



Educational Communications Board

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EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD MEETING

**ECB Board Room
3319 West Beltline Highway
Madison, Wisconsin
January 31, 2020
9:30 A.M.**

MINUTES

Roll Call and Introductions

Board Chair Dr. Rolf Wegenke called the meeting of the Educational Communications Board (ECB) to order at 9:30 A.M. In lieu of a roll call attendance of Board Members, Dr. Wegenke asked members to introduce themselves for the benefit of new members. The complete attendance list follows:

Board Members Present:

- Representative Dave Considine
- Heather LaRoi (UW System President Ray Cross designee)
- Jose Delgado
- Jim Zylstra (WTCS President Morna Foy designee), Vice-Chair
- Alyssa Kenney
- Eileen Littig
- Senator Luther Olsen
- Representative Pat Snyder
- Kurt Kiefer (DPI Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor designee)
- Rolf Wegenke, Ph.D., Chair
- Bohdan Zachary

Absent:

- Chris Patton (DOA Secretary Joel Brennan designee)
- David Hutchison
- Senator Fred Risser
- Karen Schroeder



Approval of Minutes from the October 25, 2019 ECB Board Meeting

Eileen Littig moved, seconded by Jim Zylstra, to approve the October 25, 2019 meeting minutes. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

AGENDA ITEM 1. Report of the Board Chair

Dr. Wegenke welcomed new members and reminded all members of the important responsibilities of the ECB and service to the Board of Directors for the State of Wisconsin. Dr. Wegenke noted there are always things to learn and challenges faced by the Board and he looks forward to working with everyone to meet those challenges.

There were no questions or comments regarding the Board Chair report.

AGENDA ITEM 2. Report of the Executive Director

Dr. Wegenke introduced Marta Bechtol, ECB Executive Director, and reminded board members that a copy of the Executive Director's report was included in the board packet in advance of today's meeting.

Ms. Bechtol reported that one of the primary agenda items for today was a presentation of the agency audit results and the Board's acceptance of that report. Ms. Bechtol reminded the Board this was part of the 2019-21 ECB Strategic Plan Direction II, Action Item 3: "Responsibly manage state assets to maximize service and minimize expense."

Ms. Bechtol thanked the ECB Finance Team (Aimee Wright, Natalia Sutyagina, and Dawn Okon) for their hard work in preparing the agency for the audit and accommodating the auditors. Ms. Bechtol noted this was the earliest an audit has been completed at ECB, and she was pleased to make the results available at the January meeting rather than April. Ms. Bechtol reported that ECB is required to undergo an annual financial audit in order to remain eligible for CPB funding.

Ms. Bechtol provided an update on ECB projects before the State Building Commission. Ms. Bechtol reported that power increases have been approved for WHLA in the La Crosse area and WPNE in Green Bay. Ms. Bechtol noted that construction contracts and equipment orders have been finalized and the projects will be completed by November 2020. Ms. Bechtol thanked the ECB Engineering Division for their efforts to keep the process running smoothly.

Ms. Bechtol reported on the Federal Budget as it relates to the ECB. Ms. Bechtol noted this was part of the 2019-21 ECB Strategic Plan Direction I, Action Item 1 to "support efforts to sustain federal funding." Ms. Bechtol reported that the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) funding was passed into law in December 2019. Ms. Bechtol added this includes \$20 million of additional funding to increase the CPB budget from \$445 million to \$465 million, the first



increase to this appropriation in over a decade. Ms. Bechtol added there was also a \$1.25 million increase for the PBS Ready to Learn program, which totaled \$29 million; and a \$20 million ongoing appropriation for the PBS Interconnect.

Ms. Bechtol shared that she is joining Gene Purcell, Bohdan Zachary, Niles Berman and Mark Foley (Chair, MATC Board of Directors) at the America's Public Television Stations (APTS) Public Media Summit in Washington D. C. near the end of February to advocate for public media with Wisconsin Congresspersons.

