**South Dakota Board of Directors for Educational Telecommunications**

**Spring Meeting—April 10, 2024**

**Sioux Falls—Co-op Architecture Conference Room**

**Board Members Present:** Doyle Estes, Jeff Clines, Julie Overgaard, Shuree Mortenson, Dave Landry, Jerry Oster, Julie Ashworth, and Erika Tordsen

**Board Members Absent**: Kay Jorgensen (excused)

**SDPB Staff Members Present:** SeVern Ashes, Laura Peterson, Fritz Miller, and Ryan Howlett.

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 9:31am by Doyle Estes.

Julie Overgaard did roll call.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Jerry Oster moved to approve the November 29, 2023 minutes as presented. Dave Landry seconded.

Motion carried.

Julie Overgaard moved to approve the December 6, 2023 minutes as presented. Jerry Oster seconded.

Motion carried.

**FINANCIAL REPORT**

Laura Peterson provided the financial report. Laura walked the board through changes from FY2023 to FY2024. Salaries have increased significantly over the past several years. We are working to use up our general funds first but may run short of cash before the fiscal year’s end. We cannot have a negative cash balance so will have to delay paying some bills until the new fiscal year.

Laura also noted that direct transfers from Friends of SDPB are down slightly due to moving some education department expenses over to Friends. Tower lease payments from the federal government are behind due to an issue registering with SAM.gov. We are in the process of getting re-signed up and paid.

We have seen an increase of $40,000 for state accounting services without an increase in general funding to cover the additional expenses. We receive approximately 71% of general funds to cover increases in salary policy and central services. SDPB is expected to raise the other 29% through other funding sources.

Jeff Clines asked if we have budgeted for increased state travel rates. Laura responded that we have budgeted for both increases in hotel and mileage.

Jerry Oster asked about decreases in utility costs. Severn responded that new digital equipment at transmitter sites is saving on electricity as it is more energy efficient.

Julie Overgaard made a motion to approve the Financial Report as presented. Jerry Oster seconded. Motion carried.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

Julie Overgaard reported we are waiting on final approval from FEMA and CPB regarding our infrastructure grant request. We expect to hear back in the next month. We will not receive everything we asked for in the first round of funding, but we do not have to re-apply.

National broadcast audiences continue to decline due to streaming and digital trends. SDPB is bucking the trend due to audiences for our local content and high school activities. Doyle Estes noted that increasing our local programming offerings has paid off.

Budget deficit has been addressed in the short term with reductions for now.

Julie also noted that the SDPB brand refresh launched during basketball tournaments in March and went smoothly. Dave Landry said he enjoyed SDPB coverage of the state basketball tournaments and all the different ways he and others could watch the games.

**FRIENDS OF SDPB REPORT**

Ryan Howlett said most of the discussions they are having with donors and businesses is focused on funding for local programming. Friends is on target to make its budget goals for FY24. They are working to get the new West River Major Donor Officer, Val Simpson trained and currently interviewing for an East River Major Gifts Officer.

Jerry Oster asked if it was time to move away from traditional on-air fundraising. Ryan said Friends is taking a different approach by doing more mini drives and providing donor match incentives. We need to be constantly reinventing. We continue to worry about acquiring new donors as most new donors come through passport and direct mail with 43% of new members coming through Passport.

Shuree Mortenson asked who the new members are and where we get them from. Ryan said it was probably time to have our membership file studied again for that kind of data. It’s been about 7 years ago since we did it last.

**DIRECTOR OF CONTENT REPORT**

Twyla Olson reported on the many activities, outreach and local programs being worked on by the network. SD Focus continues its year-long series on children in South Dakota. Legislative coverage was great this year and recently wrapped. High School activities coverage is winding down for the season. Looking forward to our Vote SD partnership for election coverage and a re-vamped Dakota Life this fall.

**DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMING & COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

Fritz Miller noted we also increased our local programming offerings by partnering with independent producers. We are trying to make local shows more visible especially in Mountain Time Zone, so at 10pm CT we are going into late fringe programming—shifting in June to continue more prime-time feel of programming and continuing local programs until 10 pm.

Fritz provided an update on the brand refresh. It has been a smooth transition and well-received by the public and internally. Updating continues to happen. Will be a while before the signs are replaced. Awaiting approvals and electricians. Billboards on Highways, electronic billboards in various towns. Up until June—some through August. There are also spots on Spotify, also on social media, you’ll see short videos with new brand.

Fritz shared a 30 second legacy spot that will air on SDPB TV. Grateful to Friends who funded the re-brand and fully supported all the efforts Happy to have a fresh, new look.

**DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING, OPERATIONS & ONLINE SERVICES**

SeVern Ashes report is has been an exciting year in engineering. Studio NOC and RF were charged with looking at new technologies to improve audience experience. Brian Wood collaborated with production and wrote a program to streamline how technology is used on statehouse floors. Makes it automated and looks great online and on TV.

In Early February we utilized drones and Kent Osborne made drone videos to assess the condition of all towers to see if we could save dollars on tower inspections and to get eyes on the towers more regularly. We will institute every 2 years to inspect, as well as after any weather event instead of paying tower expense at $5K per inspection.

Jerry Oster asked if it met with government approval. Severn said yes, but not for the 5-year inspection requirement. Still, having another set of eyes will give us more documentation. Jerry asked what company we use for inspections. Severn answered a local company out of Renner. They will climb large towers and some crews will not. This company is also used by state radio.

Tremendous team working on the grant and mapping out everything we need to move us forward. It’s been 24 years since the last major upgrade out in the field. Very proud of our uptime. 99,98% through the year. Testament to maintaining our sites and equipment.

The equipment we were approved to move forward with concentrates on interconnection. Starting in Vermillion to Aberdeen. Still analog in that area. Fully digital will be provided with new equipment.

The grant will also allow us to finish the Mitchell FM transmitter. Moving forward on tower, funded a building and generator onsite. Transmitter and rest of the gear will be paid for by grant. Also, all FM transmitters will be transitioned to all HD. The grant will also provide additional EAS support at the transmitter sites. Legislature gave us funding to update local EAS system to new standards for warning systems. Other broadcasters look to us for the alerts that go out. All other systems alert off of us. Will harden our backbone for alerts at the state level—SDPB is the one who activates through NOC. DCI-Amber alert team have direct phone. Will allow us to incorporate photos of the child and full poster and rich media in alerts.

**BREAK**

Doyle Estes announced 15-minute break then Executive Session.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Julie Overgaard made a motion to move into Executive Session at 11:13am. Jeff Clines seconded.

Motion carried.

Julie Overgaard made a motion to reopen the ET Board meeting at 12:08pm. Jeff Clines seconded. Motion carried.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Dave Landry made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:09pm. Jery Oster seconded.

Motion carried.