

## **WTTW COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD**

MINUTES of the PUBLIC MEETING of the  
WTTW Community Advisory Board (CAB)

Tuesday, October 30, 2018

WTTW Studios, 5400 N. St. Louis Ave., Chicago, Illinois

**The Chairman called the meeting to order at 5:48 PM without a quorum present.**

**The following CAB members were present:** Chairman Joseph Morris (Chair); Secretary Rita Tandaric; Barbara Cragan; Simuel Hampton; Susan Ivers; Gene Koprowski; Peter Kraus; Sinhue Mendoza; Lennette Meredith; Mary Lou Mockus; Herbert Sohn, MD; Carlton Triolo-Sapp.

**Note the following CAB members were absent:** Vice Chairman Kimberly Frost, Maryilene Blondell; Joe Bosco; Leatrice Campbell; Linda Jackson; Yvonne Johnson; Aaron Lawler; Sharon Meroni; Maggie Steinz; Bruce Sutchar; Nyan Tucker; Dr. Sheila Wicks.

**The following persons also were present:** Dan Soles, WTTW's Senior Vice President and Chief Television Content Officer and CAB's management liaison; Phil Ponce, Host of "Chicago Tonight", and Yvonne Davis, Administrative Assistant to "Chicago Tonight" and Staff Liaison.

**And, the following members of the public were present:** Nancy Koprowski; Nancy Simon; Carmella Wimberly.

The Chair reported on various CAB member absences and specifically explained that Ms. Campbell would not attend due to a violent death in her family and expressed sorrow on behalf of the entire CAB.

The Chair welcomed Phil Ponce, one of only three hosts of "Chicago Tonight". The CAB is devoted to "Chicago Tonight" and notes that there is nothing like it anywhere else in the country. It is a great institution and very important to Chicago. The Chair asked Mr. Ponce to tell the CAB about himself: how he got into journalism, how he came to Channel 11, and how he came to the hosting chair on "Chicago Tonight".

Mr. Ponce explained that he was born in Texas and moved with his family to NW Indiana at age 4. The area was gritty, diverse and working class. His parents were steelworkers. In retrospect he views his childhood as being a very rich upbringing. The only segment of the population that he had little exposure to was the white, middle class. He attended public school and described the teachers as "unbelievable." The public school education was strong, and the teachers were dedicated and demanding. He attended Indiana University and majored in English, then attended law school and practiced law for about 6 years. He didn't care for the confrontational aspects of the law. He prefers his current role as "moderator". He segued into journalism in Indianapolis as a weekend reporter. He was then hired by Channel 2 in Chicago where he was a street reporter for 9 years. He left reporting for the corporate world for about a year but found it incredibly boring. He called John Callaway to discuss getting back into journalism. At the time the station had extended an offer to a person who did not take the job, so Mr. Ponce was given a position, on a trial basis, to work as back-up host and occasional reporter for "Chicago Tonight." After about 5 years he went to work for Jim Lehrer for a couple years and then came back when John Callaway retired. Bob Sirott hosted the program for several years and then Ponce returned

and has been in the host's chair since. He is grateful to work with people who have standards, care about their work, and that respect the intelligence of the audience. He appreciates the support of management. Those who work at "Chicago Tonight" think of themselves as trustees of the program that belongs to the people and they recognize the responsibility. They understand that they need to meet the expectations of a smart, diverse and engaged viewership. They view the program as essential resource in the civic life of the city.

The Chair asked when the program was expanded into the current 1-hour format. Mr. Ponce said that the program went to one hour when Bob Sirott was the host. When John Callaway hosted program it was a half hour, single-topic panel. The one-hour format allows for three to four panels and a couple of taped segments.

The Chair asked if there is anything that Mr. Ponce would change. Mr. Ponce answered that they would like to see shorter segments and possibly more taped pieces. This, however, is up to management and subject to available resources. The culture today is not geared to the longer talk segments. The Chair responded by stating that one of the great virtues of the program is to hear smart people who talk in more than 30-second sound bites like available on commercial television news programs.

