

Minutes of Meeting #470

Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission
Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Center
1800 N 33rd St.
Lincoln, NE
December 2, 2021

Present: Commissioner Greg Adams
Commissioner Dorothy Anderson
Commissioner Nick Baxter
Commissioner Darrin Good
Commissioner Marilyn Hadley(Chair)
Commissioner Patricia Kircher
Commissioner Heath Mello
Commissioner Clay Smith

Absent: Commissioner Matt Blomstedt
Commissioner Lisa May
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 Marilyn Hadley called the meeting #470 to order at 10:37 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 #469 as held on August 26, 2021. It was moved by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Good to approve the minutes from meeting #469. Voting aye: Commissioner Adams, Anderson, Baxter, Good, Hadley, Kircher, Mello, Smith.

Opposed: None.

COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA

BKD Audit Report ending June 30, 2021

Chief Financial Officer Randy Hansen presented the BKD audit report ending June 30, 2021. It was moved by Commissioner Baxter and seconded by Commissioner Smith to approve the BKD Audit report ending June 30, 2021. Roll call was recorded as follows: Voting aye: Commissioner Adams, Anderson,

Baxter, Good, Hadley, Kircher, Mello, Smith. Opposed: None. The Finance Committee met prior to the full Commission meeting to review the report in greater detail. Present after voting had commenced:

COMMISSION INFORMATION AGENDA

General Manager's Report

General Manager Mark Leonard presented the report:

- Federal Funding update:
 - Final news on Federal funding appropriation for CPB is likely to occur later this month. At this point, both the Senate and House Bills contain full funding for our requests.
- There is a flurry of recruiting activity going on currently due to retirements and resignations. Among the roles currently being recruited is the Chief Strategy Officer, Director of Education, 2 Television producers, an HR Assistant, and more. We are using the search firm Development Resources Inc to help us with the CSO recruitment.
- The Commission shares a governance role with UNL as detailed in a memorandum of understanding. Structurally, that means that I report to the Executive Vice Chancellor for UNL. That position was occupied most recently by Dr. Elizabeth Spiller, who resigned in late November. There is an internal search for a permanent replacement currently going on. In the meantime, Bob Wilhelm will serve as interim Executive Vice Chancellor in addition to his role as Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development.
- As you may have read elsewhere, Nebraska Public Media will not have broadcast rights to the NCAA Quarter finals for Women's Volleyball. In previous years we were able to secure rights to broadcast, but ESPN is going to be streaming the quarterfinals instead.

Education Update

Director of Communication, Cameron Risher submitted the report:

- NebraskaStudies.org: Now in Spanish– the full Spanish translation of the site has launched and been promoted on social media, Omaha Magazine Education Issue, Nebraska State Education Association magazine, PREMIERE member magazine, Smart Scoop eNewsletter and online.
- Cannabis in Nebraska: Medicine, Agriculture & the Law, Screening & Discussion-Success As part of a grant and in partnership with NOVA we held a screening and discussion (Sept 21) exploring the science and data behind cannabis featuring excerpts from the NOVA film, *The Cannabis Question*. Panelists included the director of the NOVA film Sarah Holt, Kelly Dineen from Creighton Law School, Andrea Holmes from Doane. We were one of two stations selected to host this screening and we had the highest attendance.
- 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?

- *Beyond the Baton, the television biography* of conductor Thomas Wilkins, music director of the Omaha Symphony and the first African American in the history of the Boston Symphony to hold a conducting position, premiered on Monday, November 15. During the pandemic, Wilkins celebrated the 100th birthday of the Omaha Symphony with a powerful concert where "*music still flourishes and beauty gets to have the last word.*" We launched the educational resources on November 16, which will provide music educators with interactive tools to inspire and train young artists. The educational tools and resources can be found linked from this webpage: www.nebraskapublicmedia.org/baton
- *Bright By Text* Launched in October
- Nebraska Public Media has teamed up with Bright By Text to send FREE activities, games, and resources for children up to age eight right to a cell phone. These texts for parents and caregivers (including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and babysitters) are targeted to their child's specific age. They include information on child development, early literacy, health and safety. To sign up, text the word NEKIDS to 274448. Messages are available in English or Spanish.

Engineering Report

Chief Technology Officer, Ling Ling Sun presented the report:

- PBS DDMS – We have received PBS Scope of Work 1 (SOW1) draft for review. We will be meeting with PBS to discuss technical details and address both parties' comments. The SOW1 is to cover the needs for diversity and emergency transmission services.
- Cloud data backup – The Cloud data backup has been established for NPM critical servers. Triggered by a recent ransomware attack on Sinclair broadcast group, we are expediting the process of a full cloud data backup, in addition to the NPM's existing on premise backup system. Researching cold (offline) backup options is also underway. Sinclair broadcast group, which operates dozens of TV stations across the US, was hit by ransomware on October 17, 2021. Some of its office and operational network were disrupted.
- Linear Live Streaming NPM digital subchannels – Two AWS MediaLink encoders have arrived. Configuration and testing is in progress.
- Cloud storage – implementing AWS cloud storage is underway. This is to replace NPM end of life /end of support LTO-5 library after proof of concept of AWS cloud for media storage.
- TV Encoding System Replacement - Installation of the TV encoding system has been completed. We are working on configurations to maintain existing services and provide new functionalities.
- Recording/Playout system replacement - We have received one of three Imagine Nexio Amp servers. Shipments on the other two servers are being delayed due to supply shortage. We are working toward getting the 1st server online to deal with existing system failures.

