

WTTW COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

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

Thursday, March 8, 2018

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

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM with a quorum present.

The following CAB members were present and introduced themselves: Chairman Joseph Morris (Chair); Vice Chairman Mary Lou Mockus, Secretary Rita Tandaric; Denise Avant, Maryilene Blondell; Nora Bonnin; Joe Bosco; Leatrice Campbell; Kimberly Frost; Linda Jackson; Lennette Meredith; Carlton Triolo-Sapp, Bruce Sutchar.

Note the following CAB members were absent: Barbara Cragan, Susan Ivers, Aaron Lawler; Sharon Meroni, Herbert Sohn, Maggie Steinz; Eleanor Wolfe.

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

And, the following members of the public were present: Gene Koprowski; Nancy Koprowski; Katie Koprowski; Peter Kraus.

The Char called the meeting to order, declaring a quorum present. Self-introductions by CAB members were deferred. The Chair welcomed new attendees and reminded candidates for CAB membership that they would be introduced shortly.

The Chair directed attention to approval of the agenda and asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Vice Chair Mockus so moved, seconded by Mr. Bosco. The agenda was unanimously approved.

The Chair then asked for changes or corrections to the minutes of the August 15, 2017 meeting. There being no changes, the Chair called for a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Meredith so moved; Mr. Sutchar seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

The Chair then asked for changes to the minutes of the October 17, 2017 meeting. There being no changes, the Chair called for a motion to approve those minutes. Ms. Blondell so moved and Ms. Avant seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

The Chair moved to the public comment portion of the meeting. No members of the public were present and the comment period was closed.

The Chair noted that no liaison from the Board of Trustees was present, therefore no report was received.

The Chair introduced Dan Soles, Sr. Vice President of Television Content and production, who oversees, among other things, new production content. Two main topics to be discussed are the status of WYCC and WTTW's search for a new CEO after the retirement of Dan Schmidt.

Mr. Soles started his report with an update on WYCC's situation. WYCC terminated operations after having sold its spectrum rights in the FCC's spectrum auction. WYCC's programming emphasis was always educational. It was owned and overseen by the City Colleges of Chicago.

Mr. Soles explained that the negotiations regarding WYCC's programming is progressing. An appeal to the FCC to allow WTTW to enter into a shared carriage arrangement was approved by the FCC pending public comment which ended on March 1. WTTW has not received information about the comments. WTTW is hoping to broadcast MHZ Worldview Service, which was previously seen on WYCC. The program airs worldwide news broadcasts. Other popular programs included European mystery programs. If all is approved by the FCC the plan is that WTTW would sign an agreement with MHZ Worldview through the end of 2018 which would bring MHZ Worldview back to the air on channel 20.1. Potentially, interns would be hired from the City College system. Several mysteries have already been acquired and the station plans to acquire Midsummer Mysteries which would air on the WTTW Prime channel this summer.

The Chair mentioned that WYCC has/had station facilities at Kennedy-King College and maintained staff and production personnel there. Would any of this be acquired by WTTW?

Mr. Soles explained that WTTW has already hired several WYCC staffers, including a traffic person, an on air promo producer and a cameraman. WTTW has also partnered with a WYCC producer Mario Tharpe regarding the 370th Regiment documentary. It's nice to know that personnel with public television experience are available as positions open at WTTW.

Ms. Mockus asked whether WYCC technicians are union personnel. Mr. Soles answered yes.

To summarize, it is hoped that WYCC will be back on the air in late April on Channel 20.1, broadcasting MHZ Worldview Service and various mysteries previously aired on WYCC. Nothing can be officially announced as yet. The plan is that Channel 20.1 will be branded as WYCC through 2018.

