

**EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD
QUARTERLY MEETING
ECB Board Room
3319 West Beltline Highway
Madison, WI
Remote attendance by Microsoft Teams or phone
April 21, 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 9:33am. A roll call was taken and a quorum was verified. A complete attendance list follows:

Board Members Present: Jim Zylstra, Chair
Dr. Darrell Williams
Anne Chapman
Alyssa Kenney
Dr. Eric Fulcomer
Senator Chris Larson
Senator Romaine Quinn
Representative David Considine
Héctor Colón
Niles Berman
Eileen Littig

Also Present: Aimee Wright
Fred Jacobs
Paul Jacobs
Tom Luljak

Absent: Chris Patton
Heather LaRoi
Leah Lechleiter-Luke
Representative Patrick Snyder
Bohdan Michael Zachary

Approval of Minutes from the January 20, 2023 ECB Quarterly Board Meeting

Eileen Littig moved, seconded by Representative David Considine, to approve the January 20, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

AGENDA ITEM 1. Report of the Board Chair

Board Chair Jim Zylstra opened the meeting by introducing new members to the Educational Communications Board, beginning with the Executive Assistant to the Executive Director, Megan Bellini. Ms. Bellini shared her happiness and gratitude for her first few months with the Educational Communications Board, and stated she looks forward to many more in the future.

Mr. Zylstra then moved to introduce new Board member, Dr. Eric Fulcomer, as a Private Education member. Dr. Fulcomer shared that he has been in higher education his entire career and has been spending his time getting to know the state and visiting member campuses after recently moving from his previous position as president of Rockford University in Illinois. He stated that this was technically his second meeting, as he attended the one in January as a guest.

New member Senator Romaine Quinn was asked to say a few words. Senator Quinn stated that he was recently elected to District 25 in the northwest, filling the Senate Majority board seat previously occupied by Senator Alberta Darling. Upon introducing himself, Senator Quinn informed the Board that while he was new to the Senate, he served in the Assembly alongside Representative Considine for six years and is glad to be a part of the Board.

Mr. Zylstra mentioned that another new member may be joining the meeting later and would introduce him at that time. Mr. Zylstra issued a reminder that a meeting of the Wisconsin Public Broadcasting Foundation trustees would immediately follow. While foundation meetings usually run short, representatives from Associated Bank will be joining today to present on the Foundation's investments and market outlook. Mr. Zylstra then turned it over to Executive Director Marta Bechtol for her report.

AGENDA ITEM 2. Report of the Executive Director

Executive Director Marta Bechtol began her report with the central issue of the moment – the biennial budget. Ms. Bechtol confirmed that ECB's budget request submitted in September 2022 was flat with standard budget adjustments. Ms. Bechtol walked the board through the [Governor's proposal](#) released on February 15th, 2023. She noted that ECB prepares its budget using the template provided by the State Budget Office (SBO). Then the SBO then applies its own calculations for standard budget adjustments, utilities, debt services and the like. The Governor's recommendation appears smaller in the area of General Purpose Revenue (GPR), i.e. tax dollars, but is slightly higher in program revenue than requested. Ms. Bechtol estimated these are typical variations from what was requested and reflect the Governor's priorities.

With regard to GPR, Ms. Bechtol noted a small proposed increase in fuels and utilities, based on the SBO's view of how utilities costs may increase over the next two years. She noted that debt service is where the budget really looks as if it is being decreased, but in actuality this just represents the governor's intention to pay down state debt. The proposed "State Operations Adjustment" is a very small number – likely accounting for cost increases in consolidated agency services. Ms. Bechtol noted that the standard budget adjustments were higher in the governor's proposal than the ECB's request because they included gross wage adjustments announced in his budget address. No changes to the Full Time Equivalency (FTE) were proposed. Ms. Bechtol

reiterated that the governor's proposal is typical and she has no concerns. She remarked that she is hopeful the Legislature would be supportive of the governor's recommendations.