Dr. Sohn asked Mr. Ponce about his involvement with the elections. Mr. Ponce responded that the station is re-airing ½ documentaries done on Bruce Rauner and J.B. Pritzker. The programs revealed interesting insights into their personal lives and histories.

The candidate forums have been conducted for various races. There has been analysis on the candidates. Online coverage has been very robust as well.

Mr. Koprowski asked how the program is assembled each day and asked about the deadline for final decisions as to the program's content. Mr. Ponce answered that because "Chicago Tonight" does not have an army of reporters it needs to have some projects that are longer term, others that are "day of" and others that are "the day before". Events of the day are addressed to the best of their abilities. Many decisions are made the morning of broadcast as booking a panel must be done early. Gears can't switch too late in the day, but it can be done when necessary. Generally, things must be in place by around 2:30-3:00 PM.

The Chair asked about the off-air role of the program's host. Mr. Ponce responded that today (October 30), he conducted an interview with author Camille Paglia. Then he conducted an interview with Lisa Desjardins regarding the current election races. He also prepares for the panel segments. The host cannot have many "blind spots". Preparation includes reading the local newspapers and conducting online research. He tries to know a little bit about a lot of subjects. He starts with a vague outline of a lot of topics and then tries to fill gaps with his research. The goal for all segment hosts is to know enough about a subject to ask questions on the public's behalf.

Ms. Ivers asked why Chicago is so fertile for "Chicago Tonight". Mr. Ponce answered that Chicago has the critical mass in terms of politics, business, science and entertainment, so there is enough "stuff" going on to support a nightly program. The other ingredient is management's commitment to producing this type of show. What other station in the city would make the commitment? Producing a daily one-hour show is expensive.

Ms. Ivers asked what Mr. Ponce enjoyed the most about the program. Mr. Ponce answered that he most enjoys the variety of topics that they cover. All the on-air personnel are basically generalists and every day brings new surprises.

Mr. Kraus commented that since we're all creatures of the Internet age, and asked if anyone has considered adding a crawler to the bottom of the screen telling the viewer what is upcoming on the program, and the time the segment will be shown? Mr. Ponce responded that it's an interesting prospect but added that teasers are shown during program breaks.

Mr. Mendoza asked if Mr. Ponce watches the competition. He responded that he does not watch much of the competition's programming. He added that the reason a WBBM Channel 2 was such a powerhouse in years past is that at that time there were so few players. Now the choices are limitless.

Ms. Cragan complimented the station on the website and the ability to watch segments on the site. She has friends who love "Chicago Tonight" but younger members of the family – not so much. She loves that she can send people to those segments.

Ms. Ivers commented that the CAB often discusses the under-40 viewer and asked if Mr. Ponce has any ideas about how to bridge that gap and attract younger viewers. Mr. Ponce answered that attempting to get younger viewers is the holy grail of broadcasting. It's the bigger audience vs. the younger viewers. Everyone is after the younger viewers. One thing that might help is shorter segments. The younger viewers don't have the same attention span as older viewers.

The Chair asked that if there were additional resources available, what would be the priorities for spending those additional resources? Mr. Ponce answered that the priority would not be in subject matter but in additional content as a way of changing the pacing of the program. This would include more crews in the field with cameras.

Mr. Mendoza commented that as a Millennial he's often watching and listening online. He complimented the station on the number of younger on-air reporters. Mr. Mendoza also appreciates being able to share website content.

The Chair went back to the topic of resources. The emphasis seems to be on local news. Mr. Ponce responded that it's called "Chicago Tonight" because the focus is on Chicago.

The Chair mentioned that the station is currently undertaking a strategic planning project. The Chair asked if Mr. Ponce is involved in that process. Mr. Ponce answered that he is not involved in the process.

CAB candidate Ms. Wimberly asked if the station has ever considered a segment on old Maxwell Street area and what happened to the people who were there every Sunday. Mr. Ponce responded that they generally don't get that granular but commented that there was a segment about the area in past years. It was a highly diverse area at one time.

