

Public Session Board Meeting Minutes

Date: February 13, 2017
Time: 6:45 p.m.
Venue: NEPR, 1525 Main Street, Springfield, Mass.

Directors Present: See sign in sheet (Cory Mescon and Sam Masinter on phone)

Directors Absent: See sign in sheet

Staff Present: See sign in sheet

- Angelika Melien convened the public session at 6:45 p.m.
- Angelika asked for public comments; Paul said that he appreciated the post inauguration coverage and talked about the good work NEPR is doing
- Our next fund drive starts on March 2nd
- Martin and Vanessa will give updates on the strategic plan; Vanessa is leading the staff, she's now part of the Senior Management team and also part of the Strategic Planning Committee
- Board members received information that's been compiled during the meetings; will send the staff report to everyone;
- We will continue to support the music side; asked how we address this to extend into the digital domain; Martin said we're looking into "Classical Music Rising" next generation which is supported by a grant from CPB; we'll get a full report at the end of the year and use it to guide us for music programming going forward; will invest in all music; we want our hosts to continue to connect to the community; our efforts consists of improving the news network; local programming is key; anyone can access NPR anytime they want; what will keep us relevant will be local; we see news as a pressing public service; Martin said the three points are:
 1. Grow our capacity as a news organization by focusing our efforts on expanding the newsroom, improving the sound of the NEPR News Network, and integrating digital into everything that we do (NPR One, a new NEPR app., podcasts, web-content, etc.)
 2. Create an authentic community engagement plan for everything we do, with a focus on the stations ability to share the stories of our community.
 3. For the moment, we are focused on building a better news service on what we have now- WFCR and the NEPR News Network programmed as they are – the plan will also include – in addition to the News Network – looking at options for creating a classical music network if that is possible financially and technically; while maintaining our other music programs – similar to what's been done in Vermont, Boston, New York and other places.
- Vanessa: John Voci and Sam Hudzik have been working with a news consultant, Coats to Coats, to develop a news strategy; build a digital presence for news; looking to going to a beat system which will provide flexibility, i.e. assign reporters specific projects; have someone potentially focused on a single story; that strategy is exciting to the reporters because they get to focus; expand the concept to digital; it lends itself to community engagement, too; a representative from the Coats to Coats team will be coming to work with news one on one in the near future; Carey asked how digital will be different going forward; Vanessa said we could be doing a lot more; Martin said we're also looking at a new app; Bob asked about our current app; Vanessa said it was only designed to stream the stations; the new app will be able to do much more, including download podcasts; Martin suggested downloading WNYC's app to see the possibilities; Vanessa said it will be like condensing our website and making it an app; Carol asked how we define the "community" in Community Engagement; "community" can mean different things to different people and researching stations shows many different things; we need to reach new listeners and community engagement is one way; Vanessa has been assigned to lead the community engagement part of the strategic plan; some stations are doing community series reporting; reaching out

to the community; reaching out through social media platforms about different stories they're doing; etc. like crowdsourcing journalism, i.e.: give the audience input on what stories they're interested in and send the information to newsroom; digital media will attract a younger audience; we are planning a three-prong approach to include events and programs and some we're doing already, e.g.: Media Lab; Words In Transit, with several different components; Valley Voices Story Slam in partnership with Academy of Music; the News and Brews community event; the goal moving forward is to have a series of events; the plan is to integrate community engagement in every aspect of what we do; Carol asked what our community is; Vanessa thanked her for the question and said it's a huge question and we're still trying to figure out the answer; how we can best use what we do well; make sure that we're focused and not scattered; we welcome any thoughts on community engagement; Steve asked what percentage of listeners are using the digital platform, i.e. he wonders how relevant it is; Martin said is about 15% but there will be a lot more people accessing content, not just FM radio, we have to be prepared; Pam said we have the data and Burns will present it in the future; Vanessa said that 60% of donors give on line as opposed to those that call; Michael appreciates the concern about the definition of community engagement; it can mean anything; Tim asked if part of the plan is to evaluate what's working; Vanessa said yes; Rosie talked about news in the new political climate; Martin talked about ratings and said we don't look at one ratings book, we have to look at results over time; we've seen things go up and down; right now audience numbers are up; not sure if fundraising goes up because of it; we've received comments that would indicate that's true; we have to be careful about coming up with language to use during the fund drive; Pam said we've had a bump in the number of people leaving very specific comments about democracy; we've gotten more complaints as well, but more positive comments; Michael asked about ranking compared to news station; Martin said we're consistently top five; Steve asked about a fact check category; Vanessa said NPR does it and it's on our website – she'll send him the link;

- Martin's report was distributed via Dropbox to everyone; he will be happy to answer any questions
- Martin opened a discussion about whether or not Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) dollars go away
 - If we don't have any CPB funding, we would have an annual loss of about \$550k
 - CPB pays for a lot of things we don't have to consider, music rights, certain programs, we also might see an increase in our NPR fees, the cost would be passed onto stations
 - If this happens right away, we know of a large bequest that would get us through FY '18;
 - We don't know for sure if the funding will go away; there is a lot of Republican support for public radio, but our conversation about the possibility of the funding being eliminated needs to happen
 - NPR is talking about an increase in dues of 3%; for the record Martin objected to raising the dues as have other managers and wants to wait to see how CPB funding plays out;
 - The question for the board is what if we lose \$550k;
 - Angelika asked how to handle it; Tim asked if our listeners should contact their legislators; Martin said Mass legislators support CPB; Ken thinks we should start telling people about it; he thinks we should be clear about how much; Martin said everyone can call congressman to ask about the funding because we're not using any federal money to lobby; Pattie said she's hesitant to put too much out there too soon; Martin said we need to come up with a strategy re: what to do; Rosie asked if we can bombard them like they do us; Martin said we can and there will be a national platform; Michael said the message can't simply be about elimination of CPB; Martin said the CPB's purpose is to distribute funds; 75% goes to TV; Pattie said we need to rethink the message; Martin said if we can't make up the \$550K we will lose programs and it will likely be local; Steve asked if we should tell listeners that we only get so much from the government and Pam and Martin said yes; people don't happily absorb that so few people are giving; Sura talked about losing NPR programming, too; Pam said that we try tell people what the individual programs cost; Pam said we can tether it to chipping away at the media's voice; it's important to talk about that; to make up for the elimination of the funding, we would need about 4,000 new

donors giving \$10 a month; we have a little less than 15,000 donors and 177,000 listeners; Steve asked what they're listening to; Martin said they're listening to mostly Morning Edition and All Things Considered, (ATC); Michael said we need to push the local part of Morning Edition and ATC; Martin said there is not very much in-depth local news in our area; Tim said it was news to him the music rights would go away; he thinks that should be conveyed to audience; because it's complex and we don't want to cry wolf; Jack asked about the giving average of our donors compared to giving average across the country; ours is 7 to 8%, in some stations around the country are as high as 9-12%.

Submitted by:
Joyce Skowrya, Executive Administrative Assistant
NEPR