



Educational Communications Board

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EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD MEETING

ECB Board Room

3319 West Beltline Highway

Madison, Wisconsin

April 17th, 2015

9:30 a.m.

MINUTES

Roll Call and Introductions

Board Chair Dr. Rolf Wegenke called the meeting of the Educational Communications Board to order at 9:40 a.m. In lieu of a roll call of Board Member attendance, Dr. Wegenke asked board members to introduce themselves for the benefit of a new board member. The complete attendance list follows:

Board Members Present:

- Ellis Bromberg
- Dean Dietrich
- Diane Everson
- Senator Nikiya Harris Dodd
- Erin Kastberg (representing Ray Cross)
- Kurt Kiefer (representing Superintendent Tony Evers)
- Richard Lepping
- Eileen Littig
- Karen Schroeder
- Rolf Wegenke, Ph.D., Chair
- Cate Zeuske (representing Scott Neitzel)

Absent:

- Regina Milner
- Senator Luther Olsen
- Jim Zylstra (representing Morna Foy)

Approval of Minutes from October 17th, 2014 Meeting

Dean Dietrich moved, seconded by Eileen Littig to approve the October 17th, 2014 meeting minutes. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.



AGENDA ITEM 1. Report of the Board Chair

Dr. Wegenke noted that we've all been focused on what is essential in this agency and the future direction, and multitude of things that may have an effect on our mission and what we accomplish. A lot of what we've been doing is in keeping with our first name "Educational". We also recognize that the Joint Finance Committee is in session right now, and we are at a time when policy, programs and administration intersect. This is an interesting and challenging time for the board and there are a lot of important things to deal with.

AGENDA ITEM 2. Report of the Executive Director

Dr. Wegenke introduced Executive Director Gene Purcell. Dr. Wegenke reminded board members that Mr. Purcell provides a copy of his written report in advance as part of the board packets distributed prior to the meeting and encouraged board members to let Mr. Purcell know if they have any questions or comments.

Mr. Purcell promised that his report would be brief. His written report was focused on the ongoing budget deliberations, and that topic is an agenda item for today's meeting. Mr. Purcell reported that the proposed 2015-16 State Budget includes a 34% cut in GPR funding (\$2.7 million) which represents a 14% cut in the total ECB budget. The proposed budget also moves the equivalent of 15 full time positions from GPR to Program Revenue funding and moves 8 additional positions out of ECB as part of a consolidation of state services program. Mr. Purcell went on to report that under the proposed budget, the ECB faces the potential loss of 23 of 56 full time positions. Mr. Purcell added that public broadcasting will also be affected by cuts to the University but the total amount of those cuts is unknown at this time.

Mr. Purcell went on to report that during the last couple of months, discussions surrounding the budget and planning for the ramifications has been his full-time job. Mr. Purcell has been working with colleagues from UW Extension to assess the impact of the proposed budget, speaking with legislators to advocate for public broadcasting and answer questions, communicating with viewers and listeners, and informing educators around the state about the potential impact to ECB and the Wisconsin Media Lab.

Mr. Purcell reported that many meetings with legislators have taken place during the last couple of months, mostly with members of the Joint Finance Committee. Mr. Purcell believes there has been progress, and he has heard from many legislators who are hearing concerns from their constituents regarding the potential impact of the proposed state budget.

Mr. Purcell added that he has also been communicating with staff at ECB and the UW (WPT & WPR). Mr. Purcell noted that while there has been some tension and uncertainty, the work of ECB, WPT and WPR employees continues uninterrupted. Mr. Purcell wanted all board



members to be aware of the outstanding work of the employees within public broadcasting during a difficult time.

To conclude his report, Mr. Purcell reminded board members that James Steinbach would be retiring at the end of June. Mr. Purcell expressed that it has been a privilege to work with Mr. Steinbach for 20 years and he will leave a remarkable legacy at WPT that will have a positive impact for many years.

