Minutes of Meeting #458
Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission
Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Center
1800 N. 33rd Street
Lincoln, NE
February 15, 2018

PRESENT: Commissioner Stan Carpenter
Commissioner Marilyn Hadley
Commissioner Patricia Kircher
Commissioner Fred Ohles (Chair)
Commissioner Jackie Ostrowicki
Commissioner Randy Schmailzl
Commissioner Clay Smith

ABSENT: Commissioner Ken Bird
Commissioner Matt Blomstedt
Commissioner Lisa May
Commissioner Darlene Starman

Advance notice of the public meeting was sent to Nebraska news media by means of a news release forwarded from the Commission office with Agenda posted in the NET lobby and on the state and NET websites. LB898 (related to Open Meetings Act) is also posted in the NET Boardroom on the first floor.

Chair Fred Ohles called the meeting #458 to order at 10:35 a.m.

Following the call of the roll, it was determined that a duly constituted quorum of Commissioners to be present.

The Chair called for public comment. There was none.

CONSENT AGENDA
The Chair requested approval of the minutes of meeting #457 as held on December 7, 2017. It was moved by Commissioner Smith to approve the minutes of meeting #457 as presented.
Voting aye: Commissioners Carpenter, Hadley, Kircher, Ohles, Ostrowicki, Schmailzl, Smith.
Opposed: None. Absent: Commissioners Bird, Blomstedt, May and Starman.

COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA
2nd Quarter Budget Report
AGM-Administration & Finance Randy Hansen presented the 2nd quarter budget report, ending December 31, 2017 for both Television and Radio Divisions.
Randy explained that it is not unusual to be underspent six months into the budget year, which is the situation at this time. The Appropriations Committee is recommending a 2% cut for the remainder of the current fiscal year and another 4% annualized. Randy said there continues to be a slowdown in the pace of discretionary spending in capital equipment, non-PBS programming and travel in this fiscal year.

On the television budget side, Randy stated the budget is currently underspent in maintenance and supplies by 10%. At December 31, 2017, the radio budget is underspent in maintenance, however in January and February the savings in this area were used due to an antenna issue at KTNE in Alliance.

Mark stated the University is not proposing cuts for NET at this time.

It was moved by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Kircher to approve the December 31, 2017 Budget Report. Roll call was recorded as follows: Aye: Carpenter, Hadley, Kircher, Ohles, Ostrowicki, Schmailzl, Smith. Opposed: None. Absent: Bird, Blomstedt, May and Starman. The Finance Committee met prior to the full Commission meeting to review the report in greater detail.

Nominating Committee Report
The Nominating Committee was formed at the December 7, 2017 NETC meeting and consisted of Commissioners Smith, Carpenter and Ostrowicki. The Nominating Committee proposed the following resolutions:

It was moved by the Nominating Committee to approve the proposed slate of officers as proposed by the Nominating Committee; to approve the proposed slate of Commissioners to serve on the Executive Committee and to approve the proposed slate of Commissioners to serve on the Finance Committee. Roll call was recorded as follows: Aye: Carpenter, Hadley, Kircher, Ohles, Ostrowicki, Schmailzl, Smith. Opposed: None. Absent: Bird, Blomstedt, May and Starman.

Commissioner Ohles spoke of the Commission’s responsibility to be stewards of the assets of the State of Nebraska used for radio and television programming. The assets the Commissioners steward include part of the payroll and personnel that allows NET to operate, all of the facilities and equipment, a portion of the service and safety activities of the State of Nebraska, and the reputation of NET.

COMMISSION INFORMATION AGENDA
General Manager’s Report
Funding Update
Mark Leonard shared State and Federal funding updates. He said NET’s governmental sources of funding are under some pressure right now. The University is managing through a state funding reduction and making plans as to how additional cuts in the coming year are managed. Mark testified to the Appropriations Committee last week. NET was one of several agencies that testified that afternoon. Mark testified on what has already been cut and what the impacts have been. He also painted a picture of what would be lost if there were additional funding cuts.
The University funding is a $2 million piece of the NET budget. Mark met with Donde Plowman a week ago and she indicated NET isn’t scheduled for any cuts, but that could change. This situation is being monitored closely.

