

Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission
Meeting of January 24, 2023
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; 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 also were in attendance. *MPT President and CEO Larry Unger, Ms. Colette Colclough, Mr. Andrew Levine, Mrs. Fran Minakowski, Mr. Travis Mitchell, Ms. Betsy Peisach, Ms. Krista Respass, Mr. Steven Schupak, 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.*

The chair called the meeting to order at 10:33 a.m. He requested approval of the minutes of the November 22, 2022, meeting. Ms. Wang made a motion to approve the minutes, Ms. Gardeniers seconded the motion; and the minutes were approved unanimously as submitted.

President's report

MPT's legislative budget hearings are scheduled for late February. As in past years, Mr. Unger will meet with each member of the budget subcommittees to update them on MPT's activities in the past 12 months. In addition, he will discuss a new annual appropriation request for The Center for Maryland History Films. With a new administration in place, visits will also include meetings with legislative leadership, agency heads, and members of the governor's cabinet. MPT's budget that is set by a formula, will receive an increase again this year.

The audit firm did not complete the MPT annual audit in the usual time period. An extension was requested and granted by CPB. The audit will be completed in February and discussed at the next commission meeting.

The 2023 omnibus appropriations package that includes funding for CPB has resulted in a \$90 million increase over just the last few years. The funding package provided increases to Ready To Learn, Interconnection, and funding for the Next Generation Warning System.

The Maryland General Assembly's legislative session began on January 11. MPT crews are providing live streams of proceedings that will continue into April. The News & Public Affairs team along with Production Services provided live coverage of the January 19 inauguration of Governor Wes Moore; the satellite feed provided by MPT enabled other networks to carry the event. Photographs of the ceremony taken by Mr. Bodorff were used on a *State Circle* episode.

A proposal was submitted to CPB to request funding for the enhancement of coverage of state and governmental news and issues. MPT will be notified if selected in May. Talks continue with the gubernatorially appointed Maryland 250 Commission to provide a broadcast production

of an event in 2026 to observe the 250th anniversary of the United States. MPT was approached by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for ideas relating to a documentary about the 40th anniversary of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement. The documentary could be developed later this year.

The annual joint commission-foundation dinner will be held on June 8. The *Chesapeake Collectibles* taping will occur on June 24 and 25 in the Irene and Edward H. Kaplan Production Studio. This will be the first *Chesapeake Collectibles* taping held since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Commissioners viewed clips from outgoing Governor Hogan’s farewell address, Governor Moore’s inauguration, *Unpacking Cambridge*, *Christmas with Choral Arts* held at the Baltimore Basilica, and the Baltimore School for the Arts *Nutcracker* special. An MSAA public service announcement made for the Department of Health featuring Baltimore Raven James Proche was also shown.

Budget & Compensation report

Mr. Bodorff, committee chair, stated MPT had an outstanding performance in the Development and Education divisions, and MSAA. Many vacant positions were filled and the percentage of minorities hired has increased. He turned to Ms. Schwertman for her report.

Suzanne Schwertman, chief financial officer, presented reports on revenue and expenses. The Leadership Society and Legacy Society exceeded their full year budget as of December 31, 2022; however, there was a decrease in Membership’s forecast as many viewers have returned to pre-COVID viewing habits. There was an increase in the Education Division’s revenue. Salary expenses were higher due to an unbudgeted 4.5% COLA, a retirement health increase by the state, and increases to salaries that enable MPT to remain competitive in the job market.

Two MPT contracts were reviewed that were approved by the Board of Public Works. The CDP database software program contract was renewed. There were no contracts that required commission approval.

Ms. Colclough, vice president, Human Resources, reported that as of December 31, 2022, there were 136 filled posts out of the 145 authorized positions. There were 10 new hires and five separations that included retirements. The average age of employees is 50. The number of minority executives and managers is above the national average.

Education Division update

Ms. Betsy Peisach, vice president, Education Division, delivered an update. The division supports teaching and learning by providing media rich instructional resources to child care providers and Pre-K-12 teachers. The education formula is three-fold—an expert staff, strong partnerships, and multi-year grant awards that provide funding to accomplish their goals. With a core team of six staff members, the team is able to accomplish its goals with the help of an expanded team of approximately 100 partners and collaborations with a number of organizations.

