

**EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD MEETING**  
**Virtual Teams Meeting**  
**January 22, 2021**  
**9:30 A.M.**

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MINUTES

Roll Call and Introductions

Board Chair Dr. Rolf Wegenke called the meeting of the Educational Communications Board to order at 9:35 A.M. A roll call of Board Member attendance was taken and recorded. The complete attendance list follows:

Board Members Present:      Representative Dave Considine  
   Niles Berman  
   Jim Zylstra (WTCS President Morna Foy designee), Vice-Chair  
   Alyssa Kenney  
   Eileen Littig  
   Kurt Kiefer (DPI Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor  
   designee)  
   Heather LaRoi (UW System President designee)  
   Leah Lechleiter-Luke  
   Chris Patton (DOA Secretary Joel Brennan designee)  
   Representative Pat Snyder  
   Rolf Wegenke, Ph.D., Chair  
   Bohdan Zachary

Absent:                              Jose Delgado  
   Tara Senter

**Approval of Minutes from the October 16, 2020 ECB Board Meeting**

Alyssa Kenney moved, seconded by Jim Zylstra, to approve the October 16, 2020 meeting minutes. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

**AGENDA ITEM 1.** Report of the Board Chair

Dr. Wegenke noted that since the last ECB Board of Directors meeting, we've witnessed violent incidents and civil unrest at the Capitol, as well as devastating human and economic effects of the ongoing pandemic. Dr. Wegenke suggested that these events underscore the importance of broadcast communication and in particular, educational communication and the role of this Board. Dr. Wegenke said that he hopes the civil discussions of this Board and the work of the agency will be part of the solution as we move forward through these challenges.

Dr. Wegenke requested that all board members who were present introduce themselves for the benefit of new members.

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 distributed in advance of today's meeting.

Ms. Bechtol updated the Board on the agency's operations during the COVID 19 pandemic. Ms. Bechtol reported that ECB's Beltline office continues to remain closed to the public, and ECB office workers are telecommuting wherever possible. Ms. Bechtol noted that the Department of Administration is planning to reopen the building in April with limited staffing, and safety protocols in place to protect employees and potential visitors.

Ms. Bechtol thanked all the staff of ECB and noted that there has been a number of live news coverage broadcasts in recent weeks and Ms. Bechtol commended the Operations Center staff for their flexibility and ability to safely and effectively manage all the programming changes during this time.

Ms. Bechtol updated the Board on advocacy efforts scheduled during the next few months. Ms. Bechtol reminded the Board of the American Public Television Stations Public Media Summit in February. Ms. Bechtol noted this event usually happens in Washington D.C. and culminates with visits to the offices of Wisconsin legislators. Since the event will be virtual this year, Ms. Bechtol stated that there is room for additional attendees and asked board members to let David Cobb know if they are interested in participating in this event.

Ms. Bechtol reported that advocacy at the Wisconsin State Capitol will look very different this year due to the ongoing pandemic. Ms. Bechtol noted that ECB's budget request includes no additional funding but it's important to meet with legislators to highlight our work and thank them for supporting the agency. Ms. Bechtol anticipates that rather than a daylong event with volunteers at the Capitol, virtual visits or mailings will be used to contact a limited number of

legislators. Ms. Bechtol asked that if any board members are interested in participating in advocacy events to please let her know.

Ms. Bechtol continued her report by highlighting activities by the agency and identified how those activities were related to the ECB Strategic Plan. In the area of Direction I, Item 2: “Seek opportunities to expand service...,” Ms. Bechtol highlighted the installation of an FM translator WHA-AM in Janesville that serve a listener population over 80,000 people. Ms. Bechtol added that expansion applications will be submitted to the FCC for other areas in the state including Rice Lake, Sheboygan, and Phelps, Wisconsin.

Also in the area of Direction I, Item 2, Ms. Bechtol reported that PBS Wisconsin will be one of twelve stations to participate in a five year “Ready To Learn” grant to identify and pilot new PBS Kids resources and expand educational content. Ms. Bechtol reported this grant will amount to more than \$400,000 over five years.

In the area of Strategic Direction II, “Assure the responsible use of resources...,” Ms. Bechtol highlighted the approval of purchase orders for new television transmitters at Wausau, Menominee, and Park Falls; and FM transmitter replacements in Wausau and Green Bay. Ms. Bechtol noted these equipment replacements will not only expand service in these areas but also improve energy efficiency and reduce utility expenses by approximately \$100,000 annually.

Also in the area of Strategic Direction II, Ms. Bechtol reported that robotic inspections of tower guywires has been completed at the La Crescent, Minnesota transmitter site (WHLA-La Crosse). Ms. Bechtol noted that the replacement of these guywires had been budgeted for 2021, but the robotic inspection provided data that revealed only one guywire in need of replacement. Ms. Bechtol commended Adam Hargrove and the Engineering Division who worked with industry partners to develop and utilize robotic inspections of the ECB transmission tower guywires. Ms. Bechtol believes this new method of inspections greatly benefit ECB’s budget planning process related to tower and guywire replacement schedules.