Mr. Kraus asked if the station would consider an Internet personality doing webcasts. Mr. Ponce answered that he had not considered it, but in any case, such a situation would be subject to the station's news standards which are part of the station's DNA in terms of fairness, balance and accuracy.

The Chair commented that it was 6:30 and time to let Mr. Ponce get ready for "Chicago Tonight." The Chair thanked Mr. Ponce.

The Chair observed that attendance was one person short of a quorum. Nevertheless, the Chair then moved to the agenda for the meeting and called for self-introductions of CAB members.

The Chair called upon Dan Soles, WTTW's Senior Vice President and Chief Television Content Officer and CAB's management liaison, to discuss new developments at the station.

Mr. Soles provided an update on candidate free time, stating that candidates from higher level offices down to the Water Reclamation District were provided the opportunity to record statements for placement on the station's website. There will now be a shift to the Chicago mayoral race. Candidate free time will also be offered to candidates in all 50 city wards.

He then discussed Art and Design Chicago. The fourth and final episode will air on Friday, November 1st and is also available on the website. There was a screening at the Cultural Center (and a thank you to Susan Ivers for attending). This has been an important initiative of the Terra Museum to acknowledge the city's great art and design history.

The strategic planning document submitted by the CAB was received and is being taken under advisement. There are many meetings taking place and the goal is to have a strategic plan in place by Spring 2019. President Micek was pleased to receive the CAB's submission early in the process and appreciated the constructive and helpful comments. There's still a long way to go, though.

The station is very close to hiring a new Vice President for Community Engagement. There have been outstanding candidates and the selection is down to a few candidates; a decision should be made in the next few weeks. Mr. Soles suggested that the person who is hired be a guest at the next CAB meeting.

The station is continuing its monthly screenings at the Cultural Center. The next is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of November which is Native American Heritage Month. The film "Keep Talking", produced by Kartemquin Films, is about a vanishing language from Native American tribes. This will be the last screening of 2018. For 2019 the station is working with Free Spirit Media for a potential screening in January and also talking with Kartemquin Films on two potential screenings, one about a 1963 school boycott that took place in Chicago and another around the film "Minding the Gap", which has the potential to be nominated for an Academy Award. Details about such futures screenings are still in the works.

Another Geoffrey Baer project is close to completion: "Chicago on Vacation". Geoffrey has been crisscrossing the Midwest, particularly Wisconsin and Michigan. The premier is scheduled for early March.

The Chair asked if the new Vice President for Community Engagement will report to Mr. Soles. Mr. Soles answered yes. The Chair then asked if the role of Management Liaison to the CAB would be passed on to the new hire. Mr. Soles thinks it's important that CAB meet the new Vice President and stated that it is possible that this person will attend CAB when Mr. Soles has a conflict.

The Chair then commented that it has been nearly two years that the Trustees' Liaison has regularly attended a CAB meeting. The Chair asked that Mr. Soles mention this matter to President Micek; the Chair also stated that he would contact Trustee Chairman James Mabie about the issue.

The Chair commented that the Cragan/Bosco proposal to hold a CAB retreat did not come to fruition due to conflicts in CAB members' schedules but noted that it is possible that the December meeting would be devoted to holding the retreat. The purpose of the retreat will be to discuss the culture of the CAB and revisit the CAB's by-laws. Ms. Cragan suggested that the December retreat meeting might be held in the WFMT studio (where the CAB formerly met) as the current conference room is not conducive to a retreat-like meeting as many of the people are in the back of the room

behind those who are seated at the limited table space. In the studio the tables can be arranged to suit the purpose of the meeting.

Ms. Cragan commented that it's very difficult for everyone to add another meeting to their schedules.

The Chair asked Administrative Liaison Ms. Davis if the WFMT studio could be reserved for CAB in December. Ms. Davis asked if there would be any meeting in December, due to weather, the holidays, etc. Mr. Soles agreed that he could look into the WFMT space for the December meeting but could not guarantee that it could be available for every regularly scheduled CAB meeting. The Chair responded that the studio would only be needed for the December 2018 date.