Ms. Bechtol provided an update on the ECB's Rural Broadband initiative. Ms. Bechtol noted this initiative supports Direction I and II of 2019-21 ECB Strategic Plan. Ms. Bechtol reported that information sharing and meetings have taken place between the ECB, the Public Service Commission, the Department of Public Instruction, and DOA Division of Enterprise Technology, and will continue at future dates. Ms. Bechtol reported that ECB has met with local service providers to explore the potential use of broadcast whitespace in places where ECB maintains towers that are underserved by broadband internet. Ms. Bechtol indicated that larger service providers have expressed little interest while smaller, rural providers have discussed potential pilot programs.

Senator Luther Olsen asked about the FCC Tribal Priority Filing Window for Educational Broadband Service licenses mentioned in Ms. Bechtol's written report. Senator Olsen asked if there has been any interest by Wisconsin tribes to apply for such licenses. Ms. Bechtol responded that ECB has disseminated information to tribes and related state agencies regarding the application process but she does not know yet if any tribes intend to apply for a license.

There were no additional questions or comments regarding the Executive Director report.

AGENDA ITEM 3. Election of Board Officers

Dr. Wegenke announced the floor was open for nominations of Board Officers. Jim Zylstra nominated the current slate of officers for re-election by unanimous ballot: Dr. Rolf Wegenke as Chair, Jim Zylstra as Vice-Chair, and Eileen Littig as Secretary. The nomination was seconded by Senator Luther Olsen. Dr. Wegenke called three times for additional nominations. There were no other nominations. The Board elected Dr. Rolf Wegenke as Chair, Jim Zylstra as Vice-Chair, and Eileen Littig as Secretary by unanimous voice vote.

There were no additional questions or comments from board members.



AGENDA ITEM 4. Ron Dunlap tribute – Niles Berman, Vice Chair of the WPRA Board

Dr. Wegenke introduced Niles Berman, Wisconsin Public Radio Association (WPRA) Vice Chair. Mr. Berman thanked the Board for the opportunity to memorialize Ron Dunlap at today's meeting. Mr. Berman provided a tribute for Mr. Dunlap, ECB board member who passed away on October 28, 2019. Mr. Berman recounted Mr. Dunlap's long career and significant contributions in education as well as his commitment to public service. Mr. Berman discussed Mr. Dunlap's role and accomplishments as a member and chairperson of the WPRA, and also his responsibilities to represent the WPRA for the ECB Board of Directors. Mr. Berman shared that he and Marta Bechtol attended the public memorial service for Mr. Dunlap and he was moved by the outpouring of community support. Mr. Berman shared a collection of comments from WPRA Board of Directors members which were part of a tribute at their most recent meeting. Mr. Berman announced that the WPRA Board has chosen to leave the WPRA Board Chair position open until their next election, at the conclusion of the current fiscal year.

Following Mr. Berman's comments, Senator Olsen reminisced about his daughter's professional experience with Mr. Dunlap; his own experiences traveling with Mr. Dunlap; and noted that Wisconsin lost a great person and a great asset with Mr. Dunlap's passing.

Eileen Littig reminisced about her experiences with Mr. Dunlap as an educator. She noted the challenges he faced in promoting diversity in northeast Wisconsin and praised his success in doing so. Ms. Littig thanked the Board for recognizing Mr. Dunlap at today's meeting.

Dr. Wegenke thanked Mr. Berman and noted that Phil Corriveau, Director of Wisconsin Public Radio (WPR) from 2005 – 2010, had passed away a few weeks before today's meeting. Dr. Wegenke asked Marta Bechtol and Mike Crane to reflect on Mr. Corriveau's passing and share memories of him with the Board. Ms. Bechtol shared that she first met Mr. Corriveau when he was the Deputy Director at the ECB prior to becoming Director of WPR. Ms. Bechtol noted that she worked closely with Mr. Corriveau and that he was a positive spirit in the workplace with a passion for music and radio. Mike Crane discussed Mr. Corriveau's leadership at WPR and his role in advancing the work of the WPRA. Mr. Crane noted that Mr. Corriveau was instrumental in strengthening the fundraising work of WPRA, and that WPR continues to benefit from his vision.

