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

**Virtual Meeting via Zoom (2:00pm to 3:30pm CT)**

**June 11, 2020**

**Board Members Present:** Mark Shlanta, Julie Overgaard, Jeff Clines, Kay Jorgensen, Doyle Estes, Jerry Oster, Dave Landry, Janelle Toman, and Julie Ashworth

**Staff Members Present**: Larry Rohrer, Teri Roetman, SeVern Ashes, Brad Van Osdel, Cara Hetland, Bob Bosse, Fritz Miller, Ryan Howlett, Deb Larson, and Lita Muhr (BIT Finance Manager)

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mark Shlanta at 2:03pm. Julie Overgaard did roll call with the board members and staff.

**WELCOME**

Jeff Clines is the new BIT Commissioner. He joined BIT two months ago and is learning the ropes quickly. He is looking forward to working with SDPB and this board as well.

Lita Muhr replaces Deb Larson as the new Bit Finance Manager and will be taking over SDPB’s finances.

She joined BIT in May. Lita is looking forward to working with everyone. Welcome Jeff & Lita.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Doyle Estes pointed out on page 2; there is a mistake in the middle section. Estimated Cost of 5-Year Plan ($250,000 per year/$1,500,000 over 5 years); should be $1,250,000 over 5 years. Teri will make the correction in the minutes.

A motion was made by Doyle Estes to accept the amended minutes from the November 15th meeting. Second by Janelle Toman. Motion carried.

**APPROVAL OF NETWORK AUDIT**

Everyone received a copy of the audit in their board packet. Deb Larson reported this audit is for the year ended June 2019 and the comparison to 2018. There were no problems with the audit and the component unit of Friends. There were significant matters noted to staff reorganization; when we get the expenditure report you will see the changes Julie has made. This had been talked about in previous meetings about moving staff around as part of strategic planning. The statement of cash shows an increase due to holding onto funds for upcoming capital asset purchases in the new fiscal year. Those purchases have now been made. Deb believes the cash flow will go back to normal except for the additional $380,000 CPB will send out from the CARES Act. Julie will not have any restrictions on that cash or a timeframe to spend that cash.

A motion was made by Kay Jorgensen to accept the Network Audit as presented. Second by Jerry Oster. Motion Carried.

**FINANCIAL REPORT**

Deb Larson reported on behalf of Lita Muhr. Going forward Lita will be giving this report. There are no surprises in this report. When you look at actuals from 2018 compared to 2019 so far, it’s hard to compare as Journalism and Entertainment have been added. Programming costs are under Programming now instead of TV and Radio. It’s the same expenditures but reported in a different layout. We will have to wait a few years to see the trends and averages.

Julie mentioned we underspent our budget in some areas due to COVID. We were unable to finish out the high school sports and activities second season. It had an impact not covering those events, unable to travel for meetings, regional conferences, and along with the staff’s inability to go out into the field to produce content. However, it did enable us to go ahead and replace our last two old FM transmitters. While we spent down in one area, we were able to transfer into another area and spend on other things. All indications are we will end the year with about half million dollars in carry over plus the $380,000 in CPB COVID dollars. We do have some thoughts on how we might spend that, keeping in mind that next year’s budget projections are based on Friends being able to maintain the same level of transfer in financial ability and stability they have had. There are some questions on how well underwriting will perform, what fall sports might look like or not look like, and what membership/major giving will be like during the next 12 months. Some of this money will be spent on the Educational Initiative. We also plan to hang onto some of it in case we start running short or have budget issues going into the second quarter of FY21.

A motion was made by Janelle Toman to accept the Financial Report as presented. Second by Jeff Clines. Motion carried.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

Julie could not be prouder of this management team and the staff that support them. The managers were hopeful when they initiated the strategic plan and reorganized staff. There is nothing like a good trial by fire to see if you did the right thing. They certainly did the right thing, if not, we wouldn’t have been able to react as quickly and as thoroughly as we did. The technology of Teams and Zoom, has worked well for our ability to act as a team, deploy as a team, make decisions together, produce stellar content, and provide public service over the past few months.

The network received $380,000+ in CPB COVID money. CPB had to give special emphasis on how they passed this money around to rural stations serving rural markets. We were able to get an extra bump in the dollars we received versus other stations in larger markets to the tune of an extra $80,000 for the rural services that we provide.

We were randomly lottery selected by CPB for an audit. This is done differently than our regular audit. CPB will be auditing the network from a financial standpoint, an open meeting standpoint, and all the tick marks they have that go into us getting our annual community service grant. We are expecting this process to take six to eight months. We are fortunate to still have Deb Larson around to help us get through on the financial side and then we will answer and address any questions CPB may have. This would normally require them to fly in from Washington DC and doing a field site survey or field visit; because of COVID they will not be doing that. We will see how this plays out. This will take some extra work on our part gathering items they may want.

