

WTTW COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of the PUBLIC MEETING of the
WTTW Community Advisory Board (CAB)

Tuesday, March 21, 2017

WTTW Studios, 5400 N. St Louis Ave, Chicago, Illinois

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., declaring a quorum present.

The following CAB members were present and introduced themselves: Chairman Joseph Morris (Chair); Vice Chairman Mary Lou Mockus (Vice Chair); Secretary Rita Tandarcic; Denise Avant; Maryilene Blondell; Joe Bosco; Barbara Cragan; Kimberly Frost; Lennette Meredith; Maggie Steinz; Aaron Lawler.

Note the following CAB members were absent: Derrick Kimbrough; Norma Sutton; Sharon Meroni; Linda Jackson; Susan Ivers; Janice Goldstein; Felicia Townsend; Helen Bracey; Nora Bonnin.

The following persons also were present: Dan Schmidt, WTTW's President and Chief Executive Officer; 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.

And, the following members of the public were present: Herbert Sohn; Eleanor Wolfe, Shweta Singh; Dee Harrison; Denise Korcal; Damon Lucero; and Denisa Dragan.

The Chair opened the meeting with the introductions of WTTW officers Dan Schmidt and Dan Soles. The Chair explained that the CAB's key work in 2016 involved the station's journalistic standards, which concluded with a productive meeting and discussion with V.J. McAleer. The CAB produced and filed a report with station management, including Dan Schmidt, Dan Soles, and Mary Field, as well as consultant V.J. McAleer. The cab has been informed that the station's work on its journalistic standards is close to being finalized. Feedback indicates that the CAB's work was helpful.

The Chair continued stating that the station's news programming is valuable. Indications are that the new administration in Washington, DC intends to cut funding to Public television. Illinois' budgetary issues have already resulted in reduced funding to WTTW and WTTW's Board of Trustees has been tempering its actions based on the reducing funding sources.

The CAB understands that WTTW's strategic plan is a work-in-progress. The Chair asked if anything new can be reported by Mr. Schmidt.

The Chair also explained that the CAB had met with Reese Marcusson at its last meeting (October 2016). The Chair then gave the floor to Dan Schmidt, who first thanked the Chair and the CAB members for their work.

Mr. Schmidt explained that good reports are coming from the team working on the station's news standards and stated that the CAB's input was helpful. Mr. Schmidt commented that one of the greatest assets of the organization is the trust and credibility in the news and public affairs programming. He admitted that "we don't always get it right." He stated that

the station seeks to offer a platform across all segments that is balanced, but that the need for diligence is more important than ever in a time when civil discourse is challenged.

Referencing Charlie Rose, Mr. Schmidt stated that digital devices, and the ability to register “likes” have impact. Users of such digital outlets are fed information with which they agree. Listening is not what it should be. WTTW seeks to be a counterbalance and civil discourse lives on through the station’s work. Trusted and credible journalists are essential. Public media is trusted and viewed as fair and objective.

Mr. Schmidt stated that Federal funding is always a challenge. Attacks on funding go back to the Nixon administration. However, the people believe that public media is an investment with favorable returns. Past attacks on funding have been narrow, with PBS being singled out. Now, however, the attack is broad with the intent to redirect funds normally allocated to many funds and programs to military causes. The station encourages those who support public media to go to protectmypublicmedia.com and sign a petition of support.

Mr. Schmidt further stated that the good news is that 72% of Americans favor funding for public media. Over the past four to five years there has been success in Washington developing bipartisan support in both House and Senate appropriations committees, and last year, Vice President Pence the Champion of Public Broadcasting.” Mr. Schmidt stated that public media has always prevailed in the past, but no one is taking anything for granted at this time.

CAB member Ms. Blondell asked if Senators Durbin and Duckworth are behind support for public media. Mr. Schmidt answered that they are. However, advocates for public media are encouraging the station to stay on top of legislators because the public media funding is part of a much larger issue as many important programs are impacted and there is much lobbying.

Ms. Schmidt stated that this is an interesting time to be strategically planning, and management is tweaking the plan as necessary. The main thrust of the plan is to be strong programmatically and financially. Funding is more challenging when considering the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) instead of Springfield. Support levels from the State of Illinois have always fluctuated and the station has been able to weather the fluctuations in the past. The station’s strategic plan has not yet moved into its public phase – that is expected in about 6 months. So far, approximately \$54 million has been raised.

The station currently receives about \$4 million per year from CPB. The station adds approximately \$1.7 million and then sends \$5.7 million back to PBS. A conservative Senator from Oklahoma is a strong supporter of public media and believes that budget cuts will not hold.

