



**EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD MEETING**

**April 29, 2022**

**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 9:30 A.M. A roll call was taken and a quorum was verified. A complete attendance list follows:

**Board Members Present:**

- Niles Berman
- Senator Janet Bewley
- Amy Bogost
- Alyssa Kenney
- Heather LaRoi (UW System President Designee)
- Leah Lechleiter-Luke
- Eileen Littig
- Chris Patton (DOA Secretary Designee)
- Tessa Schmidt (DPI Superintendent Designee)
- Representative Pat Snyder
- Rolf Wegenke, Ph.D., Chair
- Bohdan Zachary
- Jim Zylstra (WTCS President Designee), Vice-Chair

**Absent:**

- Representative Dave Considine
- Senator Alberta Darling
- Tara Senter

**Approval of Minutes from the March 25, 2022 ECB Board Meeting**

Eileen Littig moved, seconded by Amy Bogost, to approve the March 25, 2022 meeting minutes. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.



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

Dr. Wegenke shared that he was honored by his colleagues at the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU) last Wednesday in celebration of his upcoming retirement. Dr. Wegenke noted that he has spoken with Governor Evers regarding a private college and university representative to the ECB. Dr. Wegenke is hopeful that his replacement at WAICU will continue to represent those interests at ECB as well.

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

Ms. Bechtol reported on public media advocacy efforts at the State and Federal level which is part of the ECB Strategic Plan Strategic Direction 1, Action Item 3: “Inform legislators and the public on the value public media delivers to Wisconsin. Engage with state and federal legislators to demonstrate the value our service and advocate for continued public funding of ECB activities.”

Ms. Bechtol reported that Federal Advocacy visits occurred in February as part of the American Public Television Stations (APTS) “Public Media Day” and additional visits would be scheduled in 2022 as the FY23 Federal Budget is negotiated.

Ms. Bechtol reported that State advocacy took place in March as part of the Wisconsin Public Media Advocacy Day. Ms. Bechtol noted that the traditional Advocacy Day was adjusted to a combination of in person and virtual visits over the course of a week. Ms. Bechtol reported that advocate volunteers presented a thank you message and shared [a video](#) highlighting public media activities in Wisconsin. Ms. Bechtol also reported that all legislators will be invited to tour ECB transmitter sites during the summer of 2022.

Ms. Bechtol informed the Board that the contract to provide master control operations for Milwaukee PBS has been approved by the Milwaukee Area Technical College Board and is being circulated for approval signatures. Bohdan Zachary added that the contract was approved by the MATC Board with enthusiasm and thanked everyone on the ECB Board for supporting the partnership between ECB and Milwaukee PBS.

Ms. Bechtol reported that ECB has been granted an FCC license for 90.7 FM in Rice Lake. As part of the license, Ms. Bechtol noted that ECB chose WEPP as the call letters for the new station. Ms. Bechtol shared that most of the call letters for Wisconsin public media stations have some sort of meaning and a couple are named in honor important figures in public broadcasting. For WEPP, Ms. Bechtol shared that the initials “EPP” were chosen as a memorial to Gene Purcell whose full name was “Eugene Patrick Purcell.” Ms. Bechtol noted that Ruth Purcell, the widow of Mr. Purcell, was also involved in selecting the new call letters. Ms. Bechtol went on to report that the FCC announced the new license on March 17<sup>th</sup> (St. Patrick’s Day) which was appropriate as Gene was very proud of his Irish heritage.



Ms. Bechtol continued her report and shared that she nominated Gene Purcell for the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame, and that nomination has been approved. Ms. Bechtol announced that Mr. Purcell would be inducted into the WBA Hall of Fame at a ceremony in June in La Crosse, Wisconsin which is near Mr. Purcell's hometown of Coon Valley, WI. Ms. Bechtol expects that a good number of family and staff will be present to celebrate the induction and encouraged board members to contact her if they are interested in attending.

Ms. Bechtol reminded board members who are required to submit a Statement of Economic Interest that they should have received a message from the State Ethics Commission and those are due by May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

There were no questions or comments from board members.

**AGENDA ITEM 3.** Financial Reports – Aimee Wright, ECB Finance Director

Dr. Wegenke introduced Aimee Wright, ECB Finance Director to review the quarterly Financial Reports.