On a separate track, WTTW is trying to carry a number of programs that previously aired on WYCC, which will be carried on WTTW Prime. It will not be carried on Direct TV. Comcast and RCN are the only providers that carry the Prime channels. As for channel 20.1, only Comcast has committed to carrying it at this point. RCN has not committed to carrying channel 20.1. Cable providers are not legally obligated to carry it. A question was posed about the number of hours WYCC would be available. Mr. Soles answered that it would be available 24x7.

Staff liaison Ms. Davis mentioned that she receives a lot of calls about a WYCC program "Sit Fit." Mr. Soles mentioned that it is not in the plans at this time.

A question was posed about whether there is any market analysis regarding revenue. There is not much data about those who only watched WYCC and not WTTW.

The Chair asked if WYCC had an Internet presence. Mr. Soles answered that WYCC's Internet presence was not as extensive as WTTW's. Further WYCC did not have the same access to the PBS library of programming as WTTW.

Ms. Blondell asked Mr. Soles for additional clarification of the benefits for WTTW to take up WYCC's programming. Mr. Soles acknowledged that there was some duplication of programming, but WTTW feels that certain programming, such as the MHZ Worldview Service was worth acquiring

Historically, WYCC was originally part of WTTW until the 1980s. Ms. Mockus explained that the objective was to make available college courses to the extent that a person could earn an AA degree over the air. When spun off from WTTW, WYCC was then owned by the Chicago Community College Board. It did not have a Community Advisory Board; it was completely governed by the College Board.

WTTW is not acquiring WYCC's spectrum. WTTW is only acquiring the contractual right to broadcast as WYCC. It was asked whether there would be any cross-advertising between WTTW and WYCC. This is yet to be determined. The main objective now is to obtain FCC approval. Bandwidth will come from WTTW's bandwidth. The logs will be on a pass-through, created and then sent to master control without editing as on the main channel. The Chair asked if the stations would be cross branded. Such is not in the plans at this time. The screen will show WYCC for the near future.

To carry WYCC under its bandwidth, WTTW is employing various technical improvements to get more broadcasting out of its existing bandwidth. This will allow space for WYCC and may be enough to allow WTTW Prime to air in High Definition.

Ms. Bonnin mentioned the passing of Lerone Bennett, Jr., long-time editor and journalist of Ebony and Jet magazines. She asked if WTTW had covered this. Ms. Bonnin also mentioned that a book is coming out about him through University of Illinois Press. Mr. Soles responded that the station has had a desire to tell the important story of that aspect of publishing in Chicago. The Chair suggested that Ms. Bonnin remind University of Illinois Press that Chicago Tonight is here and would like to know about such developments. Ms. Bonnin mentioned that she had contacted the station about the author visiting Chicago. Mr. Soles said that future communications could be directed to him and that he would pass it on to the correct producers.

Discussion shifted to the Board of Trustees' search for a new CEO for WTTW/WYCC. Several candidates for the position have been brought to Chicago for interviews. Information will be shared as soon as there is information to share.

Mr. Soles then discussed the "American Creed" film. Condoleezza Rice was in Chicago to meet with students. There is a hope to do additional youth screenings, including one with Cubs manager Joe Maddon, who was an important contributor to the project. The station is very pleased with it. The Rice event was not open to the public. When events are available to accommodate larger groups, word is passed to the Chair for communication to the CAB.

Upcoming community screenings include a screening of "Dolores", about farm labor activist Dolores Huerta, still living, on March 24th at the Chicago Cultural Center. The film also had a theatrical run.

Free Spirit Media will have a screening on April 21st. The organization works with young student filmmakers, mostly from under-served communities. A program will air in early May.

May is Asian Heritage Month, and a related film about the Chinese Exclusion Act will be screened on May 19 at the Cultural Center.

With the upcoming elections, a number of candidate forums are scheduled for WTTW airing. The leading candidates for Governor and the many candidates for the Democratic nomination for Attorney General will have forums.

The Chair asked about WTTW's "candidate free time". Mr. Soles answered that there would be a major push for the general election. Some primary races are on the website. The station is very proud of this tradition. The Chair reminded Mr. Soles that it's important to try to cover the down-ballot races. A lot depends on the budget and studio time.