Content is still available. But there is power in the national programming service. If it is eliminated, all public media outlets are weakened. Smaller rural stations will suffer the most. Major-market stations such as WTTW will find a way to carry on. National content can be acquired. Smaller stations do very little local production, but approximately 30% of WTTW’s prime time content is self-produced. This is a higher percentage than most public stations. The key is to produce, own or co-own intellectual property.

WTTW is well-positioned because it has outsourced the day-to-day broadcast operations to a shared facility and data center in Florida. Stations that participate take advantage of economies of scale. The broadcasting is Internet protocol based. A fiber network allows the station’s master control to be anywhere, and is more reliable than locally-managed operations. 11 stations participate but it was built to bring in clients. This is an attractive option for stations where

equipment is at the end of its useful life or no longer supported. Adding client stations provides additional revenue that allow for upgrades. The shared facility further reduces WTTW's costs. Members of the facility consortium include stations in Miami, Dallas, Atlanta, Orlando, Jacksonville, and Milwaukee. WTTW is the largest station participating.

The Chair thanked Mr. Schmidt and began with a question about the financial aspects of the Sesame Street relationship to HBO and how PBS fits into the mix. Mr. Schmidt explained that Sesame Street is not produced by HBO; it continues to be produced by the non-profit Sesame Workshop. The reason for the HBO arrangement is that technology has devastated the video and merchandising opportunities, which has greatly impacted revenues. The deal with HBO provides cash infusion. The show is produced in ½ hour episodes (formerly 1 hour before HBO) which air first on HBO. Approximately 6 to 9 months later the episodes appear on PBS. The arrangement allows for a longer shelf life of each episode. At first there was a concern about having the program appear first on a pay network, but there is a history of partnerships between PBS and commercial programmers, and Barney was mentioned as an example of such a partnership.

CAB member Ms. Steinz pointed out that no one has investigated whether funds previously budgeted for CPB and PBS will be used for military activity.

CAB member Ms. Wolfe asked if WTTW pays extra any programs. Mr. Schmidt answered that programs come from a number of sources. For instance, the Rick Steves travel shows are not produced by PBS – they come from American Public Television.

CAB candidate Dr. Sohn mentioned that a bi-partisan approach is needed to preserve funds for public television and other organizations such as the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The public needs to communicate with its representative. Mr. Schmidt added that 72% of Americans believe in government support for the arts.

CAB candidate Ms. Dragan asked where and how that station acquires 70% of its programming. Mr. Schmidt explained that most viewers do not distinguish between local and national content because the viewing area is no longer limited to an area within 60 miles of the Willis Tower. 24x7 streaming makes WTTW available worldwide.

CAB Vice Chair Ms. Mockus asked if any of the PBS allocation comes from the NEA. Mr. Schmidt explained that while NEA supports some PBS programming, funding to PBS comes from the CPB. There is no connection between NEA and CPB.

CAB candidate Ms. Singh asked about the strategic plan and the culture of the station's viewers, asking if the strategic plan considers the culture of the viewers. Mr. Schmidt answered that the plan includes a serious commitment to community engagement. Outreach staff takes the programming content and helps people understand what is available and how to use it. More effort is always needed. One important initiative is the "My Neighborhood" project. The project is first representing Pilson. Other neighborhoods being considered for future installments include Englewood, Back of the Yards and Austin. Such projects include special neighborhood activities organized by Community Engagement, such as special screenings. The initial Pilson installment was underwritten by a \$1 million grant from the Tom Harris Family Foundation. The Chair expressed excitement over the project, but indicated that while transmitting worldwide the station should not forget about the local audience. In response, Mr. Schmidt commented that 200 Chicago Public School students have attended a production course in how to make short films. The project's budget includes college scholarships. The project is supervised by the Community Engagement department, under the direction of Jessica Lawson. Additionally, the station's website contains stories and available tools, original content. The entire station staff is involved in community engagement. Everything the station produces will have a community engagement element.

CAB member Ms. Steinz mentioned that many in the Spanish-speaking community are unaware of the WTTW channel which broadcasts in Spanish. Mr. Schmidt informed CAB that the channel became a commercial channel in January affiliated with WTTW and PBS.

Mr. Schmidt thanked CAB for the opportunity to meet and excused himself.

CAB returned to the agenda.

October Minutes Approval: The Chair called for additional changes or corrections to the October meeting minutes, previously circulated. There being no comments, the Chair called for a motion to approve. Ms. Cragan motioned that the minutes be adopted. Ms. Frost seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Approval: There being no changes to the agenda, Vice Chair Ms. Mockus moved for approval of the agenda; Ms. Steinz seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment: The Chair noted the presence of members of the public and opened the floor for comment. CAB candidate Ms. Singh returned to the subject of the cultural component of the station's programming. Ms. Singh commented that the community 25% Asian and South Asian. She mentioned that outreach is critical as many cannot reach cable TV.

