

**EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD
QUARTERLY MEETING
ECB Board Room
3319 West Beltline Highway
Madison, WI
Remote attendance by Microsoft Teams or phone
October 20, 2023
9:30 A.M.**

MINUTES

Roll Call and Introductions

Board Chair Jim Zylstra called the meeting of the Educational Communications Board (ECB) to order at 9:28am. A roll call was taken and a quorum was verified. A complete attendance list follows:

Board Members Present: Jim Zylstra, Chair
Paul Hammer
Dr. Darrell Williams
Alyssa Kenney
Senator Romaine Quinn
Representative Patrick Snyder
Representative David Considine
Angela Adams
Roy Christianson
Eileen Littig
Deborah Hamlett

Absent: Heather LaRoi
Anne Chapman
Leah Lechleiter-Luke
Dr. Eric Fulcomer
Senator Chris Larson

Approval of Minutes from the July 21, 2023 ECB Quarterly Board Meeting

Roy Christianson moved, seconded by Alyssa Kenney, to approve the July 21, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

AGENDA ITEM 1. Report of the Board Chair – *Jim Zylstra*

Mr. Zylstra reminded the Board of their requirement to take Public Records training by November 30, 2023

There were no other questions or comments from board members.

AGENDA ITEM 2. Report of the Executive Director – *Marta Bechtol*

Executive Director Marta Bechtol informed the Board that PBS Wisconsin has a new Director of Education, Megan Monday, and asked Jon Miskowski, Director of PBS Wisconsin, to formally introduce her. Ms. Monday has been with PBS for five years having formerly served as Executive Producer of PBS Education. She also created the Wisconsin Humanities project, "Love, Wisconsin."

In her budget update, Ms. Bechtol noted that the Federal Budget was still stalled in the House and noted that a potential government shutdown would not seriously affect ECB due to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's two-year forward funding mechanism that was secured in the FY23 budget. The only potential impact could be a delay in the quarterly payments received from NOAA, which would not seriously impact operations. CPB funding amounts to about 10% of the operating budget, which specifically helps in fund our services in areas of the state with limited population density.

Ms. Bechtol informed the Board that the State Compensation Plan was approved by the Joint Committee on Employment Relations (JCOER) on 10/17/2023, which will provide Gross Wage Adjustments (GWA) and classification increases for ECB employees.

Ms. Bechtol gave thanks and congratulations to the Finance team and agency budget managers for their stewardship, accountability, and an overall great budget year. She also praised Deputy Director Jennifer Dargan and the entire Equity & Inclusion Advisory Committee (EIAC) for their work on updating the Equity & Inclusion Plan, which was approved with no changes needed by the Bureau of Equity & Inclusion (BEI) – something never seen before.

There were no other questions or comments from board members.

AGENDA ITEM 3. FY24-27 Strategic Planning Kickoff – *Marta Bechtol*

Ms. Bechtol reminded the Board that in compliance with Board Policy #107, strategic planning is due on a three-year cycle. This process is presided over by the ECB Executive Director, and the current policy expires at the end of FY24.

Ms. Bechtol Proposed the following timeline for development of the FY25-27 plan:

- October 2023: Gather input and guidance.

- January 2024: Introduce draft plan for Board feedback.
- April 2024: Present rewrite for Board approval.
- July 2024: New plan goes into effect.

Ms. Bechtol noted that the agency mission itself hasn't changed, but many other things have. The last strategic plan was created during COVID. Since that time, agency leadership has developed a new collaboration format, the regions have been structured, and the Broadcast IT unit has been reorganized. ECB is now the Master Control for Milwaukee PBS. The radio audio standardization project has been completed. New technology has brought new empowerment within the Finance Team. The approach to advocacy has been improved and the Partnership overall has strengthened.

