

WTTW COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

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

Tuesday, June 20, 2017

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

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:15 PM.

The following CAB members were present and introduced themselves: Chairman Joseph Morris (Chair); Vice Chairman Mary Lou Mockus (Vice Chair); Secretary Rita Tandaric; Denise Avant; Barbara Cragan; Kimberly Frost; Lennette Meredith; Maggie Steinz; Eleanor Wolfe; Bruce Sutchar; and Carlton Triolo-Sapp.

Note the following CAB members were absent: Maryilene Blondell; Joe Bosco; Leatrice Campbell; Dee Harrison; Susan Ivers; Linda Jackson; Derrick Kimbrough; Aaron Lawler; Sharon Meroni; Shweta Singh.

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

And, the following members of the public were present: David Strouse.

The Chair opened the meeting explaining that a quorum was not present at the time, and decided to move to public comment. There being no members of the public present at that time, the Chair called upon Mr. Soles to introduce Jessica Lawson to those present.

Mr. Soles explained that Ms. Lawson is the Community Engagement Director for WTTW. Ms. Lawson's is actively involved in the community with community screenings and has made tremendous progress in connecting WTTW with the community.

Ms. Lawson provided biographical information. She is a native of Chicago, grew up in the South Loop and on Channel 11. She attended Dartmouth College, and after college took a consulting job in San Francisco, and then to the Dominican Republic where she started a not-for-profit involved in girls' education and then returned to Chicago where she consulted with various not-for-profits before joining WTTW approximately 2½ years ago.

Ms. Lawson has charge of the station's Saturday Screening Series which is held on the third Saturday of the month (except for December) at the Chicago Cultural Center. The series has its roots in "Independent Lens." Since 2016 WTTW has had control of the content of the series and tends to showcase local film producers. Subject matter is chosen for its relevance in the community. The events are always listed on the WTTW events calendar.

The series consist of a film screening followed by a panel discussion, generally moderated by a "Chicago Tonight" personality or a WTTW producer. The issue-based discussion tying the content of the film to the community. It's an opportunity for WTTW to shine light on organizations that are involved in the issues presented in the films, and highlight

resources available in the community. WTTW works with large and small partners for the screening events, usually having one to two partner organizations per screening. The screenings can attract 200-300 attendees. Ms. Cragan asked if the films shown are eventually broadcast over WTTW. Ms. Lawson explained that the films usually air a week or so after the screening, but the panel discussions are not filmed. Mr. Triolo-Sapp asked if the series calendar is planned well in advance of the screenings. Ms. Lawson answered that the calendar is usually available 2 to 3 months in advance. The Chair asked if there is any feedback gathered after the screenings. Ms. Lawson responded that there is no formal data collection protocol, but often evaluations are requested, and that the responses are generally positive. The series is booked at the Cultural Center through 2018.

Ms. Lawson explained that the “My Neighborhood-Pilsen” project was quite an undertaking. In addition to the advance screening event attended by 500 people, there was a panel discussion, a reception and Pilsen community celebrations. One of the longest events was a town hall meeting, held at the WTTW studio, where 200 attended. Now through October, a number of symposiums will be held throughout the city, through the YWCA, the 10 Neighborhoods Network, and various community organizations. Ms. Lawson is also working with the Chicago Library Foundation to add the program and its study guide to the library’s catalog. Events are also being planned around Hispanic Heritage Month in September.

Another area of significant community engagement efforts centers around WTTW’s children’s programming, particularly the most popular program “Nature Cat” which has also lead to a national outreach effort. WTTW hosted a teach training program for 100 teachers centered on using “Nature Cat” to get outside and explore nature and connect urban children with nature. Other speakers have been engaged to develop related content – a fairy house expert, a representative from the Farm Bureau, and a representative the Chicago Architectural Foundation. The video shorts from these sessions will be available through WTTW’s early childhood partner, Opening Minds.

Ms. Lawson has one assistant to accomplish the wide range of community engagement efforts.