After a rousing round of applause from the board and multiple compliments from board members, Mr. Steinbach expressed his gratitude, acknowledged the support and contributions of WPT staff, and said that his career at WPT has been a privilege.

Following Mr. Purcell's report, there were a few questions from board members. Rich Lepping asked about an article that had appeared in the newspaper about layoffs and early retirements at the UW and UW System campuses, and wondered if these layoffs would affect services at WPT or WPR. Mr. Lepping also asked if these layoffs were a result of the proposed budget or a preemptive move. Mr. Purcell replied that he believes they are preemptive but it's too early to tell how much the cuts to the UW System will be or how they will impact WPT and WPR. Erin Kastberg confirmed Mr. Purcell's response and noted that some campuses, within their individual budget, have offered early retirement incentives but to her knowledge, no campus has issued layoff notices. Ms. Kastberg added that it's too early to know what the extent of layoffs will be throughout the system or Madison until the budget process is more complete.

Dean Dietrich asked Gene Purcell for permission to share the board packet reports with the Board of Directors of WPRA, as they are helpful in highlighting the work and profile of the ECB. Mr. Purcell encouraged Mr. Dietrich to share the reports with the WPRA. Dr. Wegenke reminded board members that our meetings are subject to open record laws and that it would be perfectly appropriate to share board reports and encouraged board members to do so whenever possible.

AGENDA ITEM 3. Acceptance of Annual Financial Audit Results - Carrie Gindt, CPA, Reilly, Penner & Benton LLP

Gene Purcell introduced Carrie Gindt, CPA, who joined the meeting via telephone. Ms. Gindt provided a brief review of the audit report which was provided to board members in advance of today's meeting. A complete copy of the report will be included with the official minutes of today's meeting. Following Ms. Gindt's review, there were several questions from board members.

Rich Lepping inquired about the upcoming spectrum auction and asked why ECB's spectrum or FCC licenses aren't listed in the balance sheet as a capital asset. Gene Purcell responded that spectrum owned by the ECB is considered an "intangible". ECB Finance Director Aimee Wierzba



added that an analysis was conducted in 2009 and, in compliance with Government Accounting Standards Board Policy 51, spectrum assets are not included as an asset on the agency balance sheet.

Dean Dietrich inquired about the auditor's letter to ECB management and asked Aimee Wierzba if she's confident the ECB finance team can address the issues identified in the letter. Ms. Wierzba responded she believes that with the finance office fully staffed and with the transition to the STAR system, the issues identified will be alleviated.

Rich Lepping stated that the goal of any audit is to get a clean opinion every audit reveals management issues or double entries but he's comfortable in knowing that we have a clean opinion.

Cate Zueske asked if the ECB will issue a response letter to the auditor's letter to management. Ms. Wierzba replied that it's not required but she has met with Ms. Gindt in person to discuss her strategy to address the issues, as well as the consolidation of accounting systems. Dr. Wegenke asked Ms. Wierzba to consider following up on Ms. Zueske's suggestion.

Cate Zueske reminded board members that the implementation of STAR is scheduled for July 1st and will help with issues such as duplicate business processes.

Erin Kastberg asked how significant, in general, "material weakness" is as it relates to a financial audit. Dr. Wegenke responded that in ECB's case, these are minor issues and in his experience, no audit is complete without identifying some material weakness. Ms. Wierzba added that the errors were a result of paper entries and clerical mistakes that were corrected as part of the audit.

Dean Dietrich moved, seconded by Eileen Littig to accept the audit results. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

AGENDA ITEM 4. Discussion of Impact and Possible Action on State Budget Proposal

Dr. Wegenke introduced the next agenda item and expressed how gratified and impressed he has been by the civil, reasonable and balanced discussions he's witnessed; not only from the leadership of ECB, but also from our friends and allies in public radio and television, and the K – 12 educational community. Dr. Wegenke continued that in his meetings with legislators, a criticism has never been leveled against this organization or its supporters. Dr. Wegenke expressed great pride in how the ECB staff and Gene Purcell have approached these discussions. Dr. Wegenke then asked Gene Purcell to provide a brief overview of the proposed budget for the ECB.



