



**WPSU Board of Representatives Meeting Notes**  
**Tuesday, August 11, 2020**  
**Via Zoom Conference**

**Board Members Present:**

Tim Asinger  
Ilona Ballreich  
Kate Bennett Truitt  
Sherry DelGrosso  
Amy Frank  
Kelly Hastings  
Matilda Illuzzi  
Jennifer Judd  
John Lacny

Vince Mannino  
Greg Petersen  
Kevin Mead  
Gary Miller  
Jennifer Neely  
John Pozza  
Rhonda Seaton  
Sara Songer

**Staff Members Present:**

Don Bedell  
Jennifer Bryan  
Rob Butler  
Carolyn Donaldson  
Tamra Fatemi  
Diane Herr  
Jeff Hughes  
Tracey Huston  
Toni Irvin

Spencer Lewis  
Mindy McMahon  
Laura Miller  
Chrissy Moyer  
Deyo Olorunnisola  
Jessica Peters  
Isabel Reinert  
Cheraine Stanford  
Tom Wilson

**Welcome**

- Greg Petersen called the meeting to order, welcomed the board members and reviewed the agenda.
  - Approval of May meeting minutes
    - A motion was made (Sara) and seconded (Gary) to approve the May 20, 2020 meeting notes as presented.
    - The motion passed unanimously.
  - The Executive Committee has invited Dr. Steven Carpenter, Dean of the College of Arts and Architecture to join the WPSU Board beginning in November 2020. Dr. Carpenter has verbally accepted this offer. Once the formal invitation from Dr. Barron has been extended and accepted, the process will be formalized. We do have several additional open board positions so please continue to put forward suggested new board members to us.
- GM Remarks – Thank you for joining us today.
  - Good News

- In June, WPSU radio reporter, Anne Danahy won second place for a Public Media Journalists Association award for use of sound for her frog song filled [“Nightlight in Central Pa. Vernal Pools”](#)
- WPSU was nominated for [six Mid-Atlantic Chapter Emmy Awards](#) with virtual ceremonies being held September 19.
- PA PBS
  - [This website](#) is a recent collaboration of all seven PBS public media stations putting an identify together to showcase the great education and production work across the commonwealth. The main audience is legislators and their staff and the key objective is to increase state funding.
- Strategic Planning
  - We held a special all staff meeting in June to review our current strategic plan and get ideas and suggestions for extending this plan through 2025.
    - This plan will ensure we align with both Outreach and the University’s plans.
    - Examples of the proposed changes were reviewed with the goal of completing this plan for your review before our next meeting in November.
- COVID-19 Impact
  - Working from Home
    - The majority of staff have been asked to work from home for the foreseeable future.
  - Working in the Office
    - Essential employee safety protocols have been established. We have implemented them and will enforce them.
  - Financially
    - With the recent transition of Penn State’s financial system from IBIS to SIMBA, we do not have any current year end fiscal data to report today. We will have a year-end report for FY 19-20 at the next meeting as well as a proposed budget to share with the board.
    - We did finish the year better than anticipated (thanks to the Cares Act) however we still finished with a deficit.
  - Staffing
    - Knowing we have had deficits for a few years now and not knowing the pandemic will impact this upcoming year we did have to make a few difficult decisions to lower our costs especially in our largest staffing expense category, salaries and fringe benefits.
  - Looking to the Fall
    - We are working to sure up some revenue streams and to create some new ones. We have had some requests from University clients for virtual events and productions and we have recently been meeting with athletics our largest university client to discuss our sports production work. We are making every effort to partner with our PSU clients to continue our robust production services this fall.
    - Potential additional revenue sources
      - PA Dept of Education –
        - Continue Learning at Home initiative
        - Potential Educational Channel