Content-Television and Radio

Chief Content Officer, Nancy Finken presented the report:

- The new television season kicked off this fall with PBS blockbusters “Call the Midwife” and “Muhammad Ali,” a film by Ken Burns. From Nebraska Public Media, “Big Red Wrap-Up,” “Speaking of Nebraska,” NSAA High School Championships (Volleyball and Football), Husker and Creighton Volleyball returned.
- The fall radio membership drive was a big success! This was the first full drive in over a year raising nearly \$10,000 over the goal of \$100,000.
- Title IX: More Than a Game is a multi-media project marking the upcoming 50th anniversary of Title IX, a federal law prohibiting gender based discrimination in schools. Its reach encompasses sports, academics, wages, employment, safety, and more. Viewers and listeners will see a variety of content this fall through next summer across all platforms. We are producing profiles and features on notable Nebraskans, discussions and reports on the impact of Title IX and what more needs to be accomplished.
- Gavin Felix has been named Director of Television Production, a position most recently held by Joe Turco who retired in May.
- After 3 decades on the air, radio announcer Lora Black has retired. Lora’s warm on-air presence engaged listeners each weekday hosting “Afternoon Concert” and “Classics By Request.” She started out as a weekend announcer and over the years worked nearly every shift at one time or another. She worked on many special projects as well including reading holiday stories by Bess Streeter Aldrich. We are searching for her replacement.
- A new television documentary from Nebraska Public Media Executive Producer Christine Lesiak tells the fascinating story of Thomas Wilkins in his final year leading the Omaha Symphony Orchestra. “Beyond the Baton,” a Conductor’s Journey is a profile of Wilkins who was the longest serving conductor and music director of the Omaha Symphony and the first African American in the history of the Boston Symphony to hold a conducting position. This documentary takes viewers through pivotal moments in Wilkins’ life where he grew up in poverty in Virginia, and after seeing an orchestra, set his sights on becoming a conductor; his tenacity earning his degrees; his philosophy about teaching the next generation; the highs and lows of working through the pandemic; and his frustrations with the classical music world’s treatment of African Americans. “Beyond the Baton” is being offered nationally through APT, American Public Television and is Lesiak’s last major project before retiring at the end of the year. Christine is a Peabody Award winner and has produced an array of documentaries many of which were distributed nationally through PBS, APT, and NETA. She leaves a tremendous archive and legacy at Nebraska Public Media.

Labs

Chief Innovation Officer, Chad Davis:

Projects Currently in R&D include:

- Paleo Sleuths Profiles – additional profile video for our Paleo Sleuths website that focuses on a younger female paleontologist
- Trade (w.t.) – a history podcast series that explores how trade is a fundamentally human activity, as vital to our species as language
- Youth Media Initiative: a long horizon project that seeks to create more young, trained media content creators in Nebraska, attract younger audiences to that content, and increase the diversity of voices represented in the content created by Nebraska Public Media

Projects in Production include:

- Expedition Nebraska – 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
 - App versions and headset versions of the initial experience slated for release this winter
- The Sound of Home: A PlainStory Podcast (post-script episodes) – two additional episodes profiling the Karen and Vietnamese communities in Lincoln
 - Release: May 2022
- 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

Administrative

Chief Administrative Officer, Julie Thomsen presented the report:

Statement of Commitment to Diversity

- As required by the Corporation of Public Broadcasting for CSG recipients, grantees are to address the following four topics in their annually updated diversity statement posted to the station website:
 - elements of diversity the grantee finds important to its public media work
 - extent to which the grantee’s staff and governance reflect such diversity
 - the progress the grantee has made to increase its diversity in the last two to three years; and
 - the grantee’s diversity plans for the coming year
- Onsite work – With no new information from the State or University related to COVID and onsite work, Nebraska Public Media continues to monitor the latest COVID information. We are allowing staff who requested remote work through the end of the year due to COVID concerns to extend into the new year with updated documented approved agreements. Nebraska Public Media continues to work towards returning to onsite work.
- Staffing - Nebraska Public Media has experienced an increase number of vacancies - planned retirements and natural attrition. The labor market and rate at which applicants are looking for and accepting opportunities has lead us to become more efficient and decrease the time of initial contact with applicants and move through the search process expeditiously. Currently, we have 15 vacancies that Nebraska Public Media Human Resources is leading hiring managers through.
- An All Staff meeting was held on November 10th via Zoom. Shari Veil- dean and professor of UNL’s College of Journalism and Mass Communications provided an overview of the college’s new initiative - Experience Lab. Nebraska Public Media’s Studio/Remote Production supervisor is one of the professionals from our organization who spends a few hours a week with COJMC students. Leadership and senior managers shared updates from their respective areas and then opened the floor to staff for questions.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

Then next Commission meeting is March 24, 2022.

There being no further business, Meeting #470 was adjourned at 11:17 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