Jeff Clines reported the staff did a great job of providing coverage of COVID issues. Mark Shlanta mentioned it was a big shift in terms of what was planned to put on the air and what was found to put on the air. In addition, to provide all the Governor’s press briefings. It was a big effort for staff to report the way they did.

**MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORTS**

*\*Larry Rohrer-Director of Media Content*

Larry pointed out there are notes in the board packets regarding the impact of COVID and how everyone reacted. People talked about going back to work plans, we never left and in fact, we did more work. The season ended prematurely for high school sports and activities. However, we will have five more years to work with them to make up for it. We received the renewal contract to partner with the SDHSAA.

Larry discussed the implementation of the strategic plan and how the staff were reorganized along with creating beat topics to pursue every day. This is all to encourage content across all platforms, raise internal awareness, and most importantly to have everyone pitch in and share ideas. The goal of the beats is to focus on important topic areas and make sure news and stories are distributed across media platforms.

ELI—Early Learning Initiative—About 18 months ago a decision was made to take the expanded resources from PBS, the need for early learning support from within the state, and to see what we could do to be a part of that. We have added SDPB4 (PBS Kids), PBS Kids online, and children’s programming on SDPB1. We contracted with an early learning specialist to help us understand what we have, the role we can play, and assess assets within the organization to help us move forward. The person we hired is Kevin Nelson, he has been active as a teacher and administrator in this area. He recently retired and is now advising and leading this project. We launched this program the first of April. Kevin is currently distributing information in a daily newsletter that has just under 1,000 subscribers. We have had very strong support from foundations and donors to help make this work so far. The next step is to take a good look at communicating with these three groups that are primary audiences for early learning: Preschool Professionals, Childcare Providers, and Parents Caring for Children at Home. We will be looking at a texting service that works with other public broadcasting stations around the country. We are looking at aligning with that so we can take the content we have and mix it in the content they have that’s embedded and reach people in the home with that method. We are hoping to bring on a part-time support person in Rapid City/Black Hills area. This is an area that has taken early learning to heart as a community. We hope to advance this project later this summer.

*\*Bob Bosse, Director of Television & Programming*

Bob reported since his board report was written he has received viewer stats for April and May. We do not have the equivalence of Nielsen measurements for our radio signals like we do for TV. Our only way to measure if the audience is listening to our radio through an internet stream.

May Radio Streaming---10,639 cumulative audience members and 63,735 total listening hours. In both March and April when everyone went home, it increased by about 20%. In Television, we use the Nielsen Company to measure our audience. During April 62% of the SD households tuned into SDPB main channel. Other metrics we use to measure audience digital platforms are social media video views and total social media reach. In May we saw 479,922 video views and a reach of 1,889,006. We also measure our website audience. In May, SDPB.org had 230,176 active users/400,826 pageviews. Our main channel is by far the most watched. Our audience increased for SDPB3 Create channel in March and April. Bob feels that is due to all the lifestyle content on that channel. This became very important to people while they were stuck at home. Our radio streaming spiked significantly through both March and April as well. This was part in due to the public’s interest in the news and content we provided during COVID. Our web site numbers had a huge increase; last May we had 76,000 users and this May over 230,000 users. The content we are putting out there is getting a lot of use. We found a new audience who found themselves at home during a crisis and educating their children. We changed *SD Focus* to a weekly series, it has been three shows per month. We extended this season until the end of June. We did daily live broadcasts on TV and radio of the Governor’s Press Briefings as well as SD.net. We started the Learners Connection, which a daily five-hour block of educational programming along with online educational materials. This airs weekdays from 11am until 4pm CT on SDPB2. This covered the gap for students 6th-12th grade. On radio we started doing a weekly one-hour NPR COVID19 update. You may have noticed some SDPB branded *No Cover No Minimum* programs that we

allowed KELO to air on weekends since they lost the NCAA tournaments and they needed

programming. We started airing *SDPB Sports Classics* by digging into the archives and found some of the better games to air on Sunday afternoons as well as our sports documentaries. One of our strategic goals was to freshen up our weekend radio schedule. Last weekend we started the new schedule. We can see in real time how many people are listening on the stream; we switched things up where people weren’t really listening.