Mark said he is also following the federal funding issues. President Trump’s budget recommends cutting the Corporation for Public Broadcasting’s appropriation from $445 million to $15 million in the current and upcoming budget years, as well as eliminating any funding for the Interconnect Replacement Project. Mark said proposed funding cuts have become an almost annual exercise, and that is why an NET contingent is going to Washington, D.C. the end of February to advocate for continued funding for public media.

Mark encouraged the Commissioners to contact their elected officials. There is suggested text available for use if anyone needs it.

**Public Media Venture Group**

As part of the planning for ATSC 3.0 (Next Generation Television), NET has joined an industry group of 24 public broadcasters called the Public Media Venture Group. This group is a diverse range of stations from large to small. The purpose of the group is to identify and advocate for applications for the new ATSC 3.0 television standard that are unique to public broadcasting. The Commercial broadcasters are very excited about the opportunities to monetize and target advertising with NextGen TV, however, public broadcasters believe there is also a case to be made for public service applications for the new technology, such as emergency notification and communication. The group is banding together to partner and develop specific applications for public broadcasting. There is particular interest in education and possibly an agricultural application.

There may be future opportunities to partner with the Carson School for Emerging Media in developing applications for this technology.

**KTNE-FM Transmitter/Antenna Issue**

Over the past month and a half, NET has had significant outage problems, as well as reduced power with the KTNE-FM transmitter in Alliance. This site had previously been identified as one of the sites that needs to be significantly upgraded, both in its transmission feed line and its antenna, however, the upgrade was pushed out beyond the current biennium in our current state funding plan.

The engineering team was able to patch the transmitter back together and while so doing, discovered the problem was actually an underlying problem in the transmitter, which was a much less expensive fix. KTNE-FM is budgeted for full replacement of feed line and antenna in 2020.

**Sexual Harassment Update**

Mark mentioned at the December Commission meeting that the issue of sexual harassment so prevalent right now was addressed in an All Staff meeting. Since then, senior managers have participated in additional training.
Mark updated the Commissioners on an article that appeared in the Omaha World-Herald on Monday February 12th that described the Douglas County Board voting to spend $50,000 in hotel-motel tax revenue to help celebrate the commissioning of the USS Omaha. In the article, Sue Morris, President of Heritage Services, stated that the money would be given to NET to help pay for the video about the USS Omaha, not spent on celebration expenses, which drew criticism from a taxpayer.

NET met with representatives of the Commissioning project about a year and a half ago to identify ways that NET might participate. The meeting was hosted by Mike Yanney, and also included representatives of the US Navy. At no point was NET looking for the group to fund the production—the decision to produce a “Nebraska Stories” segment was based solely on the importance of the event, the merits of the story and how it fit well within the scope of subjects for “Nebraska Stories” production. We were surprised to be notified two weeks ago that the commissioning celebration group through Heritage Services was planning to donate $50,000 to NET in recognition of the ongoing good work that NET does in producing programming, including the segment on the USS Omaha. We were not aware in advance of the donation, or its funding source. This was not a work for hire.

Debbie Hamlett has followed up with Mike Yanney late Monday, who confirmed that there was never a discussion of cost or funding requirement for the production.

Debbie spoke with the reporter for the story late Monday. He started by saying he “was checking the facts” on a story that had run that morning. Debbie expressed disappointment at not having been contacted prior to running the story and asked for a retraction/correction. The reporter declined saying he would run a follow up story.

Commissioner Smith asked if there continues to be opportunities for meetings with the Education Committee of the Legislature and urged Mark to continue this work. There was a meeting with the Education Committee in November, 2017, which was attended by one Senator and a staff person.

**NET Education Update**

Interim AGM-Education Debbie Hamlett gave the Education update. She highlighted she has had meetings with Dr. Tawana Grover, the Superintendent for Grand Island Public Schools. Debbie met with her to see how NET could work with Grand Island Public Schools to bring educational resources to the Grand Island community.

Debbie also met with Commissioner Stan Carpenter to spread the word about Ready to Learn and Learning Media Library.

