

Community Advisory Committee
Full Committee Meeting, via Zoom.
June 15, 2020

Committee In Attendance:

Willie Dean, Tommy Witz, Stacey Bridge, Sohaib Chekima, Shameka Andrews, Miriam Trementozzi, Joseph Dragone, Jordanan Dym, Jeremy Clowe, Ellen Sinopoli, Denise DiNoto, Brain Trautman, Allen Kolver

WMHT Staff in Attendance: Robert Altman, Mary Gribulis, Michelle Thivierge, Joseph Tovares

Joseph Tovares, started the conversation with thanks to the committee for their two year commitment to the Community Advisory Board.

Robert Altman, shared his appreciation and gratitude to the committee for their service over their two year term. Both asked the committee to share recommendations for future members.

Michelle Thivierge shared work being done around summer learning, including working on a proposal to WNET around some recently released funds by the station for their initiative “*CAMPTV*” . The initiative is centered around helping students to keep learning this summer. WNET is producing and nationally distributing *CAMPTV* , a new broadcast series for elementary school children (grades K-5) which will blend day camp and learning into a daily hour of playful fun and hands-on activities.

CAMP TV will be distributed on Wavelength, WNET's free digital content sharing platform.

WMHT is working on a proposal that would incorporate the work of a Skidmore College dance faculty member, highlighting movement as a source of mindfulness. The faculty member, Sarah DiPasquale, has developed 25 three-five length videos. Sarah has already launched this series of videos, using her dance students, in local school districts. Proposals due 6/24 to WNET and funding announced 6/27.

Michelle also shared conversations she is having with the community, in particular The United Way of the Greater Capital Region and their summer meal site partners. The United Way leverages these meal sites to encourage reading and distribute reading materials to the community. A natural link to the work WMHT already does with our Ready to Learn initiatives and programming. There are a few community partners in common already. In addition, WMHT is looking to develop a “summer engagement

newsletter” to our Ready To Learn partners and the The United Way meal sites with various PBS related content and activities for the youth and families to keep learning over the summer.

Turning to our strategic plan conversation, Joseph Tovares offered that the station continues to ask the big questions. In particular, what is the meaning of engagement? What is the role of public media in the community? How can the station highlight issues, turn a spotlight on them, build dialogue and partnerships.

The committee and WMHT staff discussed the importance of listening to needs of the community and partners.

Mary Gribulis shared the station’s work with Hearken as a tool to gauge community impact. WMHT has participated in a training cohort with Hearken, particularly around assessing community needs and questions with COVID-19. Heaken looks to “help organizations create relevant services and build resilient networks through community engagement”. WMHT has questions out around our three main areas of focus, children and education, civic engagement, arts and culture.

Next the conversation turned to assessing school district and community needs. We discussed how remote learning highlighted the need for WiFi but also the disparities that arise due to access, either from location or economic restraints, in families. WMHT Home Classroom Initiative, which launched at the end of March and is continuing through the summer, aims to help bridge this divide, via on-air broadcast.

Those committee members who have a role within educational institutions also offered how each district has responded to the best of their capacity but, as would be expected, there are so many variables in play for each area, there are no simple solutions or answers.

Next Joseph Tovares and Robert Altman offered a framework for WMHT’s next strategic plan. The strategic plan typically encompasses three years but the station has switched gears given the uncertainty from the pandemic, to a one year plan.

The plan aims to harness the framework that WMHT is a contemporary public media company, engaged in the community, digitally focused and encouraging our supporters to be sustainers. The strategic plan will look to embrace two main areas, 1. keep WMHT going financially and 2. use the opportunity of the "disruption" ushered in by the pandemic to accelerate institutional change; be it in our communications (internal/external), cultural, and using various technologies to their full potential. The vision of the strategic plan will aid WMHT in finding the depth and breadth of our focus as we launch initiatives/projects via the station's key areas (public affairs/civics,

arts/culture, children/education). Supporting ways to make the most of the progress that the station has experienced during the pandemic and keep the momentum going.

Next the committee discussed how to capture those in the community who aren't already a part of our audience/viewership. How does WMHT reach them?

On a basic level, making sure people are able to find the service, the station, but also, that WMHT is providing programs and services that are meaningful and relevant to the audience.

The committee asked questions around how WMHT accesses and measures our effectiveness. They also wondered about the potential for interactive adult education opportunities. Station has access to an enormous amount of content that is available. And is already offering this to a degree with our digital platforms and screenings. Finally, the increase in viewers with NY NOW was discussed. The numbers indicate how people value the show and appreciate the work being done to explain and break open the current and State climate/situation. It was shared that three times as many people are watching the show on TV this April compared to last.

The meeting wrapped up at 5:07 with gratitude again to the committee for their two years of service with the Community Advisory Board.

Minutes submitted by Michelle Thivierge.