

COMMUNITY BROADCASTING ADVISORY COUNCIL

Nov. 4, 2015 Noon
WTVP Conference Room
101 State Street
Peoria, IL

Minutes

Present: Moss Bresnahan, Jerry Kolb, Stacey Tomczyk, Steve Tarter, Sally Hanley, Henry Litchfield, Andra Connor, Linda Zears.

Meeting: Moss reviewed recent activities at WTVP for the board including the appearance by Judy Woodruff of PBS who was in town to interview Ray LaHood (for a program to air on Thanksgiving night) as well as appearing on Yvonne Greer's "Consider This," the station's new interview show that airs at 7:30 p.m. on Fridays.

Bresnahan also said the station was looking for ideas for local programs. Sally Hanley suggested a show focusing on area employment would be especially timely in light of Caterpillar's recent announcement to cut 10,000 workers from its global workforce. Steve Tarter suggested a program on parking in Downtown Peoria.

Stacey Tomczyk stated that initial feedback from guests who had appeared on Yvonne Greer's show had been very positive. She noted that a segment on the regional art community was included on every program. Andra Connor added that art was well supported in this area. Discussion turned to the Peoria Riverfront Museum where an exhibition on the Prohibition years is scheduled for January. Henry Litchfield suggested that WTVP rerun the Ken Burns program on Prohibition that aired several years ago.

Moss said that WTVP was working on a show depicting Peoria in the 1950s and was looking for groups or individuals to partner with in setting up events in the community to highlight that effort.

Stacey noted that "Stories from the Heart," WTVP recollections on World War II, would be returning to the air this month in honor of Veterans Day.

Moss asked if there were comments regarding the station's strategic plan. The plan was five months in the making and addresses what Bresnahan called the "unprecedented pace of change in the media."

Litchfield made the comment that as a longtime viewer, he's always enjoyed the documentaries that PBS has run over the years but complained that the network airs too much "touchy-feely" material.

Andra Connor said that the CREATE channel has turned into the Food Channel. Stacey explained that WTVP is able to insert certain material into the two digital side channels, CREATE and WORLD, but is limited in terms of topic and time.

On the subject of documentaries, Moss said a documentary unit was being established at WILL-TV in Champaign that WTVP would be collaborating on.

“It’s a good time to be in the content business,” said Bresnahan, noting that WILL will also be the center for a downstate news collaborative that will serve public broadcasters across the state. Talk then turned to the subject of the upcoming reverse auction to be held by the Federal Communications Commission. As part of a plan to shift spectrum from TV broadcasting to wireless broadband, the FCC wants to pack TV stations in the remaining spectrum to free up the space, said Bresnahan.

WTVP faces making some decisions about the future, he said. WTVP could wind up with another spot on the dial — at the top of the VHF dial and wind up as channel 10 or 11. That would mean a loss of 20 percent of the over-the-air market since the VHF channel doesn’t travel as far as the UHF signal. A lower spot on the VHF dial — channels 3,4 and 5, for example — could mean as much as a 50 percent reduction in signal strength, said Bresnahan.

A lot of money is involved in the transition, he informed the board. “It could be transformational but we’d have a lot of unhappy viewers (unable to pick up the new VHF signal),” said Moss. The problem is that it’s hard to predict the impact of the reverse auction the FCC plans on smaller markets like Peoria, he said.

The FCC has assigned values to all the TV stations across the country and WTVP’s value is set at \$111.5 million, said Bresnahan, adding that in a reverse auction, that figure is merely the starting point and will drop as the bidding takes place.

“We just don’t know what will happen since they’re starting with the major (TV) markets and working down. The most likely scenario is that the auction comes and goes before coming to Peoria,” said Bresnahan, adding that the station has until Dec. 18 to decide on whether it wants to be involved in the auction tentatively planned to take place later in 2016. “Our board was made aware of the FCC auction last month,” he said.

Jerry Kolb noted that Peoria’s proximity to Chicago and St. Louis might have some value when it came to the auction.