

Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission
Meeting of September 28, 2021
Via Zoom

Minutes

Present: *Mr. Edward Kaplan, chair; Mr. Richard Bodorff, vice chair; Dr. Debra Bright; Ms. Shelly Gardeniers; Mr. Irwin Kramer; Mr. Howard Rosen; Ms. Beth Suarez; Ms. Ellie Wang. Ms. Valerie Emrich was present to represent Mohammed Choudhury, Maryland State Superintendent of Schools.*

The following members of the MPT management and staff also were in attendance. *MPT President and CEO Larry Unger, Mr. George Beneman, Ms. Erin Chrest, Ms. Colette Colclough, Mr. Andrew Levine, Mrs. Fran Minakowski, Ms. Betsy Peisach, Mr. Travis Mitchell, Mr. Steven Schupak, 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 10:31 a.m. He requested approval of the minutes of the May 25, 2021, meeting. Ellie Wang moved for the approval and Shelly Gardeniers seconded; the minutes were approved unanimously as submitted.

President's report

By all measures, FY21 was very successful. The outcome was primarily a result of the state appropriation increase, revenue supplemented by COVID relief funding, and the work of the Maryland State Ad Agency (MSAA) and Development units. The FY22 budget provides for the filling of long-time-vacant positions and contributions to the reserves.

The strategic planning process was held last week, led by Station Manager Steven Schupak. Fifteen commissioners and foundation board directors participated in the planning sessions. Slides were presented that gave an overview of the strategic plan.

The rise in COVID cases and the Delta variant will be monitored, and teleworking plans will be revisited in the next several months.

MPT conducted the national observance of HBCU week from September 5-11 to celebrate the history and relevance of Maryland-area HBCUs. Special programs aired during the week and were supported by digital and social media.

The Irene and Edward H. Kaplan Production Studio has reached the 95% completion point, and MPT anticipates taking possession in December of this year. Final major elements include the finishing of the floor and completing the exterior.

Budget & Compensation report

Richard Bodorff, committee chair, applauded the financial success of FY21 with added commendation for the Development and MSAA areas. Maryland is now a minority/majority state, the most diverse on the East Coast. He turned to Ms. Schwertman for her report.

Susanne Schwertman, chief financial officer, presented reports on revenues and expenses. Despite the pandemic's continuance through the year, MPT ended the year with far better financial results than had been budgeted. Development adapted to the pandemic and raised \$1.7 million more in revenue over the initial budget. In addition, MPT received a \$400,000 royalty check from PBS for shows produced in prior years. Regarding contracts, since the approval threshold was moved to \$1 million, there were no contracts that needed commission approval. Artist exemption contracts included those for Jeff Salkin and Smartypants Pictures for MSAA productions. The MPT Foundation, Inc. board of directors completed its ethics forms last year.

Colette Colclough, vice president, Human Resources, gave her report pointing to the 128 filled posts from the authorized 145 positions. There are currently active recruitments for 10 of the 17 open positions. There were four separations, and EEO percentages are above the national average.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice

Shelly Gardeniers, committee co-chair, stated the MPT External Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Advisory Council held its second meeting on August 12. The meeting focused on codifying and clarifying the mandate of the council. The council will support MPT's overall mission and be a sounding board for staff and others and a community catalyst for dialogue and change.

Ms. Colclough presented materials to commissioners on screen. MPT has received recognition for its DEI&J work from sister stations inquiring how to mirror its efforts. Mr. Travis Mitchell, chief content officer, stated in addition to the two iconic Stanley Nelson films (*Becoming Frederick Douglass* and *Harriet Tubman: Visions of Freedom*) soon to be launched, more diverse national and regional programs are forthcoming. MPT plans to recruit additional external advisory board members and create a sustainability model.

Development Division update

Linda Taggart, vice president, Development Division, shared that FY21 was a year of growth and innovation as the team embraced new tools and technology. Every unit met or exceeded its financial goals. MPT acquired nearly 3,000 additional sustainers, and the vehicle donation program moved 116 vehicles to auction. There was growth of MPT Passport, MPT's video-on-demand streaming service. Initiatives were put in place to increase membership to 70,000 members and to encourage contributors to include MPT in their estate plans. There will be another State of Maryland membership campaign in spring 2022 to bolster membership.

Erin Chrest, managing director, Major & Planned Giving, stated that more than \$2.5 million was raised in major gifts, grants, and bequests in FY21. There will be a focus on planned giving over the next three years with a goal to raise \$5 million. There has been a great increase in planned giving revenue in part due to the online Free Will creation service implemented in January. A four-part postcard series and letter campaign promoting the bequest challenge and campaign was launched in May. Estate planning seminars are scheduled to begin this fiscal year. Baby boomers will be transferring nearly \$60 trillion in assets to future generations as the great wealth transfer has begun.

Old/new business

There being no old or new business, the chair asked for a motion for adjournment. Mr. Bodorff made a motion to adjourn, and Ms. Gardeniers seconded the motion. All were in favor, and Mr. Kaplan adjourned the meeting at 11:45 a.m. A vote was held to move into a closed session; all were in favor.