Ms. Bechtol invited the board to provide initial feedback to be considered prior to drafting the new plan. She reminded that board that mission of the Educational Communications Board (ECB), as described in Wis. Stat. 39.11, is to provide a statewide telecommunications system and assistance in the diffusion of advanced technologies in support of education, public media, and public safety.

The following comments were made relative to each directive of the current plan:

- *Direction I:*
 - *Strengthen the impact, reach and performance of ECB to better serve all of the citizens of Wisconsin while recognizing and striving to serve an increasingly diverse population.*
 - Rep. Considine: As communications have become a privilege, and especially unfair to rural and poor communities, this Direction is very important.
 - Alyssa Kenney: There is a role for ECB to think about the way we serve communities, not just individual people.
- *Direction II*
 - *Assure responsible stewardship of agency resources in carrying out the work of the ECB.*
 - Board uniformly agreed Direction 2 is simple and clear, with the ability to develop action items under it.
- *Direction III*
 - *Grow and engage public media audiences using the most effective forms of content delivery.*
 - Alyssa Kenney: While one technology or another might be the most effective, ubiquity is also important. Broadband is pretty effective for most people, but not for everybody. There is a balance of making sure we're reaching every community, and not just investing only in the most effective ones.

Ms. Bechtol requested the Board reach out with additional thoughts or comments by November 17, 2023.

There were no other questions or comments from the board.

AGENDA ITEM 4. Information Item: FY23 Budget Actuals, FY24 Budget Preview and Q1 report – *Aimee Wright, Director of Finance*

- FY23 Results
 - Revenues
 - 6.8% increase in overall budgeted revenue from FY22 to FY23 largely driven by Engineering revenue and GPR Debt Service support
 - Expenses
 - ECB spent 99.9% of our target operating budget in FY23 due to sound practices and the vigilance of agency budget managers.
 - Key takeaway
 - Some uncertainty will always exist in budgeting, but averages can pull together for a solid result.
- FY24 Budget
 - FY24 includes a 2% decrease in projected revenue over FY 2023.
 - There will likely be fluctuation in the debt service appropriation
 - We anticipate 20% decrease in WPRA funding due to a change in funding flow between licensees that minimizes overall costs.
 - FY24 includes a 4% increase in planned expenditures over FY23
 - Slight increase in media budget.
 - Anticipating 10% increase in salary budget due to full staff and gross wage adjustments.
 - 24% decrease in actual debt service payments from FY23.
 - Increase in interconnect expenses with the prioritization of cybersecurity.
 - Maintenance and project expenses are down by 22% however, there are still carryover encumbrances to spend related to supply chain issues.

There were no other questions or comments from board members.

AGENDA ITEM 5. Information Items: Engineering Division Updates
 Cybersecurity – *Ed Snow, Broadcast I.T. Manager*
 Tower Mapping Project – *Marcus Kruse, Northeast Regional Manager*

Adam Hargrove, Engineering Division Administrator, introduced two presentations: one to walk through what ECB is doing to address cybersecurity, and the other to explain how the ECB utilizes drone technology to efficiently manage tower space and maintenance.

Ed Snow, manager of Broadcast I.T., began his presentation with an overview on network protection, including multi-factor authentication, good cyber hygiene and proper education. He stated that ECB’s security team reached out to the federal Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) for a free Cyber Resiliency Overview and scan.

CISA’s process focuses on best practices and is comprised of over 300 questions based on security domains. Mr. Snow shared the results of ECB’s overview, stating that both

of our networks – Engineering and Administrative – are currently right at the point we had expected to be; and we’re poised to continue on an upward trajectory.

The next part of the overview included consultation review with the Division of Enterprise Technology (DET) to ensure that we have standardized procedures that are in line with the benchmark security standards. 26 procedures, 400 controls, and ancillary documents were identified as needed. The security team was given a deadline of March 2024 to have drafts of these procedures written. As of October 2023, the drafts have already been completed.

Mr. Snow told the Board the cybersecurity priorities for 2024 require coordination among the Security, Engineering, and Administration teams and will focus on five pillars: DET Procedures, Configuration Controls, Education, Risk Management, and Incident Response.

