

WTTW COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of the
PUBLIC MEETING of the
WTTW Community Advisory Board (CAB)
Tuesday, April 21, 2015
WTTW Studios
5400 N St. Louis Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Introductions were made by the following present members of the Community Advisory Board:

Joseph Morris, Chairman
Mary Lou Mockus, Vice Chairman
Ava Holly Berland, Secretary
Denise Avant
Joe Bosco
Helen Bracey
Yvette Brown
Leatrice Campbell
Barbara Cragan
Kimberly Frost
Jan Goldstein
Linda Jackson
Derrick Kimbrough
Lennette Meredith
Sharon Meroni
Ed Moran
Heather Penn
Maggie Steinz
Renee Summers
Norma Sutton
Chet Szerlag
Rita Tandaric
Felicia Townsend
Christopher Vaughn

In addition, the following persons were present and introduced themselves:

V.J. McAleer, Senior Vice President of WWCI for Production and Community Partnerships and Management Liaison
Michael W. Gonzalez, Trustee of WCCI
Yvonne Davis, Administrative Assistant to Chicago Tonight and Staff Liaison

Finally, the following members of the public were present:

Jeff Berkowitz

Trey Cobb, CAB candidate

Shonna Pryor, CAB candidate

Sylvia Puente, Director, Latino Policy Forum

Rosa Garcia

Finding the presence of a quorum, and noting that this is the annual and the bi-monthly meeting, the Chair called for the election of CAB members and officers whose terms were expiring.

Annual Election of CAB Members (9 Seats)

Ms. Meredith reported that nine members' terms were expiring in 2015, and thus were being nominated.

In addition to the nine members, Denise Avant (per Sharon Meroni's motion, and Ava Berland's second), Trey Cobb (per Ava Berland's motion and Sharon Meroni's second), and Shonna Pryor (per Yvette Brown's motion and Linda Jackson's second), were nominated from the floor. Each accepted the nomination, briefly introduced themselves, and shared their technological background. Also, Ms. Avant stated that she would bring the perspective of the visually impaired and blind; Mr. Cobb stated that he would bring a youth oriented perspective, and Ms. Pryor stated that she would bring her knowledge of and experience with the arts.

Ballots were issued and the results were counted by the Vice Chair, Ms. Sutton and Mr. Moran.

Concluding the counting of ballots, the following candidates were elected to three-year terms ending April 2018: Denise Avant, Ava Holly Berland, Leatrice Campbell, Kimberly Frost, Chet Szerlag, Rita Tanadaric, Felicia Townsend and Chris Vaughn.

Annual Election of CAB Officers

Lennette Meredith, Chair of the Membership and Nominating Committee, reported the nominations of Joseph Morris to serve as Chairman, Mary Lou Mockus to serve as Vice Chairman and Ava Berland to serve as Secretary. There were no further nominations from the floor, and the CAB Officers were unanimously elected.

Approval of Minutes

The Chair requested approval of the February 2014 Minutes. Ms. Berland noted that minor edits were submitted by Jeff Berkowitz that morning. Mr. Gonzalez, Mr. Bosco and Ms. Cragan offered additional corrections. Ms. Berland stated that the Minutes would be revised to reflect all additional edits, and would be electronically circulated. Ms. Cragan moved the minutes as revised be approved; Ms. Tandaric seconded the motion; and, the revised minutes were adopted unanimously.

Public Comment

Ms. Puente and Ms. Garcia addressed the recent mayoral debate aired on WTTW. According to Ms. Puente, the debate was biased in favor of the incumbent Rahm Emanuel in terms of the time allotted and questions asked. Ms. Puente also objected to the visual display of the IRS tax form 990 relating to the community organization Mr. Garcia headed, to moderator Phil Ponce's questions asked regarding Chuy Garcia's son's gang-related history, and to Mr. Ponce's failure to

reveal his relationship with Mr. Emanuel -- all of which led her to believe there was some "collusion" between the moderator and the incumbent. Ms. Puente acknowledged Mr. Ponce's apology for the questions regarding Mr. Garcia's son, but felt that more is needed from the station. Responding to Mr. Vaughn's questions, Ms. Puente stated that she emailed her concerns to the station. The Chair suggested that she contact Mary Field, Executive Producer of "Chicago Tonight."

Ms. Garcia agreed with Ms. Puente's assessment, adding that the audience marked their displeasure by "boo-ing" Mr. Ponce and, at the end, leaving the debate in silence.

Responding to the Chair's question, both Ms. Puente and Ms. Garcia stated that they would like a station apology.

Responding to Ms. Goldstein's assumption, Mr. McAleer confirmed that the station's editorial staff's practice is to review in advance the moderator's questions, as they do with all "Chicago Tonight" segments. Beyond that, he could not offer further details because he was on vacation at the time.

Trustee's Liaison:

In his role as a WCCI Trustee, Mr. Gonzalez reported that he and his wife attended, and that his wife was very upset by, the mayoral debate. He shared his observation that the audience appeared to favor Mr. Emanuel by 80 percent, but that even they reacted critically to the tenor of the debates and the questions asked of Mr. Garcia. He stated that he was aware that Mr. Ponce planned to apologize "immediately" thereafter. Also, Mr. Gonzalez stated that he raised his concerns regarding the debate with James Mabie, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Daniel Schmidt, President and CEO, and Dan Soles, Senior Vice President and Chief Television Officer. Thus, he assured CAB and members of the public that the Board of Trustees and WTTW management were aware of the concerns and that there would be follow-up.

Finally, Mr. Gonzalez expressed his sincere appreciation to CAB for the discussion regarding the mayoral debate issue. He concluded by saying that WTTW is a "gem" and that, where warranted, the airing and consideration of constructive criticism will ensure that it remains so. The Chair agreed, adding that WTTW can ill afford to lose any segment of its audience.

Management Liaison

V.J. McAleer concurred with the Chair's last statement, adding that WTTW wants to expand, not lose, any segment, particularly the Latino community.

Acknowledging the criticism regarding the mayoral debates, he noted that Mr. Ponce, a respected host, has served the community well over the years, and would never compromise his journalistic integrity by "colluding" in any manner. Responding to the Chair's question, he stated that he believed that Mr. Ponce apologized for himself, not the station.

Mr. McAleer added that, on April 22, 2015 "Chicago Tonight," the Mayor will field questions from students within WTTW viewing area.

Finally, Mr. McAleer noted that, in anticipation of the June station pledge drive, he will circulate three dates to CAB members so that they may participate as a group. Ms. Steinz mentioned that she and Ms. Meroni participated in the last drive, and encouraged all members to consider participating in the future.

Reports of Officers and Committees

1) Membership and Nominating Committee

The Committee did not present a report.

The Chair asked Ms. Meredith to again chair the committee; Ms. Meredith agreed; and CAB unanimously approved her appointment.

2) Program Committee

The Committee did not present a report. However, for the benefit of new members, Ms. Cragan stated that there is a program rubric, which members with programming ideas can fill out and submit to the committee for consideration, subsequent vote by CAB, and ultimate submission to WTTW management. As most programming ideas generated have related to “Chicago Tonight” segments, Ms. Cragan encouraged members to check online what topics have already been covered.

The Chair asked Ms. Cragan to again chair the committee; Ms. Cragan agreed; and CAB unanimously approved her appointment.

3) Outreach Committee

The Committee did not present a report, but noted that it will be scheduling a meeting in the near future.

The Chair asked Ms. Meroni to again chair the committee; Ms. Meroni agreed; and CAB unanimously approved her appointment.

4) Technology Committee

The Committee did not present a report.

The Chair asked Ms. Brown to again chair the committee; Ms. Brown agreed; and CAB unanimously approved her appointment.

5) Committee on Cultural Research and Development

The Committee did not present a report.

The Chair thanked Jeff Berkowitz for his service and participation, and stated that he would appoint a member to chair the committee.

6) Committee on Education

Ms. Steinz thanked all who attended the Midwest Robotics Competition. The infectious and growing enthusiasm was something to behold, as evident by the fact that it will soon need to be held at the McCormick Convention Center. In this connection, she noted that an inspired Lane Tech autistic female student recently wrote a robotics curriculum for autistic students. Finally, Ms. Steinz encouraged all CAB members to join in the excitement, and bring others to attend the event next year.

