



Educational Communications Board

3319 West Beltline Highway • Madison, WI 53713-4296 • 608.264.9600 • ECB.org

EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD MEETING

ECB Board Room
3319 West Beltline Highway
Madison, Wisconsin
October 25, 2019
9:30 A.M.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Marta Bechtol, Executive Director

Staffing Update

I am pleased to announce the promotion of Adam Hargrove from Director of Field Engineering to Director of Engineering, replacing Steve Bauder who is now officially retired. Adam began managing advanced communications systems development in 2006 while serving in the Air Force. He has developed and deployed secure radio and data networks supporting (literally) the highest levels of national government. He's adept with stakeholder interactions, having served as intermediary among the military, contractors and vendors for over a decade. His deep experience as a project manager was put to use immediately at ECB with the repacks of WPNE and WHLA, which were flawlessly executed by the field and contracted staff. Adam's proven performance along with his prioritization of safety and accountability will ensure his success as the new division leader. Adam holds a degree in management information systems from Bellevue University. He and his family relocated from Seymour to Middleton in August.

The three staff reallocations needed to constitute the new Broadcast I.T. Unit were officially finalized by DOA on September 23, 2019. This unit was initially authorized by DOA on October 1, 2017. These employees are now settled into their new positions and the agency is glad to be moving forward.

State Budget Update

Although the agency was unsuccessful in securing additional GPR for K-12 education, we were pleasantly surprised to see the statutory authority for K-12 media content returned to Wis. Stats. 39.11.

"Authorize the board, when appropriate and related to the programs of the state educational radio and television network, to procure or publish instructional material. Provide that a reasonable handling charge could be established to cover the costs of providing this material and that all moneys received from the sale of these materials would be deposited in the board's gifts and grants appropriation."

This reinsertion will not have substantial impact on our operational activities, but is symbolic in its presence. We are very glad to have it back.



Educational Communications Board

3319 West Beltline Highway • Madison, WI 53713-4296 • 608.264.9600 • ECB.org

Another notable adjustment is the reduction in annual GPR for agency utilities (\$24,200 and \$5,000 respectively). We are hopeful that the new energy efficient transmitters will be able to absorb this loss. All other adjustments were standard and are not likely to adversely impact the operational activities of the agency.

The agency's capital funding letter was received in early September. The allocations include:

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| All Agency Program (funds power increases at WPNE and WHLA): | \$3,061,000 |
| Small Projects (routine replacement and maintenance projects): | <u>\$2,579,000</u> |
| TOTAL: | \$5,640,000 |

Federal Budget Updates

In late June, the U.S. House of Representatives approved a "minibus" appropriations bill that fully funded the public broadcasting requests for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 including \$495 million for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) in FY 2022, \$30 million for Ready To Learn (RTL) and \$20 million for public broadcasting interconnection. However, the Senate has endorsed CPB funding at its previous spending level (\$445M), \$25M for RTL, and \$20M for the broadcast interconnect. While these numbers are not everything we'd hoped, they are still positive figures. It remains unclear how or when Congress will finalize FY 2020 funding (which began on Oct. 1), but the continuing resolution signed into law keeps the government operating through November 21, 2019.

Rural Broadband

In cooperation with the Department of Public Instruction, ECB is exploring the possibility of expanding school services by working with local telecoms to provide data credits to households with K-12 students. Conversations and RF studies are being actively conducted to determine the viability of these services in areas where ECB has tower presence.

ECB leadership met with Chairperson Valcq at the Public Services Commission (PSC) and folks from its Wireless Broadband Office last month to discuss the potential of and concerns with using TV whitespace to increase broadband service. There we also met with commercial providers that are using this spectrum in northeastern Wisconsin (as mentioned by Rep. Snyder at the last board meeting) and are exploring partnerships that can identify best practices for use of this spectrum. Marta will speak on the subject at WiscNet's "Connect and Learn: Building Smarter Communities" event on October 23, 2019.

Additionally, we are working with the Division of Intergovernmental Relations to identify Educational Broadband Service (EBS) license opportunities for qualified Tribal communities that could be used to further broadband access.