

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
November 29, 2006

The Iowa Public Radio board of directors held its monthly meeting November 29 in the Pappajohn Higher Education Center in Des Moines. Board members present included chair Art Neu, Warren Madden and Steve Parrott; Kay Runge and Steve Carignan participated by phone. Also present for the meeting were IPR executive director Cindy Browne, and members of the IPR leadership team Robin Fraser, Wayne Jarvis, Joan Kjaer, Todd Mundt, and Don Wirth. Visitors included Steve Firman of the Friends of KUNI and Judy LeRoy, consultant with TRAC Media Services.

Chair Neu called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. Parrott moved and Madden seconded approval of the minutes of the October 26, 2006, meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Development director introduced

Robin Fraser was introduced and welcomed as new Iowa Public Radio director of development. He noted that he has reviewed documents on annual giving, which he said provides a good base for the development of major gifts and capital campaigns in the future.

Financial report

Wirth reviewed changes to the monthly financial statements, which included a new sheet for “All IPR” and new lines that segregate operating revenues, expenses and the total of those lines from extraordinary activities. At the board’s recommendation, he agreed to add one more change: putting the income, expenses and the difference between the two at the bottom of the financial page so that information is easily identified.

News and information report

Members of the leadership team provided an update on efforts to make IPR listeners aware of changes to news and information programming that will be launched Jan. 1, 2007. Mundt noted that the new schedule has been available on-line since Nov. 20. He also said that he is addressing the changes and answering listener questions in his blog, and he noted that there would be a contest to provide a new name to the “Talk of Iowa” show.

Jarvis reviewed engineering changes that will allow one “Morning Edition” host to serve all three stations beginning Monday, Dec. 18. Those changes will also allow for the stations to have one host for “All Things Considered” beginning on the same date.

Kjaer noted that she and others are working with Iowa Public TV communications staff to produce and distribute letters to members by Dec. 15 with information about the news and information programming changes. In addition, each station’s newsletter, going out at the end of December, will have information on the changes. Staff from all three stations have formed a listener response team and are collaborating with IPR’s web designer to develop a common database that will ensure timely response to listener questions and the most efficient use of staff time.

Browne reported that she and Mundt had spoken with a Des Moines Register reporter and that they anticipated an article on the programming changes. In addition, she and Mundt visited all of the IPR stations to discuss the changes with staff members. Browne told board members that IPR could expect to hear more from listeners when the changes actually go into effect on Jan. 1.

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Madden questioned whether newsletters were a cost-effective means of communication for the changes. Browne noted that many stations have eliminated their print newsletters but she said this time of programming changes is not the right time to reduce IPR's communications with listeners and donors. She said it would be possible to combine the stations' newsletters into one this coming summer but that the newsletters should be continued through the next year.

Listening Project

Dr. Judith LeRoy, co-director of TRAC Media Services of Cleveland, Ohio, presented the findings to date from various listener surveys conducted as part of IPR's Listening Project. Browne noted that the results were seven-eighths done so the data presented at the meeting were still preliminary.

Browne reminded directors of the goals of the Listening Project: to gather data about what listeners think about public radio; to establish a baseline of information on whether listeners see IPR as vital and making a difference in Iowa; and to create a common experience for staff around the wants and needs of listeners. She said the results would be used to help identify IPR's key challenges and opportunities; to inform fund-raising and branding efforts; to speak to listeners in their own language; and to define what "local" means to our listeners.

LeRoy noted that the project included a telephone survey of 600 Iowans contacted by random dialing; 997 mail survey responses; an Internet "opt-in" survey that drew 512 responses (a record for a TRAC Media project, she noted); and field group meetings in Ames, Cedar Falls, Des Moines and Iowa City that included 81 people.

LeRoy noted that for Iowans, "local" does not only mean Ames, Cedar Falls or Iowa City, it means the entire state. She also noted that listeners want a balance of national and local news and that they want the quality of local news to be as good as national news. News about the weather and the weakness of radio station signals were the major complaints, she said. She will follow up with a final, written report, which will be distributed in print and online.

Corporate structure and governance

Attorney Wayne Reames joined the meeting to discuss issues of corporate structure and governance and the proposed management agreement between the three universities, the Board of Regents, and IPR. He reviewed some of the differences of opinion about the status of IPR and suggested three alternatives, including 1) remaining under the Board of Regents, 2) seeking legislative action to "spin off" IPR from the state, and 3) a hybrid under which IPR has non-profit status with the IRS but remains a Board of Regent entity. Further discussion on the topic was tabled.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Parrott, Secretary