- Potential Data Casting – for those who lack high speed internet connectivity
    - PAPBS has submitted a proposed scope of work and are waiting to hear back about what will be approved for funding this year.
  - HEALS Act -
    - Watching how negotiations are going for the latest COVID relief bill to see how public media will be impacted.
    - We do feel confident that there may be some funding similar to that of the CARES Act where the station benefited from funds allocated to public media efforts.
  - Grants applied for (project specific)
    - Front Line grant – what it’s like to be a reporter of color in rural central PA.
    - Additional Science-U work
    - Speaking Grief -
    - Geospatial Revolution
    - Mental Health Project
  - Close to having a new tenant on our Clearfield tower
  - We hope to reduce electric and maintenance costs by implementing and replacing our transmitter this fall using Dr. Keiko Miwa Ross’ generous donation received about two years ago.
- Generally speaking, we are taking a number of actions to scale back our costs and to increase our revenue stream to ensure our financial security during this pandemic and well beyond.
- A Production Highlight
  - June 29 virtual roundtable with black university leadership exploring race and climate that we produced and the conversation included active participation from viewers through a chat room monitored by WPSU Producer and Director, Will Price.
    - Two more similar roundtables are scheduled for this fall.
    - We are taking the local and national discussion focused on race very seriously and exploring via community conversations and media coverage.
    - Cheraine is working on a plan to ensure this continues for the short and long term.
  - Speaking Grief release and virtual events were also highlighted.
- Last Meeting’s Feedback
  - 7 responses, thank you!
  - What did you like most about the meeting?
    - Concise content coverage.
    - Always like when Tracey Huston keeps us informed and ensures WPSU is being represented at the table.
    - Learning about how WPSU has served in these strange and unpredictable times.
  - What did you like least about the meeting?
    - Miss the in-person meetings.

- Report outs often go long and information is repeated.
  - What would you like to learn about or see more of during future meetings?
    - Continue changes in production, things being planned, what is need and why.
    - Opportunities to develop active learning in programming
  - What do you suggest we change for future meetings?
    - Keep using Zoom vs cancelling meetings.
    - Make report outs more effective.
  - Any other comments/questions about today's meeting?
- VP of Outreach, Tracey Huston Remarks
    - Thank you, board members, for your support and service. You inspire us in good times and in tough times and it means a lot.
    - Thank you, Isabel who has remained unflappable and positive in these demanding and ever-changing times.
    - Thank you to Isabel's leaders, staff, producers, and technical service team who work hard to provide service to our listeners and viewers during this difficult time.
      - They have been creative in finding ways to deliver community engagement while remaining socially distant.
      - They have been serving PreK-12<sup>th</sup> grade learners in over 100 school districts across Pennsylvania.
      - They have served this university by:
        - ✓ coming up with a way to hold virtual commencement exercises that were viewed around the world
        - ✓ Town Hall meetings on some of the most difficult things that have been facing this university's history
        - ✓ Town Hall meetings that provide new opportunities and hope for our community such as Speaking Grief. Tracey told Dr. Barron that WPSU hopes to be experimenting with this very innovative, synchronous, social media platform live stream distribution followed by a panel discussion in real time.
          - ❖ We had so many comments stating THANK YOU for bringing this documentary to the world.
          - ❖ This project was extraordinary because it gives us another tool in our tool kit.
      - These projects are possible due to all of WPSU being creative and flexible.
      - Thank you to you, our board, who support us in all that we do.
    - Tracey introduced Deyo Olorunnisola an Administrative Fellow who will shadow Tracey for the year in most university engagements to learn and grow. Deyo is the Director of the Schreyer Honors College Admission Office here at the university.

## Staff Reports

- Development - Rob Buter outlined the impact that the pandemic has had on fundraising. There is a lot of reason for optimism with regard to fundraising efforts.
  - Because of the leadership from both Jessica Peters on the membership side and also from Don Bedell on the Business Support and underwriting side there is a lot of positive evolution in our fundraising the last couple of years.