Mr. Sutchar asked how subject matter for screenings is chosen. Ms. Lawson responded that much of the content is grant-driven. Various organizations make funds available in order to highlight particular subject matter by providing funds for events around specific topics. Ms. Lawson will apply for such grants when subject matter is relevant to the Chicago community. Ms. Lawson tends to highlight organizations that may not normally have a voice. It’s a way to connect with and provide value to the community. Grassroots organizations get a valuable boost by partnering with a public media outlet like WTTW. It’s a way to promote the “small and mighty” who might not normally get the exposure. Mr. Soles added that the station tends to favor local filmmakers for screenings. The Chair asked if there is a cost associated with acquisition of films. Mr. Soles responded “sometimes, yes and sometimes, no”.

Mr. Triolo-Sapp asked if there is a way for the CAB to assist in promoting such events. Ms. Lawson said that they are still getting organized. Mr. Soles tries to make the CAB aware of such events, but several CAB members wondered if there is not enough lead time for CAB to be helpful. The Chair asked if the station would welcome suggestions of topics or possible panelists for post-screening discussions. Mr. Soles responded that they always welcome suggestions, but he emphasized that events center on available films. Ms. Lawson mentioned that they often have the film but nothing else planned around the film in response to Mr. Triolo-Sapp’s concern that once a film is placed on the calendar the event must be fairly organized at that point. Mr. Sutchar asked about the types of speakers needed for various events. Ms. Lawson explained that each event requires 3 to 4 speakers. They particularly desire speakers who have lived the experience, as well as someone at an organizational or policy level or organizational level, and someone who is working to solve the problems. It helps to have participants with differing opinions.

The Chair asked if Ms. Lawson has duties not related to films. Ms. Lawson explained that most of her work centers on some sort of visual content. The Chair asked about events related to children's programming. Ms. Lawson explained that the station maintains a number of partnerships, one being Opening Minds. She went on to describe Opening Minds, based in Chicago but a national early childhood education organization. They hold a yearly conference for about 5000 early-childhood educators, librarians, and care providers. WTTW has a barter agreement with Opening Minds wherein WTTW is a presenting media sponsor. The station will bring a number of properties and may conduct a workshop at the conference. They've done workshops on PBS Learning Media. Ms. Lawson has also worked with the station to create a traveling kids show for children ages 2-7, featuring the popular PBS Kids characters, such as Nature Cat and Daniel Tiger. The show pops up around the city. Each show is about an hour long. It's come in handy during school furlough days when community centers are overwhelmed with kids out of school. The goal is to start taking the show to more neighborhoods.

The Chair interjected that several CAB members had arrived and that a member of the public had also joined the meeting. Mr. David Strouse introduced himself and explained that he was interested in exploring volunteer opportunities. The Chair welcomed all new arrivals to the meeting.

The Chair asked about retaining those children as viewers as they grow beyond the early childhood years. Ms. Lawson mentioned an organization, Cinema Chicago, which screens films and provides discussions geared to 7th through 12th grade students. Right now, the station partners with Cinema Chicago once or twice a year. The events are generally held at the DuSable Museum of African American Heritage or the Chicago Cultural Center and 600 Chicago Public School ("CPS") students attend. Cinema Chicago runs the program in conjunction with CPS. CPS chooses the students who attend the programs. WTTW provides content and panelists. In September WTTW will show "My Neighborhood-Pilsen" to 600 CPS students.

Additionally, regarding the "My Neighborhood" program, the station was able to sponsor a high school video competition, wherein 43 students from 6 different high schools produced 2 to 5-minute documentary films on subjects important to their communities. \$18,000 in scholarships were awarded. A generous funder offered money for the project and Ms. Lawson used a portion of the donation to fund the scholarships. Judging was done by Sylvia Ewing, filmmaker Jon Siskel (nephew of the last Gene Siskel) and WTTW producer Dan Andries. The videos produced will soon appear on the WTTW website. Ms. Lawson hopes that this could be a pilot for an annual event. Students did most of the work. Lots of great feedback, and it was hard to get CPS teachers to participate, but the scholarship money created a lot of excitement for the project.

