

Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission (MPBC)

Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, November 18, 2025

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: Virtual (Zoom)

Present: Mr. Richard Bodorff, Chair; Ms. Rebecca Hanson, Vice Chair; Dr. Debra Bright; Mr. Irwin Kramer; Ms. Elizabeth Suarez; Ms. Ellie Wang, Dr. Lakeisha Lashley, Mr. Robert Douglas; and Ms. Erin Senior, representing Dr. Carey Wright.

The following members of the MPT management staff were also in attendance: Mr. Steven Schupak, Mr. Charles Roberts, Ms. Patricia Fitzhugh, Ms. Lara Hjortsberg (OAG), Ms. Frances Minakowski, Mr. Travis Mitchell, Ms. Betsy Peisach, Ms. Susan Wolfinger Schmitt, Ms. Ling Ling Sun, Ms. Linda Taggart, Mr. Thomas Williams, and Mr. Harry Vaughn. Ms. April Martin was present to record minutes. Mr. Max Zelalem was present for IT services.

1. Call to Order and Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Chair Richard Bodorff at 10:02 AM. Chair Bodorff welcomed attendees, noting the success of the new Ken Burns program that aired on PBS.

2. Opening Remarks

Chair Bodorff introduced the newest commissioner, Mr. Bob Douglas, who thanked the Commission and commented on the recent successful transition of CEOs from Larry Unger to Steven Schupak.

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the September 30, 2025 meeting were reviewed and approved unanimously.

4. Housekeeping

a. Governor's Appointments Office

- Pending term expirations for 2026 and 2027; members will be reapplying.
- A new commissioner is expected to be appointed within several months.
- One vacancy remains on the Commission.

b) Training Completion

- Appreciation extended to Irwin Kramer for successfully completing the Open Meetings Act requirements.

Chair Bodorff turned the meeting over to Mr. Steven Schupak for the President's Report.

5. President's Report – Mr. Steven Schupak

- a) Ken Burns: *The American Revolution*
 - Encouraged commissioners to watch and recommend the program.
- b) Federal Funding Update
 - Ongoing federal defunding situation discussed.
 - Contingency plans in motion to operate without federal funding.
 - APTS remains hopeful restoration of federal funding but no guarantees.
 - National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is being considered as a possible alternative to CPB to administer funds going forward.
 - Maryland law indicates the State will cover resulting losses; MPT is planning for timing gaps between expenses and state reimbursements.
- c) Expense Management
 - MPT will implement expense reductions and keep ten positions vacant but still plans on delivering its mission to Marylanders.
- d) Fundraising Update
 - Fundraising performance is outstanding thanks to Linda Taggart and team.
 - Membership at 77,000; the highest in MPT history (up from 68,000 pre-rescission).
 - Canvassing program successful thus far.
 - 747 Leadership Society Members (donating \$1,200+ annually), a new record.

Rhea Feikin spot was shown.

- e) Maryland Center for Media Literacy and Education (MCMLE) 1-Year Anniversary
 - Celebrating the first year since rebranding the Education Division.
 - Mr. Schupak turned the meeting over to Ms. Betsy Peisach for a full presentation.

6. Maryland Center for Media Literacy and Education (MCMLE) Presentation – Ms. Betsy Peisach

a. Launch and Funding

- Official launch with First Lady Dawn Moore in November of 2024.
- \$1.5M donation from Betsy Sherman.
- \$1M gift from the Donald family.
- Two \$50K donations supporting family digital wellness initiatives.
- New MCMLE website launched.
- Primary target groups: early learners, families, seniors, teenagers.

b. Highlights & Impact

- Delivered 25+ workshops with more than 400 attendees.
- Reached 350+ professionals across health, wellness, civics fields.
- Supported 250 early learning educators.
- Enrolled 160 secondary educators.
- Launched peer-to-peer teen initiative.

c. Accomplishments

- Engagement with 24 organizations.

- Partnerships with agencies, universities, colleges, schools, senior groups.
- Monthly newsletter reaches 7,000 subscribers; parent texting service launched.
- On-air media literacy messages featuring Media STEPS.
- Data-gathering tools and focus groups used for research.

d. Looking Ahead

- Expanding target groups and communications.
- Plans include:
 - Training more ambassadors
 - Increasing early learning partners
 - Launching a teen advisory group
 - Producing more toolkits
 - Partnership with Towson University
 - Hosting community conversations
 - Producing additional broadcast/digital messaging

A Media STEPS video clip was shown.