CAB candidate Ms. Harrison commented that she grew up watching WTTW and that it was a pleasure to attend the meeting. Ms. Harrison asked whether the station's budget is set up for original programming. Mr. Soles mentioned that is currently seeking funding for an Indian cooking show. Such efforts take time; the tentative scheduling is for 2018. Additionally, "The First Guru" telling the story of an Indian Swami visiting Chicago in the 1800's, is a documentary scheduled for 2018.

Mr. Soles explained that some projects are produced internally and others are done with outside partners. He explained that everything comes down to funding. If producers have resources, the projects can move ahead quickly.

The Chair declared a quorum, but noted, "Just barely" and announced that Felicia Townsend has resigned from the CAB and will be taking a position at Governors State University. This leaves 19 active member of CAB.

Discussion of Remarks by Dan Schmidt: Ms. Cragan opened the discussion expressing her excitement about the neighborhoods project and posed the question of whether the CAB could recruit new applicants in conjunction with the marketing efforts for the new series.

Dan Soles, WTTW's Senior Vice President and Chief Television Content Officer, commented that WTTW hopes to open dialogues between Chicago neighborhoods. CAB member Ms. Blondell commented on the bifurcation of WTTW's focus – local v. national and asked how decisions are made. Mr. Soles responded the WTTW strives to always deliver great content and to deliver it any way it can to as many people as possible and in many ways as possible and to always strive for balance, in keeping with the station's desire to be a "Window to the World."

Trustees' Liaison: In the absence of either Trustee liaison, no report was presented.

Management Liaison: The Chair introduced Mr. Soles and described his position as being responsible for everything content-wise.

Ms. Soles opened by expanding on the previous discussion concerning VeMe and its elimination from the WTTW line-up of channels. Basically VeMe decided to go commercial. The split was amicable. The change offered the station an opportunity to expand children's programming by creating "WTTW Kids." Ratings results are very encouraging in the 6-10 PM window. The audience is primarily ages 2-5 and tops out at about age 8. Children's hospitals have the channel on all night. The station is encouraged by the numbers after only two months. Plans include expanding related online and App features. The channel can be found at 11.4 and on Comcast and RCN. Direct TV and Dish Network do not carry the channel. Mr. Soles asked that CAB members take a look and provide feedback.

Ms. Frost asked how the station knows that the audience is primarily kids age 2-5. Mr. Soles responded that the data comes from Nielson ratings but commented that it's more difficult to gauge the online audience. Mr. Soles said that technology is catching up and that programs are focus-tested. Through this research it's been determined that the "sweet spot" is ages 3-4.

Ms. Frost then mentioned her son's online experience during which a camera feature was enabled. Whether this was a spam-related incident is unclear, but it occurred while using the WTTW website. Ms. Frost wondered if the station was gauging the audience with camera capture and/or cookies.

The Chair returned to the subject of VeMe and asked the separation from WTTW came about. Mr. Soles explained that VeMe was an external entity and that the agreement with VeMe had a 10-year term. Simply put, VeMe was not generating the revenue it expected and it carried little local programming from WTTW. VeMe's mission deviated over time and it started buying televideos from Spain. Since WTTW had the Kids Channel in the works, the separation with VeMe was well-timed. PBD Kids is based in Washington, DC.

CAB Member Mr. Bosco asked about the station's data collection policy. Mr. Soles replied that the station collects data, and specifically mentioned views on the website but suggested that Anne Gleason would be a better source of information. Mr. Soles mentioned that a show that is heavily viewed on TV it will also be heavily viewed online.

Returning to the neighborhoods series, the Pilson installment will have a kick-off viewing and panel discussion on April 20 at Juarez High School and CAB members are invited to attend. The people of Pilson will tell their own story. The materials on the website will take a deeper dive. The program will air on April 27 and will be a 2-hour event, preempting "Chicago Tonight." Phil Ponce and Eddie Arruza will moderate a town hall dialogue after the show. Univision is a partner on the town hall. 150-200 people can attend at the studios and a live camera will be in Pilson. A number of elected officials and community leaders will participate.

Another upcoming program is "American Creed" which sets out to emphasize that we have more in common than we think. The film will travel the country exploring diversity. Some subjects include Native Americans, the Afghan War and Joe Madden and a Hazelton, PA outreach.