*\*Cara Hetland—Director of Radio & Journalism Team Leader*

Cara expressed how very proud she is of the Journalism Team. They started out having to make some adjustments with legislative coverage. A two-minute video update was available on SDPB1 summarizing highlights in the SD legislature each weekday. The team really worked well together to produce this and developed a great system to make this happen. The team did this video, created news stories of the day and covered all the daily Governor press briefings. We were able to get content on TV and get into the practice of repurposing our content across all platforms. To enable our interns to put in some hours, when moving into full coverage of COVID we had the interns busy with cutting and editing stories. Our reporters were able to keep feeding *In the Moment* while producing news stories. Stephanie Rissler did a great job with *SD Focus* by being able to have guests on remotely and pre-recording interviews. The biggest audience we had is when Governor Noem was on to answer questions. There were over 2,000 questions that came in 24 hours prior to the show airing. Josh Haiar works with *In the Moment* and is a gifted amination creator. He is the one who did the maps and charts along with some of the slides seen in video content. We are now doing a daily news update podcast; it is short and has around 300+ subscribers. The audience continues to grow with our podcasts. We have three new employees:

Seth Tupper, Business & Economic Development reporter, Richard Two Bulls- Diversity reporter, and Jordyn Henderson-Multi-Media Producer. We are glad to have each of them on our team. We are moving the program *In the Moment* to one hour of live interviews and the second hour we will replay some festival music. This will give our listeners a break from COVID news and give the staff time to take some vacation beginning the first week in July.

*\*Brad Van Osdel—Production Manager & Entertainment Team Leader*

The Entertainment group is looking forward to the fall season of sports and activities. Brian Gevik is working on a documentary titled *Rural Connections.* We have adapted over the pandemic time frame by doing a couple of things. Larry Rohrer reached out to different organizations, museums, and the symphony. We came up with *Dakota Life Virtual*. Using Zoom, Larry was able to virtually visit a museum, conduct interviews, visit with musicians, and listen to music. We shared this on social media and on our web page. In order to bring everything together that we did in the entertainment group, we created *Dakota Life Edition.* This is digital magazine. We put pieces together that were put on social media and the web, added video content to radio reports for easy and fun to read stories. All aspects from the content groups were added. We will continue to use that going forward to highlight different aspects of our digital content for *Dakota Life*. Since the sports season ended abruptly, we felt the need to highlight some the high school students. Kyle Mork and Nate Wek came up with *In Play Conversation* and reached out to students that were possible going to do well in the tournaments or upcoming events like golf, track and other sports. They did a similar *Dakota Life Virtual* but with Zoom interviews with students, coaches, and a lot of other people in that high school activity realm. A new project that we are doing as people are creating new things around the house and working on projects in the yard; we partnered with Erik Hillard of Landscape Gardens Center. In the first three episodes he shot video from his phone and sent to us for editing. We are now able to go interview him, and he talks about different areas of gardening and landscaping. This gets edited and then shared on social media. We also do a blog post with just a little extended version of what Erik talked about. On Wednesdays he joins Lori Walsh on *In the Moment* for a little questions and answers on the same topic. It’s a fun project, *South Dakota Gardening* can be found across all platforms. Brad’s team is very excited to cover high school rodeo finals in Fort Pierre next week, the program coverage will air in July.

*\*Fritz Miller-Marketing Director*

Our gears had to shift quickly for Education and Outreach. We are set up to be able to provide the programming that people need. We had thought through, set up and utilized resources, so when we needed to shift quickly, we were able to do so. One of those tools is the PBS Learning Media, think of it like passport for teachers and others. The content is available for free. We have seen a significant jump in the number of educators, parents, and daycare providers that used this material because of school shutdowns. On the typical month we would see 10,000 to 12,000 views or accesses of the content material we created and placed in the lending library. In March when schools started to close that number doubled and in April in doubled again to 62,0000. We continue to see an increase in the level of people that are still interested in accessing our content. We have heard from daycare providers, parents of kids that are Pre-K, and we have heard from college professors that have utilized some our dissection videos that Steve Rokusek placed on the SDPB PBS Learning Library website.

On the marketing side, normally we would be traveling, participating in festivals, hosting events and film screenings. We have been forced to be creative. *Prehistoric Road Trip* premiers next Wednesday on PBS nationwide, starring Emily Grasille, a Rapid City native. Emily and her family were talking about promoting this event since we could not host a screening, decided the drive- in theatre would work. Marketing got it all set up with the Hermosa drive-in and boom 262 people arrived in about 145 cars, great crowd. Emily did a presentation and then a half-hour preview of that program was shown. Last night we did the same thing for people that could not show up at the drive-in. Emily was in Rapid City and Larry Rohrer was in Vermillion and we did this live on Facebook. Over 5,000 people were reached through this premier on Facebook. *The Vote* premiers in July, we will do a screening and we are reaching out to people. This is about the 100th anniversary of passing the 19th Amendment. *Unlady Like 2020* is the story of women who have been involved with not only the suffrage movement but with other firsts, including Gertrude Bonnin a South Dakota Native who was involved in that. We are working with the producers of this program and the SD Humanities Council to create some events associated with this. *Blood Sugar Rising* premiered in April and we are scheduling virtual activities and content that will be shared in November during International Diabetes Awareness month. PBS American Portrait is a national storytelling project that asks people all over the country to submit their stories by responding to some various provoking prompts. A show will be put together and air in early 2021.