7. Follow-Up Q&A

- Ms. Hanson: Asked if presentations/panels will be available online.
Ms. Peisach: Not yet but planned for future availability.
- Chair Bodorff: Asked how long current funding will last.
Ms. Peisach: Approximately two years; new grant applications and donor outreach underway.

Continuation of President's Report – Mr. Schupak

8. MSAA

- MSAA has generated \$50M in revenue over eight years.
- DGS request submitted recommending MSAA as a preferred vendor for Maryland state agencies.
- Onboarding of preferred vendor status expected by February 2026.

A Department of Correctional Services recruitment ad produced and distributed by MSAA was shown.

9. Content & Programming

1. HBCU Week NOW – HBCU Week went national.
 - Clip shown.
2. *Becoming Thurgood* – Recently aired; strong recognition to the content team.
 - Clip shown.
3. *Maryland Farm & Harvest* – New episodes airing.
 - Clip shown
4. *MotorWeek* 45th Season
 - 2,144 episodes; celebration event planned in Kaplan Studio.

- Anniversary clip shown

Q&A

- Mr. Douglas asked about public response to *Becoming Thurgood*. Mr. Schupak reported excellent PBS carriage and promotion plus the program received over the top positive reviews.
- Mr. Mitchell reported strong national support:
 - 222+ stations aired HBCU programming including the *Thurgood* film.
 - More screenings planned for February (Black History Month).

Additional clips shown:

- *Outdoors Maryland*
- *Visions of the Chesapeake* photographer feature
- Ken Burns *American Revolution*
- *Be Inspired / Day of Thanks Film Festival*

10. Financial Report – Patricia Fitzhugh

- Total combined revenue (Q1): \$12.4M
- Q1 expenses: 27% of annual budget (includes 1% COLA)
- Total consolidated revenue: \$26.0M
- Total consolidated expenses: \$11.8M
- Net: \$14.2M
- Continued cautious fiscal approach recommended.

11. Action Item

Issue: Travel expenses of \$2,233.16 charged to the Foundation needs reimbursement from MPBC.

Motion:

- Made by Mr. Bodorff
- Ms. Hanson moved; Ms. Wang seconded
- Approved unanimously

12. Budget & Commission Report – Rebecca Hanson

Chair Bodorff turned the meeting over to Ms. Hanson, who then turned it over to Ms. Suzie Wolfinger Schmitt for the Human Resources Report.

13. HR Report – Suzie Wolfinger Schmitt

a. Staffing

- 10 positions held open due to hiring freeze
- 1 new hire this fiscal year
- 3 separations
- Annualized turnover: 8.5%
- Average tenure: 13 years
- Workforce demographics:
 - 34% minorities

- 45.3% women
- Average age: 50
- Leadership demographics:
 - Executives: 60% female, 50% minority
 - Senior managers: 63% female, 37% minority

b. Salary Overview

- Annual salaries total: \$14M
- Average salary: \$99,655
- Median salary: \$88,455

c. Internship & Apprenticeship Programs (2025)

- Interns: 8 spring, 13 summer, 12 fall
- Apprentices: 3 positions (Sept 2024–June 2025); recruiting for 3 new roles (Dec 2025–July 2026)
- Partnership with Maryland Dept. of Service & Civic Innovation initiated via Mr. Douglas
- Student fellows in production, social media, MSAA, finance, and digital content.
- Intern EEO: 62% female, 53% minority.

Q&A

- Ms. Wang noted that Ms. Wolfinger Schmitt began as an intern.
- Ms. Wolfinger Schmitt confirmed and highlighted the strong mentorship culture.
- Students come from Towson, Stevenson, UMBC, University of Maryland, and other colleges.

Ms. Hanson closed the B&C report.

14. Operating Deficiency & Reserve Fund Discussion

- Mr. Schupak discussed the potential need for a future request to transfer funds from the Foundation reserve fund.
- Formal action will likely occur at the next meeting.
- Chair Bodorff noted:
 - The Commission will use its own counsel (Ms. Hjortsberg).
 - The Foundation will retain separate counsel. The Foundation is considering law firms.
 - Members serving on both boards must recuse themselves from any related vote.

15. Mr. Craig Fuller's Foundation report was deferred to the next meeting.

16. Adjournment

With no objections, the meeting adjourned at **11:20 AM**.