Ms. Ivers suggested that the current room could be configured to put all attendees in a large oval to better facilitate communication. Others agreed. The current conference room is the largest conference room available.

The Chair asked if there was an appetite to produce an annual report for 2018, above and beyond the Strategic Planning paper previously submitted to station management.

Ms. Ivers commented that it might be difficult to produce a meaningful annual report unless something substantial occurs within the next few weeks. She also commented that there is precedent for a special document to take the place of an annual report – specifically, the News Standards document took the place of the annual report as the primary work of the CAB in 2016.

The Chair asked for additional comments about an annual report, or for comments on whether the CAB should report on its meetings with Mary Field and Phil Ponce. Mr. Kraus asked if there was any plan to expand “Chicago Tonight”. Mr. Soles answered “no”, but that the station does want a broader presence for news, but that such expansion would be over the website. Various pages have been retitled as “WTTW News”. The television footprint would not be expanded but might be re-purposed if resources became available.

The Chair, not hearing any overwhelming desire to produce an annual report, stated that the December meeting agenda could be quite flexible. If the December meeting is a retreat, it would be a non-public meeting and Ms. Davis and Mr. Soles would be excused from attendance.

The Chair stated that a retreat agenda can be built from the program previously developed by the retreat committee. The retreat planning committee was reconstituted, and the meeting will be non-public.

The next public meeting will be in February 2019, hopefully with the new Vice President for Community Engagement. The April meeting would potentially yield information on the Strategic Planning project.

The Chair stated that Mr. Kraus had asked for time at this meeting to discuss topics that he believes that the CAB should consider for presentation to the news staff for possible broadcast. It was agreed that Mr. Kraus would start his discussion but that it would be continued to the next public meeting as unfinished business when a quorum would be present to act upon any related motion. Mr. Kraus elected to start the discussion at this meeting.

Mr. Kraus brought up several issues that are not being reported through traditional media but are reported on social media and various webcasts. It is Mr. Kraus' opinion that such subjects are ignored by traditional media because traditional media is heavily funded by pharmaceutical concerns.

Particularly, the issues all center on various health crises, including autism and autoimmune diseases.

At this point (approximately 7:04 PM), Ms. Steinz joined the meeting and the Chair declared a quorum present, and then asked Mr. Kraus to continue.

Mr. Kraus continued stating that the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention currently predicts that 1 in 59 children will be diagnosed with autism and further predicts that 1 in 2 may be diagnosed with autism in 2025. It is reported that there may be a correlation between the use of glyphosate (a chemical used in weed-killer Round-up) and autism, autoimmune diseases, and fatty liver disease.

Mr. Kraus also reported that there are reports that the HPV vaccine (to prevent cervical cancer) may actually cause more disease than it prevents. Mr. Kraus continued with a detailed, technical presentation.

After Mr. Kraus completed his presentation, the Chair commented that Mr. Kraus should follow the programming rubric established by the Programming Committee, but only after sources are confirmed and lists of local experts are prepared for consideration and possible participation in a broadcast piece or panel discussion. The Chair asked how Mr. Kraus intends to go forward with this project. Mr. Kraus said that he distributed his information to the entire CAB. Ms. Mockus asked if the program rubric could be adapted to this project. Ms. Ivers asked Mr. Kraus why he is resistant to using the established rubric. Mr. Kraus stated that he has perhaps been negligent in not researching the rubric. Ms. Meredith asked Mr. Kraus to explain his expectations of the CAB in this matter. Mr. Kraus responded that he is hoping that the CAB will agree to present this paper to station management and to communicate the idea that there are topics are not being made available to the public.

During the course of the discussion it was learned that Mr. Kraus had already submitted the information to Mary Field, the producer of "Chicago Tonight". The Chair asked Mr. Kraus to confirm that he had already sent the material to Mary Field and that Mary Field agreed to review the material. Mr. Kraus confirmed that the information was submitted to Mary Field, but that Ms. Field did not explain how she intended to act upon the information. The Chair then asked what the CAB could do with this information. Mr. Kraus answered that he did not know what management would do with the information or if the CAB could do more.

