

EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD QUARTERLY MEETING

ECB Board Room

3319 West Beltline Highway

Madison, WI

Remote attendance by Microsoft Teams or phone

October 17, 2025

9:30 a.m.

MINUTES

Board Chair Kenney Called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m. Roll Call was taken.

Board members present:

- Alyssa Kenney
- Paul Hammer
- Leah Lechleiter-Luke
- Sen. Romaine Quinn
- Sen. Chris Larson
- Rep. Patrick Snyder
- Rep. Ryan Clancy
- Roy Christianson
- Janet Botz
- Deborah Hamlett

Board members absent:

- Anne Hanson
- Chris Patton
- Lucas Munz
- Eric Fulcomer
- Amy Traynor

MINUTES APPROVAL: Paul Hammer moved to approve the July 18, 2025 minutes. Roy Christianson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 1. Report of the Board Chair – *Alyssa Kenney*

Alyssa Kenney stated that we now have more certainty following the closure of the CPB, due to good fund stewardship and financial efficiencies found by the agency to date.

She then mentioned the recent public media tower tours which occurred September 22 – October 3 that were attended by the following board members in their respective service areas: Sen. Quinn, Sen. Larson, Paul Hammer, Anne Hanson and Janet Botz. She invited the attendees to share their thoughts. Paul Hammer stated that to be an effective member of the ECB Board, you should see the infrastructure. He was impressed with the magnitude of effort it takes to run, monitor, and maintain the public media towers, and was impressed with the expertise of the staff. Sen. Quinn appreciated the longevity and expertise of the staff he met and encouraged other ECB Board members to attend. Janet Botz agreed with Paul Hammer and Sen. Quinn while adding that advocating for the agency is important and must continue to be done.

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

Marta Bechtol stated that the agency's financial position after the closure of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting is much clearer three months into the new fiscal year.

Roy Christianson asked where the loss of revenue is expected to hit the hardest. Marta responded that programming and maintenance will be affected but staffing would remain consistent.

- AGENDA ITEM 3.** Action: Approval of 2026 meeting dates
Proposed meeting dates – all meetings on Fridays beginning at 9:30 a.m.
- January 16
 - April 17
 - July 17
 - October 16

Paul Hammer moved to approve the proposed 2026 ECB Board of Directors meeting dates. The motion was seconded by Roy Christianson and unanimously approved.

AGENDA ITEM 4. Information: Accounts Update – *Dan Julie and Tim Hazeltine, Associated Bank*

Dan Julie and Tim Hazeltine, managers of the accounts held by the Wisconsin Public Broadcasting Foundation (WPBF), provided an update on the status of the investment accounts and presented their impressions of their sustainability for future security. The accounts have performed well due to diversification, which reduces overall risk. Dan stated that short term reallocation is necessary to address short term goals, such as bridging the FY26 revenue gap as the agency scales for reduced revenue expectations.

AGENDA ITEM 5. Information: WPR Disaster Recovery – *Brian Butler, ECB Deputy Director of Engineering and Gene Cook, WPR Radio Engineering Manager*

Brian Butler and Gene Cook presented on the cross-partnership Disaster Recovery (DR) project and the continuity goals for WPR services. While WPR produces radio content, ECB distributes that content. And while service interruptions are rare, delivery of critical emergency messaging should be reliable. One risk to continuity of services is that both ECB and UW distribution sites are located in Madison. The goal of the DR project is to provide effective redundancy through geo-diversity to ensure continuity of service delivery. The Eau Claire location has now been updated with a natural gas generator, DH satellite dish and electrical infrastructure to build capabilities necessary for a solid recovery site. Ongoing collaboration within the ECB/UW partnership is critical for the continuity and sustainability of our public safety services. Roy Christianson asked how much of a lapse in coverage could be expected should the DR site be activated. Brian Butler estimated the lapse to be around one hour.

AGENDA ITEM 6. Information: ECB & WPM Partnership – *Marta Bechtol & Jordan Siegler*
FY26 and Beyond Budget Impacts – *Aimee Wright & Zach Picknell*

Marta Bechtol and Jordan Siegler conducted a brief refresher ECB & WPM (Wisconsin Public Media) Partnership presentation. The partnership is established by State Statute 39.14(4) and 36.25(5), WPM-ECB Affiliation Agreements, Operating & Allocation Agreements, WPRA (Wisconsin Public Radio

Association) & Friends represented on Educational Communications Board of Directors, and Affiliate Station Agreements. These relationships are more important than ever for recovering from the loss of CPB revenue. Marta Bechtol stated that WPBF funds, while helpful in the short term, cannot be repeatedly drawn upon without impact on the principal. Scaling to revenue is the fiscally responsible path to long-term sustainability.

Aimee Wright and Zach Picknell presented the FY26 impacts to WPRA, Friends of PBS Wisconsin, ECB, and WPM budgets. The CPB cuts combined with UW budget losses leave a \$6.2 million deficit for the partnership in FY 26.

Leah Lechleiter-Luke asked if other states have relationships similar to the ECB/WPM partnership to help when financial deficits occur. Marta informed that Nebraska has a similar structure to that of Wisconsin, but otherwise no other states are organized in this way. Marta followed that the next ECB Board of Directors meetings will focus on what further reductions the partnership will make to solidify long-term solutions. Roy Christianson mentioned the continued importance of legislative advocacy; Janet Botz supported this and added that future engagement with legislators should be driven by local impact examples.

AGENDA ITEM 7. Information: ECB FY25 Budget performance & Q1 financial report – *Aimee Wright*

Aimee Wright provided a summary of the FY25 Budget performance and shared FY26 revenue and expense projections based on Q1 data. Marta Bechtol thanked the public for their contributions, and the membership and development teams for their fundraising efforts. Jon Miskowski noted that PBS Wisconsin contribution numbers appear strong, however it is important to distinguish between one-time and sustained contributions. Sarah Ashworth stated that WPR sustaining members are up, over 50,000, and the fall membership drive went really well. She deferred to WPR's associate director, Kealey Bultena, who added that WPR donors reached 3,300 during the fall drive.

AGENDA ITEM 8. Adjournment:

Roy Christianson moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Janet Botz. The meeting adjourned at 11:26 a.m.