In the area Strategic Direction III, “Grow and engage public media audiences...,” Ms. Bechtol highlighted the Broadcast IT unit’s work to install and test an all-digital program delivery architecture for radio. Ms. Bechtol noted that this upgrade will provide uniform sound throughout the statewide radio network, as well as prepare the network for new digital format industry standards.

Ms. Bechtol provided an update on the work of the Governor’s Broadband Taskforce. Ms. Bechtol reported that the taskforce has collected statewide mapping data to identify the areas of the state with the greatest need for broadband access. Ms. Bechtol also reported that the taskforce will be increasing meeting frequencies and developing recommendations due by the end of the fiscal year.

Following Ms. Bechtol’s report, Eileen Littig inquired about the agency’s Equity and Inclusion Plan which Ms. Bechtol had reported on in her written report in advance of the board meeting.

Ms. Littig noted that the plan is a positive goal and asked Ms. Bechtol how the Board of Directors will be able to monitor action steps taken to implement and uphold the plan. Ms. Bechtol responded that the plan is intended to guide hiring decisions and ECB is currently fully staffed, but the plan will be in place as staff turnovers occur moving forward.

DOA Deputy Secretary Chris Patton commended the ECB's Equity and Diversity plan and thanked Ms. Bechtol and ECB staff for working with DOA Human Resources to develop the plan. Mr. Patton suggested that Ms. Bechtol add an Equity and Diversity update to her quarterly report to the Board of Directors. Ms. Bechtol agreed this was a good idea and will include updates in her quarterly reports.

Ms. Littig also inquired about the diversity of the Board of Directors, noting that the Board composition wasn't as diverse as it could be and asked if the Equity and Diversity plan could influence decisions regarding the composition of the Board. Ms. Bechtol replied that many of the Board of Directors positions are determined by statute and those board members are appointed based the position they hold in another governmental or broadcasting capacity. Ms. Bechtol added that for the Governor's appointments, she has reached out the appointments office and expressed a desire for a balanced Board in terms of gender and race, but she has no role in selecting who is ultimately appointed by the Governor.

Alyssa Kenny asked Ms. Bechtol if there are internship opportunities at ECB and wondered if internships could be used to introduce more diverse candidates to the agency who might consider permanent employment with ECB when a vacancy occurs. Ms. Bechtol replied that the State has a summer internship program but there have been no interns at ECB for about ten years which she attributed to capacity staffing levels at ECB and lack of interested intern candidates from colleges and universities. Ms. Bechtol added that to address this, she is looking closely at the language of position descriptions for ECB positions, and where feasible, changing the requirements for a college degree to include a path for candidates to receive on the job training. Ms. Bechtol noted this change could expand the pool of candidates to be considered for ECB positions which could lead to more diverse candidates.

There were no 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 Zystra as Vice-Chair, and Eileen Littig as Secretary. The nomination was seconded by Chris Patton. Dr. Wegenke called three times for additional nominations. There were no other nominations. The Board elected Dr. Rolf Wegenke as chair, Jim Zystra 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.** Audit Presentation, Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP

Dr. Wegenke introduced John Rader, CPA, and MBA, 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 audit 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 WHA TV and Radio. 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. 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 reported one deficiency related to the restatement of prior year financial statements. Mr. Rader attributed this to the understatement of the ECB Operating Fund balances in 2018 and 2019. According to Mr. Rader, when the State transitioned to the STAR system to record financial transactions, capital contributions and expenses were recorded in ECB's Operating Fund cash balances in 2018 that should have been reversed in 2019. Mr. Rader reported these errors were discovered internally by ECB and led to the restatement of financial statements for 2018 and 2019.

Mr. Rader introduced Leah Wipperfurth, CPA of Baker Tilly Virchow Krause who reviewed financial statements for Fiscal Year 2020 for the ECB operating fund and the Wisconsin Public Broadcasting Foundation (WPBF). Ms. Wipperfurth reviewed the Statement of Net Position and reported that current assets decreased by about \$1.4 million, which she attributed to the transfer of funds from cash accounts to long term investments. Ms. Wipperfurth reported that non-current assets increased by about \$4.3 million which she attributed to long term investment transfer and ongoing donations.

Ms. Wipperfurth reported that current liabilities for the ECB decreased FY2019 to FY2020, which she attributed to a change in accounting practices to consider ECB's allotment for the Wisconsin Retirement System to be an asset rather than a liability. Ms. Wipperfurth reported the total change in net position was an increase of approximately \$2.7 million.