Mr. Sutchar mentioned that the Chicago Tribune publishes list of judges about which most voters, unless in the legal profession, might not have sufficient information to make informed decisions.

In relation to public screenings, it was noted that films shown in public screenings do appear on the air. The panel discussions following the screenings are not aired on WTTW. There is a goal to have screenings moved to other areas of the community in addition to the Cultural Center. Jessica Lawson organizes the screenings. The screenings are generally well-attended.

Ms. Mockus asked about audience reactions to screenings. Mr. Soles noted that there is no formal report of audience reactions. Generally the number of calls has dropped as many rely on social media to communicate. Most calls to customer service are about membership issues.

The Chair thanked Mr. Soles and proceeded to Committee reports.

Community Engagement Committee: The Chair announced that Mr. Triolo-Sapp will be taking over the CAB's Facebook and Twitter accounts and has created a universal CAB email address through g-mail. Anything that a CAB member would like to post on the CAB's social media pages can be sent to the email address for processing. He is also waiting for approval from a site that facilitates scheduled Twitter feeds. More information will be provided in the coming weeks. There is a tentative conference call set for April 9th; details to follow.

Membership Committee: There are 20 active CAB members and 4 members' terms are expiring in April. Current members with expiring terms should notify the Membership Committee of intentions to stand for re-election or not.

The Committee reported that there are 7 potential CAB members being considered. These potential members are Simuel Hampton, Yvonne Johnson, Gene Koprowski, and Peter Kraus, who are in attendance at the current meeting, and three others who will attend the April meeting: Renee Kofi-Bruce, Sinhue Mendoza, and Dr. Sheila Wicks.

Mr. Kraus has a math and engineering background, an interest in classical music on WFMT, and is currently researching medical topic which could lead to the improvement of public health. He is particularly interested in the possible connection between Lyme Disease and Alzheimer's Disease. Mr. Kraus mentioned a film which sets forth a possible connection between the diseases and thinks it might be a film that WTTW would like to present on air. The Chair suggested that any such suggestions from any CAB member should be directed to Mr. Soles for station consideration.

Mr. Hampton is a veterinarian at the Anti-Cruelty Society of Chicago. He is a Chicago native and interested in becoming involved in CAB.

Ms. Johnson has worked in the Cook County Public Defender's office for 21 years. She is currently involved in the domestic violence area of the office. She is also very active with her son in the issue of charter public schools. She is the

president of an organization that works to encourage parent participation in the charter schools and in the political aspects of public charter schools. She believes in choice for education. Ms. Meredith noted that Ms. Johnson's son, a product of charter schools, has earned a full scholarship to Northwestern University and is a sophomore.

Mr. Koprowski is a journalist of over 30 years in the area of techno-politics. He has worked with Fox News and has been nominated for an Emmy. He was accompanied to this meeting by his wife and daughter, who has appeared in the Nutcracker at Northeastern University.

The Chair mentioned that his daughter is very involved in charter schools and is a founding director of the Foundations Charter School in the Roseland community and works in the field with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers. The subject of charter schools is a perennial topic on "Chicago Tonight" and a subject of continuing interest to the CAB.

The Chair mentioned that the April plenary meeting is the CAB's annual meeting, at which 1/3 of the CAB is elected for the next three year term. At that meeting 9 seats will be up for election. Ms. Avant has informed the CAB that she does not wish to stand for re-election.

CAB officers are also elected for the next year (Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary).

Technology and Digital: Ms. Frost had no report but will speak when the CAB addresses New Business.

Vice Chairman: No report.

Secretary: No report.