*\*SeVern Ashes—Engineering, Operations & Digital Report*

Strategic goals that were set last year, many have already been met. SeVern is extremely pleased with his team. They were able to purchase our infrastructure monitoring of all transmitter buildings, tower lighting control, and all the monitoring of the statewide systems coming back into Vermillion NOC. We replaced the 40+ old transmitters at Long Valley and Faith. There were our last two high power stations that were not IBOC capable, we went ahead applied IBOC license in Lowry. By fall this year we will have statewide compliment of HD radio 1 and 2; this will cover well over the interstate corridors throughout the state minus our translators in Mitchell and some scattered throughout the Black Hills. Those are in our long-term goals to make them IBOC capable.

In response to COVID, SeVern is proud of his staff working with production staff looking at new technologies, different ways to continue programming the station, and doing remote interviews. A huge shout out to BIT team in Pierre for giving us adequate bandwidth and the introduction to Microsoft Teams. This made a huge difference for network collaborations and moving folks into that realm. There is still a lot of unknowns with ATSC.3 and of course we will have ongoing capital assets, TV automation and replay systems, we are looking for opportunities and budget down the road to upgrade those items.

SD.net really stood up and shinned through this pandemic. A couple of highlights were proud to help with was South Dakota’s first ever legislative body to hold a legislative session solely online. We used Microsoft Teams for this and integrated it from Teams into our broadcast environment here in Vermillion. It worked well and it started the avenue to what we are doing now with interviews. Another part of response was in this new environment, UJS came to us looking for a way to stream courtrooms. Lincoln and Minnehaha counties were shut down as a hotspot. One of their requirements to hold court was they needed a public open courtroom. We assisted them through SD.net and our streaming Hiavision to allow stream straight from each of court rooms, they adopted 10 channels, they can be used in any courtroom throughout the UJS systems statewide. They are slowing getting some judges and clerk of courts on board with this. They are using it and has allowed open courts to open back up in those communities. Looking at SD.net April through June, the stats have increased, the watch on the website has really grown. It shows the content is really getting out there, the Boards and Commissions have amped up. Our team really stepped outside the box and grasped the new technology in a new way of doing things. It has been a hectic year, but it’s been great and learned a lot.

*\*Ryan—Friends of SDPB Report*

Ryan mentioned this disruption is difficult, but we have still been able to do about 90 percent of our work. Julie has given a lot of credit to the staff and management, Ryan wanted to thank Julie Overgaard on behalf of the network for her clear, strong, and decisive leadership. Friends were able to get through a lot of this due to their new outsourced business model. Last July we closed the Brookings office where we had been processing all the mail manually. We have gone away from that and use a vendor, Allegiance Fundraising Group. They handle all of that for us now. We now have time to make decisions about content, what is our fundraising appeal, and when to add a campaign or drop a campaign. They do all the processing for us with the outgoing mail. Incoming mail now goes to First Premier Bank with a lockbox service to be processed for us. Friends hired a skilled data manager to process the files and integrate between First Premier and Allegiance. The membership portion we have seen very little disruption. Our vendor did not expect any COVID disruptions in service, so we have not seen any losses in membership. Underwriting is a different story. Sports revenue is about 40 percent of what we do and probably 70 percent of the spots that were tied to contracts did not air, so that was a massive disruption. It has delayed the major giving process but that is starting to improve. We have done stewardship calls and we called our top 100 donors to just check in with them.

We are becoming more assertive; the added gifts have doubled. Overall, we are up 70,000 dollars. We have 447 new members this year and 149 of them came in directly due to Passport. FY 21 Outlook—Friends has built a conservative and balanced budget to maintain the same transfer amount to the network. We are expecting membership drives to be down 10% and continued growth in all membership. Major Giving staff will have to be on top of their game for the entire year. Budgeted a third hit for underwriting as sports is unknown and event-based sponsorships are unknown.

**UNDERWRITING POLICY DISCUSSION**

Under Tab F is the revised proposed underwriting policy.

Julie would like the board to take time to read through it and give their feedback. We will circulate it back around so by the time we have a meeting, we have it in a satisfactory place for approval.

The policy in your board packet is what we are recommending. Teri will send out the original policy with the red lines and strikes through it so you can see the edits.

**FUTURE MEETINGS**

We do not have a list of future meetings since we don’t know if we can plan in person meetings at this point. Julie does want to get the policy updated so she would like to purpose a short business meeting in late September early October with the sole purpose to approve the policy. Teri will contact board when ready to plan a meeting date and time.

**ADJOURNMENT**

With no future business to discuss Mark Shlanta adjourned the meeting at 3:38pm CT.