- University leadership asked that all units across the university NOT do any mailings around membership renewals, additional gifts or lapsed memberships. We are going to start again this week.
- We missed our spring radio drive but in June following the TV drive we did have our radio “halftime drive” that was successful but again, it was half the goal so we did not raise as much as we normally would with a full drive.
- From the start of the pandemic to the end of the fiscal year, we calculate we lost about \$31,000 in business support commitments either thru cancellations or delayed contracts. Even at the start of this new fiscal year we have some businesses delaying support due to the unknow impact of the pandemic on their ability to support the station.
- We are impacted in our ability to raise funds for events since they too have been mostly cancelled (International Children’s Festival for example) due to the pandemic.
- All that being said there is reason for optimism:
  - For TV, in FY19-20 we raised 99% of our commitments goal for membership. I cannot recall the last time we were that close to making our goals so kudos to Jessica and Michele Chernega for that remarkable work.
    - At the start of this fiscal year we have 4,460 TV members, that is an increase of 720 members over last year at this time. Of those 19% are monthly sustaining contributors.
  - On the radio side, last fiscal year we raised 84% of our goal due to missing half of a radio drive as well as the loss of mailings. We do have over 2,250 radio members which is an increase of over 92 members over last year at this time. 31% of those are sustaining monthly members. That is very exciting.
    - Part of the reason we have an increase in our sustaining memberships is due, in part, to matching challenge donations which netted 73 new sustaining members and an additional 19 members actually increased their membership amounts during this challenge.
    - The idea of a monthly sustaining member challenge grant came from Sara Songer. Thank you to both Sara and Tom Songer who provided funds for one of these generous and impactful challenge grants.
    - The funds provided by the Songers lasted only two days of the drive so it would be wonderful to have more matching grants of this nature to last the entire drive.
    - We know these incentives help, having premium gifts, etc. does help but challenge grants really do help and there is no cost to the station.
  - On the business support side in FY19-20, TV, FM and events sponsorship raised 81% of the overall goal. There are many challenges remain to our local businesses. We are still continuing to have conversations knowing it will get better.
  - There are several five figure commitments to WPSU which has been a rarity in the past, so this is a testament to Don’s efforts and leadership.
    - Geisinger
    - Centre Care
    - Boalsburg Car Company

- Everett Cash Mutual Insurance – our single largest business supporter of WPSU.
    - So far, this fiscal year, our business support team has secured over \$105,000 in commitments. Of that, \$11,100 was raised for the Our Town Hollidaysburg production which exceeded our goals.
  - On the planned giving side, last year TV had over \$360,000 in bequest commitments (or realized bequests) and FM had over \$380,000.
  - We learned that a local resident, Marjorie Seward, established an endowment at Centre Foundation which generates quarterly payment which annually will total about \$7,800. That same donor subsequently passed away and we learned that she had put WPSU FM in her will. Her estate gift of over \$133,000 was received just last week.
  - We are promoting these bequests as well as planned giving and we are starting to see results from that.
  - We expanded our team with a third Business Support Rep, Lori Smeigh, who has a background in sales and fundraising, major gift fundraising and public media underwriting experience with WITF. We are very excited to have her on the team.
  - We have changed a lot of how fundraising is done at WPSU in the last few years and we are confident in the direction we are heading. Our mantra is Relentless Optimism and we have a lot of reason to be optimistic.
- Education: Toni Irvin outlined the Learning at Home initiative, Broadcast Schedule changes, Virtual Summer Camps, “Grab and Go” Activity bag Distribution and Fall Opportunities with PDE.
    - See Toni’s Presentation attached

**Committee Break Out Sessions** – the four committees broke out into four Zoom Rooms for 30 minutes.

- Community Outreach – Laura Miller
- Education – Toni Irvin & Tamra Fatemi
- Membership/Business Support– Rob Butler, Jessica Peters & Don Bedell
- Government Relations – Carolyn Donaldson

**Committee Report Outs** – **see attached committee reports**

### **Overview of Production/Programming**

- Fall PBS/NPR Programming (Jeff Hughes)
  - The Choice 2020 from Frontline
  - A More (or Less) Perfect Union – A Constitution For All
  - Upcoming dramas on PBS and Masterpiece
    - Van Der Valk
    - Last Tango in Halifax
    - Flesh and Blood
    - COBRA
    - The Trouble with Maggie Cole
    - Midsomer Murders in October
    - Escape to the Chateau
    - Josephine Baker documentary

- Carol Burnett Show Carol's Favorites
- WPSU Projects (Mindy McMahon)
  - [Speaking Grief](#)
  - [The Investment](#) 2020
  - University Park drone footage of campus
  - Back to football camp footage
- Virtual Events
  - Commencement
  - Convocation
  - Be a Part From the Start
  - Speaker events
  - Student engagement events
- Digital Initiative stories (Cheraine Stanford)
  - WPSU Race Relations and Diverse Content **presentation attached**
  - Mental Health and COVID-19
- Radio News/Feature Programming
  - Penn State Students Share Thoughts About Returning to Campus
  - Grief for Take Note
  - I'm Your Neighbor
- Multimedia and Website projects (Tom Wilson)
  - [Grief site review](#)
  - Watch.psu.edu is a site where we are storing streaming projects created by WPSU including events, interviews, town halls, new student orientations, commencements, concerts and productions.
  - Most projects are a mix of in-studio, Zoom and remote filming.