Chairman's Report: Between now and the April meeting, the Chair hopes to have an initial draft of the 2017 annual report and to discuss it electronically before the April meeting and to have a final report ready when a new CEO is selected. The new year allows us to explore new topics, beyond journalistic standards, which was a highly effective endeavor on CAB's part. Another topic of continuing concern is the cost benefit of pledge drives, opinions on which are divided even among CAB members, not to mention members of the public. The pledge drives generate a substantial amount of the WTTW annual dues owed to PBS for broadcasting rights, so there are cases to be made on both sides of the pledge drive issue.

This is the time to determine which topics to pursue in 2018.

The Chair also encourages active participation in the CAB committees and to encourage the committees to follow the leads of the Ms. Meroni and Ms. Frost in holding meetings electronically, via conference call and to hold such meetings between plenary meetings. The Chair concluded his report.

Ms. Blondell commented that in the past year the CAB, as an entity, focused on one main initiative, that being journalistic standards. Ms. Blondell thought that this was very helpful to the CAB as it focused the efforts. The Chair asked if Ms. Blondell had suggestions as to topics for consideration in 2018.

Ms. Blondell answered that she believes that engagement is important – consideration of the demographics in an effort to expand to a younger audience and the programming that would attract the younger audience.

The Chair commented that these are excellent issues – finding audience and connecting the audience with content. Over the past year the CAB met with Anne Gleason, who in charge of marketing and the online world as it relates to WTTW. The WTTW audience is generally under 6 and over 60. That spot between is the challenge. How do we get those people? Is there a way beyond what PBS makes available to systematically plan for acquisition of content?

Ms. Mockus commented that the dues to PBS are closely correlated to the amount raised by pledge drives, is that an endorsement of the programming specifically aired during the pledge drives? Quite a paradox.

Mr. Bosco asked Mr. Soles if there is any WTTW-controlled spectrum that is currently unused. Mr. Soles answered, “No, not really.” There are adjustments being made because technology now can create capacity that allows for a clearer signal. More could be done to increase use, but high definition might suffer. WTTW is not going to acquire additional bandwidth at this time.

Ms. Blondell asked if bandwidth decisions dictate programming decisions. Mr. Soles commented that WTTW strives to provide more options. More people are watching content by other means than traditional TV. WTTW tries to be where the people are watching whenever possible.

Mr. Kraus commented that schools tailor curriculum for different learning levels – special education for those in need of extra help or advanced classes for the gifted. Is this type of analysis considered in determining programming? For instance, in the past, programs such as “Firing Line” or “Book Beat” were aired. Is there any thought given to intellectual programming? Mr. Soles responded that he considers most of WTTW’s programming to be intellectual programming. A lot of thoughtful productions are made available: the deeper dives into history, for instance Ken Burns’ two-week “Vietnam” series, and programs like “Chicago Tonight,” “POV,” and “Frontline” are examples. WTTW continues to evolve over the air and online. Additionally, PBS Learning Media is available for the classroom.

The Chair commented that he is aware of home-schooling families who make extensive use of the WTTW online offerings.

Mr. Koprowski added to Ms. Blondell’s comments by stating that it is common media theory that most people will not remember exactly where they obtained specific information.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business: Ms. Frost revisited the topic of security and the concerns of manipulation by interactive media without consent. Ms. Frost explained that several years ago her son was on a tablet and in the course of his viewing of WTTW a pop-up window asked that the viewer engage his/her camera, but she’s not sure if it was from WTTW or PBS or another source. Ms. Frost is concerned that public television should be protecting the interests of the public and she would like to see WTTW take a proactive stance and set a standard and state that it is not data-mining its users on any of its sites. Ms. Frost would like the CAB to make this suggestion to WTTW.

Mr. Triolo-Sapp asked for clarification of Ms. Frost’s position. Mr. Triolo-Sapp stated that there is difference between data-mining information where the user has agreed to certain terms and conditions when subscribing to an App – it’s in the small print – and information collected without permission or notice, and then selling that information for other purposes.