Online professional development courses for K-12 teachers enable educators who live out of state, in other countries, and who are on maternity leave to maintain their teaching licenses. Ready To Learn initiatives connect learning with PBS KIDS shows. Grants provided by the Library of Congress teach students in a fresh and interactive way. *Thinkport* continues to be MPT's gateway to media resources for both students and teachers.

Many educators left the teaching profession due to COVID-19. The pandemic also took a toll on students as they lost learning time and were impacted socially. MPT produced a series of quality virtual learning courses for students and professional learning courses for teachers. There were 575 lessons developed and over 2,000 custom media assets, interactives, and videos. Ms. Peisach shared videos that included a Chinese language dialogue and a Data Science course. Quality resources for the classroom were created using the Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman films. MPT created a website that connected to themes including freedom, civil rights, and social justice based on advisory board recommendations. There will be two educator webinars held in February.

Ms. Krista Respass, managing director, Early Childhood Services, stated that MPT has its finger on the pulse of early learning. A space was created on *Thinkport* for education professionals to promote social development and overall well-being. Early Learning Socials allowed MPT to listen to the community and build a free year-long monthly program. This professional development tool is in its third year. Ready To Learn is awarded through a competitive grant process and is funded in five-year cycles. MPT has been selected to participate for the past 30 years. An early learning media ambassador program was also developed and MPT was selected to expand the program worldwide.

Ms. Wang is interested in the program to learn the Chinese language and feels the diversity shown in the education interactives is extraordinary. Mr. Bodorff was impressed that there are interested international audiences, even in Asia. He asked what makes MPT's education tools appeal to those so far away. Ms. Peisach stated the education courses offer credits and many around the world have benefited from these free resources conveniently accessible through Eventbrite.

Mr. Wahl asked if there was a place to find lesson plans and resources regarding the STEM curriculum. Ms. Peisach said that there are resources from public media on *Thinkport* and suggested PBS Learning Media.org for lesson plans, videos, and interactives. Ms. Emrich, a representative of MSDE, shared additional resources on chat including OER Commons, NASA and California Institute of Technology, and PhET Interactive Simulations.

Strategic Plan update

Mr. Schupak, station manager, reported that MPT has completed the first year under its current strategic plan. He provided highlights of progress achieved to date. The station is successfully producing, curating, and distributing high quality content, including local programs. MPT has a commitment to serve and grow audiences, and has made strides to attract a more diverse audience. Efforts have been redoubled in the following content areas: environment, natural history, and news & public affairs. Small groups began working on individual plan goals,

developing concise and sharp tactics for each strategy. Once a year, the small groups will present their progress and challenges to a larger group of MPT leadership and invited guests.

Ms. Hanson inquired if MPT had begun its canvassing program. Ms. Taggart explained that the state procurement for the canvassing initiative is active. A request for proposal (RFP) is being developed and canvassing is expected to begin by early fall.

DEI&J update

Dr. Bright, committee co-chair, stated there were no external DEI&J committee meetings held since the last report and turned to Ms. Colclough for her report.

Ms. Colclough, vice president, Human Resources, said the paid internship program has started and received high marks across the board. Students from the University of Maryland, Stevenson University and high schools in Towson and Glen Burnie are scheduled to tour the station in an effort to introduce them to employment opportunities and internships at MPT. A meeting with the DEI&J internal committee will be held in February. To reach a broader pool of applicants, recruitment included an extensive social media promotion.

Mr. Mitchell, chief content officer, shared that *Harriet Tubman: Visions of Freedom* has reached 1.9 million total viewers and there were 2,234 repeat broadcasts. The heaviest repeat schedule will occur in February and March. *Becoming Frederick Douglass* reached 1.6 million viewers. Screenings of these films will exceed 100 nationwide and 19 PBS stations received MPT grants related to the films. MPT received NETA's Public Media Award for Community Engagement for its DEI&J efforts.

MPT Foundation, Inc. update

Mr. Bodorff, Foundation Chair, stated the Governance & Nominating committee has completed its review of foundation documents. The Legacy Society has received gifts from three estates totaling more than \$140,000 and is expecting to receive a \$900,000 gift in the next several months. The Leadership Society closed 2022 exceeding its goals for the fiscal year and will increase its next target goal.

Old/new business

There being no old or new business, the chair asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Wahl made a motion to adjourn, and Ms. Hanson seconded the motion. Mr. Kaplan adjourned the meeting at 12:01 p.m. The next meeting will be held on March 28, 2023.