Moving along, Ms. Bechtol drew attention to the agency's *Strategic Direction I, Action III: To inform legislators of the value we serve, how we serve Wisconsin, and to engage with state and federal legislators to demonstrate the value of our service*. She noted that public media's State Advocacy Day was held on March 21st, 2023, approximately one month after the governor's budget was released. Ms. Bechtol referenced the attachments that were emailed to the board containing the materials shared with legislators at both the state and federal level. She explained that members of Joint Finance and the Education Committee were top priority when setting up advocacy meetings. Ms. Bechtol communicated her confidence that these meetings went well – even with the Assembly having 25% new members this year. Many advocates stated in their debriefs that legislators knew who ECB was, what ECB does, and had a positive perception of the agency. She noted that there are upcoming visits and tower site tours in the spring giving the chance to meet with anyone that was missed, or to follow-up with those who requested it.

Ms. Bechtol stated that she and her UW counterpart (Heather Reese) were in Washington D.C. for the annual Public Media Summit and advocacy day in February. Marta and Heather were joined by colleagues from Milwaukee PBS and met with most of Wisconsin's delegation. Ms. Bechtol added that on April 7, 2023, she visited Representative Gallagher's district office in Green Bay and gave his staff a tour of the WPNE tower site. Ms. Bechtol reminded the board that federal funding comes to the agency in form of grants from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, accounting for about 10% of the agency's annual budget.

Looking forward to spring, Ms. Bechtol noted the progress made for the WEPP-FM site in Rice Lake. All of the paperwork has been completed, though there is still some tower work that has to be done before equipment can be installed.

Continuing with her report, Ms. Bechtol informed the board that ECB has undertaken a voluntary audit with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA. An agency of Homeland Security, CISA staff met last week with ECB's IT and Broadcast IT personnel to review agency security processes, the first step in a comprehensive activity that will take place over the summer. CISA will do further testing of ECB's services and symptoms, as well as in-depth assessments such as vulnerability scans and network penetration testing. She stated that she expects to share results and progress at the October board meeting.

Concluding her report, Ms. Bechtol shared a fun programming note – on Monday, April 24th, *Hometown Stories: Appleton* will premiere on PBS Wisconsin at 8:00pm. While discussing programming, board secretary Eileen Littig chimed in that *The Wisconsin Muslim Project* had aired the previous evening and she felt it was "absolutely superb." Ms. Littig highly recommended each board member to view it, stating it was available for streaming on the PBS Wisconsin website.

There were no other questions or comments from board members.

AGENDA ITEM 3. Quarterly Financial Report – *Aimee Wright, Director of Finance*

Jim Zylstra introduced Aimee Wright, Director of Finance, for the quarterly financial report.

Ms. Wright directed the board members to the budget report that was sent ahead of the meeting and touched on a few highlights. She informed the board that as of the end of March the agency's revenue is sitting at 73%, which is exactly where they should be three quarters of the way through the fiscal year. The CPB grants have now been received – 2.4 million for FY23. ECB also has a new line of revenue designated as "Broadcast Interconnection Support," which is money received from the WPRA and Friends of PBS Wisconsin to help support the interconnect infrastructure used to deliver content around the state.

Ms. Wright pointed out that debt service revenue is received just before payments come due, as the appropriation is sum sufficient. At the end of March ECB had received 40% of the debt service budget, but a larger than expected installment will be coming due in April. In speaking with Capital Accounting, Ms. Wright learned that the state has recently made significant debt payments that will push the appropriation's spending over the original Chapter 20 budgeted amount. Come October, the debt service budget will exceed 100%.

Moving on to expenses: payroll is sitting at just about 72% which should come close to 100% by the end of the year. Supplies and services spending is at 63%, not including any purchase orders or encumbrances that have been issued. Looking at spending overall, the agency is at 81% of the budget including encumbrances. As we hit the final quarter of the year, 91% of the supplies and services has been set aside for planned purchases.

Ms. Wright pointed out lines in the budget where spending seems low for this point in the year, noting that there is upcoming tower work and building at WEPP-FM as well as planned spending for professional development including an Engineering Division meeting in La Crosse scheduled in May.

With these final notes, Ms. Wright concluded her report.

There were no other questions or comments from the board.

