



## Educational Communications Board

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### EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD MEETING

ECB Board Room

3319 West Beltline Highway

Madison, Wisconsin

July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015

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 9:40 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
- Eve Hall, Ph.D.
- Erin Kastberg (representing Ray Cross)
- Kurt Kiefer (representing Superintendent Tony Evers)
- Richard Lepping
- Eileen Littig
- Karen Schroeder
- Rolf Wegenke, Ph.D., Chair
- Jim Zylstra (representing Morna Foy)

Also Present:

- Jenna Zantow\* (representing Senator Luther Olsen)

\*Non-voting

Absent:

- Senator Nikiya Harris Dodd
- Senator Luther Olsen
- Cate Zeuske (representing Scott Neitzel)



### Approval of Minutes from April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Meeting

Diane Everson noted that during discussion of the state budget (agenda item 4); she voted “aye” for a motion to amend the wording of the board resolution. Ms. Everson indicated she would like the record to reflect her vote as “nay” on that motion, and remain “aye” on the motion to adopt the board resolution. The change of Ms. Everson’s vote did not change the outcome of the vote taken at the April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Board of Directors meeting. The motion passed by a vote of 7 ayes and 4 nays.

Dean Dietrich moved, seconded by Eileen Littig to approve the April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015 meeting minutes. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

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

Dr. Wegenke wished to acknowledge the strong leadership of Gene Purcell at the ECB as well as Senator Luther Olsen’s advocacy for the agency during the recent state budget deliberations. Dr. Wegenke also recognized the staff at ECB who have continued to perform well and carry out the agency’s mission during challenging times. Dr. Wegenke noted “I know I speak for the full Board; we are proud of all of you and what you do” and stressed the importance of educating the general public about the ongoing mission and accomplishments of the ECB.

### **AGENDA ITEM 2.** Report of the Executive Director

Dr. Wegenke introduced Executive Director Gene Purcell. Mr. Purcell reminded board members that a copy of his written report was included in the board packets distributed prior to the meeting. Mr. Purcell reviewed the state budget as passed by the Joint Committee on Finance (JCF) and subsequently approved by the legislature and signed by the Governor, and the immediate and long-term impact of the budget at ECB.

Mr. Purcell reported that the original budget proposal for the ECB in February called for a 34% cut to Agency GPR which totaled about \$2.7 million. In May, the JCF voted to restore about \$1.6 million in GPR funding to ECB and to restore 8.6 positions to GPR support.

The resulting loss of about \$1.1 million in GPR funding is mainly focused on Wisconsin Media Lab (WiML).

In order to adjust ECB operations, Mr. Purcell reported that since May we have chosen not to fill three vacant WiML positions and have also notified three WiML staff members that they will



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be laid off. Two positions will remain with ECB in order to keep the WiML website online, provide outreach for K - 12 educators and ensure that resources which have already been licensed or paid for will remain available for Wisconsin K - 12 educators and students.

In addition, ECB is vacating space within the Beltline Building and will be relocating remaining staff. This process is already underway and is expected to be completed later this fall.

ECB also lost an additional engineering position as part of a proposal from the Department of Tourism to staff a Marketing Division.

Additionally, there were other GPR cuts to the ECB budget, including a \$211,000 cut in funding for Milwaukee Public Television.

Mr. Purcell offered special thanks to ECB's legislative representatives and in particular, Senator Luther Olsen for his vigorous support of the agency during the JCF process.

Mr. Purcell also expressed his gratitude for the many listeners and viewers of WPR and WPT who contacted the JCF to express their support for state funding of public broadcasting.

Following Mr. Purcell's report regarding the state budget, there were several questions from board members.

Diane Everson inquired about the restoration of GPR funding to the ECB budget and for clarification of the 8.6 GPR positions. Mr. Purcell reported that following the restoration of \$1.6 million of GPR funding, the bulk of the cut to ECB's final budget was directed by legislative action at WiML. The 8.6 positions were originally proposed to be funded by program revenue but were restored to GPR funding by the JCF's motion. All of the positions are in the Engineering Division.

Rich Lepping asked if there will be an opportunity in the next biennial budget cycle to reinstate the WiML and related funding, and is there a plan to advocate for such a restoration. Mr. Purcell responded that he will continue to reach out to legislators to promote the WiML and educational media developed by the WiML. Mr. Purcell reported that the message he heard from members of the JCF was that ECB needs to seek independent funding to develop and maintain educational media. Mr. Purcell indicated that ECB will make a good faith effort to explore fundraising options.