The Chair asked if Ms. Lawson is responsible for her own grant applications. Ms. Lawson answered that she will apply for smaller grants (\$5,000-\$10,000) for various screening events, with the knowledge and approval of station management. Generally, larger grants are handled by the station's fundraising department. CAB member Ms. Wolfe asked if Ms. Lawson is aligned with a particular Board Member or Trustee. The Trustees have a Community Engagement Committee with which she will occasionally interact, but generally, Mr. Soles interfaces with the Trustees.

Vice Chair Ms. Mockus asked about the length of the monthly screening events at the Cultural Center. Ms. Lawson explained that the films usually run about an hour with a 30 to 45-minute discussion after the film. The events are always on Saturdays at 2:00 PM. Mr. Sutchar asked how such events are promoted. Ms. Lawson answered that an on-air spot runs for about a week before each event. Additionally, there are two email blasts, and mentions in the printed program guide, 2 tweets, one Facebook posting, notices posted at the Cultural Center and postcards. Also, partner organizations will cross-promote the events.

The Chair mentioned that two CAB committees have had connections to Ms. Lawson and the station's engagement efforts – specifically Maggie Steinz and her Education Committee and Sharon Meroni and her Community Engagement Committee. While neither committee chair was then present, the Chair asked Ms. Lawson to describe her interactions with the two CAB committees. Ms. Lawson answered that Ms. Steinz often attends various screening events organized by Ms. Lawson. Ms. Steinz sends emails with suggestions and is very pro-active. CAB member Ms. Frost asked if programs would be expanded into other parts of Cook County. Ms. Lawson mentioned that there is a connection between Nature Cat and the Forest Preserve District where children can obtain a map which assists them to track Nature Cat within the forest preserves. Stickers are given at each forest preserve visited. Ms. Frost mentioned that she would like to see various programs for children expanded into the parks. Ms. Lawson agreed and reminded everyone that it comes down to budgeting. They hope to make some additions to the program in the fall.

The Chair thanked Ms. Lawson for attending the meeting and updating CAB on her role with the station.

Approval of Minutes: The Chair moved to the meeting's agenda. The first item was the minutes of past meetings. The Chair asked for comments or corrections on the minutes for the meeting of March 21, which was the meeting attended by Dan Schmidt, President and CEO of WTTW. There being no additional comments or corrections, the Chair asked for a motion to approve the March 21st minutes. Vice Chair Ms. Mockus so moved and Ms. Frost seconded. The March 21st minutes were unanimously approved.

Next, the minutes of the April 18th meeting were considered. The Chair asked for additional comments or corrections. There being none, the Chair asked for a motion to approve the April 18th meeting minutes. Ms. Cragan so moved; Ms. Avant seconded. The minutes of the April 18th minutes were approved unanimously. The Chair requested that Ms. Davis post both approved meeting minutes on the website.

Revision and Adoption of Agenda: The Chair asked for revisions to the agenda. There being none, he called for a motion to adopt. Ms. Avant so moved; Ms. Frost seconded. The agenda was adopted unanimously.

Trustees' Liaisons: The Chair noted that Trustee Liaison Gonzalez has experienced some health problems and was not able to attend the current meeting but expected to return for the August meeting.

Management Liaison: The Chair turned to Mr. Soles and asked if there had been any word from Mary Field or other station management on the status of the revision of the station's journalistic standards. Mr. Soles reported that the document had been approved yesterday (June 19, 2017) and that he would circulate the document to the Chair for distribution to CAB members. He added that the document would be posted on the station's website.

The Chair then posed a question to the CAB members for discussion later in the meeting. The question: If the CAB had no committees and started with a blank slate, what committees do we need - whether they are existing or never-existing.