AGENDA ITEM 4. WPR Audience Research Report – *Fred & Paul Jacobs, Jacob Media*

Jim Zylstra introduced Tom Luljak, interim Director of Wisconsin Public Radio. Mr. Luljak offered a prologue to the WPR Audience Research Report, sharing thoughts on Wisconsin Public Radio – what it has looked like, and what the hope is for its future.

Mr. Luljak communicated the robust exploration WPR has conducted over the last ten months, seeking the best ways to serve the people of Wisconsin. He stated that WPR is a legend in the field, providing service for over 100 years. He noted that the programming formats among the two networks (News/Music and The Ideas Network) have essentially not changed in the last 30 years.

Mr. Luljak noted that when he came on as the Interim Director, he was asked by Marta Bechtol and Heather Reese to lead a process to study if and how WPR should make adjustments to its programming to better serve audiences. Listener behaviors have changed dramatically in the last ten years with apps and streaming services, and there is an incredible wealth of options within those. What might audiences need and want in the next ten to twenty years?

Mr. Luljak stated that WPR engaged one of the top radio research firms in the country, Jacobs Media Strategies. Mr. Luljak then introduced Paul and Fred Jacobs, founding members of the firm, to present the findings of a comprehensive survey of WPR's current audience.

With their PowerPoint presentation on the screen, Fred and Paul Jacobs began the report by introducing themselves, sharing their experience with consulting work in Wisconsin, specifically Milwaukee, Madison, Eau Claire and La Crosse, as well as for National Public Radio (NPR) and American Public Media. Fred Jacobs stated there are three components to their study, with the most important piece being the quantitative study they did specifically for WPR.

The first segment of their report revolved around the public radio technology survey – a nationally syndicated study that Jacobs Media has done for the last 13 years. This survey encompasses media and technology and identifies what the listening audience is doing when they're not listening to radio. Last conducted in the summer of 2022, 69 public radio stations participated, generating more than 27,000 responses nationally, with WPR accounting for 474 of those. One point to note from the national study is that WPR listeners tend to be "older than average and more traditional" – meaning that while they do use digital resources, Wisconsinites are listening to live broadcast radio more than the national average. Even so, the WPR app is still quite popular. But when a comparative evaluation was made for public radio apps nationally, WPR's ratings weren't as positive as other stations. WPR has been advised that this is something to look at because mobile app performance is critically important in today's environment. Continuing with digital media, the results showed that Facebook tends to be the most popular social media platform among WPR listeners, which is a common finding.

The tech survey was further broken down into two parts, starting with active-participation focus groups. The Jacobs team wanted to hear what listeners all over the state had to say about WPR before drafting the quantitative study, so that the written questionnaire could be refined to best reflect the key questions that must be answered over the course of the project. Seven groups were organized from the WPR email database; two of the groups were composed of NPR News and Music listeners specifically, with the other five sessions made up of Ideas Network listeners from regions with coinciding news bureaus: Madison, Green Bay, La Crosse, Eau Claire, Wausau, Superior, and Milwaukee.

Feedback showed that the overall perception WPR is that it is extremely well thought of and has great brand strength. Among the positive comments was that WPR is Wisconsin's "crown jewel" with earned credibility and longevity.

Findings also demonstrated a strong awareness of what each of the two WPR networks offer. Respondents noted that they will often switch back and forth between the two to access the content in which they are interested. The study also revealed some confusion about the programming schedules on both networks. One respondent stated they "blindly going back and forth until they bump into content that is desirable" for

them. The study also found that people who moved to Wisconsin from other states took some time to understand what each network was about and to learn where things were.

Additionally, the focus groups identified that most people are change averse; they get into routines and don't want those routines shaken. This sensibility is not unusual in public radio, or radio in general. When exposed to new models of how the two networks could be arrayed, reactions initially were mixed to negative, though one respondent's initial reaction was "great!" Mr. Jacobs stated that this is exactly why the quantitative study is so important; you're able to see all the fine details of opinions.

Mr. Jacobs continued stating there were some concerns that WPR might lose its "Wisconsin-ness" with the addition of NPR network shows. Respondents made clear how critically important it is that the talk portion of WPR remain state- and regionally-centric. Many stated the importance of transparency around changes, with the expectation that WPR would fully explain any reconfiguration. Because of the brand trust WPR has built, many said they would give change a chance. It was with this information that Fred and Paul Jacobs pieced together the questionnaire for the quantitative study.