Aimee Wright presented the Financial Reports that were included in the board packet. Ms. Wright reported that the budget-to-actual figures are where she would expect them to be at this point in the fiscal year. Ms. Wright reported that ECB revenue is currently 72.14% of the FY22 budget through the end of March, with one quarter of the fiscal year (July 1 – June 30) remaining. Ms. Wright reported that the expended agency budget related to supplies and services stands at approximately 63% at the end of March. Ms. Wright attributed this to ongoing issues in the supply chain for equipment, parts and supplies. Ms. Wright noted there are additional orders for equipment, parts and supplies that are not reflected in the budget to actual report until the equipment is actually delivered.

Ms. Wright continued her report by highlighting additional areas of the budget to actual report. Ms. Wright reported that Appropriation 103 debt service payments were made in March of this year and represent an increase from the FY21 YTD from March of last year. Ms. Wright noted that FY22 debt service payments were made one month earlier than previous years but remain in line with the annual budget.

Ms. Wright reported that ECB received CARES Act grants related to the COVID pandemic and those funds were used to update teleconferencing equipment at ECB to facilitate virtual meetings in the post-pandemic hybrid work environment.

Ms. Wright reported that underwriting revenue remains strong and stands at 65% the projected FY22 budget. Ms. Wright added that an additional transfer from the Friends of PBS Wisconsin is



scheduled for May and expects that underwriting will be closer to or at 100% of what was budgeted by the end of the fiscal year.

Ms. Wright reported that ECB has spent approximately \$30,000 on professional development so far in FY22, with more conferences and training opportunities scheduled before the end of June. Ms. Wright noted this was a substantial increase from the previous fiscal year when travel and training opportunities were limited due to the COVID pandemic.

There were no questions or comments regarding the financial report.

**AGENDA ITEM 4.**      Dunn County Historical Museum “Storylords” Exhibit,  
Melissa Kneeland, Museum Director

Dr. Wegenke introduced Melissa Kneeland, Dunn County Historical Museum Director, to present an overview of the “Storylords” exhibit currently on display at the museum.

Ms. Kneeland provided a brief history of the instructional program “Storylords” which was produced at the University of Wisconsin-Stout for the ECB in 1985. Ms. Kneeland explained that “Storylords” was a reading comprehension series which used a fantasy story to present lessons in an entertaining manner. Ms. Kneeland noted that “Storylords” was quite popular when it aired and remains popular with Dunn County residents who are familiar with the local connection to UW-Stout. Ms. Kneeland noted that “Storylords” was first shown in 18 Wisconsin school districts in 1985 as part of a Rural Reading Improvement Project. Ms. Kneeland reported that by 1987, “Storylords” was part of elementary school reading programs in 23 states. Also in 1987, Ms. Kneeland reported that “Storylords” was awarded a “Golden Apple” award from the National Educational Film and Video Festival.

Ms. Kneeland shared that the idea for a “Storylords” exhibit began in 2018 when the Storylords director, Ed Jacober donated a number of artifacts and set pieces from the original production to the Dunn County Historical Society. Around that time, Ms. Kneeland noted there was a [Wisconsin Public Radio story](#) about “Storylords” which renewed interest in the program, and additional artifacts were collected to build the exhibit. Ms. Kneeland credited Peggy Garties of the ECB (retired), for loaning the museum the only known copy of a CD-rom companion video game for classroom use which experts from UW-Stout were able to incorporate into exhibit.

Ms. Kneeland reported the exhibit opening was postponed due to the COVID pandemic but has been well attended after opening in February of 2022.



Ms. Kneeland displayed pictures from the exhibit as well as three testimonials from educators who had used “Storylords” in their classroom and visited the Dunn County Museum exhibit. Ms. Kneeland reported that the exhibit has been a very popular attraction at the museum so far and invited ECB board members to come see it themselves. Ms. Kneeland thanked the ECB for developing the original “Storylords” and for the helpfulness and assistance provided in building the museum’s “Storylords” exhibit.

Following Ms. Kneeland’s presentation, there were no questions but many comments regarding the positive and lasting impact of “Storylords.”

**AGENDA ITEM 5.**      2022 Staff Climate Survey results – Marta Bechtol and Jennifer Dargan

Marta Bechtol discussed a staff climate survey that was undertaken to gauge employee’s perception of the overall climate and job satisfaction at ECB. Ms. Bechtol noted that ECB has conducted similar surveys on a regular basis, usually on the same schedule as the agency Strategic Plan. Ms. Bechtol reported the last survey was conducted in 2020, and as the agency operations have changed and adjusted in response to the pandemic, a survey was conducted during the first quarter of 2022.