Returning to Mr. Soles, Mr. Soles explained that "Weekend in Havana" will air on July 18th, but that a screening will be held at the Oak Park Public Library on July 12th at 7:00 PM

Also upcoming is a program on the 370th Regiment, which was an Illinois-based regiment of African Americans who fought under French command in WWI. It will air in November 2017 and will be offered to a national audience in 2018.

Also in mid-2018 there will be a continuation of Geoffrey Baer's "10...That Changed America" with new installments on monuments, streets and modern marvels.

Ken Burns' new film, "Vietnam" will be the major focus of the fall schedule. The station is gathering stories from the public, from many different angles (i.e., those who served, those impacted by the war, those who protested, etc.), that can be packaged for the website, for promos, or for broadcast in a program. Mr. Soles will take emails with suggestions.

Mr. Soles mentioned that Anne Gleason will be attending the August meeting. He asked that the CAB put together questions in advance of the meeting so that she may come prepared. The Chair described Ms. Gleason's duties, particularly in connection with the WTTW website, and explained how important the website has become to the station. The website contains far more content than that which is presented over the air. Ms. Gleason started in marketing but now has responsibility for the entire website.

Visitor/CAB candidate Mr. Strouse asked about content availability on the website. Mr. Soles explained that nearly everything aired by WTTW is available online. Some programs, such as British dramas, have a shorter window of availability, but local programs are always available, and certain programs, such as "Frontline" are permanently available.

Membership Committee: Ms. Meredith introduced CAB applicant and candidate Davis Strouse. Mr. Strouse explained that he is a native of the Northern suburbs, attended New Trier High School, and worked in sales for the White Sox and as director of community relations for the Bulls, but is now in sports entertainment. He loves Ch. 11 and specifically "Chicago Tonight."

Ms. Meredith commented that two CAB members have been absent recently: Mr. Kimbrough and Ms. Jackson. Ms. Meredith will contact each to determine their intentions regarding CAB participation.

The Chair explained the strict attendance requirements due to the small number of meetings each year. Additionally, there are currently four vacancies on the CAB.

Program Committee: No report was presented.

Digital and Interactive Media: Ms. Frost has passed along two matters for future discussion: 1) what is the relationship between WTTW and the Neilson organization and the metrics that Neilson provides, and 2) is there any connection between Luna Metrics and WTTW, and whether WTTW uses any information provided by Luna.

Cultural Research and Development Committee: Ms. Wolfe asked about this committee. The Chair explained that the CBA's purpose is to determine whether WTTW, through its policies, meets the cultural and educational needs of the community. The educational aspects of this mandate are covered by the Educational Committee, while the cultural aspects are intended to be covered by the Cultural Research and Development Committee. No report was presented.

Education Committee: No report was presented.

Station Administration and Finance Committee: No report was presented.

Journalistic Standards and Ethics Committee: The committee is expecting the station's new journalistic standards and will likely meet to discuss the document. A report will follow such review.

Secretary: No report was presented.

Vice Chairman: Vice Chair Ms. Mockus asked Mr. Soles about "School Inc." Mr. Soles said that the program was aired on WTTW's World Channel, but will possibly air on Ch. 11 as a three-part series in the fall calendar. Additionally, Ms. Mockus has been speaking to groups about Cultural Marxism, and in that context, some recollected Kenneth Clark's "Civilisation." Mr. Soles reported that the BBC is currently working with PBS on a new series for 2018 and 2019. The original "Civilisation" series is probably available in libraries. That series aired in the 1970s. A discussion of Sr. Wendy's art series followed, which aired in the 1990's, and may be available on You-Tube.

Ms. Mockus offered a special salute to Ms. Meredith of the Membership Committee for performing the challenging work of the Membership Committee, and for her very gracious manner of handling CAB membership applications and candidates. Ms. Meredith thanked Ms. Mockus for the kind words.