Along with audience research, the Jacobs' also held roundtable discussions with WPR sponsors, underwriters, and advertisers to gain insight as to how the networks are perceived by Wisconsin's advertising community.

Fred Jacobs noted that upon its conclusion, 4,649 people completed in the quantitative on-line survey, entering it from a variety of avenues: email invites from WPR's database, links on social media platforms, and on-air announcements. Mr. Jacobs detailed the demographics of the respondents:

- Gender: 60% female, 40% male
- Race: 9/10 identified as white
- Age: Age samples were organized into two groups: 18-54 years old and 55+
- Participation: Madison was the region with the most respondents; Green Bay second; Milwaukee third. While Eau Claire and Superior only made up 3% of the respondents, that's still approximately 140 people.

The survey showed that approximately the same number of people listen "mostly or only to the Ideas Network" as listen "mostly or only to the NPR News and Music Network." The remaining go back and forth between the two on a fairly equal basis.

The survey identified trends in four population segments: Madison, Milwaukee, the rest of Wisconsin, and a very small percentage out of state.

- Four out of every ten Madison respondents listens mostly or only listen to the NPR News and Music Network; two out of ten of those listen mostly or only to The Ideas Network.
- In Milwaukee, the Ideas Network is a much more prominent listening destination – mostly due to availability – with 45% listening mostly or only to that network.
- The remainder of the state is equally divided among the two networks, with about 40% listening to both on a regular basis.

The survey presented respondents with a long list of content topics and were asked to rate their level of interest from 1 – 5, where five is very interested and one is not interested at all. The categories of most interest are:

- Environmental and international news (tied for greatest interest)

- Science, Politics, and news from the State Capitol (6/10 respondents)
- Education, music and lifestyle stories (5/10 respondents)

Respondents were then asked how satisfied they are with the way WPR currently covers the same topics. These results were similar to the interest levels, with the top two being politics (61%) and gardening – believed to be a reflection of Larry Meiller’s program being so popular on The Ideas Network.

The study then calculated the gaps between interest and satisfaction. Environmental News rated a top interest score of 63% and a satisfaction rate of 48%, showing a 15% gap between audience interest and coverage. It is this number Jacobs Media used for scaling in their research. Fred Jacobs noted that comparatively, 15% is “not all that big” and most other gaps presented in this study turned out to be single digit, which is just statistical. Mr. Jacobs stated that WPR actually overperformed in satisfaction in the areas of music and Wisconsin lifestyle stories.

Mr. Jacobs then reported on feedback inviting the audience to rank their perception of a proposed news and information station. Overall the results were positive (81%): 40% saying it would be their favorite, and a similar percentage saying it may not be a favorite but they would listen a lot. Asked to rank a potential classical music and arts station, Mr. Jacobs made note that this question can be somewhat relative – while most understand what classical music is to be, definitions of art and culture can vary person to person. With that in mind, 17% said it could be a favorite station, approximately every three out of ten said they would listen often. 43% said they would listen only on occasion, and 12% said they would not listen. Overall, almost 45% indicate they would be regular if not primary listeners.

Mr. Jacobs reminded the board that the overall respondents skew female and older, but geographically they are a solid mix across the state. Mr. Jacobs also pointed out that it has been more than a decade since WPR has done any significant audience research.

Mr. Jacobs then opened the report up to questions. Dr. Williams pointed out that there used to be a jazz station in Milwaukee. He expounded, saying there are many people in Wisconsin, especially in Milwaukee, who would like to listen to jazz and would be a welcome addition to the new music format. Mr. Jacobs stated that is one of the program options under consideration right now.

There were no other questions or comments from the board.

AGENDA ITEM 5. Recommendations for updates to Board bylaws

Board Chair Jim Zylstra stated that at the last board meeting he had asked Marta Bechtol for a review of the board bylaws with proposed updates and called attention to the redlined version she shared in this meeting’s materials. He asked for a motion to bring this item to the floor which was made by Rep. Considine and seconded by Eileen Littig, then turned it over to Ms. Bechtol to discuss the recommended changes.