Vice Chair Ms. Mockus commented that this type of project is overdue. Think of the trouble that might have been avoided if we promoted unity.

Scheduled for November or January.

“Weekend in Havana” is currently being edited and is scheduled for mid-July broadcast.

There will be a new set of “10 ... that Changed America” in mid-2018.

And in early stages, special programming for the 100th anniversary of the 370th Regiment in WWI.

In non-television production, “Urban Nature” for the website. One example is city v. non-city squirrels.

Membership Committee/Nominating Committee: The Chair called upon Ms. Meredith of the Membership Committee to present candidates for membership on the CAB. Ms. Meredith introduced Eleanor Wolfe, L.C.S.W, C.A.D.C., a licensed clinical social worker a certified alcohol and other addictive-drug counselor and Herbert Sohn, M.D., J.D., a practicing urologist and a lawyer. Ms. Meredith also introduced three applicants to the CAB: Ms. Shweta Singh, Ms. Denisa Dragan, and Ms. Dee Harrison.

Ms. Singh is originally from Northern India. She obtained a Ph.D. in social work at North Carolina. She is with Loyola University and has done communication work, documentary and social work. She has an 8 year old son and is a fan of “Check Please.”

Ms. Dragan is originally from Romania. She came to the U.S. at age 14 and her parents watched WTTW to learn English. She did her undergraduate work at DePaul and her graduate work at University of Chicago. She is now in health management with Presence Health and works to retain patients in the system and bring health care to those in need.

Ms. Harrison is a native Illinoisan and a graduate of the UCLA Film School and returned to Illinois a few months ago. She watched WTTW as a child and remembers “Mr. Rogers” as an impactful program. She would like to merge her experience and training with WTTW.

Dr. Sohn is originally from NY. He is currently involved in health care reform, including Obama care and alternatives to be presented to Congress. He described WTTW as the media outlet that represents the city and the best of Chicago. He feels that the future of Chicago can be built by WTTW.

The Chair motioned for the election of Dr. Sohn and Ms Wolfe. The motion was seconded by Ms. Steinz. Motion for election of Dr. Sohn and Ms. Wolfe passed unanimously.

Ms. Meredith listed other potential candidates to the CAB: Mr. Carlton Triolo-Sapp, Mr. Bruce Sutchar, Ms. Sheila Jones and Ms. Lisa Wolt.

The Chair reminded all that the April meeting represents the annual CAB meeting at which annual elections are held. The 2017 class is up for election, as well the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary positions. The election will be held at the April 18th meeting. Also needing attention are Committee Chairs and Committee members.

The Chair does not intend to address the Committees and Committee Chairs until after the April election and after a discussion of the entire committee structure. The Chair posed a number of issues:

- Should work be assigned to committees and the reported back to the entire CAB at business meetings?
- Is there an appropriate balance of committees and committee membership?
- Does the CAB have the correct committees to accomplish its work?

Program Committee: No report.

Community Engagement Committee: No report.

Technology Committee: No report.

Cultural Research and Development Committee: No report.

Education Committee: Ms. Steinz reported that due to a series of unexpected events, three scheduled education committee meetings had to be cancelled.

Ms. Steinz reminded everyone of the Robotics finals to be held April 1st at the UIC Pavilion. 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM, admission is free. Youth from all over the country compete. It's very exciting. Teams of high school students receive kits to build their robots. The pits are open which allows visitors to view the robots up close. The First Robotics organization was able to provide \$20 million in scholarships over the past year.

Journalistic Standards and Ethics Committee: The Chair informed CAB that the work on journalistic standards is close to completion, and should be done in the next few weeks. CAB believes that WTTW's standards should be available to the public. The station agrees; this is a major achievement.

Station Administration and Finance Committee: No report.

Secretary: No report.

Vice Chairman: No report.

Chairman's Report:

The Chair reminded that the 2017 class of CAB members should contact Norma Sutton to report whether each will stand for re-election.

The Chair also reminded everyone that the roster of CAB members is intended for CAB purposes only and should not be shared outside the CAB.

The Chair commented that CAB should schedule a meeting dates with Jessica Lawson and Anne Gleason.

CAB member Ms. Blondell inquired whether the CAB has a strategic plan of its own. The Chair answered no, but asked CAB members to consider whether a Strategic Planning Committee is needed.

Good and Welfare:

Ms. Meredith mentioned that the next meeting of On the Table will occur on May 16. She will send information to CAB members.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. Dr. Sohn motioned, seconded by Ms. Cragan.

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:38 PM.

Next Public CAB Meeting: April 18, 2017, at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Rita E. Tandaric, Secretary

Attachments: