

**MINUTES
TELEPHONIC PUBLIC SESSION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Wednesday, December 1 – Thursday, December 2, 2021

Call to Order

Chair Ramer called to order the public session of the Board of Directors at 3:01 pm Eastern Time on Wednesday, December 1, 2021. The following directors participated virtually:

Bruce M. Ramer, Chair;
Laura G. Ross, Vice Chair;
Ruby Calvert;
Miriam Hellreich; and
Robert Mandell.

The following officers and staff were also in attendance:

Patricia Harrison, President and Chief Executive Officer;
Michael Levy, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer;
Teresa Safon, Senior Vice President, Chief of Staff and Corporate Secretary;
West Smithers, Senior Vice President and General Counsel;
Bill Tayman, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer;
Stephanie Aaronson, Senior Vice President, Engagement;
Anne Brachman, Senior Vice President, Government Affairs;
Stacey Decker, Senior Vice President, Innovation and System Strategies;
Kathy Merritt, Senior Vice President, Radio, Journalism and CSG Services;
Deb Sanchez, Senior Vice President, Educational Media and Learning Experience;
Kathryn Washington, Senior Vice President, Television Content;
Stephen Wolfe, Chief Technology Officer, Senior Vice President, Information Technology;
Kimberly Howell, Inspector General;
Kate Arno, Vice President, CSG and Station Initiatives;
Deborah Carr, Vice President, Operations and Strategy;
Brendan Daly, Vice President, Communications;
Michael Fragale, Vice President and General Manager, Education Strategy and Content;
Beth Jacobs, Vice President, Digital Strategy and Innovation;
Joy Lin, Vice President, Journalism;
Nick Stromann, Vice President and Controller;
Beth Walsh, Vice President, System Strategies;
Jacquie Gales Webb, Vice President, Radio; and
Sarah Kildall, Board Affairs, Manager.

Adoption of Agenda and Determination of Closed Status

Chair Ramer called for a motion to adopt the meeting agenda and close the meeting for agenda items seven through nine. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the agenda was adopted unanimously as presented.

Invitation to Disclose Conflicts of Interest

In accordance with the CPB Code of Ethics for Directors, Chair Ramer invited directors to disclose possible conflicts of interest regarding the meeting agenda. There were none.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Ramer called for a motion to approve the minutes of the public sessions of October 6-7, 2021, and November 18, 2021. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were approved as presented.

Chair and Directors' Remarks

Chair Ramer thanked the CPB Board and staff for their dedication and hard work during this challenging year.

Chair Ramer noted for the record that the Board unanimously approved three resolutions through written consent since the last board meeting: two resolutions authorizing CPB management to extend agreements with existing entities and a resolution regarding CPB's funding request to OMB.

Resolution of Appreciation for Beth Courtney

Ms. Calvert read aloud the resolution of appreciation for public media colleague Beth Courtney. Chair Ramer asked for a motion to adopt the resolution of appreciation. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the resolution was unanimously approved.

There were no further remarks from board members.

President's Report to the Board

Ms. Harrison reported that this year, CPB received an increase of \$20 million in the FY 2022 general appropriation, funding for Ready To Learn and interconnection, and \$175 million in emergency funding for stations from the American Rescue Plan Act.

Public media has received substantial support in the Senate Democrats' FY 2022 appropriations bills. The Senate Labor-H Bill proposed funding of \$565 million in FY 2024, \$20 million for Interconnection and Infrastructure, and \$30 million for Ready To Learn.

Ms. Harrison reported that the current continuing resolution (CR) expires this week, and Congress is expected to pass another CR to fund the government through early next year. Since CPB's appropriation is two years in advance, CRs do not affect the current year base funding or the distribution of Ready To Learn funds, but they do prorate funding to CPB for Interconnection and Infrastructure. CPB continues to appreciate the bipartisan support from Congress.

Ms. Harrison reported that CPB support has enabled stations to meet increased educational, informational and safety needs of their communities. CPB has helped to strengthen local journalism to provide updated information regarding the pandemic and the availability of vaccines. At the local and national level, CPB will continue to advance the initiatives and projects outlined in the business plan and the Board will receive an update on CPB's work to support digital transformation in the public media system.

Ms. Harrison reported on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) working group, a collaboration among CPB, PBS, NPR, and station leaders, which continues to identify measurable ways to increase and support new diverse talent at all levels of public media.

Ms. Harrison welcomed senior vice president of human resources and DEI, Dr. Stephen Wilkins, scheduled to join CPB the following week.