Mr. Lepping inquired about the ownership of WiML media and whether it could continue to be made available to schools and educators. Mr. Purcell replied that ECB owns the copyright for WiML original productions and that the ECB will work with the Department of Public Instruction and the University to ensure that WiML educational media will continue to be accessible by educators. Mr. Purcell added that educational media which has previously been licensed by WiML will continue to be available for the duration of the license agreement.



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Eileen Littig expressed her disappointment with the budget cuts directed at WiML and reminded the Board that the original mission of the ECB included production of instructional television and that is why “Educational” is part of the Board’s name. Ms. Littig encouraged the Board to remember that part of the Board’s mission when the ECB’s strategic plan is updated.

Karen Schroeder discussed exploring alternative funding models. Ms. Schroeder added that the agency’s ability to raise funds might be enhanced if it were not tied to government funding.

Ellis Bromberg expressed his support for Eileen Littig’s statement about the history of the ECB. Mr. Bromberg went on to ask Mr. Purcell for clarification of the intent of the JCF motion to restore a portion of GPR funding. Mr. Bromberg wondered if the motion was intended to eliminate the WiML altogether or simply the WiML funding. Mr. Purcell responded that he has had the opportunity to meet with Senator Olsen (JCF Co-chair) since the JCF passage of the budget and he is confident that Senator Olsen and other legislators support the work of WiML. Mr. Bromberg went on to share his experience as manager of a public television station in Illinois and discussed educational media was produced by public television and paid for by school districts.

Kurt Kiefer shared with the Board that the high quality educational media developed by ECB and WiML is vitally important to Wisconsin schoolchildren. Mr. Kiefer went on to say that DPI stands ready to continue its partnership with the ECB to explore any and all options in order to continue to develop high quality, Wisconsin based educational media.

Dr. Eve Hall asked Mr. Purcell for examples of educational media that ECB has licensed and produced. Mr. Purcell responded that “Flocabulary” is an example of educational media that ECB licensed for educational use in Wisconsin. According to Mr. Purcell, by licensing media on behalf of the entire state, substantial savings can be realized that would not be possible if licenses were purchased individually by schools or school districts. Mr. Purcell also noted that WiML makes educational media available to homeschoolers and private educators. Mr. Purcell went on to discuss WiML original productions including Wisconsin Biographies that address educational requirements for Wisconsin history and Native American history. Mr. Purcell added that the recent WPT Vel Phillips documentary incorporates an ongoing collaboration with WPT and WiML to repurpose the film for educational settings including lesson plans and classroom activities to teach Wisconsin schoolchildren about Vel Phillips and civil rights history in Wisconsin.

Eileen Littig complimented the Vel Phillips documentary and shared that it was featured as part of a community engagement with the YWCA Women’s Empowerment Center and UW Green Bay Women’s Studies program.



**AGENDA ITEM 3.** Resolution acknowledging WPRA/Friends of WPT

Dr. Wegenke complimented the efforts by the Friends of Wisconsin Public Television and the Wisconsin Public Radio Association to advocate for the ECB and Wisconsin Public Broadcasting during the budget deliberations. Dr. Wegenke distributed a Board Resolution to thank and commend both organizations for their actions.

Dr. Wegenke moved to adopt the resolution. The motion was seconded by Diane Everson. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

**AGENDA ITEM 4.** Introduction of WPT Director Jon Miskowski

Gene Purcell introduced Jon Miskowski, who was recently appointed to the position of Director of Wisconsin Public Television following the retirement of James Steinbach.

Mr. Miskowski introduced himself to the board by reviewing his background and former positions at WPT. Mr. Miskowski also shared updates regarding ongoing projects at WPT including Wisconsin From the Air winter scenes, the Vel Phillips documentary, Door County History, Wisconsin Tribal History, the Young Performer's Initiative, Tommy Awards, the Honors Concert, and the Eau Claire Jazz Fest. Mr. Miskowski also updated the Board on preparations for next year's elections coverage. Mr. Miskowski reminded the Board of the WPT/WPR collaboration wivote.org. Mr. Miskowski stated that it will be an exciting time for Wisconsin journalists to cover the elections particularly since one of the candidates for President is from Wisconsin.

