

Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission

Meeting of March 28, 2023
via Zoom

Minutes

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

The following members of the MPT management staff were also in attendance. *MPT President and CEO Larry Unger, Mr. George Beneman, Ms. Colette Colclough, Mr. Andrew Levine, Mrs. Fran Minakowski, Mr. Travis Mitchell, Mr. Kayode Onalapo, Mr. Steven Schupak, Ms. Suzanne Schwertman, Ms. Linda Taggart, Mr. Harry Vaughn, 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 10:30 a.m. and turned the meeting over to the vice chair, Richard Bodorff. Mr. Bodorff requested approval of the minutes of the January 24, 2023 meeting. Mr. Wahl made a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Kaplan seconded the motion; and the minutes were approved unanimously as submitted. Mr. Bodorff announced that MPT was the most-watched public TV station nationwide on March 15.

President's report

Mr. Unger attended the Maryland International Film Festival (MIFF) in Hagerstown last week. MIFF presented its Mendez Award to Steven Schupak for making a positive impact in the television and film industry. Rhea Feikin will be inducted into the Baltimore Jewish Hall of Fame next month. MPT's long-time vice president of Human Resources, Colette Colclough, will retire at the end of July.

MPT's legislative budget hearings in both the Maryland House of Delegates and Senate were successful. The 2023 "sizzle reel" which highlighted MPT's FY22 work was well-received. A video that introduced The Center for Maryland History Films was also shown to legislators. Mr. Unger shared a clip from the legislative session. MPT's budget should receive the largest state annual appropriation in more than a decade.

The APTS Public Media Summit was held in Washington, DC last month. Mr. Bodorff and several MPT staffers attended the Inventing the Future-themed conference. MPT staffed a booth at the Summit that displayed information about the Maryland State Ad Agency and The Center for Maryland History Films. There was a great deal of interest from station representatives from around the country.

The Organization of State Broadcast Executives (OSBE) will hold its spring meeting in the Irene and Edward H. Kaplan Production Studio in mid-April. This will be the first time in more than 20 years that this group has met on the MPT campus. The PBS Annual Meeting will take place starting May 15 in San Diego. This is the first in-person meeting since the COVID-19 pandemic began. There will not be an "Insider Track" component to the conference this year.

The annual joint meeting of the MPBC and Foundation board of directors will be held on June 8 at the Historic Savage Mill. This year's taping of Chesapeake Collectibles will be take place on June 24 and 25 at MPT. The 19th annual Chesapeake Bay Week occurs April 16 - 22. There will be more than 22 hours of bay-related programming including four new MPT-produced films.

Commissioners viewed video clips that included excerpts from *Discovering the Dove*, *Water's Edge: Black Waterman of the Chesapeake*, *Kent County's Storied Landscape*, the national pledge special *Dion Parson & The 21st Century Band*, and a clip from the final season of *Sanditon*.

Audit report

Mr. Kramer, committee chair, reported that the Audit Committee met on March 14. He stated that MPT received a clean audit report. Mr. Kramer asked for a motion to accept the audit. Mr. Wahl made a motion to accept the audit, and Mr. Bodorff seconded the motion. All were in favor and the audit was accepted.

Technology Division update

George Beneman, senior vice president and chief technology officer, stated the Technology Division is a vital component of the organization. It is the responsibility of the division to ensure MPT provides the highest quality programming possible and that the station remains innovative. There are currently 48 employees in the Technology Division; more than one-third of MPT's staff. Ten new staff members joined the team in the last year and there are two vacancies. The division is made up of five departments; each department fulfills multiple tasks. The division recently won an Emmy® award in the videography category for its work on the documentary *Creatures of the Chesapeake*.

Harry Vaughn, senior managing director, Production Services reported that his team is providing gavel-to-gavel streaming coverage of the Maryland General Assembly 2023 session that will continue through April 10. His team also provided live coverage of the January 19 inauguration of Governor Wes Moore and the State of the State Address on February 1. He shared a clip of the events.

