

Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission (MPBC)

Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, September 30, 2025

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: Maryland Public Television & Virtual (Hybrid)

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

Guest: Mr. Craig Fuller

The following members of the MPT management staff were also in attendance: Mr. Steven Schupak, Mr. Chuck Roberts, Ms. Patricia Fitzhugh, Ms. Lara Hjortsberg (OAG), Ms. Fran Minakowski, Mr. Travis Mitchell, Ms. Betsy Peisach, Ms. Suzie Wolfinger Schmitt, Ms. Ling Ling Sun, Ms. Linda Taggart, Mr. Tom 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

Chair Richard Bodorff called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. A quorum was present. He welcomed all attendees.

2. Opening Remarks

Mr. Bodorff noted that a recent MPT Foundation survey indicated members prefer in-person meetings. He remarked that it is a challenging time for the media industry but emphasized MPT's strength in leadership. Mr. Bodorff welcomed Mr. Schupak (President & CEO) and Mr. Roberts (Chief Operating Officer) to their new roles and announced that Mr. Larry Unger has been engaged by the Foundation as a consultant. He also welcomed Ms. Rebecca Hanson as the new Vice Chair.

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the May 27 meeting were reviewed.

Motion and second: To approve minutes as presented.

Outcome: Approved unanimously.

4. Commission Membership Updates

Mr. Bodorff reported that Ms. Shelly Gardeniers-Pettigrew has resigned her commission seat, creating a vacancy. He encouraged commissioners to suggest qualified candidates. He noted that some commissioners' terms have expired, but due to a cooperative relationship with the Governor's Appointments Office, efforts will be made to extend terms. Affected commissioners will need to reapply, and Mr. Bodorff will follow up individually.

5. Commissioner Resources

Mr. Bodorff reminded members that relevant documents are available on the Commission portal and requested that the portal address be included in all future agendas.

6. Foundation Report

Mr. Bodorff reported on recent Foundation elections: Mr. Fuller (Chair) and Ms. Suarez (Vice Chair) were elected. He will invite Mr. Fuller to brief the Commission on Foundation activities later in the meeting.

7. Bylaws Amendment

Ms. Hjortsberg presented an amendment to the MPBC bylaws to allow for the designation of an Emeritus Chair or Emeritus Members. The amendment took effect immediately, and Mr. Kaplan was designated as the first Chair Emeritus.

Motion: To approve the bylaw amendment as presented at the meeting (Mr. Wahl/Ms. Wang).

Outcome: Unanimous approval.

Motion: To appoint Mr. Kaplan Chair Emeritus (Mr. Wahl/Ms. Wang).

Outcome: Unanimous approval.

Ms. Hjortsberg noted that she would be performing a comprehensive review of the bylaws and that Ms. Hanson and Mr. Kramer had volunteered to work with her on this project.

8. President's Report – Mr. Steven Schupak

Mr. Schupak noted that the previous meeting was an emergency session following the federal government's rescission of public media funding. He acknowledged industry-wide challenges but reaffirmed MPT's commitment to public service and financial resilience.

Key highlights:

- Introduction of Mr. Roberts as Chief Operating Officer.
- Commendation to Mr. Bodorff for founding the Chesapeake Circle fund for Chesapeake Bay-related content.
- Discussion of the public television environment, including station closures and retrenchment.
- Update on APTS federal funding efforts; optimism for some funding restoration.
- MPT membership: 74,000 members, an all-time high.
- FY27 budget submitted; 10 open positions remain unfilled as a cost-saving measure.
- Fundraising efforts enhanced through canvassing, email, and major gifts.
- Anti-scam messaging produced and aired on MPT.
- Event highlights: *Maryland 5 Star*, *Maryland Cycling Classic*, *HBCU Week NOW*, *Made in Maryland: Real Stories of Addiction*, and Maryland 250 initiatives.
- Focus on streaming access and "Download the App" campaign.

9. Budget & Compensation (B&C) Committee Report – Rebecca Hanson

The B&C Committee met on September 22. Ms. Hanson reported that MPT manages approximately \$20 million with limited staff and praised Ms. Taggart and her team for effective fundraising activities.

Ms. Fitzhugh (CFO) presented FY25 highlights:

- MPT membership revenue: \$9 million, with increases linked to rescission-related sympathy.
- Maryland State Ad Agency (MSAA) revenue: \$6.9 million.
- Expenditures: Increased due to cost-of-living and healthcare costs; canvassing start-up expenses high.
- Result: FY25 ended with a \$200,000 surplus.