Ms. Harrison reported that with the emergence of the COVID-19 omicron variant, CPB will continue to work remotely, monitor the nature of the virus, and use safety protocols when the office reopens. Ambassador Mandell asked about the tentative return-to-work policy and whether any guideposts have been developed. Ms. Harrison reported that CPB will have an official telework policy. Mr. Tayman reported that a phased return-to-work plan has been laid out, with employee safety as the top priority. The largest concern is that the majority of staff commute via public transportation. Currently, staff continue to work remotely and follow specific protocols for entering the office.

Chair Ramer asked about the status of the Homeland Security funds. Ms. Brachman reported that during the reconciliation process it was removed from the House bill. CPB will discuss it with the House and Senate during the FY 2022 appropriations process, which will likely go into early next year.

Report on PBS NewsHour Weekend

Chair Ramer welcomed Sara Just, Executive Producer of PBS NewsHour and Senior Vice President of WETA. Ms. Merritt reported that with CPB support, the *PBS NewsHour Weekend* launched in 2013, providing viewers a seven-day-per-week source of news and information on public television. The weekday program was produced in Washington, D.C. while the weekend program was based out of New York City. Over the last few years, PBS NewsHour at WETA has built a strong digital team to create more digital content and increase viewership. Following an examination of the expenses for both PBS NewsHour programs, and the PBS NewsHour's increased capacity for digital content, CPB, PBS, WETA and WNET concluded that bringing all PBS NewsHour productions under one roof would allow for more efficient and effective use of public media resources. Beginning in April 2022, PBS NewsHour Weekend productions will be integrated into PBS NewsHour operations at WETA, reducing expenses and providing a continuity of workflow and consistency of voice to strengthen the public media news brand.

Ms. Just thanked CPB for the investments in PBS NewsHour's digital growth. With CPB support, the PBS NewsHour has been able to navigate the fast-changing media landscape and reach audiences where they are looking for news and information. The last two years especially, PBS NewsHour has faced more rapid-fire breaking news, public distrust and a global pandemic that forced the newsroom staff to work from home.

Ms. Just reported on preparations for the consolidation of PBS NewsHour and PBS NewsHour Weekend. Ms. Just also reported that the production team at WETA is also taking over management of *Washington Week* to maximize resources and draw the most value from these investments.

Ms. Just reported that PBS NewsHour will continue to produce news-related and breaking news specials, while also continuing to cover presidential addresses, court hearings and election-related events such as debates and primaries. Having a seven-day-a-week newsroom and production operation will better position PBS NewsHour to create these specials.

Ms. Just reported on the progress of PBS NewsHour's initiative The Communities and the hiring of five reporters in cities across the country that are often overlooked by mainstream media.

This initiative gives a better view and vantage point into these communities and stories that are affecting the whole country in different ways. It enables the PBS NewsHour to cover breaking news in those regions more quickly and with more in-depth resourcing, while bringing new reporters into the public media system.

Ms. Ross commended PBS NewsHour on the hiring of Geoff Bennett as their Chief Washington Correspondent and soon-to-be PBS NewsHour Weekend anchor. Ms. Calvert asked about the five communities chosen for The Communities initiative. Ms. Just reported that the cities are: New Orleans, LA; St. Louis, MO; Dearborn, MI; Fresno, CA; and they are in the process of hiring for Oklahoma City. Chair Ramer asked for details regarding the cost savings of moving PBS Newshour Weekend to Washington, D.C. Ms. Just reported that savings are from combined computer systems, shared resources, and the elimination of overlapping jobs. Chair Ramer asked if PBS NewsHour West Coast Edition will move from Phoenix to Los Angeles. Ms. Just noted that Los Angeles was in fact her first choice, but Phoenix was just an easier fit with the Cronkite School of Journalism at ASU also being home to Arizona PBS. Their facilities make it more seamless to come and piggyback off the crew for local productions while also being affordable. Ms. Just noted that when she and her staff are in Los Angeles, the USC Annenberg allows PBS Newshour to use the building on their satellite campus.

There were no further questions and Chair Ramer thanked Ms. Just for her report.

Affirmative Action Plan

Mr. Tayman reported that diversity has always been a priority at CPB, and a stated goal is to reflect the diversity of the local community. Through CPB's annual affirmative action report, CPB sets goals as needed, consistent with guidelines established by federal regulations.