Kayode Onalopo, senior director of Information Services stated that cyber-attacks worldwide have become more advanced and frequent. MPT's Information Services Department is focused on protecting against cyber-attacks. The security systems are strong with technology and policies in place to protect networks and data. Anti-virus software, operating systems, and web browsers are kept up to date. Strong passwords are in place to prevent cyber threats including malware, phishing attacks, and password attacks. All MPT staff are enrolled in monthly cyber security training.

Mr. Beneman said that MPT has upgraded energy-efficient transmission systems at all six transmitter sites thanks to federal government funding. The division recently purchased new equipment for its edit suites, an enhanced lighting system for the Irene and Edward H. Kaplan Production Studio, remote camera units, studio cameras, and upgraded drones.

In 2025, it is expected that 50% of televisions will be Next Generation technology ready. Many audiences will see the summer Olympics in Paris in 4K technology. The average family now has 22 wireless connected devices in their home.

Mr. Beneman highlighted new technology including a Black & Decker cocktail drink maker, Roomba vacuums that wet mop, dry mop, and empty dustpans, and a Kohler voice-activated bathtub that draws a bath at the temperature and amount of fill requested.

The Technology Division is committed to innovation, excellence and improving the quality and accessibility of programming. The team is dedicated to the people of Maryland. Mr. Beneman stated his opening and closing comments were written by ChatGPT.

DEI&J update

Ms. Colclough, vice president, Human Resources, reported that MPT has recently hired 15 employees. There are six remaining vacancies in the stage of applicant review and the interviewing process. Tours of the station have been conducted for colleges and high school students to introduce them to employment and internship opportunities at MPT. This has resulted in an uptick of internship applicants. There has been an increase in minority hires and a slight decrease in female hires. MPT continues to meet with the community to find out how to engage them and increase membership.

Travis Mitchell, senior vice president and chief content officer, stated that programs that have been offered reflect MPT's audience and population and have amplified the voices of underserved communities. Grant activities related to the *Harriet Tubman: Visions of Freedom* and *Becoming Frederick Douglass* documentaries continue. A proposal has been submitted to CPB to request funding to expand HBCU Week.

Strategic Plan update

Mr. Schupak, station manager, began his report by thanking Irwin Kramer for his support of the Overdose Response Program (ORP), an initiative Mr. Schupak is working on with the Maryland Department of Health. Mr. Kramer convinced the Maryland State Bar Association to be the first business entity to sign on to keep the overdose drug, Naloxone, on site at their work offices and branches to prevent opioid-related deaths from occurring at places of employment.

Mr. Schupak provided a progress report on the MPT Strategic Plan. The organization is halfway through implementation of the three-year strategic plan. MPT is keeping up with the plan and is on track to meet its goals. Participation in the strategic planning process has been universal among MPT leadership, department heads and managers. Smaller department strategies called "Strategies on a Page" (S.O.A.P.s) were addressed in smaller meetings to assess their progress against their goals and objectives. Individual reports from SOAP groups will be consolidated into a single presentation and shared with MPT leadership and invited guests in May, 2023.

MPT Foundation, Inc. update

Mr. Bodorff, MPT Foundation Chair, stated the planned giving campaign has reached 93% of its financial goal. Major Giving revenue has exceeded one million dollars. MPT Foundation, Inc. had a clean audit. The "I Heart MPT" day of giving generated \$44,000 in revenue. Three board members were added to the foundation board including Mr. Henry Stansbury, Ms. Debbie Dreisman, and Mr. Michael Styer. The Chesapeake Collectibles taping event will provide VIP attendance opportunities that will be offered to board members and their guests. Increased activities in planned giving marketing are expected due to a recent hire in the Development Division.

Old/new business

Mr. Bodorff referenced the resolution that was circulated with board materials regarding the estate of Joseph Thoma. Mr. Wahl made a motion to accept the resolution, Ms. Wang seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously accepted, and the resolution was adopted.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:39 a.m.