

WVIA Community Advisory Board

Thursday, September 23, 2021 12 noon

The Community Advisory Board met by Zoom at noon on September 23, 2021. Attending were Bill Hudon (chair), Tonyehn Verkitus (co-chair), Arthur Breese, Dick and Barbara Briden, Tom and Judy Hall, Della Hutchison, Stephen Lindenmuth, Doug and Ursula Myers, Erica Rogler and Omar Camacho, Nell O'Boyle, and Francisco Torres-Aranda. Absent: Elaine Herzog, Midori Yamanouchi. Carla McCabe, Kate Sickora, and Chris Norton represented WVIA, and Chairman of the Board of Directors Peter Frieder attended as a special guest.

Bill Hudon (chair) called the meeting to order, welcoming Peter Frieder and WVIA's new Chief Development Officer Kate Sickora, who each expressed pleasure at meeting the group and seeing the CAB at work. Minutes of the May 20, 2021 meeting were approved. Mr. Hudon welcomed 7 new CAB members: Arthur Breese, Della Hutchison, Stephen Lindenmuth, Doug and Ursula Myers, Erica Rogler and Omar Camacho. All members and WVIA staff representatives then introduced themselves briefly. Information packets sent by e-mail included a list of CAB members, a summary of the purpose of the CAB, and the CAB bylaws, and a schedule of upcoming fall *Keystone Edition* public affairs topics. Following the meeting a PBS schedule of Hispanic Heritage Month programs was e-mailed to CAB members.

Carla McCabe and Chris Norton reviewed highlights of summer activities. WVIA developed a partnership with the CEO Weinberg Northeast Regional Food Bank and Weis Markets for a successful NEPA Gives Day fundraiser/foodraiser in June, building on the successful Giving Tuesday (November) event with the Central PA Food Bank and Weis. WVIA staff have volunteered for several shifts packing food boxes for the CEO Weinberg food bank. The Scranton Shakespeare Festival this summer included two musicals with performers singing to orchestral tracks recorded at WVIA studios. WVIA hosted 6 "Hemingway birthday party" screening/discussions in July at libraries and theaters in Lewisburg, Berwick, Wilkes-Barre, Scranton, Honesdale, and East Stroudsburg, following up the Ken Burns documentary broadcast. These were followed by 4 preview screening/discussions of the Ken Burns film *Muhammad Ali* in Lewisburg, Tunkhannock, Berwick and East Stroudsburg during August and September. Attendance was distinctly lighter than pre-COVID events, but those who did attend expressed appreciation for in-person discussion events.

Carla McCabe updated the CAB on WVIA's new journalism initiative, including the good news that longtime WNEP reporter/anchor Julie Sidoni will join WVIA as News Director October 4. Before her career in commercial broadcasting Julie Sidoni actually started in public radio in Pittsburgh. She'll assemble a team of multi-media reporters to build regional journalism into *Morning Edition*, *All Things Considered*, and other radio newscasts, contribute to *Keystone Edition* and other television programs, and develop a digital journalism service going forward.

Ms. McCabe announced that after a pause due to the pandemic, the *Our Town* series will resume this year with *Our Town Forest City* and *Our Town Lewisburg*. WVIA has begun planning for a

much-needed building remodel project that has also been on “hold” in recent years. Peter Frieder pointed out that WVIA has undertaken considerable work to refresh Chiaroscuro Jazz with a new website, a podcast series, and new album releases, to take advantage of worldwide digital distribution .

Mr. Norton and Ms. McCabe shared details of the second season of the public affairs series *Keystone Edition*, including a schedule of topics for fall 2021, subject to change if other timely topics emerge. *Keystone Edition* moves to Monday nights at 7 PM in order to attract a larger audience for its important discussions. Management is considering an additional focus on veterans’ issues, pending funding. *Mind Over Matter* is a new initiative generously funded by Geisinger. Monthly TV specials will include national documentaries on mental health issues as well as WVIA local programs addressing behavioral health concerns with regional subject matter experts and those with lived experiences. Our first local program is October 28 with a focus on senior isolation, COVID’s effect on the family, mental health stigma among young people and seniors, and help resources available through the 2-1-1 system. Short interstitial messages, online resources, and radio content are all part of this multi-platform initiative throughout the year. Several years in the making, the original WVIA documentary *A Call to CARE* follows paroled individuals seeking to rebuild their lives through the effective but little-known Court-Assisted Re-Entry Program, airing October 14.

Mr. Hudon shared plans for this year’s *Conversations for the Common Good* events at Bloomsburg University in partnership with WVIA. Three panel discussions consider the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attack, and will be recorded for later WVIA TV broadcast.

“Witness to 9/11: a victim, a journalist, a soldier” October 20

“Reaction to 9/11: dialing back civil rights, violation of human rights” Nov. 10 livestreamed

“Recovery from 9/11, 20 years after: in need of restorative justice” February 23

In addition Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble will stage the award winning Kotri Hall play *The Mountaintop* January 20-February 6 at the Alvina Krause Theatre, and guest artists will visit campus for discussions in this project exploring the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

<https://www.bloomu.edu/conversations-common-good>

Francisco Torres-Aranda pointed out that new Census data show Hazleton’s population growing 18% since 2010. *Keystone Edition* plans to explore “The Changing Face of NEPA” in November. Dick Briden mentioned some favorite WVIA radio programs: *Rick Steves, A Way With Words, Notes on Film, Music from St. Stephens*, opera. Tom and Judy Hall added *Wait Wait Don’t Tell Me*. Barbara Briden noted many interesting nearby sites on their “Grand Tour of Pennsylvania,” including the capitol, Falling Water, scenic Route 6. Judy Hall added Nature Inn and Bald Eagle State Park, and Dick Briden thought Pennsylvania’s 125 state parks would make an interesting television feature.

The meeting was adjourned. Mr. Hudon reminded the CAB of next meetings scheduled January 20, 2022 and May 19, 2022 at 12 noon. Zoom or in-person details to follow.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Norton
Senior Vice President