Debbie reported that the Education Department is currently conducting Family Engagement Workshops. Debbie referenced the Commissioners to a page in the packet featuring Allison
Pontious, a teacher at Oakdale Elementary School in Elkhorn. She is a Digital Innovator through PBS. She has agreed to do “Tech Nights” once a week in partnership with NET.

Debbie showed two clips – *Served Like a Girl*, part of the Indie Pop-Up Lens series and *It’s You I Like*, a celebration of Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood 50th Anniversary. NET will be celebrating “Good Neighbor Day” on March 20th, which is the anniversary of Fred’s birthday.

Commissioner Smith encouraged Debbie to use the *Served Like a Girl* film as a potential fundraising/friendraising opportunity, especially among the Veteran community.

**NET Engineering Report**

AGM – Engineering Ling Ling Sun presented the Engineering Department’s report. She referenced the Terrestrial Reliability Report included in the packet. Broadcast quality is achievable through the improvement of Terrestrial circuit reliability and through robust over-the-air back-up.

The Radio Meta Pub project test is expected to start soon. This project will provide a new way to engage audiences in various applications.

In January, engineering staff received notification from the Legislature that funding would be received for the third phase of the Capital Equipment Refresh Project. Equipment purchasing has begun.

NET Engineering has been actively responding and working on the Falls City TV translator displacement project. Reimbursement of $109,000 is expected for the translator replacement.

The window for applying for replacement translators in other communities is April 10-May 16. Engineering staff will be preparing for this application process.

**NET Broadcast Production, Radio & Television Programming**

In the absence of AGM – Content Nancy Finken, Joe Turco, Television Production Manager, presented the Broadcast Content and Programming Report. He showed a preview of his locally produced documentary, *Growing Old Gambling*, which premiered on Monday, February 12.

Mark referred the Commissioners to the rest of Nancy Finken’s report, highlighting the support of the University of Nebraska in our coverage and programming. In addition, the weekly series, *Speaking of Nebraska*, premieres tonight. *Nebraska Stories* also premieres tonight.

Commissioner Smith mentioned that he has received comments from the third district about Big Red Wrap Up moving to a different day and time. Mark responded that this schedule change was implemented last season as a result of PBS must carry program designations on Tuesdays. PBS is increasingly scheduling high profile, highly promoted premiers for programs on Tuesday nights, leaving Thursdays and Saturdays as the designated windows for local programming. Due to talent schedules, NET is unable to produce the program live on Thursday evenings and has opted instead to offer the program live at 7 PM on Tuesday nights on NET World, repeat at 10 PM on NET, and again on NET Thursday nights at 8 PM, as well as being available live via
streaming. We have been actively promoting this schedule through all communication channels and Facebook.

Unfortunately, in the western part of the state NET World is not carried on satellite.

**NET Digital & Multimedia Report**

AGM – Digital & Multimedia Chad Davis gave the Digital & Multimedia Report. He reported that his first year at NET was spent learning Nebraska and NET. Now in his second year, he has been assessing the potential for what NET could be doing in the emerging media space. In the last six months, he has refined the vision for what the department could contribute in value to NET.

The department is changing its name to Emerging Media and focusing on new technologies, new techniques for production, new distribution platforms, and experimentation. The goal is to come up with successful work flows and find best practices and translate those to the rest of NET.

Collaborations have begun to happen between production and the next generation of technology. Podcasting is another area in which the department is pushing NET forward. The department is still working on websites, apps, Alexa and Google Home.

Commissioner Ostrowicki asked what success looks like in the Emerging Media Department. Is it bringing in a younger demographic? There is a desire across NET to bring in younger audiences but there aren’t any numbers attached to this yet. The department is working on developing baselines. Chad said collaboration across NET is one definition of success.

Chad said the department is working with Debbie’s team to redefine the Nebraska Studies website and make it more search focused instead of laid out like a textbook. It will be launched at the end of May or in early June.

**ADDITIONAL BUSINESS**

The next meeting is June 29, 2018.

There being no further business, Meeting #458 was adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Leonard