Ms. Bechtol reviewed portions of the survey for the Board. According to Ms. Bechtol, the number of staff who responded increased slightly and the results were similar to the 2020 survey. Ms. Bechtol reported the survey results have been shared with ECB staff and she believes they are an accurate reflection of overall satisfaction and workplace climate.

Ms. Bechtol noted the survey was helpful to identify the importance of access to training for staff, and she anticipates that training opportunities will increase as COVID restrictions subside and in-person trainings return on a regular basis. Ms. Bechtol identified that training for the new broadcast standard ATSC 3.0, also known as NextGen TV, was identified as a priority for engineering staff as the new technology is implemented.

Ms. Bechtol reported that ECB has adopted a philosophy of “Psychological Safety” to promote a workplace atmosphere where employees feel safe to share thoughts and feelings without fear of retaliation or disappointment, and the ability to express what is needed to successfully carry out job functions. Ms. Bechtol reported that she shared the survey results with the state’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) in order to determine if there are training needs to support workplace psychological safety. Ms. Bechtol noted that the EAP provider reviewed the survey results and did not identify a need for additional training as it appears employees are not afraid to speak up. They feel they are respected and valued, and that their feedback makes a difference. Ms. Bechtol also noted that the EAP provider suggested training to improve workplace communications. Appropriate training will be identified and offered to employees in the near future.



Ms. Bechtol reported that overall, ECB's workplace climate survey scored well above the average for state agencies and she feels very positive about that.

Following Ms. Bechtol's comments, there were additional comments and questions from board members.

Eileen Littig commended the agency for seeking employee input and was pleased to see that employees felt comfortable identifying the need for mental health and LGBTQ support.

Senator Janet Bewley inquired about workforce shortages and retention and noted that 13% of employees responded there is no better alternative than their current position which she interpreted as an indication that employees want to stay at ECB. Ms. Bechtol responded that there have been a few retirements since the pandemic, and three employees have vacated their positions for other opportunities or higher education, but she feels positive about the retention at ECB and does not perceive a workforce shortage on level with other industries or national averages. Ms. Bechtol added that one of those employees has already returned to ECB as a limited term employee.

Chris Patton commended the ECB and concurred with the EAP provider's analysis of the Staff Climate Survey. Mr. Patton shared that he monitors these type of surveys across all state agencies and noted that ECB's scores are in the top tier of results. Mr. Patton reported that employee training is in greater demand at all state agencies and he was pleased to see that as a priority at ECB. Mr. Patton added that it's important to recognize these needs are employee driven, and staff surveys are an effective method for staff to identify professional growth opportunities.

Mr. Patton also highlighted the survey question related to "How can engagement with your colleagues be improved?" Mr. Patton noted that many agencies have acknowledged that social engagement is missing as workplaces have changed during the pandemic. Creating spaces for employees to personally connect and collaborate should be a priority based on the survey results.

Amy Bogost inquired if the 2022 survey was identical to the 2020 survey and asked how the agency was able to reach 73% participation rate from employees. Ms. Bechtol responded that many of the questions were identical but responses were scaled this time rather than simply "yes or no." Ms. Bechtol noted that psychological safety was a new element to the survey and that moving forward, the agency will conduct similar surveys on annual basis rather than every three years. Ms. Bechtol added that 23% of the responses included the employee's names but acknowledged that some respondents prefer to remain anonymous, and offering both options increased participation.

There were no additional comments or questions.



**AGENDA ITEM 6.** Discussion of the potential acquisition of an FCC NCE license and the evaluation of the ECB Executive Director

*Pursuant to s. 19.85(1)(c) and (e) Wis. Stats., the Board convened in a closed session for the annual performance evaluation of the ECB Executive Director and the potential acquisition of an existing FCC NCE license. Following the closed session, the Board reconvened in open session.*

Following the closed session, Jim Zylstra moved to grant the ECB Executive Director the authority to negotiate and finalize the purchase of an existing FCC NCE license and related assets. The motion was seconded by Eileen Littig. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

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

There were no additional questions or comments from board members.

**AGENDA ITEM 8.** Adjournment

Jim Zylstra moved, seconded by Niles Berman, to adjourn. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. Dr. Wegenke announced the meeting adjourned at 11:16 A.M.