Dr. Wegenke thanked Ms. Bechtol and Mr. Crane. Dr. Wegenke noted that both Mr. Dunlap and Mr. Corriveau should be credited for their public service and contributions to the success of public media in Wisconsin, and that it was important for the Board to honor their legacy today.

There were no further questions or comments.



AGENDA ITEM 5. Presentation: Project CHEESEHEAD – Ankur Desai, PhD, UW-Madison

Dr. Wegenke asked Jeff Ohnstad, Deputy Director, ECB Engineering Division, to introduce Dr. Ankur Desai and the Project CHEESEHEAD presentation. Mr. Ohnstad described his role in the Engineering Division, which includes managing the ECB's leased tower space. Mr. Ohnstad noted that one such agreement in Park Falls, WI has provided tower space for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration research equipment for over two decades as the location is ideally suited for atmospheric research. Mr. Ohnstad reported that in 2018, the University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences arranged to utilize ECB resources in Park Falls for a research program titled "Project CHEESEHEAD." Mr. Ohnstad introduced Dr. Ankur Desai as the Reid Bryson Professor of Climate, People, and Environment in the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences and the Nelson Institute Center for Climatic Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Dr. Desai thanked the Board and noted that he was honored to work with and speak to the ECB as a researcher as well as a Wisconsin citizen and supporter of PBS Wisconsin. Dr. Desai reported that researchers from around the world have utilized data collected at the Park Falls site for over twenty years using instruments mounted on the WLEF-TV tower to monitor atmospheric conditions. Dr. Desai noted that the tower's location, presence of long-term observations, and good working relationships have promoted a number of studies throughout the region that have advanced climate science and ecology.

Dr. Desai went on to describe the "Chequamegon Heterogeneous Ecosystem Energy-balance Study Enabled by a High-density Extensive Array of Detectors" project which is referred to as "Project CHEESEHEAD". Dr. Desai displayed a series of pictures depicting the equipment installation and operation at the WLEF site. Multiple detectors were installed at the WLEF site and surrounding land, and some data was collected from research airplanes. Dr. Desai displayed additional maps and pictures related to the surrounding forestation, and described how the data from Project CHEESEHEAD will help scientists and researchers understand how ecologies respond to carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Dr. Desai noted that Project CHEESEHEAD collected over 100 terabytes of data that will facilitate scientific research during the next year. Dr. Desai reported that for over a quarter century, the partnership between researchers, the ECB, and partners at the United States Forest Service has supported numerous workshops, field projects, public outreach events, and scientific publications. He hopes this will continue into the future.



AGENDA ITEM 6. Presentation of Audit Report – John Rader, Baker Tilly Virchow Krause LLP

Dr. Wegenke introduced John Rader of Baker Tilly Virchow Krause LLP. Mr. Rader reviewed 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. Mr. Rader reported that Baker Tilly Virchow Krause completed audits of the ECB and PBS Wisconsin. Mr. Rader reviewed each step of the audit process including the review of internal controls, financial transactions, and financial statements which lead to the issuance of the final audit opinion. Mr. Rader reported that Baker Tilly Virchow Krause has issued an unmodified opinion and offered no recommendations. Mr. Rader equated an "unmodified opinion" as a "clean" opinion that ECB's financial statements are prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), the numbers are materially correct, and all the financial statement disclosures that are required by GAAP are included in ECB's financial statements. Mr. Rader noted this was the highest level of assurance that can be issued by an external CPA team, and that this opinion reflects strong and responsible financial management at the ECB.