Board member Dr. Darrell Williams asked about the biggest challenge with AI going forward. Mr. Snow said most likely “phishing” attacks. Phishing essentially preys on emotions, and AI will get better with those specific types of targets. AI could manipulate everything from Open Enrollment reminders to Christmas messages. Mr. Snow informed the Board that ECB has already begun in-agency phishing testing and education and will continue to do so while gathering data on the effectiveness of agency policy and training.

Board Member Alyssa Kenney asked if there were any existing policies regarding ransomware, and whether the agency would pay or negotiate, and if there was a situation where data or a broadcast network is compromised, who would make those decisions. Mr. Snow said that the State Chief Information Security Office (CISO) would be the one to make that decision.

There were no other questions or comments from the board.

Marcus Kruse, ECB’s Northeastern Regional Technical Manager, presented on the agency’s use of drone technology to manage tower space and maintenance. He is one of five licensed drone pilots at ECB. He cited Direction Two, Action Three of the Strategic Plan which states, “Responsibly manage state assets to maximize service, minimize costs and mitigate risks” as a driver for the agency’s drone initiative.

Mr. Kruse explained what it takes to manage a tower, including: accurate and up-to-date inventory of everything used to construct and attached to the tower; regular tower inspections and maintenance; and coordination and collaboration between structural engineers, broadcast engineers, tower climbers, etc.

Mr. Kruse said that in 2018 ECB replaced one of the two annual tower inspections with a drone inspection which saved the agency approximately \$25,000 annually. He noted that ECB mitigates risk by having fewer climbers on the tower. Additionally, we can keep services on the air when a drone is within a few feet of the tower which means fewer signal outages. He added that drones can withstand rain, snow, and up to 70mph winds and can be effective tools for problem solving and collaboration. For example: ECB engineers at the Rib Mountain tower found a large piece of plastic on the ground but could not immediately identify its source. A quick drone flight discovered damage to equipment that belonged to a commercial broadcaster that shared the tower. ECB engineers were able to forward this information to them, and they were able to quickly repair the damage and their signal.

Having drones around the state enables our engineers to quickly respond to any situations that require visual inspection. While the drone has many useful capabilities, the most useful is its vantage point.

Mr. Kruse explained how he has been able to weave together drone photographs to create 3D models of four of the towers that are useful for maintenance and project planning. He completed his presentation showing footage taken by drones at ECB tower sites, along with the 3D models he has created.

Board Member Paul Hammer asked how much structural capacity is left, specifically regarding tenant space. Mr. Hargrove responded that most towers are at capacity, but that doesn't necessarily mean more can't be put on. Every request is evaluated with structural analysis and engineer collaboration on a tower-by-tower basis.

Board member Alyssa Kenney asked about a tenant and landlord situation, regarding another entity's equipment on an ECB tower and if ECB engineers could bring in revenue by providing drone inspections. Mr. Hargrove said that part of ECB's mission is service to the public, and management of those towers serves that mission, so potentially that is something that could be taken into consideration.

Board member Roy Christianson noted that it seems as if ECB is moving towards fewer people on the towers, and wondered if that was the case, or if we've maximized drone use. Mr. Kruse responded, saying ECB is not trying to replace tower crews, as there are things that cannot be done with a drone. ECB is, however, focusing on utilizing drones to better support those crews.

There were no other questions or comments from the board.

AGENDA ITEM 6. Action Item: Approval of 2024 meeting dates

Proposed:

- Friday, January 19th
- Friday, April 19th
- Friday, July 19th
- Friday, October 18th

There were no other questions or comments from the board.

Eileen Littig moved, seconded by Rep. Considine. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

AGENDA ITEM 7. Adjournment

Roy Christianson moved, seconded by Rep. Considine to adjourn. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. Jim Zylstra announced the meeting adjourned at 11:18am.