a different position with our radio network and now we're promoting a part-time announcer, Shannon Claire to fill that job.
  - We aired 3 specials featuring the all-male vocal ensemble Cantus. These programs focused on Black artists for Juneteenth; Father's Day; and mental health and the power of music called "Alone Together."

### NET Emerging Media

Chief Innovation Officer, Chad Davis:

#### 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
- The Sound of Home: A PlainStory Podcast (Season 2)

#### Projects in Production include:

- Center of Gravity: A 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 bi-weekly release beginning 9/15/2021
- The Sound of Home: A PlainStory Podcast (season 1 post-script episodes) – two additional episodes profiling the Karen and Vietnamese communities in Lincoln
  - Release TBD
- Paleo Sleuths Profiles – additional profile videos for our Paleo Sleuths website that focus on female paleontologists

- Two more short videos releasing between October 2021 and February 2022
- 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
  - Slated for a public beta launch in October
- George Washington Palmer Homestead Experience – a 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:

- CPB Compliance Training – Progress continues toward the mandatory 100% completion for Harassment and Bias Prevention Training. This CPB required training ensures compliance for our FY 2022 CSG Certification and eligibility to receive 3+ million in funding. All staff and board members must complete the training by September 30, 2021.
- An All Staff meeting was held on June 21st via Zoom. Leadership shared return to onsite work information, department updates and answered questions from staff.
- Safety and Security – In continued efforts to increase the security of the Nebraska Public Media building, preliminary plans for a front reception renovation have been received for review. Modifications include badge only accessed glass doors restricting public access to the studios and network operations, a display case for NPM awards and glass barriers around the reception desk. External front entry walkway plans have also been received and reviewed. This updated walkway will ensure NPM’s compliance with ADA.
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - Nebraska Public Media Human Resources will be participating in the virtual National Association of Black Journalists career fair August 18-21. This opportunity comes to us through our affiliation with Think Public Media, the national system-wide effort to raise the profile of public media organizations for journalists of color.
- Alexander W. Epperson Kindness Award – Seven nominations have been received for the first annual Alexander W. Epperson Kindness Award. The award is funded by Randy and Brenda Epperson, Alex’s parents. The family will be selecting the 2021 recipient and presenting the award on August 27<sup>th</sup>. All Nebraska Public Media staff will be invited to attend via Zoom.

**ADDITIONAL BUSINESS**

Then next Commission meeting is December 2, 2021.

There being no further business, Meeting #469 was adjourned at 11:21 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark Leonard