Ms. Blondell commented that data mining is everywhere: grocery stores, gas stations, and so forth. There don't appear to be rules or regulations governing this.

Ms. Bonnin commented that when you accept the terms and conditions, you become a user. However, when you have an underage person who may not have signed up, they become a subject, not a user, and that the subject has rights. Data is one thing, but the behavior of an underage person is different.

The Chair interjected that, to be clear, the conversation centers on the website. WTTW operates a large website with a great deal of content. There are many links to many different sites. How a user moves across the site, and for how long, and the order of movement, is recorded. Pop-ups are triggered. The Chair suggested that CAB should pose to someone on Anne Gleason's staff questions about what is collected. Mr. Soles stated that Anne Gleason would be the best person to answer such questions. Ms. Frost agreed to an extent but insisted that despite any answers which might be provided by WTTW, she still does not want the IP address of her minor son mined and used for the station's purposes, or at least not without knowing exactly what WTTW is doing with the information. In other words, transparency is critical.

The Chair wondered if the systems are sophisticated enough to know whether he, an adult male, is the user on an IP address as opposed to his 6-year old granddaughter visiting for the day.

Mr. Triolo-Sapp stated that the Terms and Conditions tell the subscriber/user exactly what will be done with information collected. And beyond that, the Terms and Conditions probably grant access to the user's operating system.

Regarding the Chair's question about whether his usage could be distinguished from his granddaughter's usage, Mr. Bosco stated that there are Apps that can record the keystroke cadence of the user, and thus allow the interested party to determine which person is using the IP address. Mr. Bosco also explained that there is video going to the user and audio going to the user. Mr. Bosco believes that there is the opportunity to send messages down the audio channel as well as the video channel. In the past subliminal advertising was imbedded in video. Mr. Bosco thinks that subliminal advertising in audio is also possible. CAB should inquire as to this practice.

When first hearing the term data mining, Ms. Campbell didn't understand the term and she thinks that this technology should be explained to users.

Mr. Koprowski suggested that if CAB is concerned about data mining CAB should look at the NSA, which has agreements with Google mail and Yahoo mail and as a result has access to all such email; he further stated that they read everything. There are ways to block data mining. By installing the Tor browser, the user can block everything from data mining and shoot down "cookies". You can also do anonymous emailing which provides protection.

The Chair asked Ms. Frost if the discussion have moved the ball forward for her. Ms. Frost responded that it had, but that she's not really concerned about WTTW collecting data. In fact, she hopes that WTTW will use its collected data to provide the highest quality programming. But, she would also like to see WTTW become a pioneer in educating their viewers as to what is collected and for what purpose.

The Chair then pointed out that Ms. Frost and her son do not own a television and that everything they watch is via computer. The Chair suggested that we should ask Anne Gleason back to a meeting to gather additional information.

Ms. Frost agreed. This may be the “one big thing” we work on this year. Ms. Blondell stated that while her daughters use their tablets and computers to watch WTTW, it was she, the adult, who accessed those sites.

The Chair asked Mr. Soles if he would like to comment on this discussion, but did not intend to put Mr. Soles on the spot without being able to properly prepare. Mr. Soles explained that he is not an expert in this area, but he has spoken to Anne Gleason about such concerns and he stated with certainty that PBS Kids is a safe space.

The Chair asked if there was any additional new business. There being none, the Chair proceeded to Good and Welfare.

Good and Welfare: The Chair mentioned that Ms. Cragan was not at the meeting because she was on another trip. Ms. Meroni is dealing with a serious family issue.

There being no other comments, the Chair stated that the next meeting would be on the 3rd Tuesday of April, specifically, April 17, at 6:00 PM, at the WTTW studios. The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Triolo-Sapp so moved, and was seconded by Mr. Bosco.

Adjournment: The Meeting was adjourned at 8:14 PM.

Next Public CAB Meeting: Tuesday, April 17 at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Rita E. Tandaric, Secretary

Attachments: