

# WTTW COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of the  
PUBLIC MEETING of the  
WTTW Community Advisory Board (CAB)  
Tuesday, April 19, 2016  
WTTW Studios

The Chairman (Chair) called the meeting to order and declared a quorum present at 6:15 p.m. In the Secretary's absence, the Chair designated Vice Chairman (Vice Chair) Mary Lou Mockus to act as Secretary Pro Tempore.

**The following members of the Community Advisory Board (CAB) were present and introduced them:** Joseph Morris, Chair; Mary Lou Mockus, Vice Chair; Joe Bosco; Barbara Cragan; Jennifer Fletcher; Kimberly Frost; Janice Goldstein; Susan Ivers; Linda Jackson; Derrick Kimbrough; Sharon Meroni; Shonna Pryor; Maggie Steinz; Norma Sutton; Chet Szerlag; Rita Tandaric; Felicia Townsend and Christopher Vaughn.

**The following persons also were present and introduced themselves:** Dan Soles, WTTW's Senior Vice President and Chief Television Content Officer and CAB's management liaison; and Yvonne Davis, Administrative Assistant to Chicago Tonight and Staff Liaison.

**In addition, the following members of the public were present:** Nora Bonin and Benjamin Richie.

**Noting that this is the annual and the bi-monthly meeting, the Chair called for the election of the CAB members and officers whose terms were expiring.**

**Annual Election of CAB Members:** The Chair announced that the terms of office of nine members of the CAB expire at this meeting and opened the floor for nominations for the nine vacant seats. Ms. Sutton reported that Ms. Penn had informed her that she did not wish to be re-nominated for or re-elected to CAB membership. Ms. Sutton reported that the Nominating Committee nominated the nomination of the following persons (all of whom are incumbent members of the CAB whose terms of office expire at this meeting) to serve as members of the CAB for a term to expire at the annual (April) meeting in 2019: Ms. Fletcher, Ms. Goldstein, Ms. Ivers, Ms. Meredith, Ms. Mockus, Mr. Morris, Ms. Pryor, and Ms. Summers. The Chair asked if there were any further nominations. There were no further nominations and, without objection, nominations were closed. All eight nominees were elected unanimously.

Regarding vacancies, the Chair noted that there are three CAB vacancies: one will expire in 2019 (seat vacated by Ms. Penn), and two will expire in 2017 and (seats vacated by Ms. Buckner and Mr. Moran). In Ms. Meredith's absence, Ms. Sutton reported that formal presentations of candidates will be made at the June meeting to fill those seats. Ms. Sutton further reported that one of the candidates, Ms. Bonin, was present and she was invited to introduce herself. The Chair welcomed Ms. Bonin, and observed that the addition of a Spanish speaking member will enhance CAB's understanding of a significant sector of WTTW's audience.

The Chair concluded by stating that the issue of absenteeism will be deferred to the June meeting.

**Annual Election of Officers:** Ms. Sutton further reported that the Nominating Committee recommended retaining the current officers: Chair Mr. Morris; Vice Chair Ms. Mockus; and Secretary Ms. Berland.

The Chair opened the opportunity for nominations from the floor. There being none, he requested a motion calling for a vote to close the nominations. Mr. Vaughn moved; Ms. Meroni seconded; the motion carried and the officers were elected unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes:** The Chair stated that approval of the March Minutes also will be deferred to the June meeting.

**Approval of the Revised Agenda:** Ms. Penn moved to approve the revised agenda; Ms. Summers seconded; and the motion passed unanimously.

**Management Liaison:** Mr. Soles reported that at the WTTW's Board of Trustees' meeting this afternoon, Chairman Jim Mabie, who attended the April meeting, praised CAB's conduct, the substance of its discussions, and the caliber of its membership. Mr. Mabie also stated that he looked forward to attending CAB meetings as often as his schedule permits, and further expressed a desire to form a closer alliance with Station WBEZ. Ms. Ivers asked about the nature of WTTW's and WBEZ' alliance. Mr. Soles explained that there have been informal and occasional interactions generally related to special events of intersecting interest.

Mr. Soles also reported that WTTW will air gavel to gavel coverage, via PBS, of both Democrat and Republican Presidential Conventions, followed by Chicago Tonight commentary. The Chair praised WTTW's decision (reflective of recommendations in CAB's 2015 Annual Report) to comprehensively carry that the National Conventions (probably the only broadcast outlet to do so). Ms. Goldstein asked if the Chicago Tonight commentary would be conducted by the regular panelists. Mr. Soles replied in the affirmative.

On the world stage, Mr. Soles reported that on Chicago Tonight, Ecuador's President promoted a documentary that is designed to generate tourism and further understanding of his country. He stated WTTW is developing plans to promote this concept with other countries' leaders.

Continuing, he reported that Geoffrey Baer's "10 Homes that changed the World" enjoyed favorable ratings and that WTTW hopes to continue the series. He also noted that Mr. Baer is preparing a documentary on Navy Pier's history.

Turning to children's programs, Mr. Soles reported the successful and popular launch of Nature Cat, which has more episodes in development.

Additionally, Mr. Soles reported a new series, "Hideout Interviews" that will be air on Fridays at 8:30 p.m. The first in the series is a 20 year retrospective on the history of Cabrini Green housing project, and will be shown at the Cultural Center as part of WTTW's outreach programs. The series will also include "Unexpected Justice", the biography of Justice John Paul Stevens, who uncovered and challenged corruption in the Illinois justice system, scheduled for July. Regarding the Justice Stevens program, the Chair recalled his assignment as "a newly minted lawyer" to research to Steven's background, as a nominee to the Supreme Court. He contrasted Justice Stevens' congenial and civil hearing, to the contentious proceedings that became the rule with the nomination of Robert Bork a several years later.

Finally, Mr. Soles reported that WTTW is developing a new online "Focus on the Arts" series, and that the station is in the process of hiring a new Chicago Tonight staff person.

The Chair thanked Mr. Soles for his substantive and detailed report.

Ms. Ivers expressed interest in the understanding the philosophy and strategy that guides WTTW's programming decisions. Responding, Mr. Soles stated that he has been working on a statement on the subject, which he plans to

present it at a future CAB meeting. The Chair thanked Ms. Ivers for raising the subject, and added "[the subject] is a hardy perennial with us, as you know, the strategy and philosophy of the station with respect to content generation, particularly with respect to outside producers. [Mr. Soles'] qualms, as you can see, are not without sympathy on the Board -- but we look forward to what guidance you have for us on those points."

#### **Reports of Committees and Officers:**

**Programming Committee:** Ms. Cragan reported that management has not responded to Ms. Pryor's program proposal on local arts coverage, which was included in the CAB's 2015 Annual Report. Mr. Soles stated that he would address the proposal at the June meeting.

Referring to the Committee's work plan, introduced at the April meeting, that seeks to explore how other CABs function, Ms. Cragan reported that the Committee has begun preparing a questionnaire of in depth questions. She acknowledged Mr. Bosco's diligent efforts to identify local CAB contacts and to develop a very useful spread sheet. In this regard, she stated that the Committee decided to focus on CABs affiliated with stations within WTTW's general geographic area. She noted that, in the future, the Committee may consider a second work plan that will broaden the scope to include CABs, similar to ours (i.e., in size, geographical elements, audience composition and other attributes).

**Community Engagement Committee:** Ms. Meroni enthusiastically supported the Programming Committee's work plan and looked forward to the opportunity for cooperation and interaction between the two committees. To that end, the two Committee Chairs agreed to share information, and Ms. Meroni offered to provide the survey responses received to date.

**Technology Committee:** Noting that the prospective sale of public television broadcast spectrum has generated curiosity about the technology and application of ownership rights in this market, the Chair turned the meeting over to Ms. Penn. Ms. Penn then provided an enlightening presentation to CAB members on the subject.

**Education Committee:** Ms. Steinz reported that the annual Robotic competition, once again, was a great success and that efforts continue to increase television coverage as well as to live stream the event. WTTW's Al Skerkiewicz, and his wife, one of the progenitors of the event, were recognized and elevated to the National Organization.

**Cultural Research and Development:** Having attended numerous events sponsored by the WTTW's Community Engagement Division, Mr. Vaughn suggested that it might be worthwhile to invite members of those audiences to address the CAB. CAB members followed up with a discussion of possible alternative meeting venues.

**Secretary:** In the Secretary's absence, no report was presented.

**Vice Chair:** The Vice Chair reported on the following news items of interest: the national attention received by the Robotic competition reflected in the Wall Street Journal's coverage; the call by some in the government to tax the internet; and the suggested cooperative alliance between Google and the Government for a mandated "black box" apparatus that would provide interactive information on the public's viewing habits.

**Chair:** The Chair prefaced his report by observing that it was not too early for members and committees to focus on questions and issues to be considered in the next Annual Report. He further observed that, in the wake of recent personnel cuts, WTTW's financial stability has become an issue of concern. Therefore, the Chair announced a new Finance and Management Committee that will be chaired by Mr. Bosco, and invited interested CAB members to join.

Regarding WTTW's journalistic standards "dating back to the 1950s," the Chair announced that his Committee on Journalistic Standards and Ethics will meet on May 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:30. Regarding pledge drive programming, the Chair noted

CAB's interest in reviewing issues, such as the station's strategies, decision making process, costs/benefits ratio. Thus, in planning the next two CAB meeting's agendas, the Chair thought it would be helpful to discuss journalistic standards and ethics with Chicago Tonight's producer Ms. Field and pledge drive issues with the station's Pledge Activity Director, depending on their availability. He asked Mr. Soles to determine the staffs' availability in June and August. The Chair also mentioned the possibility of scheduling CAB's tour of the WTTW facility and later attendance at a live broadcast of Chicago Tonight.

Finally, the Chair appointed Ms. Fletcher to fill the vacancy and chair the Technology Committee.

Mr. Kimbrough motioned to adjourn; Ms. Tandaric seconded; and the motion passed unanimously.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Next Public CAB Meeting: June 21, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary Lou Mockus  
Ava Holly Berland