Staffing Report (for the FY ended June 30, 2025) (Ms. Wolfinger Schmitt):

- Six new PINS created (total positions: 151; filled: 145).
- 16 hires, 13 separations (9% turnover).
- Average employee age: 50 years.
- Total salaries: \$14.29 million (excluding benefits).

10. Strategic Plan

Mr. Schupak reported that the strategic plan, developed prior to the rescission, will move forward this fall with the development of smaller department strategies called strategies on a page (S.O.A. P) group initiatives beginning soon.

11. Old Business

Grant application: Maryland Farm & Harvest grant requires MPBC endorsement.

Motion: To ratify endorsement (Mr. Wahl/Ms. Hanson).

Outcome: Approved unanimously.

12. New Business

Knott Foundation Grant: \$45,000 for the Maryland Center for Media Literacy & Education requires MPBC endorsement.

Motion: To approve (Bruce Wahl/Rebecca Hanson).

Outcome: Approved unanimously.

Transfer of funds: Following review of a transfer for funds from MPBC to the Foundation by Ms. Hjortsberg on behalf of the Office of the Attorney General in accordance with the General Foundation Guidelines, management requested approval to transfer \$20,390.46 from MPBC to the Foundation to reimburse the Foundation for credit card charges erroneously made by MPT employees on their Foundation credit cards.

Motion: To approve transfer.

Outcome: Approved unanimously.

13. Open Meetings Act Training

Ms. Hjortsberg explained the requirement for the Commission to designate at least one member of the Commission to complete Open Meetings Act training.

Mr. Wahl, Ms. Hanson, and Mr. Kramer each volunteered to take the training.

14. Foundation Chair Report – Mr. Craig Fuller

Mr. Fuller shared results of his Foundation board survey, noting strong enthusiasm among directors. He highlighted the *Maryland by Air* film event at the Avalon Theatre in Easton and plans for directors to host fundraising dinners to support the President Opportunity Fund and other initiatives. Mr. Schupak thanked Mr. Fuller for revitalizing engagement among directors.

15. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

The information required by §3-306 of the Open Meetings Act with respect to the closed session held at the Special Meeting of the Commission on July 21, 2025, is attached to these minutes as Exhibit A.

Exhibit A

Presiding Officer's Written Statement for Closing a Meeting, 7/21/2025

MARYLAND PUBLIC BROADCASTING COMMISSION

SUMMARY OF CLOSED SESSION HELD ON JULY 21, 2025

1. Statement of the time, place, and purpose of the closed session:

Time of closed session: 5:02 p.m. (meeting adjourned in closed session at 5:37 p.m.)

Place (location) of closed session: *Zoom link provided for purpose of the Commission meeting*

Purpose of the closed session: *Discussion of the impact on of certain budget-related information released by received by MPT from the Executive Branch and protected by Executive Privilege*

2. Record of the vote of each member as to closing the session:

	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Richard J. Bodorff	X			
Debra A. Bright, Ed.D.				X
Shelly L. Gardeniers	X			
Rebecca J. Hanson, Esq.	X			
Irwin R. Kramer	X			
Lakeisha D. Lashley, Ed.D.	X			
Beth E. Suarez	X			
Bruce A. Wahl	X			
Ellie K. Wang	X			
Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.				X

3. Statutory authority to close session:

This meeting was closed under the following provisions of General Provisions Art. § 3-305(b):

→ **Topic #1: § 3-305(b) (13)** → **Topic #2: § 3-305(b) ()** → **Topic #3: § 3-305(b) ()**
(add others as needed)

4. Listing of each topic actually discussed, persons present, and each action taken in the session:

Topic description	Persons present for discussion	Action Taken/Each Recorded Vote
#1: Implications of State budget information received from Executive Branch and protected from disclosure by Executive Privilege	Commission members noted above; Edward Kaplan; the following members of the MPT Foundation Board: Pat Butler, King Corbett, Bob Douglas, Rhea Feikin, Craig Fuller, Kathryn Lindquist, Betty Morgan, Henry Stansbury, Michael Styer, Tyrone	No action; information only

Topic description	Persons present for discussion	Action Taken/Each Recorded Vote
	Taborn, and John Wolf; Steven Schupak; Patricia Fitzhugh; Fran Minakowski; Susan Wolfinger-Schmitt; Tom Williams; Lara Hjortsberg (OAG)	