Gene Purcell reiterated his comments from the Executive Director report and provided an overview of the proposed state budget for the ECB. Mr. Purcell reported the proposed state budget represents a 34% cut to GPR funding for the ECB. This equates to a loss of \$2.7 million or 14% of the total ECB budget. The proposed budget also moves 15 full time positions from GPR to Program Revenue funding. The proposed budget also moves 8 positions from ECB to DOA as part of an effort to consolidate state services related to IT and Finance. In total, the proposed state budget represents a \$2.7 million cut and the potential loss of 23 of 56 full time positions. Mr. Purcell reported that the ECB's full time positions were reduced from 94 to 72 in 2004, and in 2007 reduced to 56. Mr. Purcell attributed these cuts to state agency consolidation and technological improvements. Mr. Purcell expressed concern that further reductions may compromise the agency's ability to maintain its transmission infrastructure and provide services at present levels of reliability.

Dr. Wegenke opened the floor for discussion and asked board members for their comments or questions.

Dean Dietrich reported that he attended a legislative listening session and spoke to his local legislators about the proposed budget and how it may affect public broadcasting. Mr. Dietrich reported that following the session, he was surrounded by several teachers who spoke passionately about the significance of the Wisconsin Media Lab in their classroom. Mr. Dietrich pointed out that the proposed cuts go beyond public broadcasting and could impact what resources are available for classroom use by teachers.

Mr. Dietrich continued by describing the advocacy efforts of the Wisconsin Public Radio Association and Friends of Wisconsin Public Television. Mr. Dietrich shared that he is considering offering a motion for the ECB Board of Directors to adopt a resolution in support of the agency and acknowledging the negative impact of the proposed state budget.

Dr. Wegenke asked board members to consider the appropriateness of such a motion. Dr. Wegenke suggested that as a citizen board for a public agency, it might be more appropriate for us to provide the legislature with information they need to make decisions rather than for us to take a stand in opposition or support of the proposed state budget.

Karen Schroeder said she believes there may be confusion as to whether the ECB is a state agency or a public institution and it may be helpful to clarify that for the public in order to better understand the state's obligation to fund the agency.

Eileen Littig reported that she attended listening sessions in Green Bay and identified herself as a member of the ECB. Ms. Littig continued that she did contact Gene Purcell in advance of the listening session to request information she could share with legislators to help them understand the ECB and the potential impact of the proposed state budget. Ms. Littig indicated that the information Mr. Purcell provided about the Wisconsin Media Lab was very helpful and



she encouraged other board members to share this information as well. Mr. Purcell agreed to share that information with all board members.

Cate Zeuske wanted to update the board regarding the consolidation of state shared services initiative. Ms. Zeuske reported that a budget errata bill has been provided to the Joint Finance Committee to modify the implementation date of the consolidation of state shared services positions from July 1, 2015 to July 1, 2016. Additionally, the errata bill will authorize the Secretary of the Department of Administration (DOA) to review individual positions in order to determine if it may be more appropriate for them to remain at an agency other than DOA.

Eileen Littig asked Gene Purcell what is the bottom line if the ECB takes a 34% cut in GPR funding, and how much of that cut would impact the Wisconsin Media Lab (WiML), emergency alert services, and WPT programming. Mr. Purcell replied that programming is funded by program revenue and that state funds (GPR) support the WiML and the Delivery Division. Mr. Purcell noted that reduced funding will diminish the WiML's ability to produce and procure and license educational media. On the delivery side, Mr. Purcell noted that, potentially, there could be a slowdown of maintenance, equipment replacement, response time to maintenance issues, and an overall reduction in equipment reliability.

