

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes September 20, 2006

The monthly meeting of the Iowa Public Radio Board of Directors was held Wednesday, Sept. 20, at the Pappajohn Higher Education Center in Des Moines. Members present were chair Art Neu (via phone), Kay Runge, Steve Carignan, Steve Parrott and executive director Cindy Browne. Also present were Joan Kjaer, Todd Mundt, Wayne Jarvis, Don Wirth, all of IPR and Diana Gonzalez of the Board of Regents office. IPR director Warren Madden was absent.

Vice chair Runge called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. Parrott moved and Neu seconded approval of the August meeting minutes. Browne asked that the minutes be amended to identify the specific exemption to the Iowa Open Meetings law that was cited before the board went into executive session at the August meeting. With the amendment, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Financial report

Browne shared combined financial information for the stations, including staff salaries as a preview of new financial information that will be developed to show how the organization is performing as a whole across all activities instead by of station. Individual station financial information will continue to be available as needed, including for reports to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Wirth noted that a financial oversight workshop would be part of the October meeting. After that meeting, the financial reports will be restructured to blend the individual station budgets into one overall report. That new report should be available by the December or January meeting.

Transition update

Mundt gave an update on the planning process and timeline for a new Iowa Public Radio programming schedule. The first phase will begin January 1, 2007. At that time, there will be one host, producer and newscaster for NPR's "Morning Edition" and one of each for "All Things Considered" across the three stations. This will create efficiencies, allowing other staff members to handle other duties. New, consolidated schedules will be created for each format: classical music, news and information, and acoustic adult alternative (AAA) music.

IPR will have a news presence every hour from 9 am to 2 pm. The Talk of Iowa program, which is now two hour-long programs produced separately by WOI and WSUI, will be reworked. A program with a rural focus will continue at midday on WOI 640 AM. The hope is to build a better partnership with ISU Extension Service for that programming.

Browne also noted that the short newscasts produced by IPR might be exported to non-IPR public radio stations on Iowa's borders if those stations are open to that sharing arrangement. Mundt added that the newscasts may not be "branded" as IPR in order to encourage use by other stations. He said that Talk of Iowa might have potential to be aired regionally by non-IPR stations.

Runge said that listeners would want to know where and when their favorite shows could be heard. Browne said the new schedules will be included in quarterly newsletters and on the websites. Runge suggested sending posters with the schedules to public libraries across the state.

Browne said that IPR would not follow the "tear off the bandage" approach in which new programming airs without prior notice to listeners. Notice of the schedule changes will go to listeners as early as November.

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IPR is contracting with Iowa Public Television to develop a communications plan and some of its elements to ensure that listeners experience a smooth transition to the new schedule. IPTV has its own communications arm and will be less expensive than hiring an advertising agency, Browne said. Moreover, IPTV has experience in alerting its audiences to schedule changes. “They have a customer focus and they understand our mission,” she explained.

Senior leadership team recruitment

Senior leadership team recruitment continues with interviews scheduled for two finalists for the position of director of development. Both candidates met with a management team and representatives of the stations in Iowa City. Both candidates have Iowa connections, Browne noted.

Listening Project

The Listening Project is nearing completion. Civic leader sessions were held the week before the Sept. 20 meeting and community group meetings will be held the week following. An all-staff retreat will be held following those meetings to create a shared experience of what was heard at the civic leadership and community listening sessions, Brown explained.

FCC Indecency Rules

Jarvis led a discussion of Federal Communications Commission’s indecency rules, which have recently resulted in tougher penalties for indecency, profanity and obscenity. Since March of 2006, the FCC has levied the maximum fine of \$325,000 in each case. Previously, only the internal or individual host of a program was liable for such fines, but now the stations themselves are at risk.

In order to reduce risk for the IPR stations, Jarvis recommended purchasing new equipment that allows a program host to monitor the program and “bleep” comments that might lead to fines. He suggested purchasing it first for KUNI and testing it there before buying for the other stations. Jarvis also recommended liability insurance that could cost \$200 a month per station. That insurance would cover the cost of fines but would not ultimately protect a station’s license. Wirth said he would obtain quotes on insurance and present to the board later.

Audit committee

Wirth raised the issue of appointing an audit committee separate from the IPR board of directors. He noted that Madden recommended that the board as a whole act as the audit committee. McCoy Davis has suggested having a certified public accountant serve on that committee. Action on the proposal was tabled.

IPR funding and management agreements

Browne reported on a proposal from Board of Regents president Michael Gartner for funding IPR as a separate allocation from the Iowa Legislature to the Board of Regents, as opposed to the current practice of the three state universities allocating funds to the stations. That proposal, along with a revised draft of management agreements with the Regents and the universities, will be reviewed with the presidents of Iowa State, Northern Iowa and the University of Iowa. Browne reminded the directors that having management agreements with the universities is necessary to begin fund-raising for IPR.

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The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Parrott
Board secretary