### **Board Sharing from your community**

How has COVID-19 affected your community and share anything you may know about where and how media and technology have been used to mitigate its impact?

John Lacny – has been closely monitoring how the pandemic has affected ridership of ATA transportation. Maintaining ridership for essential services and funding have been great challenges. They are seeing some good things as a result of this pandemic in the form of future leaders (food banks, emergency procedures, etc.). John is very proud to be a part of public media. Democracy Works is a great program and discussing how COVID-19 has affected the election, issues of race issues, and also other extraordinary interviews. John hopes the relationship with The McCortney Institute continues.

Sara Songer – concerned with return of students but is seeing more masks so that is encouraging. Schools will likely start and then shut down. She doesn't see an end point, will likely continue at least through the winter. I see the challenge of introducing things and keeping things going with all that is happening. Seeing parents working from home but kids are in their separate rooms, parents should be involved with the learning. This is a critical missing part of educating at home. Do we want to address this? How do you make learning a family affair? Educate the parent in how to teach?

Kate Bennett Truitt – lives in a mostly over 55 community with a mother at Foxdale. Seeing a lot of isolation, people are not going out. Through various conversations (while walking the dog), a major concern is when students get back. Technology has made it easier for elderly to be active but we are in a marathon and maybe a quarter of the way to “back to normal”. Personally, every day when I turn my radio on and hear NPR it makes me feel really good. It’s always there for me. I appreciate the extra effort it has taken to keep things moving smoothly.

Greg Petersen – there's been a lot of work from home for news staff, for music staff, the front-line people have to disinfect everything. Staff has kept it as operational as possible and have done a tremendous job. Is there a plan for the Conn Dinner? Isabel noted the event will be cancelled due to the closing of the NLI and the Penn Stater having no availability on the given date. We are exploring our options for postponing, alternate options and so on.

Jennifer Judd – Omni Bedford Springs – we are busy! We have highest occupancy rate of any property in the system excluding their Florida resort. We have over 300 per day, including kids. It’s neat because people are taking advantage of the non-urban setting to get away in the country. Guests are generally considerate but somewhat frustrated. It’s good to see that we do have people spending money in our region to have these experiences.

Jennifer Neely – everything about my world is education and technology has everything to do with that now. We are offering in person, on campus classes as well as on line. We changed times classes start so that the majority of the time zones around the world can participate. Jennifer’s daughters Montessori school is offering a virtual option as well. In-laws are retired but involved in the church online to stay connected. We have been researching and collaborating to get a new LMS Learning Management System in place which was new to us since that is not the traditional boarding school way.

Amy Frank – have sewn 6,000-7,000 masks for the SCASD. The Makery has benefitted greatly with virtual shift but the downtown area is really suffering. How much do we want to encourage gathering there? We are still trying to figure it out. I am so impressed as a person who works with families and am excited about what the WPSU Education Committee discussed today. We need to find ways to tell the story of what all we are doing. We did small summer camps virtually from the Makery while it was closed.

Vince Mannino – was just in Bedford Springs for a mini-honeymoon and had a wonderful time there. Recently moved from Mifflin County to Bellefonte. COVID-19 affected Mifflin County drastically with over half a dozen businesses that have permanently closed. We need to be aware of the next aspect of this COVID-19 story. How businesses and communities recover from these losses. There was help available however the banks and the local people couldn’t maneuver through the processes to get the money. Shared the government relations letter with the Lewistown Sentinel.

Ilona Ballreich – technology is wonderful while doing outreach work for Penn State in the Sustainability field. We have been branching out to commonwealth campuses. No field trips but technology helps! Huntingdon has suffered greatly, Juniata College is struggling with layoffs, planning in person classes, they rely heavily on foreign student enrollment so COVID has really affected this. The arts organization in Huntingdon had to vacate their building because they couldn’t have events. I rely on WPSU TV to bring back some normalcy and sanity each evening. I have been renovating a house which has given me a reason to “get out” and



avoid isolation which is good. We are planning a wedding for her daughter next month which went from the princess wedding to one with just 16 guests. Has a son living in off campus housing in State College that she worries about with COVID-19 exposure.