Mr. Rader reviewed financial statements for Fiscal Year 2019 for the ECB operating fund and the Wisconsin Public Broadcasting Foundation (WPBF). Mr. Rader reported that WPBF current assets decreased by about \$2.4 million, which he attributed to the transfer of funds from cash accounts to long term investments. Mr. Rader reported that non-current assets increased by about \$5 million which he attributed to long term investment transfer and ongoing donations. Mr. Rader reported that current liabilities for the ECB increased by about \$1.31 million from FY2018 to FY2019, which he attributed to a net pension asset liability as determined by the Wisconsin Retirement System and allocated to all participants.

Mr. Rader reported that equity, or net income, for the ECB has increased \$2.6 million. Mr. Rader reported that equity for the WPBF increased \$3.3 million.

Mr. Rader reported an increase in operating revenue for the ECB of about \$672,000, which he attributed to contributions, major gifts and CPB grants.

Mr. Rader reported an increase in operating expenses of about \$1.3 million which he attributed mainly to increases in programming, broadcast and production expenses.

Mr. Rader reported that the overall change in net position was income of about \$2.6 million.

Mr. Rader reviewed the audit management letter and noted there were no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies to report which reflects successful internal control procedures at ECB.

Following Mr. Rader's review, there were comments and questions from board members, and a brief discussion.



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For the sake of new board members, Senator Olsen asked Aimee Wright to explain the relationship between the WPBF and ECB. Ms. Wright discussed the relationship between the fundraising groups (WPRA, Friends of PBS Wisconsin) and the Wisconsin Public Broadcasting Foundation, and the allocation agreements between the WPBF and ECB.

Alyssa Kenney asked about the depreciation schedule for transmission towers. Mr. Rader discussed the depreciation estimates that are part of the ECB financial statements. Aimee Wright responded that depreciation schedules for towers are 20 years and 6 years for equipment, and these schedules are reflected in the capital budget.

Marta Bechtol discussed the ECB capital budget request which includes 2, 6 and 20-year schedules to plan for the repair and replacement of towers and their related equipment and technology.

Jose Delgado asked Mr. Rader to discuss the strength of internal financial control procedures at ECB. Mr. Rader replied the audit team tests and assesses internal controls but does make a judgement regarding the strength. He noted that no weaknesses or deficiencies were identified and the audit made no recommendations related to internal controls.

Mr. Delgado asked Mr. Rader if the audit included any risk assessment of the ECB or WPBF financial systems. Mr. Rader replied that risk assessment was not part of the audit.

There were no further questions or comments from Board members regarding the audit presentation.

Dr. Wegenke thanked Mr. Rader and the staff of Baker Tilly Virchow for their work and presentation of the audit.

AGENDA ITEM 7. Financial Reports

Dr. Wegenke noted that quarterly financial reports were included in the board packets distributed in advance of today's meeting and asked if there were any questions from board members regarding the reports.

Senator Luther Olsen inquired about the difference between the FY19 and FY20 contribution goals for Television. Aimee Wright attributed this to vacancies in corporate underwriting that are in the process of being filled. Ms. Wright believes these numbers will be closer to or meet the goals when those positions are filled.

There were no further questions or comments regarding the Finance Reports.



AGENDA ITEM 8. Presentation of ECB Executive Director Evaluation Materials to Board –
Marta Bechtol

Marta Bechtol noted that April’s ECB Board of Directors meeting will include her annual performance evaluation and she has distributed a “progress to date” report via email to preview what will be discussed. Ms. Bechtol indicated she will update that report prior to the April meeting.

There were no questions or comments from Board members.

AGENDA ITEM 9. Questions/Comments from Board members

Dr. Wegenke reminded board members of the 2020 meeting dates:

April 24, 2020

July 17, 2020

October 16, 2020

There were no additional comments from board members.

AGENDA ITEM 10. Adjournment

Eileen Littig moved, seconded by Jim Zylstra to adjourn. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. Dr. Wegenke announced the meeting adjourned at 11:00 A.M.