The Chair responded that the purpose of public television is to bring information to the public that may not be available from other outlets. The Chair asked Mr. Soles if Ms. Field, upon review of the material, might decide that it's worthy of investigation and then turn the material over to a producer who specializes in scientific matters. Mr. Soles confirmed that such is the possible handling of the material. The Chair asked if the CAB could do anything more to influence her response. Mr. Soles said that he had not spoken to Ms. Field about this matter, but if the CAB supports the proposal, conveying information of such support may give weight to the proposal. Mr. Soles cautioned that the station receives a lot of suggestions from the public.

Ms. Ivers asked if there was a motion on the table. The Chair responded "no". The Chair then suggested that the matter be put into its proper parliamentary form. A quorum did not exist when Mr. Kraus began his presentation. However, during the presentation, Ms. Steinz joined the meeting, thus establishing a quorum. A quorum consists of 50% plus 1 of the active list of CAB members.

The Chair thanked Mr. Kraus for his very thoughtful presentation. The Chair suggested that between now and the February meeting that the Chair, Ms. Cragan and Mr. Kraus try to work Mr. Kraus' presentation into the established rubric format. Ms. Steinz has already expressed support. The Chair suggested that the matter be carried forward to the February meeting as Unfinished Business. Mr. Kraus cautioned that if the station pursues such reporting it may impact station revenues obtained from pharmaceutical concerns. The Chair responded that we had earlier heard Phil Ponce state that the news standards are in the DNA of WTTW personnel, and as such, would report without giving thought to the impact. Mr. Soles agreed. Ms. Steinz offered to assist in any way to prepare this matter for the February meeting.

The Chair again called the meeting to order and stated that roll call had already been taken. A quorum was declared.

**Approval of the August 2018 Meeting Minutes.** Ms. Tandaric noted that Ms. Ivers had emailed 4 minor changes which would be made. The revised minutes would be forwarded to the Chair on October 31. The Chair called for a motion to approve the August 2018 minutes with the requested revisions. Mr. Mendoza so moved, seconded by Mr. Koprowski. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Approval of the Agenda.** The Chair called for a motion to approve the agenda. Ms. Cragan so moved; Ms. Meredith seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

The Chair summarized actions already taken prior to the establishment of a quorum: The floor had been opened for public comment; the CAB heard from guest Phil Ponce; the Chair gave his statement regarding the annual report and schedule for the December meeting and discussed the continuing absence of a Trustees' liaison and heard the report from the Management liaison. The Chair then moved to Reports of Officers and Committees, specifically the Membership Committee Report.

#### **Membership Committee Report:**

The Chair commented that the Membership Committee reports that three vacancies exist. Any persons elected to those will serve out existing terms and will be up for reelection in April 2019. There is also a membership maintenance issue in that Dr. Wicks is in violation of the CAB's mandatory attendance requirement. Ms. Meredith explained that Dr. Wicks has been contacted by the Committee and responded that she wished to continue on the CAB but was unclear as to whether she would attend the present meeting.

The Chair asked how many candidates are available to fill current vacancies. Ms. Meredith responded that three candidates are available. The Chair clarified that if Dr. Wicks was removed there is no candidate to take her position. Ms. Meredith so confirmed. The Chair asked if the Committee would consider carrying the attendance matter forward to the February meeting, pending no objections. No objections were noted so the attendance matter is deferred to the February public meeting.

The Chair summarized that there are three candidates for three vacancies. Each of the candidates has attended several meetings and remain interested in joining the CAB. The Chair asked that the candidates be introduced.

Ms. Mockus introduced Nancy Simon. She is a resident of Chicago, with degrees in journalism and public policy. She is concerned with issues of free speech and transparency in public policy and broadcasting. Ms. Simon is employed by the City of Chicago and works with the city council.