Ms. Bechtol began by saying that she noticed the bylaws should be updated following the election of officers at the January 2023 meeting. Technology has changed the way we hold these meetings now and the bylaws should reflect that.

Beginning at **Article I, Section 3. Place of Meetings**, Ms. Bechtol proposed adding a sentence that states, *"Options for virtual attendance may be made available at the discretion of the Chair of the Board"* rather than requiring all meetings to take place in Madison. There were no issues or questions regarding this addition.

Next, **Article I, Section 6. Agenda**, Ms. Bechtol recommended two changes. First, the removal of "Wisconsin Public Broadcasting Foundation" from the Board Member Questions or Comments" line. Foundation meetings are typically held directly after the Board meetings and all are welcome to attend, so separate discussions feel redundant. Secondly, she noted that "miscellaneous business" isn't a category that is acceptable within public meetings law and should be removed. There were no issues or questions with these proposals.

Article II, Section 3. Nominating Procedure references distribution of ballots for the election of officers. Ms. Bechtol noted that when meetings are virtual, paper ballots aren't feasible. She also noted that the board hasn't used them in past meetings, as a voice vote has always been sufficient. Thus, she recommended elimination of the references to ballots and their distribution, and the addition of a provision for a single slate to accommodate multiple voting scenarios: *"In the event of a single slate, a single voice vote may be called. In the event of competitive votes, votes may be cast by voice, paper ballot or electronic poll at the discretion of the Chair of the Board."*

Article II, Section 4. Mode of Election and Term of Office also references election by ballot which Ms. Bechtol recommended for removal.

Article II, Section 5, Duties of the Chair Ms. Bechtol noted that there is a clause in the bylaws that the Chair serves as designee to the Public Broadcasting Service, which appears to be some historical reference. As head of licensee, the board chair is actually designated to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, so this wording should be corrected.

Article II, Section 6, Duties of the Vice Chair Ms. Bechtol pointed to the clause that says "the Vice Chair shall also serve as an official board delegate to America's Public Television Stations (APTS)" and asked for a discussion on that point. She noted that APTS is an association that conducts legislative advocacy on behalf of public media, and not every member of the Educational Communications Board is permitted to advocate within their job duties. Therefore, assigning this responsibility to the vice chair feels inappropriate because it limits who can fill that seat. Niles Berman chimed in, wondering if this provision had ever been utilized. Ms. Bechtol stated not to her knowledge.

Mr. Berman then inquired if the Board does in fact have the authority to vote on this particular change today since the provision on the amendments (Article V, Section 1) says that the proposed amendments shall be specifically set forth, and this change wasn't annotated as such. He wondered whether it should be brought back to the next meeting of the Board as an action item. Mr. Zylstra concurred, pointing to the advisement of the attorneys in the room.

Marta Bechtol spoke to a final recommendation in **Article IV, Section I, Executive Director** proposing that the reference to "he or she" be changed to "this person" so that gender is not prioritized by order. Eileen Littig supported this change as being more inclusive.

Without any more questions or comments, Mr. Zylstra proposed a vote to approve the redlined recommendations and move the Article II, Section 6, Duties of the Vice Chair item to the July 21st, 2023 agenda. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

AGENDA ITEM 6. Evaluation of the Executive Director

Pursuant to s. 19.85(1)(c) and (e) Wis. Stats., the Board will convene in a closed session for the annual performance evaluation of the ECB Executive Director. Following the closed session, the Board will reconvene in open session.

A roll call was taken and a quorum was verified. A complete attendance list follows:

Board Members Present:

Jim Zylstra, Chair
Dr. Darrell Williams
Anne Chapman
Alyssa Kenney
Dr. Eric Fulcomer
Senator Chris Larson
Senator Romaine Quinn
Representative David Considine
Héctor Colón
Niles Berman
Eileen Littig

AGENDA ITEM 7. Questions/Comments from Board Members

There were no other questions or comments from Board Members.

AGENDA ITEM 8. Adjournment

Dr. Fulcomer moved, seconded by Alyssa Kenney to adjourn. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. Jim Zylstra announced the meeting adjourned at 11:44am.