

Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission
Meeting of May 28, 2024
via Zoom

Present: Mr. Edward Kaplan, chair; Mr. Richard Bodorff, vice chair; Dr. Debra Bright; Ms. Rebecca Hanson; Mr. Irwin Kramer; Dr. Lakeisha Lashley; Ms. Beth Suarez; Mr. Bruce Wahl; Ms. Ellie Wang. Ms. Erin Senior was present to represent Dr. Carey Wright, Maryland State Superintendent of Schools.

The following members of the MPT management staff were also in attendance. MPT President Larry Unger, Mr. George Beneman, Ms. Patricia Fitzhugh, Ms. Lara Hjortsberg, Mr. Michael MacFee, Mrs. Fran Minakowski, Mr. Travis Mitchell, Ms. Betsy Peisach, Ms. Suzie Schmitt, Mr. Steven Schupak, Ms. Linda Taggart, and Mr. Tom Williams. Ms. Dionne Neblett was present to record the minutes. Mr. Max Zelalem was present for IT services.

The chair called the meeting to order at 10:32 am. Mr. Kaplan requested approval of the minutes of the March 19, 2024, meeting. Ms. Wang made a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Wahl seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously as submitted.

President's report

MPT's FY25 operating budget appropriation was challenged by language that sought to repeal the funding formula that the Maryland Senate and House of Delegates overwhelmingly approved in 2017 (Senate Bill 1034). In addition, a proposal was made to eliminate \$1 million earmarked for the Center for Maryland History Films. After numerous discussions with budget committees' leadership and key legislators, it was decided not to take those actions. The funding formula was retained and the \$1 million appropriation was increased to \$1.5 million.

A cut to MPT's CPB funding allocation for the next federal fiscal year did not occur and funding remained flat. The president of the United States has released his 2025 budget, which includes \$595 million for public broadcasting. If enacted, this would be a significant increase for the industry.

MPT celebrated *Chesapeake Bay Week's* 20th anniversary in April and had the largest number of new bay-related programs in its history. Mr. Unger shared a clip of *The Chesapeake Bay Summit* that aired on April 23.

MPT has earned 42 regional Emmy Award nominations. The award ceremony will take place on June 22, and winners will be announced at that time. Several staff members attended the PBS Annual Meeting in Las Vegas. MPT's own Kate Pearson was selected as the Programmer of the Year.

Jeff Salkin served on the media panel during the Baltimore City Democratic Mayoral primary debate at Morgan State University in April. MPT is currently in discussions to host a general election senatorial debate with former governor Larry Hogan and Prince Georges County Executive Angela Alsobrooks.

Mr. Michael MacPhee updated commissioners on how to access materials on the MPT Board Materials Portal. He will resend the portal link to this group.

Commissioners viewed clips from the *Made in Maryland* series, *Antiques Roadshow*, *Maryland Farm & Harvest*, *Outdoors Maryland*, and coverage from the Francis Scott Key Bridge disaster.

The annual joint dinner of the MPBC and MPT Foundation board of directors will take place on June 13. *Antiques Roadshow* will be taped at The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore on June 18.

Budget & Compensation report

Mr. Bodorff, committee chair, stated the FY24 year-end forecast is on target. He turned to Ms. Fitzhugh, vice president and chief financial officer, for her report. Ms. Fitzhugh announced that Membership will begin canvassing in 2025. There may be a net financial loss in the first year of the campaign; however, canvassing will be a revenue source that should grow and diversify membership.

Mr. Wahl made a motion to accept the FY25 budget, Ms. Hanson seconded the motion, and the budget was unanimously approved.

Ms. Schmitt, vice president, Human Resources, reported that as of May 31, 2024, there were 141 filled posts out of the 144 authorized positions. Two new Personal Identification Number (PIN) positions were received for FY25, and staff are awaiting four additional PINs from contractual positions that were converted to full-time positions.

MPT hosted 32 interns—24 unpaid, six paid by MPT, and two sponsored internships. The University of Baltimore will sponsor an additional intern in the summer.

FY25 Salary Plan recommendation

MPT moved to a job family classification model based on salary and classification data from Quatt Associates. DBM's classifications that closely match MPT's job family model should be completed by October, 2024.

Ms. Schmitt recommended that all employees receive a 3% cost of living increase on July 1, 2024 and 2% on January 1, 2025. MPT will revise its classification grid to accommodate the increases. Mr. Kramer made a motion to approve the salary plan, Mr. Wahl seconded the motion. The salary plan was unanimously approved. A letter will be submitted to DBM for the plan to be implemented on July 1.

MSAA update

Mr. Steven Schupak, station manager, gave an update on the Maryland State Ad Agency (MSAA). The full-service advertising agency and media buying service for Maryland state agencies continues to thrive. The agency provides original productions (mostly PSAs), trafficking/media distribution, education, and training to a number of agencies. Media platforms used include TV, radio, digital audio services, social media, mobile ads, movie theatres, billboards and mass transit ads, and convenience store and gas pump ads. Most of this media is not on MPT although MPT is a good choice for some clients. In addition, MSAA uses geo-targeted mobile ads aimed at mobile users in specific locations within the state.

MSAA currently has 21 active contracts and 9 currently on the air. A number of clients have provided very positive feedback about the agency and have recommended MSAA to other state agencies. Current clients include, the Maryland Department of Health, the Maryland Department

of Housing and Community Development and the Maryland Department of Agriculture among others. The agency recently won a \$200,000 in-kind service consulting grant from Compass Pro Bono Consulting to receive professional support and guidance. MSAA and a cadre of consultants are working together to explore ways that the MPT division can grow its current relationships and develop new partnerships with current and prospective state agency clients.

Mr. Schupak showed commissioners a PSA MSAA produced featuring Governor Wes Moore and the MSAA sizzle reel. Mr. Kaplan thanked Mr. Schupak and his team for bringing the ad agency to where it is today.

MPT Sports Desk update

Mr. Schupak explained that MPT has a long history of sports-oriented programming, with a strategic focus on offering viewers Maryland-focused sporting events. These take the form of sports documentaries, live sports broadcasts, and sports promotion activities.

He noted the use in recent years MPT used a Sports Desk featuring anchor Jim Hunter for on-air sports reporting and analysis. The MPT Sports Desk has had a role during the Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill, the Maryland Cycling Classic, and Baltimore's CIAA Basketball Tournament. Mr. Schupak said that MPT will continue to pursue sporting events with Maryland ties and those sports under-represented in the media. He then showed video clips of several of MPT's recent sports presentations.

Mr. Wahl shared that he attended Maryland 5 Star and stated it was an extraordinary event! Mr. Kaplan thanked Mr. Schupak for his thorough report.

DEI update

Dr. Debra Bright, co-chair of the external DEI committee, reported the committee met on May 23. A presentation was given by the Education Division that informed the committee about a new PBS KIDS animated series, *Carl the Collector*. The series features a lead character on the autism spectrum. She noted that equity inclusion is broader than race and gender and includes individuals with disabilities. Mr. Mitchell delivered an update on the *Standing Against Racism* 10-Point Plan. Human Resources provided an update on employee demographics.

All-gender single-occupancy restrooms are available at MPT. The committee voted to remove the "J" from its title. The next DEI meeting will be held in September.

Old/new business

There being no old or new business, the chair asked for a motion for adjournment. Mr. Wahl made a motion, Ms. Wang seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 11:48 am.