Ms. Mockus introduced Carmella Wimberly, who is a resident of Chicago, works for the Illinois Secretary of State, volunteers in East and West Garfield Park, and would like to see more teen programming on WTTW. She has a master's degree in Public Administration and Public Policy from DePaul. The West Garfield Park neighborhood (extends to about 4400 West) has been marginalized as East Garfield Park (which extends to about Kedzie) has been gentrified. She feels she could act as a liaison between the neighborhoods and WTTW. The issues are unemployment, underemployment and high school dropouts. Ms. Wimberly is an executive in the Metro drivers' services which manages all 29 facilities.

Ms. Mockus then introduced Nancy Koprowski, a Chicago resident and a documentary producer, with degrees in publishing and psychology and fine arts. Her father was involved in the launching of a public television station in Mississippi. Her husband is currently a member of the CAB.

The Chair asked if anyone had questions for the three candidates. Ms. Ivers, expressing a concern about conflicts of interest, asked Mr. Soles if WTTW receives funds from either the City of Chicago or the State of Illinois. Mr. Soles responded that the station receives no funds from the city but does receive an annual grant from the Illinois Arts Council to be used general operations. The amount is nominal when compared to the overall operation budget. All public radio and television stations in Illinois receive the grant for general operations expenses. A discussion about conflicts of interest ensued, with Ms. Ivers commenting that receiving funds from the state and having a state employee on the CAB could be viewed as a conflict of interest. Ms. Ivers believes that all such situations should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The Chair asked for further debate on the election of the three candidates to the CAB. There being none, the Chair reminded the CAB that a motion to elect the three candidates was already made by the Membership Committee and deemed seconded, and without objection, the Chair would consider all three together. The vote was unanimous in favor of election of the three candidates. Ms. Koprowski was assigned to the vacant Bonnin seat; Ms. Simon was assigned to the vacant Goldstein seat; and Ms. Wimberly was assigned to the vacant Wolfe seat.

**Unfinished Business:** The Chair determined that the CAB had disposed of the issue of the retreat.

**New Business:** The CAB heard the beginning of Mr. Kraus' proposal regarding underreported science/medical news.

The Chair then directed attention to Mr. Koprowski's motion to send a letter honoring Carroll Spinney on his retirement as Big Bird, subject to minor changes sent to Mr. Koprowski by CAB members. The motion was seconded by Ms. Cragan. The motion was passed unanimously.

Ms. Ivers commented that she brought copies of New City magazine for CAB members, which includes an article about the upcoming POV series episode "Minding the Gap". Ms. Ivers also reported that she attended the screenings of "Whose Streets?" and "Art and Design in Chicago". Ms. Ivers suggested that the WTTW staff producer of "Art and Design in Chicago", Dan Andries, be invited to speak to the CAB. Ms. Ivers will discuss this with the Chair and Mr. Soles.

Ms. Ivers also attended a screening of "Mr. Soul" a film about and based on the PBS series "Soul" which aired in the late 1970s for approximately 5 years. The film includes clips from the show and the political context and includes recordings of President Richard Nixon commenting that he wanted "Bill Moyers and any Black off the air", which lead to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting cancelling the funding for "Soul".

Mr. Kraus attended a concert by "Chicago a Capella" that was hosted by Geoffrey Baer.



**Good and Welfare:**

Ms. Simon noted that Rich Moskal will be stepping down as director of the Chicago Film Office, Mr. Soles commented that he will be missed and will probably appear on “Chicago Tonight” before he leaves his position.

Mr. Koprowski has joined the Board of Directors for “Access to Care”, a non-profit primary health care program for low-income, uninsured or underinsured residents of suburban Cook County and Northwest Chicago, which matches those persons with physicians and health care.

The Chair inquired as to Ms. Steinz’s health. She responded that she’s 100% but that she gets tired.

There being no further business, the Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Koprowski so moved, seconded by Dr. Sohn.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 PM.

**Next Public CAB Meeting:** Tuesday, February 12, 2019 at the WTTW studios.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rita E. Tandaric, Secretary

**Attachments:**