



EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD MEETING

October 15, 2021

9:30 A.M.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Marta Bechtol, Executive Director

Farewell to Gene Purcell

The week following our last board meeting, Gene Purcell (former ECB Executive Director and present head of our partner Wisconsin Public Media at UW-Madison), lost his life in a traffic collision on his way to a meeting at the Wisconsin Public Broadcasting Center. The depth of shock and sadness at this tragedy simply cannot be expressed in words. His loss is mourned by all of us in the ECB family and public media partnership.

Many staff and building tenants were at work and were witnesses to the event. Group and private meetings with trauma and grief counselors were arranged for staff in the days and weeks following. We remain observant of the stages of grief and vigilant for environmental triggers that may stress the staff.

Heather Reese named Interim Director of WPM

Previously serving as Gene's Associate Director, Heather Reese, was appointed Interim Director of WPM by UW-Madison Provost John Karl Scholz shortly after Gene's passing. Her appointment lends stability and continuity to the partnership during this difficult time, for which I am most grateful. I am enjoying working with her very much.

Heather originally joined the staff at WPM in 2010 and has progressed in her role over the past decade. Heather was the project lead for transition of the division of Wisconsin Public Media from UW – Extension to UW – Madison in 2018-2019. In her prior position, Heather was responsible for overseeing compliance for PBS Wisconsin and Wisconsin Public Radio. She also led division wide strategic projects and served as a member of the executive team for the division.

Before joining Wisconsin Public Media, Heather practiced law in the Madison area for 8 years. She graduated from UW Law School with a J.D. in 2002 and earned a B.S. from UW Stout. Originally from rural central Wisconsin, Heather has lived in the Madison area for 25 years.

Mike Crane resigns from Wisconsin Public Radio

Mike Crane stepped down as director of Wisconsin Public Radio on October 1, 2021, citing weariness of stressors and interest in future opportunities elsewhere. Heather and I accepted his resignation and thank him for his decade of service to WPR.



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Because the director of WPR is a joint report to the director of WPM and me, the WPM director position should be permanently filled before recruitment begins for a new head of WPR. Unfortunately, this means a vacancy could exist for up to a year. Heather and I are working on an interim solution to this leadership gap and will keep you apprised as we move forward.

Capital Budget Update

ECB has received its FY22 funding letter for capital projects. We had requested \$3,363,060 and were awarded \$3,364,000. We are very pleased to have the opportunity to undertake all of the projects on our list for this biennium. The agency expresses its appreciation to the legislature, building commission and the Division of Facilities Development at DOA for supporting our request.

Credit for this outcome should also be given to ECB employees who have built positive relationships and trust with the building commission and the facilities division over the years. Their expertise, outstanding project management and professional integrity enable this continued support.

Federal Budget Update

From our friends at America's Public Television Stations (APTS) in Washington, D.C. – On Thursday, September 30, 2021, the President signed into law a Continuing Resolution (CR), a short-term funding measure that keeps the government and its programs, including public media, funded at roughly last year's spending levels through December 3, 2021. The bill, which passed with bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate, did not include any language to suspend the debt ceiling. Congress will likely have to take some action on the debt ceiling before the end of October.

In the meantime, work continues on the final Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 funding bills. While the Senate Appropriations Committee is unlikely to hold any additional markups this year, the Chairs of each of the subcommittees whose bills have yet to be marked up -- including the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Subcommittee, which provides our funding -- are reportedly finalizing their versions of the bills which will serve as a baseline for final negotiations with the House.

The House of Representatives initial FY22 federal request is as follows:

- \$565M for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in FY24 (an increase of \$90M over the FY23 appropriation which is forward funded)
- \$20M for Interconnection funding (continuing appropriation from FY21)
- \$31.78M for Ready to Learn (an increase of \$2.28M over FY21 appropriation)
- \$20M for the Next Generation Resilient Alert and Warning System - a new request for a competitive grant program within the Department of Homeland Security/FEMA



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As Senate Committees are finalizing their portions of the reconciliation bill, APTS is working to ensure that funding for the Next Generation Warning System is included in the Senate version of the reconciliation package. And while APTS continues to advocate for inclusion of public media's broader \$300 million infrastructure funding in the reconciliation bill, the window for inclusion seems to be closing and the likelihood of success (never great) is increasingly slim.

As a reminder to the board, federal funding comprises only 10% of the agency's operating budget, but it provides critical leverage for our fundraising efforts and makes it possible for us to equitably serve the most rural parts of the state.

Equity & Inclusion

Our staff have all completed an online course, "Preventing Harassment and Discrimination," fulfilling our requirement for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. We share CPB's commitment to "maintaining a work environment that promotes inclusion and is free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, and bias."

Deputy Director Jennifer Dargan has begun working with staff to prepare for our equity and inclusion monitoring audit from the Bureau of Equity and Inclusion that will occur in 2022. This monitoring audit will help keep ECB on track to meeting the goals established in the agency's [Equity and Inclusion Plan](#).

With assistance from DOA HR, we are in the process of reviewing a spectrum of E&I-related curriculum to identify training appropriate for our staff. Our ideal course would be researched-based and shown to make genuine impact on recruitment demographics and agency culture. Once a suitable course has been identified, we will move forward with agency-wide training.