Mr. Tayman reported that in FY 2021, CPB's workforce increased from 85 employees at the beginning of the year to 89 at the end of the year with twice as many new hires as there were promotions. Despite the increase in employees, CPB remains below its pre-pandemic level of employment, and there is a vacancy rate of 12 percent at the end of the fiscal year. Regarding new hires and promotions, minority representation was 40 percent for new employees and 80 percent for promotions. Mr. Tayman reported that CPB exceeded gender representation in FY 2021. Minority representation goals are required only for the top job group, executive senior officials and managers. Although goals may not be required in all four job groups, CPB will continue its good faith efforts to recruit from diverse pools of candidates for all vacant positions. Mr. Tayman reported that management seeks the Board's approval of the FY 2022 Affirmative Action plan.

Resolution

Chair Ramer called for a motion to approve the 2022 Affirmative Action Plan. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the 2022 Affirmative Action Plan was unanimously adopted.

Discussion of 2022 Meetings

Amb. Mandell recommended postponing this agenda item until there is more certainty about the COVID-19 infection rates. By common consent, the agenda item was deferred. Chair Ramer noted that 2022 board meetings will take place virtually until further notice.

Executive Session

At 4:15 pm Eastern Time, Chair Ramer closed the meeting for an executive session.

[The minutes for these discussions are contained in the executive session record of December 1-2, 2021.]

The meeting adjourned for the day in executive session.

Public Session

Public session resumed at 3:01 pm Eastern Time on Thursday, December 2, 2021.

Digital Transformation Update

Chair Ramer welcomed guest speakers Michael Isip, President and CEO, KQED; Raney Aronson-Rath, Executive Producer, FRONTLINE; Alexis Rapo, Senior Partner, QCatalyst; and Kevin Martin, President and CEO, Ideastream Public Media. Chair Ramer invited Stacey Decker, CPB's Senior Vice President of Innovation and System Strategies, to report on the Digital Culture Accelerator (DCA), one of CPB's digital initiatives.

Mr. Decker reported on CPB's role in ensuring that the public media system continues to be relevant in its content and service to the American people. The Digital Culture Accelerator (DCA) is a CPB-supported program that over the last four years has been instructing, coaching and guiding station leaders and their staff on how to transform the day-to-day operations of their stations to be more digital-centric to reach, engage and convert new and diverse audiences.

Mr. Decker reported that all media organizations need to transform as audience preferences, needs and expectations change as they consume content across multiple platforms. Public media leaders must create and distribute content beyond broadcast that better serves communities, grows audiences, attracts new members and donors, and increases stations' sustainability. Participation in the DCA program has enabled stations to find success in the digital landscape.

Mr. Isip reported that his station, KQED, joined the DCA program in 2019. KQED had been growing its digital services since 2013, but the DCA program offered great value in helping him and his staff think differently. KQED found strategic focus and clarified its mission and vision – to redefine public media for its community and make it more participatory and inclusive. The DCA program also helped KQED turn their strategic framework into a business plan – identifying specific strategic growth opportunities that tie to audience, revenue and membership, and prioritizing investments in the programming and services necessary to achieve specific growth goals.

Ms. Ross asked about changes to KQED's audience since the shifted emphasis to digital. Mr. Isip reported that KQED is seeing support from a younger, more diverse audience and attributed a 5 percent growth in membership over the last year to their digital investments. Ms. Calvert asked if KQED is a joint licensee and if their radio station is involved in their digital work. Mr. Isip reported that KQED is television, radio and digital, and since incorporating digital back in 2013 there has been meaningful participation and involvement across the organization so that everyone is at the table. Ms. Hellreich asked if KQED has a model to share with smaller stations that may be struggling with this digital transition. Mr. Isip reported that all DCA station

participants are working together to establish a model for the public media system, and the DCA program puts together cohorts where stations can share information and ideas in working groups.

Mr. Decker introduced Ms. Aronson-Rath, who reported on FRONTLINE's focus on digital platforms and new forms of content while staying true to FRONTLINE'S journalism practices and editorial standards. In 2016 FRONTLINE posted the film *The Choice* to YouTube, boosting viewership numbers and expanding the audience to a younger age demographic. In 2020, FRONTLINE published all its films on YouTube. The results proved that people are hungry for public media's content on all platforms. FRONTLINE's top performing films on broadcast are also top performers on digital platforms. FRONTLINE also produces a digital newsletter that now reaches more than 500,000 people and has ventures in radio and podcasting.

