

WTTW COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of the
PUBLIC MEETING of the
WTTW Community Advisory Board (CAB)
Tuesday, December 16, 2014
WTTW Studios
5400 N St. Louis Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

The Chair found a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Before proceeding, on a somber note, the Chair asked for a moment of silence to reflect on the over 130 Pakistani children and teachers who lost their lives in a Taliban terrorist attack.

On a brighter note, the Chair mentioned that December 16th marks the anniversaries of the Boston Tea Party (1773), the adoption of the Bill of Rights (1789), and the decisive victory of the Battle of the Bulge (1944).

Introductions were made by the following present members of the Community Advisory Board:

Joseph Morris, Chairman
Mary Lou Mockus, Vice Chairman
Ava Holly Berland, Secretary
Jeff Berkowitz
Joe Bosco
Barbara Cragan
Janice Goldstein
Linda Jackson
Kimberly Frost
Derrick Kimbrough
Lennette Meredith
Sharon Meroni
Eb Moran
Maggie Steinz
Renee Summers
Norma Sutton
Arlene Swartzman
Chet Szerlag
Rita Tandaric

In addition, the following persons were present and introduced themselves:

V.J. McAleer, Senior Vice President of WWCI for Production and Community Partnerships and Management Liaison
Michael W. Gonzalez, WCCI Trustee and Liaison
Yvonne Davis, Administrative Assistant to Chicago Tonight and Staff Liaison

Finally, the following members of the public were present and introduced themselves:

Denise Avant, CAB candidate
Trey Cobb, CAB candidate
Peggy Rademaker
Charles Whitcomb, CAB candidate

Approval of Minutes

The Vice Chair provided Draft October 2014 Minutes, which will be finalized and circulated to Members electronically. Mr. Berkowitz requested permission to record the December Meeting. Recording the meeting, he asserted, is a “good use of technology,” and will provide an accurate transcript of the discussions. Whereas several Members supported, the overwhelming majority opposed, Mr. Berkowitz’ request. The Chair ruled that if only one Member objected to the request, it would be denied. Accordingly, the Chair ruled Mr. Berkowitz’ request denied. Mr. Berkowitz exercised his right to appeal the Chair’s ruling, but did not garner Members’ 2/3 vote and thus his appeal was denied.

Adoption of the Agenda

The Chair requested adoption of the Agenda, and it was adopted unanimously.

Public Comment

Ms. Avant presented a written statement, read into the record. Specifically, Ms. Avant recommended PBS and WTTW improve accessibility for, and to better serve, the blind and visually impaired, by updating its programming and websites to adopt the latest developed screen reading software platforms. The adoption of such platforms, Ms. Avant stated, would serve the public interest, by ensuring that the network and station were meeting its responsibilities to and “level the playing field for disabled people.”

An informative discussion regarding accessibility followed. The Chair thanked Ms. Avant for her presentation and written statement, copies of were provided to Mr. Gonzalez and Mr. McAleer so they could explore and “get ahead” of the issue. A copy also was provided to the Chair and the Secretary (and is attached). As a process matter, the Chair stated that the issue will be referred to the Technology Committee for further analysis.

Trustee’s Liaison:

Mr. Gonzalez expressed his delight to be present and appreciation for the work of -- and interest in getting know -- all the CAB Members. He also supported Ms. Avant’s efforts to ensure programming and web content are fully accessible to the sight impaired. Finally, he stated that he was looking forward to reading CAB’s 2014 Annual Report.

Management Liaison

Mr. McAleer stated that WTTW will be celebrating its 60 year anniversary being on the air, and that we would soon be seeing programming reflecting that. He also mentioned seeing Christopher Vaughn in the Lyric Opera’s “Porgy and Bess,” and on “What You Know About Chicago.”

Officers’ and Committees’ Reports:

1) Chairman

The Chair thanked all Members for their careful review and suggested edits to CAB’s 2014 Annual Report, which was on tonight’s Agenda. Ms. Summers added that the Chair should be commended for his incredible work, which all agreed.

Looking forward to 2015, the Chair noted that both Committees on Education and Cultural Research and Development plan to present program proposals, and that a new committee on journalistic standards would

convene and schedule a meeting with Mary Field and Phil Ponce. Also, the Chair stated that he intends to schedule a meeting with Newt Minow, former Chair of the Trustees and the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) to which all Members will be invited. Finally, he agreed with Ms. Steinz that it would be appropriate to raise “Net Neutrality” with Mr. Minow and hear his thoughts on the topic.

2) Membership and Nominating Committee

Ms. Meredith stated that although there are no vacancies, there are six pending applications, including Ms. Avant and Mr. Cobb who were present at the Meeting. As a member of the Committee, Mr. Berkowitz stated he had not seen the pending applications and contended that Mr. McAleer and/or Ms. Meredith should forward all applications to the Committee Members. Responding, Mr. McAleer stated that he will continue to forward applications to the Committee’s Chair, which she will forward. The Chair agreed, emphasizing that Mr. McAleer “has a lot on his plate,” that the current process in place works, and that there is no reason to change it. Ms. Meredith concurred, noting that since there are no vacancies circulation of pending applications is a non-issue.

Finally, Ms. Sutton closed by noting that an ad hoc group of members met in September and reached a consensus that the Bylaws regarding candidates’ consideration should remain in effect.

2) Program Committee

Ms. Cragan did not present a report, but noted that the Committee would soon submit a program proposal.

3) Outreach Committee

Ms. Meroni distributed copies of a written report outlining the Committee’s past achievements (including the survey’s November release, and related text for the 2014 Annual Report) and its future plans, which include monthly (alternating teleconference and in-person) meetings and holding informal discussions to precede CAB Meetings, and reaching out to the Technology Committee for assistance. In the latter regard, Ms. Meroni also mentioned the Committee encountered a snafu working with the website and that an update of the CAB logo was in order. (A copy of the written report is attached.)

The Secretary stated that the Committee Members might benefit from, and that she would forward, the Minutes from the June 2013 Meeting, attended by Anne Gleason, Senior Vice President of WTTW for Marketing and Interactive Media. In the interest of expanding the response pool, she suggested that the Committee also brainstorm with Trey Cobb, a CAB candidate and student at DePaul University. Ms. Meroni accepted the Secretary’s offer of the Minutes, and suggestion regarding Mr. Cobb.

4) Technology Committee

In Ms. Brown’s and Ms. Penn’s absence, no report was presented.

5) Cultural Research and Development Committee

The Committee did not present a report, but stated that it would schedule a meeting on January 21, 2015 to continue consideration of the topic of education alternatives and reform.

6) Education Committee

Ms. Steinz reported that the Committee had a very productive meeting regarding WTTW educational resources with Carmen Schmidt, WTTW’s Director of Education Services and Outreach Coordinator and programming producer. She further reported that the Committee plans to bring together teachers and librarians, connecting them with such resources in 2015.

7) Secretary

The Secretary reiterated her plans to send the Outreach Committee the June 2013 Minutes, which she did the following day. Also, she expressed her interest in joining the new committee on journalistic standards. Finally,

she committed to reviewing, and getting back to, Ms. Steinz regarding her evaluation of “Net Neutrality” topic being considered by the FCC.

8) Vice Chairman

The Vice Chair did not present a report.

Old Business

None

New Business: Consideration of the 2014 Annual Report

At 8:00 p.m., with a quorum present and non-members excused, the CAB Members deliberated, reviewed each section of and offered edits to and ultimately unanimously adopted the 2014 Annual Report.

Next Public CAB Meeting: February 26, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ava Holly Berland

Attachments:

Ms. Avant’s Email

Outreach Committee’s Report