Chairman's Report: The Chair returned to the topic of CAB committees and CAB member Dr. Sohn's idea for a committee on committees. There has also been some discussion between Ms. Meroni and Ms. Frost about combining the Digital and Interactive Media and Community Engagement committees and ceding chairmanship of the combined committees to Ms. Frost. Ms. Frost acknowledged that the matter has been discussed.

Without further commenting on the combination of those committees or any committees, the Chair stated that he would like to take up Dr. Sohn's suggestion and appoint a committee on committees. The Chair appointed Dr. Sohn, the three CAB officers and the current chairs of current committees to serve on the committee. A meeting is proposed for July 25th at the studios, depending on the availability of meeting space. All members of the CAB are welcome to attend. Definite notice will be provided.

The Chair again posed his question: Which committees should exist? A quick poll was taken:

Ms. Mockus: Education

Ms. Tandaric: Journalistic Standards

Ms. Cragan: Legislative Committee (which is a committee that other CABs have)

Ms. Frost: Cultural Research and Development, Education, Journalistic Standards, Community Engagement and Technology, Programming

Ms. Wolfe: Health-Mental and Physical

Ms. Steinz: Health-Mental and Physical, Programming, Membership, Education, Cultural Research, Civic Education/Legislative

Mr. Triolo-Sapp: Membership, plus suggested combining Programming, Community Engagement, Cultural Research and Development and Education, technology, and administration and finance

Ms. Avant: Journalistic Standards, Programming, Education, Cultural Research and Development, Finance, Membership, with each committee being concerned with diversity and as broad an audience as possible

Ms. Meredith: Membership and Nominating. Otherwise no changes.

Mr. Strouse asked if audience development is any part of this discussion. The Chair responded that community engagement would have covered this area, but that we do not manage the station – we only advise.

The Chair also requested that everyone keep in mind the annual report. The next meeting will represent our 3rd meeting in recent years with Anne Gleason.

Unfinished Business: None

New Business: Ms. Frost questioned that upcoming content brings many items available for revenue generation. Mr. Soles explained that some of the upcoming content is not owed by WTTW, and that he's learned over the years that merchandising revenue is extremely hard to predict.

Mr. Tiolo-Sapp asked if new CAB members should be joining current committees or wait. The Chair answered that the best thing to do is to attend the July 25th meeting. Everyone is waiting for decisions to be made before proceeding with committee work. Ms. Avant suggested that once committees are in place, that every CAB member be encouraged to be involved in one or more committees, and that the Chairs of such committees try to conduct meetings via conference calls.

Good and Welfare: The Chair noted that Ms. Campbell has been unwell but is improving. She passed along information that her youngest daughter who has been working in the financial/corporate world has recently graduated with high honors from the Arizona Chef Culinary College. She was inspired by "Check Please," and will return to Chicago to try to combine her corporate life with her newfound interest in culinary arts.

Ms. Cragan mentioned that she was stuck on an airplane between two gentlemen who discussed their love of PBS. One was a farmer from central Illinois and another was a businessman on his way to Jordan.

Ms. Meredith thanked Yvonne Davis for all her help in forwarding CAB applications. She also complimented Ms. Avant, who was born blind and is an attorney, on her many accomplishments. Ms. Avant recently went on a skiing trip to Norway. Ms. Avant also has a yellow belt in Karate.

Ms. Avant clarified that she used to downhill ski but has switched to cross-country. She also has a red belt in Tae Kwon Do.

The Chair reported that the Mary Jo Griffin, the widow of the CAB member Red Griffin, is seriously ill and will undergo surgery later in the week. Please keep her in your thoughts.

Ms. Meredith reported that CAB Member Dee Harrison is involved in the One Million Degree program which mentors students and facilitates connections between students and employers.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Avant so moved; seconded by Ms. Steinz.

The Meeting was adjourned at 7:54 PM.

Next Public CAB Meeting: August 15, 2017, at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Rita E. Tandaric, Secretary

Attachments:

