

## VIA Community Advisory Board

Thursday, May 21, 2020 12 noon

The Community Advisory Board held a Zoom meeting at noon on January 16, 2020. Attending via Zoom were Tom Hall (chair), Judy Hall, George Coulter, Elaine Herzog, Tonyehn Verkitus, Bill Hudon, Tony Brooks, Dick Briden, and Barbara Briden.. Absent: Caryn Powers, Linda Keene, Murray Small, Midori Yamanouchi. Chris Norton represented VIA.

Tom Hall (chair) called the meeting to order, and the CAB approved minutes of the January 2020 meeting.

Chris Norton updated the CAB on the VIA leadership transition. Board vice-chair Peter Frieder leads an 8-person search committee that is working with NETA Consulting. Approximately 75 candidates applied, and the committee conducted three rounds of virtual interview to narrow the field. The search committee hopes to present their choice for appointment by the board of directors in June.

Chris Norton reviewed recent programming and community events since the January meeting.. The statewide collaboration project *Battling Opioids* finished its second year with programs January 30 and April 23, the latter of which dealt with the struggle to recover from addiction during the COVID-19 pandemic. WVIA hosted a presentation by the U.S. Census for area non-profit organizations in February, interviewing a census official for the program Keystone Edition. The station presented a local historian speaking about local Underground Railway sites in connection with a screening of the film *Harriet* at the Dietrich Theater February 22. Four screenings were planned in March for the new *Masterpiece* series *World On Fire* before the COVID-19 pandemic forced their cancellation. Many other spring events were cancelled including a *Retro Report* screening at East Stroudsburg University and an ArtScene Conference, and events are likely to be suspended throughout the summer until restrictions are lifted.

The VIA public affairs initiative was to kick off this spring, but will be postponed, probably until fall. Nevertheless WVIA quickly organized a special program *Keystone Edition: Corona Crisis* March 26 in the midst of the pandemic. And in response to the closing of schools, WVIA joined other PA PBS stations in a comprehensive Learn at Home program. WVIA reprogrammed the main TV channel with PBS Kids educational programs specially selected to align with state educational standards for pre-kindergarten through grade 2 from 10 AM to 1 PM each weekday, followed by *Nature*, *NOVA*, and other programs for grades 3-12 afternoons 1-4 PM. Each program was accompanied by educational resources available free at [wvia.org](http://wvia.org). After several weeks the station added instructional video lessons from regional teachers all coordinated to the educational programs, working with five Intermediate Units and dozens of school districts.

Dick Briden noted the great staff effort to pivot to this new public service. Tom Hall expressed appreciation for the radio station's promotion of online virtual arts opportunities in lieu of public performances and exhibitions. Tony Brooks observed that municipalities such as Wilkes-Barre are facing a severe financial crisis due to the epidemic and economic shutdown. Tonyehn Verkitus spoke of a grant opportunity with the health department to help with the Pain and Addiction Summit. Organizers are considering a half-day case study online course. Tom Hall praised the PBS dramas *World on Fire* and *Call the Midwife*.

The Community Advisory Board reviewed two nominations for new members of the group:

Nell Donnelly-O'Boyle of Scranton, nominated by Tonyehn Verkitus, and

Francisco Torres-Aranda of Hazleton, nominated by Chris Norton.

Both were elected by acclamation and will join the CAB at the fall meeting.

The CAB selected September 17, 2020 for its next meeting, and will choose dates for January 2021 and May 2021 at that meeting. Chairman Tom Hall asked that the September 17 meeting focus on preparing a report for the Board of Directors October 2, 2020 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned. Next meeting is scheduled September 17, 2020 at 12 noon. The CAB will decide later whether this is a Zoom or in-person meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Norton  
Sr. Vice President