Rich Lepping thanked the search committee, including ECB Deputy Director Marta Bechtol who served as the search committee chair; and said he was proud to see a number of great internal candidates.

**AGENDA ITEM 5.** FCC Spectrum Update

Gene Purcell provided an update to the Board regarding the upcoming FCC spectrum auction and he explained how television spectrum could be repurposed and used for wireless communications. According to Mr. Purcell, the FCC plans for a voluntary auction of television spectrum which will affect all television broadcasters beginning in March 2016. Mr. Purcell described two stages of the auction with the first being the reverse auction of spectrum which is voluntary, and secondly the repacking process which is mandatory. Broadcasters who choose not to participate in the auction may still be affected by the repacking process and forced to move their signal to a different part of the television spectrum. Mr. Purcell reported that the FCC intends for the repacking process to be completed within 39 months. Mr. Purcell noted that most broadcasters feel 39 months to complete the repacking process is an unrealistic goal.



Mr. Purcell provided a presentation to the Board which explained the FCC's proposed reverse auction process and included opening bid projections. Mr. Purcell reminded board members that the FCC's reverse auction plan will bring the bid projections down significantly.

Following the presentation, Mr. Purcell explained that broadcasters will have four options: choose not to participate in the auction, participate in the auction and relinquish their FCC license and associated television spectrum, channel share with another broadcaster, or move channels from UHF to VHF. Mr. Purcell added that broadcasters who choose to channel share or move to VHF will realize substantially less incentive (payment).

Dr. Wegenke reminded the Board that ECB is not a commercial interest and asked board members to keep our mission and purpose in mind when considering the ECB's options related to the spectrum auction.

Following a brief discussion, Dr. Wegenke acknowledged that he perceived an overwhelming sentiment amongst the Board to not participate in the auction. Dr. Wegenke explained that the Board's position on the spectrum auction was not an action item for today's meeting but we will prepare to adopt a formal position or resolution at the October meeting.

Dr. Wegenke announced that he needed to leave the meeting early and thanked the Board for their efforts today. Jim Zylstra assumed the position of Board Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

**AGENDA ITEM 6.** Discussion of ECB Strategic Plan Process

Jim Zylstra asked Gene Purcell to update the Board on the ECB Strategic Plan. Mr. Purcell reported that ECB's current strategic plan was adopted in 2012 and is normally updated every three years. In light of the agency's efforts to plan for the new state budget, Mr. Purcell made the decision to delay work on the strategic plan and will ask the Board to revisit this at the October or January meeting.

**AGENDA ITEM 7.** Financial Report

The Board reviewed the financial statements which were distributed in advance of the Board of Directors meeting. Mr. Purcell reported that radio was on schedule to meet or exceed membership and underwriting goals for the fiscal year. Mr. Purcell pointed out WPR's increased commitment to underwriting staff and explained how that helped lead to increased underwriting funds. Mr. Purcell went on to report that membership numbers for TV were strong and attributed part of that to the success of "Wisconsin From the Air".



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Eileen Littig asked if there would be a Wisconsin Public Broadcasting Foundation (WPBF) meeting in October. Mr. Purcell confirmed there will be a WPBF meeting following the Board of Directors meeting in October.

Ellis Bromberg asked about the distribution of underwriting revenue between WPT, WPR, and ECB. Mr. Purcell responded that the distributions are determined by annual allocation agreements between the partners.

Jim Zylstra asked if there would be an update about the WPBF investments at the October board meeting. Mr. Purcell acknowledged that an update was originally proposed for today's meeting but Dr. Wegenke asked for that to be moved to October due to the length of today's agenda.

### **AGENDA ITEM 8.** Proposed Meeting Dates for 2016

Jim Zylstra asked board members to let Gene Purcell or David Cobb know if there are any scheduling conflicts for the 2016 meeting dates as proposed:

Friday, January 15, 2016

Friday, April 15, 2016

Friday, July 15, 2016

Friday, October 21, 2016

### **AGENDA ITEM 9.** Questions regarding reports or other comments from Board members.

There were no further questions or comments.

### **AGENDA ITEM 10.** Adjournment

Kurt Kiefer moved to adjourn, seconded by Dean Dietrich. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. Jim Zylstra announced the meeting adjourned at 12:40 p.m.