

**Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission**  
**Meeting of April 27, 2021**  
**Via Zoom**

**Minutes**

*Present: Mr. Edward Kaplan, chair; Mr. Richard Bodorff, vice chair; Dr. Debra Bright; Ms. Shelly Gardeniers; Ms. Rebecca Hanson; Mr. Irwin Kramer; Ms. Beth Suarez, Mr. Bruce Wahl; Ms. Ellie Wang.*

*The following members of the MPT management and staff also were in attendance: MPT President and CEO Larry Unger, Mr. George Beneman, Mr. Joe Campbell, Ms. Colette Colclough, Mr. Michael English, Mr. Andrew Levine, Mrs. Frances Minakowski, Ms. Kate Pearson, Ms. Betsy Peisach, Mr. Travis Mitchell, Mr. Steven Schupak, Ms. Suzanne Schwertman, Ms. Linda Taggart, Mr. Tom Williams, Mr. Bob Wilson. Ms. Dionne Neblett was present to record the minutes. Mr. Rob Jefferson was present for IT services.*

**Minutes review and approval**

Chair Edward H. Kaplan called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. and welcomed everyone. He called for approval of the minutes of the March 23, 2021 meeting, Ellie Wang moved for the approval and Rebecca Hanson seconded; the minutes were approved unanimously as submitted.

**President's report – Larry D. Unger**

Steven Schupak, Station Manager, was inducted to the National Capital Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences' Silver Circle, recognizing his 25 years in the broadcasting industry.

Staff teleworking has passed its first anniversary, and the MPT team remains productive. Chesapeake Bay Week (CBW) productions were viewed in 18 national markets. Commissioners viewed a clip from the *Chesapeake Bay Summit* hosted by Frank Sesno, and one from *Creatures of the Chesapeake*, the centerpiece of CBW this year.

MPT Production Services provided streaming coverage of the Maryland General Assembly 2021 session. Education Division initiatives continue statewide. The *Standing Against Racism: Fostering Unity Through Dialogue* initiative also continues and will be reviewed later in this meeting. Interest in the MPT Travel Club is soaring, reflecting pent-up demand on the part of viewers and members. MPT continues to secure valuable media publicity – for example, the 85 separate *Maryland Farm & Harvest* media “hits” for the program’s Season 8.

The American Rescue Plan delivered \$175 million to public broadcasting, and MPT will receive an \$815,000 share from Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). The state appropriation of \$9.8 million for MPT for FY22 is the largest since SB1034 was enacted in 2017. The commission will review the network’s FY22 budget and compensation plan at its May meeting.

Commissioners were invited to attend the PBS annual meeting in May, with no registration fee. The commission and the board of the MPT Foundation, Inc. will gather in person on the evening

of October 26 for the first-ever event in the expanded Irene and Edward H. Kaplan Production Studio.

Commissioners viewed clips from MPT local series and some national productions.

### **CPB presentation**

Pat Harrison, the CPB president and CEO and the organization's longest-serving chief executive, sent a video message for the commission. The message was a warm greeting and recognition of MPT's many services.

### **Content review**

Travis Mitchell, senior vice president and chief content officer, delivered the Content Division update. The division covers the racial divide in the region and nation through a plan executed under the broad *Standing Against Racism: Fostering Unity Through Dialogue* initiative. Content is delivered through public affairs programming and special events. Mike English, managing director, Content, explained the May 24 programming involving a *Direct Connection* special, and other elements for an evening of programming. Kate Pearson, managing director, Programming & Acquisitions, secured the special "*Say His Name: Five Days for George Floyd*" film for MPT from Twin Cities Public Television for that evening's broadcast.

MPT is partnering with ITVS, Morgan State University, and Loyola University for virtual, race-related conversations in May. More than 60 hours of Monday night programming have aired to support the *Standing Against Racism* efforts.

An external advisory board has joined the efforts of an internal Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee. Twenty-five new general managers of PBS stations will hear a presentation from Mr. Mitchell on MPT's DEI work.

The long-awaited documentaries on Marylanders Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman will air on PBS in fall 2022, thanks to a State of Maryland grant. An education component will support the films.

Other enriching programming for MPT cited by Mike English, managing director, Content, will include a June 19 evening of arts programming, the centerpiece of which is a 90-minute production with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra from the Meyerhoff on conductor Marin Alsop's final appearance. A new, redesigned *Artworks* hosted by Wendell Patrick will be introduced to the viewing audience that night as well.

Two upcoming productions – *Destination Maryland* and *Made in Maryland* – will be new series of local content and are in the pilot production stage at present. They premiere in fall 2021. Bob Wilson, managing director, Digital Operations & Content, explained the digital platform support for these and other MPT programs. Joe Campbell, interim director of Creative Services, addressed educational, promotion and sponsor-supportive videos his team creates.

The audiences for local productions is growing on MPT's main and secondary channels as explained by Kate Pearson, managing director of Programming & Acquisitions.

### **Old/new business**

There being no old or new business, the chair asked for a motion for adjournment. Mr. Wahl made a motion to adjourn, and Ms. Wang seconded the motion. All were in favor, and Mr. Kaplan adjourned the meeting at 11:37 a.m.