Ms. Ross asked how FRONTLINE promotes content on YouTube, what are the associated costs, and how it combats misinformation. Ms. Aronson-Rath reported that FRONTLINE has compiled a digital team and works directly with someone at YouTube. FRONTLINE focuses intently on combating misinformation, and a presence on these digital platforms is vital. As public media content rises in the algorithm, it highlights FRONTLINE as an authoritative news source and reinforces that people are looking for this content. Digital efforts have been supported generously by CPB, and FRONTLINE has invested in people who are skilled in the digital landscape and can help with the next crucial steps. Chair Ramer asked if anything has changed in the way FRONTLINE uses Facebook. Ms. Aronson-Rath reported that they have stopped publishing original films and content and use it now as a promotional catalyst for documentaries and content on PBS platforms.

Mr. Decker introduced Beth Jacobs, CPB's Vice President of Digital Strategy and Innovation. Ms. Jacobs reported that CPB worked with QCatalyst to modify the DCA program for the pandemic so that the participating general managers and their stations could continue their progress. Goals of the modified program included a greater emphasis on project work in digital areas that drive audience growth; instilling digital best practices across the organization; strengthening cross-departmental collaboration to increase speed of execution; and utilizing a learning-by-doing approach with station personnel to create "muscle memory" with each digital project. Over time, stations have become more digitally mature organizations that are building greater loyalty with their existing audiences and attracting a new generation of public media viewers, listeners and users, who will become future members and donors. She introduced Alexis Rapo to speak in more detail about the current work of the DCA program.

Ms. Rapo reported on QCatalyst's approach for helping stations identify and manage the opportunities that arose from the abundance of digital platforms. Since public media stations have limited resources, general managers needed a new approach to how they manage their strategies for these platforms, and their overall business going forward. COVID-19 accelerated their digital transformation. Public media's strong suit is trusted content, and the DCA program shows stations how to use these platforms to distribute content to a larger audience and connect and build relationships with them. Peer working groups meet regularly for training, goal-setting and discussion of successes and best practices. Additionally, there is a speaker series that brings in experts from the commercial world to share relevant insights about digital growth and transformation. Ms. Rapo reported on specific email marketing and newsletter projects through which stations are engaging with their audiences more effectively and are seeing increased revenue streams.

Mr. Martin reported on Ideastream Public Media's experience in the DCA program as one of the three pilot stations when it launched in 2017. DCA has encouraged work cross-departmentally to develop knowledge and skills in platform-intentional media. To date, Ideastream has produced over 50 short-form videos designed for digital-first distribution, which also became broadcast television interstitials. Ideastream's digital content, specifically a series called *Making It*, has opened doors for new local funders and provided opportunities for educators to pair lesson plans with online content and align with Ohio Learning Standards. This content has also helped with the formation of a community Project Advisory Board whose biggest contribution has been generating support and new story ideas. These advisory board members have told Ideastream staff what a great impact the telling of their stories had on their lives as entrepreneurs. This work could not have been done without the guidance of the CPB-supported DCA program.

Ms. Calvert asked about the success of small stations in the DCA program. Ms. Rapo reported on how WCTE in Cookeville, TN is developing a strategic plan and vision, as QCatalyst is working with the new general manager to track revenue streams. Ms. Calvert asked Mr. Martin about his station's agreement with the Ohio Department of Education and if there are other opportunities like this. Mr. Martin noted that the pandemic was a motivator in thinking differently about how his organization could best serve its community and find even more opportunities. Having been a DCA pilot station, Ideastream had the tools to create short-form videos, which proved timely for the series *Making It*.

Ms. Ross exited the meeting at 1:42 pm Eastern Time

Chair Ramer asked about the geographic makeup of the DCA stations, noting that most of them are east of the Rocky Mountains, and about email open rates. Ms. Rapo reported that the DCA has an application process. Stations are selected for a range of reasons, and for how much they can benefit from the program and its tools. Regarding digital email and newsletters, the data they generate informs stations about audience interests. The goal is to increase open rates.

Mr. Levy noted that CPB's investment to speed up digital transformation at every level of public media is essential as audiences grow and evolve. Chair Ramer thanked all the guest speakers for their presentations.

Future Agenda Items

Chair Ramer asked that any future agenda items be sent to him, Vice Chair Ross and Safon. Amb. Mandell suggested a future discussion on services to Latino communities and Spanish language content.

Adjournment

By common consent, the meeting adjourned at 4:51 pm Eastern Time.