Kelly Hasting – a lot of people wearing masks and also a lot NOT doing so. 68% of parents want their kids back in the classroom so that is what they are planning on. Technology is great but with a rural community, we have broadband issues. Her community closes Main Street on Friday so town can gather and visit (at a distance). First Quality (paper goods) is hiring so there are job opportunities here! Glad to be a part of WPSU serving on this board and also an on-air volunteer. Many of whom are coming in and taking over for some of those who are not in a position to report to the station. Kelly is an on-air volunteer at WPSU.

Sherry DelGrosso - now camping in the mountains taking advantage of family time and Michael's travel ban. Echo what everyone else has been said. The family business has had to make lots of changes, 3 family weddings have been affected. Our community is innovative where people are coming together (YMCA, school districts, etc.). Families are becoming closer. Cyber charter schools have seen 450% increase in enrollment inquiries with 1,100 new students. There are transitions from brick and mortar schools to virtual.

Matilda Illuzzi – We need to look at the true medical aspect in a small rural area – fear factor that media portrays with skewed numbers. Dr. Illuzzi (Matilda's husband) – for example knows of a case of a DuBois area health care worker who tested positive– you have to test double negative – 3 days apart in a row before being able to come back – she had 10 additional tests – of those, 8 were positive, 2 negatives, (all while being quarantined). There is an argument to be made that the number of deaths (with Covid19 present, but not necessarily the cause of death due to other life-threatening issues) are still being counted as Covid19 deaths to allow for more funding to funnel to the more rural US hospitals. Matilda's point? “We can't be fearful - We need to be cautious, but we also need to live with this – and take everything we are hearing with a “grain of salt”.

Her best advice is to talk with local leaders, local health care officials and local folks to find the best comfort level.

CONN DINNER IDEA - Let's brainstorm! – Have 1 or 2 people who were at the table call everyone else at their table and with a few bullet points highlighting what we have been - largest fundraiser - provide talking points of the ways WSPU has helped our communities (Learning at Home, Covid19 stories, Race issues, etc). “Go back to the Old-fashioned way with a true thank you and a lovely hand-written note!” Ask folks to contribute \$100 or more to help this special year.

John Pozza – we have suffered in Jefferson County, the Opera House Café closed. Restaurants have had a very difficult time with the space limitations due to COVID, etc. On the positive side, as a result of COVID, a lot more people are going outside, going to parks and trails. We have the Redbank Valley Trail very close by with trailhead in Brookville. People are buying bicycles and now they are selling out. On a personal note, a large family wedding has been postponed and will have to limit the number attending so that was disappointing. I am only able to FaceTime with my mother in California who is in a facility there. Schools have been proactive providing Chromebooks to all students. Being patient and respectful is my advice.

Kevin Mead – staying at his isolated lake home in Erie. I don't really go out except to Wegmans once a week. I am in WQLN territory here which leaves a lot to be desired!  
People seem to be wearing masks and keeping to small groups.

Rhonda Seaton - As a parent of two college kids, one at Penn State, I've been very impressed with how both the university and local communities are working diligently to prep students for a safe return to campus, also understanding that the only permanent thing we can count on is living with uncertainty and being ready to adapt. There are so many unknowns, but people are working very hard behind the scenes to make the transition successful for all concerned. Media and tech figure very prominently in providing students, parents, faculty, staff and community members with important information as events and news evolve.

Also wanted to share that there is a scientific reason why we are all feeling so strung out at the end of a day of Zoom calls. It has to do with neurons and social cues our brains automatically look for in physical interactions; when we are not together physically, our brains are constantly trying to read physical cues that are impossible to process, so this overtime work, makes us very tired, even if we are unaware. There is a great article to share on WSJ about this attached and below.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-zoom-meetings-can-exhaust-us-11585953336>

## **Meeting Closing and Adjournment**

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW AND PLAN TO JOIN US!**

Future Meeting Dates:

- November 18, 2020 – Tentative: Penn Stater and ZOOM
- 2021 meeting dates (All Zoom optional and subject to change)
  - Tuesday, February 16 – ZOOM/optional in-person (weather-related)
  - Wednesday, May 19 - Penn Stater
  - Tuesday, August 17 – PBS39, Allentown
  - Wednesday, November 17 – WPSU