



WMUK FAC Draft Minutes

Date: Wednesday, October 25, 2017
Place: Richmond Center for the Visual Arts
Conference Room, #R2305
Western Michigan University

WMUK Friends Advisory Committee (FAC)

Present - Jim VanderRoest (JVR), Rob Oakleaf (RO), Marti Fritz (MF), Ben Maxey (BM), Jon VanderMeer (JVM)

Absent – Ying Zeng (YZ), Miguel Ramirez (MR)

WMUK Staff

Stephen Williams (SW)
Joan Amos (Secretary)

Guest

Tom Livingston (TL) - Strategic Plan Consultant from Livingston Associates

Minutes for Wednesday, October 25, 2017 meeting:

I. Welcome

II. Call to Order by Chair, Jim VanderRoest

- a. Meeting called to order at 5:10 pm. Quorum present.
- b. SW: Noted that Paul Knudstrup resigned his membership of the FAC, due to inability to attend past few meetings.

III. Comments from the Public (5 minutes)

- a. No comments submitted

IV. Introduction of Tom Livingston, Strategic Plan Consultant

- a. Stephen Williams introduced Tom, gave bio and background information and experience
 - i. Described process and that Tom's name was the one that kept coming up when searching for a consultant.
 - ii. 3-phase plan, we are currently working on the assessment phase.
 1. Tom has met with staff, university stakeholders and is meeting with FAC.
 2. Hoping to receive frank feedback and direction.
 - a. We need a radical look at who we are—community, format and how we continue to grow.
- b. TL: As Stephen mentioned, I have managed stations for 20 years. I have experience with executive searches, serving as interim GM, assessments and strategic plans for approximately 60 stations similar in size to WMUK.

- i. Requested FAC members introduce themselves.
- ii. Purpose of the first phase is to gather information- situational analysis, assessment report and come out with 3-4 strategic initiatives.
- iii. FAC members answer question of what is important to them:
 1. RO: Since election I have turned off the national coverage, I like local content, no other local media in Kalamazoo.
 2. BM: Community aspect, moved to podcast, need to look at how people are getting the information- using more platforms.
 3. JVM: I teach audio production. WMUK struggles because of where we are geographically we get pushed from all sides, such as from 104.1- how do we compete?
 4. MF- Dislike national news issues, likes local music- has paid for advertising through work about community events KPL and Bach Fest. No other local media—local focus is critical- struggle with audience issues- fear that public radio may have to change and may not be what is wanted.
 5. JVR: Has done volunteer work for WMUK since 1982.
 - a. Local is best. Fears we are moving away from localism, particularly with respect to local classical music. Classical music piped in on HD-2 is not sufficient to fill this gap.
 - b. No reason to compete with WUOM (Michigan Radio) - all News/Talk not our niche.
 - c. Prefers hard classical- Performance Today, opera, symphony- fine with diversity.
 - d. Doesn't understand people wanting station to change for them—he doesn't like news so he simply turns it off and then tunes in for classical.
 - e. Local news is top flight, but played at wrong times- example is WestSouthwest played at 9:30 when everyone is already at work.
 - f. Tell our story—locally owned, unlike WKZO.
 - g. Feels like we are going the easy route.
- iv. TL: Response to FAC member comments.
 1. Gave audience growth history.
 2. Fall 2017 Drive: Station likely went too early, negatively impacting drive performance. Station loyalty is low. This is a problem because the more you listen, the more likely you are to give. And audience is not tuning in and staying with us.
 3. Too many format changes throughout the day can lead to audience drop off.
 4. Looks like we leak audiences to WUOM, though it's unclear if this is really the driving factor for audience attrition.
 5. Be a great local news, local institution. This can be expensive. WMUK does produce a lot of local content already.
 6. Money is concerning. For years, public radio has been over-dependent on small gifts. We need to re-focus on major donors as well.
 7. Staff has been open during one-on-one interviews.
 - a. Community engagement kept coming up, as a consistent theme.
- v. Question: Is where we are sustainable?
 1. TL: Podcasts provide hope for Public Radio- but for local content, it can be hard to get traction.
 2. Possibility of listening sessions in the community.

3. BM: Diversity of the station format may be a strength, since having both classical and news formats may sell better.
4. JV: How do we help WIDR in its own growth? Awareness, community engagement.
5. TL- One internal mission decision for WMUK could be better promotion.
 - a. There needs to be a strategy for news coverage. Content verticals. What areas are we going to own?
 - b. Promotion: We need to promote our own air better.
 - c. Brand: locally owned and operated media.
- vi. TL: We basically have 3 choices:
 1. Continue with our current hybrid format, but with more local content.
 2. Go all-news.
 3. Go all-classical.
- vii. FAC members respond with their choice:
 1. JVR: stay where we are/more local- lot more local, get rid of some of the one hour/week shows or the different half hour programs at 9:30.
 2. MF: Stay where we are/more local- likes music and ME, ATC (national news low), variety.
 3. JVM: Hybrid format is good, but we need to do an analysis on what's more sustainable.
 4. BM: Do no harm.
 5. RO: Prefers going local. Perhaps even dropping some NPR, in favor of locally owned news—loves idea of volunteer producers.
 6. SW: As Tom noted, audience loyalty is a problem for us – particularly due to genre shifts at midday.
 - a. Would prefer 2 stations, one for each- move things around a bit
 - b. RO: HD- other channel?
 - c. TL: use a translator, buy a station signal.
 7. JVM: What is the time frame?
 - a. TL: make changes soon to format- looking at a few months
 8. JVR: How do we differentiate from 104.1 if we do that?
 - a. SW: Community engagement- beef up WSW to more days a week.
 - b. TL: 104.1 has one reporter in area up in GR, we have four here in Kalamazoo- local air, local service.
 9. JVR: Previous news director (Tony) knew everything about town—and had penchant for hard hitting investigative journalism. Had deep connections with local and state officials to break stories. Wishes our News dept. had more of that. Also likes idea of ramping up use of journalism interns.
 - a. RO: Problem is that interns don't have the relationships to get interviews
 - b. SW: There are opportunities for investigative journalism. We are dealing with some FOIA requests right now. But there is room for growth.
 10. MF: An endowed position for news?

V. Future Meetings

- i. Committee decided to count this meeting as the second one for the year. Will therefore not need to reconvene in December.

- ii. Station will instead try to plan next meeting around the time Tom comes back with assessment for follow-up in coming months.

VI. Adjourn

- a. **Meeting adjourned just after 7 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by Joan Amos.