Kurt Kiefer discussed the ECB's relationship with the Department of Public Instruction and spoke about the value of digital content that the ECB and WiML make available to Wisconsin schools and homeschool students. Mr. Kiefer reminded the board of Wisconsin Statutes and the ECB's responsibility to create content related to Wisconsin such as Wisconsin history, geography, and tribal history. Mr. Kiefer noted that as the utilization of digital content for education increases, so does the value of the content licensed by the ECB. Mr. Kiefer added that this value is realized even more by rural Wisconsin school districts.

Rich Lepping noted that he has met with legislators at the Capitol and met twice with DOA Secretary Neitzel. Mr. Lepping wondered if the board should have considered adopting a resolution sooner, and questioned whether such a resolution would resonate as much as "boots on the ground" and meeting face to face with lawmakers.

Dr. Wegenke noted that legislators he's talked to have heard from Gene Purcell as well as constituents and he does not believe there's a perception we're running away.

Diane Everson spoke in support of adopting a resolution and reminded board members that we volunteered for this board because we care passionately for public broadcasting and she believes we have an obligation to do everything we can to advocate for the agency.

Eileen Littig thanked Ms. Everson for the editorial she published in the Edgerton Reporter in support of the ECB and asked Ms. Everson for permission to share it. Ms. Everson gave



permission for all board members to share the editorial as they wish and asked David Cobb to make sure all board members have a copy.

Rich Lepping asked Cate Zeuske and Senator Harris Dodd for their opinion on the effectiveness of a resolution adopted by the ECB Board of Directors in support of the agency during the budget process.

Senator Harris Dodd replied that it certainly can't hurt to present a collective voice and share our concerns with legislators who are deliberating the budget.

Cate Zeuske shared that, as a former legislator, she believes lawmakers need to hear from end users. Ms. Zeuske added that Dean Dietrich's story about teachers meeting with legislators is an example of the type of feedback she found most valuable as a legislator. Ms. Zeuske added that she doesn't believe legislators are waiting for this board to respond to the proposed budget and she agreed with Mr. Lepping's comment regarding "boots on the ground" and meeting with legislators in person.

Dean Dietrich moved to adopt the following resolution: "The Board of Directors of the Educational Communications Board expressed its support for the mission, programs, and services provided by the ECB, and the information that has been provided by the Executive Director in response to the proposed state budget." The motion was seconded by Rich Lepping.

Dr. Wegenke asked if there was any discussion regarding Mr. Dietrich's motion. Karen Schroeder moved to amend the motion to insert "factual" for the motion to read: "The Board of Directors of the Educational Communications Board expressed its support for the mission, programs, and services provided by the ECB, and the factual information that has been provided by the Executive Director in response to the proposed state budget." Dr. Wegenke seconded Karen Schroeder's motion.

There was no further discussion regarding Ms. Schroeder's motion. Dr. Wegenke called for a roll call vote to Ms. Schroeder's motion. The motion passed by a vote of 7 ayes and 4 nays.

Dr. Wegenke asked if there was any further discussion regarding Mr. Dietrich's motion and there was none. Dr. Wegenke called for a roll call vote to adopt the resolution: "The Board of Directors of the Educational Communications Board expressed its support for the mission, programs, and services provided by the ECB, and the factual information that has been provided by the Executive Director in response to the proposed state budget." The motion passed by a vote of 10 ayes, 0 nays, and one abstention (Zeuske).



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AGENDA ITEM 5. Financial Report

There were no questions or comments.

AGENDA ITEM 6. Evaluation of WECB Executive Director

Pursuant to s. 19.85(1)(c), Wis. Stats., the Board convened in a closed session for the annual performance evaluation of the WECB Executive Director.

AGENDA ITEM 7. Questions regarding reports or other comments from Board members

Eileen Littig shared that the next Teen Connection will air June 10th at 7 p.m. on WPT. The subject of the June 10th episode is “Mental Health and Youth”.

There were no further questions or comments.

AGENDA ITEM 8. Adjournment

Dean Dietrich moved to adjourn, seconded by Karen Schroeder. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. Dr. Wegenke announced the meeting adjourned at 12:40 p.m.