

**Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission**  
**Meeting of May 23, 2023**  
**via Zoom**

Minutes

Present: *Mr. Edward Kaplan, chair; Mr. Richard Bodorff, vice chair; Dr. Debra Bright; Ms. Shelly Gardeniers-Pettigrew; Mr. Bruce Wahl; Ms. Ellie Wang. Ms. Valerie Emrich was present to represent Mohammed Choudhury, Maryland State Superintendent of Schools.*

The following members of the MPT management staff were also in attendance. *MPT President Larry Unger, Mr. George Beneman, Ms. Colette Colclough, Mr. Andrew Levine, Mrs. Fran Minakowski, Mr. Travis Mitchell, Ms. Betsy Peisach, Ms. Suzie Schmitt, Ms. Suzanne Schwertman, Ms. Linda Taggart, and Mr. Tom Williams. Ms. Dionne Neblett was present to record the minutes. Mr. Rob Jefferson was present for IT services.*

Guest: *Mr. Patrick Butler, president and chief executive officer of America's Public Television Stations (APTS) and chair emeritus of the MPT Foundation, Inc., was in attendance.*

The chair called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m. He requested approval of the minutes of the April 25, 2023, meeting. Mr. Wahl made a motion to approve the minutes; Ms. Wang seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously as submitted.

President's report

MPT expects to surpass the FY23 budgeted bottom line. Balancing the budget may be more challenging as salaries have increased across the organization. A few years ago, 98% of staff salaries did not reach the market midpoint. Currently, the majority of staff members meet or exceed MPT's salary target ranges. The salary increases and filling most of the vacant positions have increased compensation costs dramatically. These additional costs have been met with a combination of increased state appropriation, positive results from MSAA, and a good performance from the Development Division.

Mr. Unger and several staff members attended the PBS Annual Meeting in San Diego. This was the first in-person PBS meeting since the pandemic began. There were more than 1,400 attendees. The 2023 C. Scott Elliott Development Professional of the Year Award, which represents the highest level of professional achievement in the public broadcasting development community, was presented to MPT's own Linda Taggart.

MPT has received 20 regional Emmy Award nominations. Winners will be announced on June 24. The season 11 taping of *Chesapeake Collectibles* will take place on June 24 – 25 at MPT. A national pledge special titled *Social Security & You* will premiere on June 3 and nationally in 2024. The annual joint meeting of the MPBC and MPT Foundation board of directors will take place on June 8<sup>th</sup> at Historic Savage Mill. A photographer will be there to take photos of the commissioners and foundation board members.

Commissioners viewed video clips that included the national pledge special *Dion Parson & 21<sup>st</sup> Century Band*, Martin Doblmeier's *Sabbath*, an excerpt from *Artworks*, and a "We thought you ought to know" spot about the *Chesapeake Collectibles* taping event.

### APTS update

Patrick Butler reported that with the help of 50 State, APTS continues to work to increase federal and state funding. The budget request for CPB included a \$90 million increase. There is a \$40 million appropriation proposed for Next Generation Warning System. President Biden is negotiating to raise the debt ceiling.

Entrenchments are to be expected as spending cuts are proposed to reduce the federal budget deficit. Congressman Robert Aderholt of Alabama intends to complete a program-by-program analysis rather than make across the board cuts.

At the state level, most legislatures have finished their work for the current cycle. APTS is working hard to persuade lawmakers to fund \$1 billion in total government investments. Every station and partner must tell their own story. Public television stations will know their funding fate by December.

Mr. Kaplan inquired if there are any implications for PBS with the growing influence of AI. Mr. Butler replied public TV won't be exempt from its impact. APTS is talking with CPB and PBS to determine if ChatGPT will affect their work.

### Budget & Compensation report

Mr. Bodorff, committee chair, noted MSAA has delivered an outstanding financial performance, bringing in nearly 20% of MPT's revenue. A State of Maryland appropriation of \$1 million was provided for The Center for Maryland History Films, MPT's newest division. He complimented the work that continues to be done with the Harriett Tubman and Frederick Douglass documentaries. He turned to Ms. Schwertman for her report.

Suzanne Schwertman, vice president and chief financial officer, presented reports on revenue and expenses. The Legacy Society program received a large endowment. The increase in salaries affected compensation costs. Underwriting funds included a large one-time grant payment for the Tubman/Douglass documentaries. Leadership Society funds have increased year over year. MSAA has 16 clients and a number of large contracts. Pledge days were decreased; subsequently, on-air fundraising had a slight decrease in donations.

Ms. Colclough, vice president, Human Resources, reported that as of May 31, 2023, there were 139 filled posts out of the 144 authorized positions. Five job openings remain – there were 17 openings a year ago. The 13 new hires and seven separations included retirements. The EEO percentage of female employees is the highest it's been since FY11. The percentage of executives that are either minorities or female remain high.

Human Resources will introduce a new employee handbook in June. The handbook will be distributed via an online portal and can be easily updated. There hasn't been an update to the handbook in five years.

### FY24 Salary Plan recommendation

Ms. Colclough recommended that all employees receive a 2% COLA and 4% increase; 3% on July 1, 2023 and 3% on January 24, 2024. MPT will revise its classification grid to accommodate the increases. All employees have been placed in a job family classification based on salary and classification data from Quatt Associates. DBM is currently creating new classifications to closely match the current job families. A request for additional Position Identification Numbers (PINs) was made to DBM to convert some contractual positions to regular full-time positions.

As part of the new performance bonus program, MPT has issued approximately 25 bonuses to full-time employees. Another seven bonuses have been given to employees as part of the recruitment bonus program. A request was made to DBM to include contractual employees who work 30 hours or more to the bonus programs. Three managers have been promoted to the position of senior managing director. A summer intern was hired as an MPT employee after participating in the paid internship program.

Mr. Bodorff made a motion to approve the salary plan; Ms. Wang seconded the motion. The salary plan was unanimously approved. Mr. Wahl made a motion to accept the FY24 budget, Ms. Wang seconded the motion. The budget was unanimously approved. A letter will be submitted to DBM for the plan to be implemented on July 1.

### DEI&J update

Ms. Colclough reported that a voluntary employee training will occur in July to discuss the respectful use of pronouns. Efforts have been made to increase Hispanic recruitment. There are eight staff members that have signed up to participate on the internal diversity committee.

Travis Mitchell, senior vice president, Content, stated MPT has received four Emmy nominations related to DEI&J issues. MPT received NETA's Public Media Award for Community Engagement. CPB will fund a three-year grant to expand HBCU Week, using it as a model for the entire PBS system. MPT is working on a third national history film, this one about Baltimorean and former Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. The film will highlight the role of the courts in a non-partisan way and will have community engagement components.

Mr. Kaplan thanked all involved for doing a great job on *Water's Edge: Black Watermen of the Chesapeake*. Mr. Kaplan commented that from his basic idea, MPT made a work of art.

Mr. Unger shared videos of Mr. Schupak that included updates on MSAA and the MPT Sports Desk. Commissioners viewed an MSAA spot that was nominated for a regional Emmy award.

### Old/new business

There being no old or new business, the chair asked for a motion for adjournment. A motion was made, seconded, and approved. The meeting adjourned at 11:44 a.m.