Ms. Steinz also noted that the committee plans to introduce CAB to the “Sit, Stay and Read” program, she mentioned in the February Meeting, with a future live demonstration.

Finally, Ms. Steinz asked members to consider the reauthorization of the Patriot Act, particularly Section 221, which authorizes the government’s pervasive surveillance of American citizens. She recounted the public’s general lack of awareness of the issue – given that only 47% have heard of/know about Edward Snowden.

The Chair asked Ms. Steinz to again chair the committee; Ms. Steinz agreed; and CAB unanimously approved her appointment.

7) Secretary

The Secretary did not present a report. Ms. Berland reiterated that she would circulate the revised February Minutes to reflect the voted upon revisions (which she did the following day).

8) Vice Chairman

The Vice Chair and “unofficial keeper of the flame,” shared her recent conversation with Mary Jo Griffin, Redd’s widow. She was delighted to let CAB know that all of the courses Redd introduced at Triton College have continued, with the exception of “The Great Philosophers” for lack of an instructor. Undaunted, twelve former students, determined to continue that course, formed an independent study group that meets weekly at Oak Park Library and invites Mary Jo as an honorary member. “Tis better to light one candle,” and Redd certainly lit many. He was a valued CAB member, and continues to be greatly missed.

9) Chairman

Given the robust discussion regarding the recently aired mayoral debate, the Chair noted how appropriate it was for the committee he is chairing to review the station’s journalistic standards.

The Chair also mentioned the standing and special committees, and wanted each member to consider serving on the committee(s) that interests his/her.

Finally, the Chair reminded CAB members of its responsibility to assist WTTW in fulfilling its mission to inform, inspire and meet the cultural and educational needs of its audience, and that everything it achieves ultimately culminates in a better, more useful Annual Report.

Unfinished Business

The Chair introduced the Proposed By-Law Amendments, that were distributed at the February 2015, as well as the current, meeting. The Amendments establish a separate Membership and a Nominating Committee. The members discussed and agreed upon minor clarifying edits to address concerns raised by Mr. Szerlag and Mr. Bosco.

Ms. Berland and Ms. Meroni questioned the need to separate the functions of the Membership and Nominating Committee. Ms. Meredith explained that the division of functions would ease the Committee’s workload and avoid potential conflicts of interest. The Vice Chair opined that such division would necessitate two stages of review by different groups of members, a duplication of efforts. Mr. Szerlag agreed, stating that the current Committee is akin to a human resources division, and thus it appropriately should continue to handle both functions.

The Chair noted that the current By-Laws refer to the Membership and the Nominating Committees as a standing and a special committee, respectively. Ms. Berland suggested that the By-Laws be amended to establish a single committee. After further discussion, Ms. Meroni suggested a resolution. Specifically, she moved to delete the revisions set forth in Section 5 of the Proposed By-Law Amendments, Ms. Sutton seconded the motion, and the motion was unanimously adopted.

New Business

Ms. Meroni distributed a Draft Resolution, proposing to amend the By-Laws to substitute the Outreach Committee with the “Community Engagement Committee” that she and Mr. Szerlag prepared. She noted that renaming the committee would be consistent with the Board of Trustee’s Committee, co-chaired by Mr. Gonzalez, as well as WTTW’s new office headed by Jessica Lawson. The proposal will be considered at the June, and voted at the August, meeting.

Good and Welfare

Ms. Brown stated that her and Ms. Penn’s second part in the series “Response to Violence: Communities in Crisis,” is completed and the 90-minute program may viewed online in 30-minute segments. A link to the website will be provided shortly. Kudos to Yvette and Heather!

Ms. Townsend has completed her doctorate and self-published a book “SpecialTopics Education: Lead the Way.” Kudos to Felicia (or rather Dr. Townsend)!

Ms. Campbell reported that her granddaughter, whose home was destroyed by fire, has finally moved back with her family after a year in transit, marriage and family intact and thriving.

And finally, the Vice Chair notified CAB that “Charter Schools: For Better or Worse” will be screened at the Chicago Cultural Center on April 25, 2015.

Next Public CAB Meeting: June 16, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ava Holly Berland