Ms. Wipperfurth reported that equity, or net income, for the ECB has increased by about \$300,000 and equity for the WPBF increased \$2.4 million, for a total overall growth in net

position of about \$2.7 million. Ms. Wipperfurth attributed this mostly to increases in contributions, major gifts and CPB grants.

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

Jim Zylstra asked Mr. Rader about accounting rules changes from the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) and whether Baker Tilly Virchow Krause is providing advice to clients regarding the implementation of the new rules. Mr. Rader responded that implementation of new GASB rules 87 and higher are voluntary at this time and most organizations are choosing to delay implementation.

Jim Zylstra asked if federal aid related to COVID will be audited. Mr. Rader responded that audits for 2021 will include federal aid and the Legislative Audit Bureau will audit the distribution of that aid in Wisconsin.

Niles Berman asked Mr. Rader if Baker Tilly Virchow Krause audited public radio and television in addition to the ECB. Gene Purcell provided clarification that Baker Tilly Virchow Krause is contracted to audit WHA-TV and WHA Radio but the attached fundraising organizations are audited by different firms. Mr. Rader added that those auditors are highly regarded firms, and the different auditors are helpful to each other during the audit process.

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

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

Eileen Littig moved to accept the auditor's report, seconded by Jim Zykstra. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

**AGENDA ITEM 5.** Financial Reports, Aimee Wright

Dr. Wegenke introduced Aimee Wright, ECB Finance Director and reminded board members that quarterly financial reports were included in the board packets distributed in advance of today's meeting.

Ms. Wright reviewed the quarterly financial reports. Ms. Wright reported that fundraising goals remain on target for Radio. Ms. Wright noted that December 2020 contributions have been reported since the financial reports were compiled, and that contributions from December will move past 50% of the budgeted goal for the fiscal year. Ms. Wright reported that Television fundraising is on target through November of 2020 while December contributions have not yet been reported. Ms. Wright noted that Television underwriting is slightly behind pace of the

previous fiscal year and attributed this to changes in how project and major gifts are recorded by the Friends of PBS Wisconsin.

Ms. Wright reviewed the ECB Expenses Budget to Actual report. Ms. Wright reported that ECB has expended approximately 40% of the annual budget through the first six months of Fiscal Year 21. Ms. Wright noted that debt service payments are paid in October and April, so the budget percentage will increase significantly after the April payment. Ms. Wright noted in other categories such as professional development and outreach, the budget percentages may remain low as travel and in person activities have been minimal during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were no questions or comments regarding the Finance Reports.

**AGENDA ITEM 6.** 2021 – 2024 Strategic Plan Draft Presentation, Marta Bechtol

Dr. Wegenke asked Marta Bechtol to update the Board on the progress and development of the 2021 – 2024 ECB Strategic Plan.

Ms. Bechtol reviewed the October 2020 ECB Board of Directors meeting discussion related to the ECB Strategic Plan, and the steps taken since that meeting to finalize the plan. Ms. Bechtol reminded the Board that the agency's mission is determined by statute and remains unchanged. Ms. Bechtol reported that ECB managers have reviewed the Strategic Plan action items to consider the agency's effectiveness in implementing those action items. Ms. Bechtol reported that three different committees have contributed to the Strategic Plan action items, including partners from the UW. A leadership planning group collaborated on an employee survey. A NextGen TV workgroup worked to determine the ECB and PBS Wisconsin's preparedness to implement the new broadcast standard. An internal broadband access group worked to evaluate how ECB could contribute to the State's efforts to expand rural broadband internet access. Ms. Bechtol also discussed areas for improvement identified in the 2019 – 2021 ECB Strategic Plan and reported that improvements have been made in the areas of training opportunities and salary gaps. Ms. Bechtol noted that training continues to be an important priority particularly as technology evolves and changes over time. Ms. Bechtol reported that efforts to improve diversity and inclusion have been incorporated into the Strategic Plan, as well as the agency's Diversity and Inclusion Plan developed earlier this year.

Ms. Bechtol reviewed the "Measurement" section of the draft Strategic Plan and noted that public reports posted on ECB's website include the ECB Biennial Report to the Legislature, the Equity and Inclusion Plan, CPB Compliance Reports, the agency's financial statements, as well as the agency's Strategic Plan.

Ms. Bechtol reminded board members that the copy of the draft Strategic Plan they received for today's meeting has incorporated the changes discussed in October and she welcomes any additional feedback or questions from board members.

Dr. Wegenke thanked Ms. Bechtol and ECB staff and asked board members to review the plan in preparation to vote on its approval at the April 16, 2021 ECB Board of Directors meeting.

There were no questions or comments.

**AGENDA ITEM 7.** Questions/Comments from Board Members

There were no questions or comments from board members.

**AGENDA ITEM 8.** Adjournment

Eileen Littig moved, seconded by Alyssa Kenney, to adjourn. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. Dr. Wegenke announced the meeting adjourned at 10:40 A.M.