

WVTF Friends Council Meeting Wednesday, April 28, 1:00pm
Tele-meeting via Zoom hosted by Director of Development Bruce Marquis

WVTF staff in attendance: Roger Duvall, Bruce Marquis, Brian Black

Friends Council members in attendance: Anna Lawson, Dana Martin, Kathy Krendl, Margaret Grayson

Community Members in attendance: Lauren Ellerman, Michael Bentley

1:00 pm Bruce Marquis welcomes attendees and introduces Anna Lawson, President of the Friends Council.

Anna Lawson calls the meeting to order.

Anna Lawson calls for a motion to approve the minutes of the December meeting. Friends Council member Dana Martin presents the motion. The motion is approved and the members vote to approve the December minutes.

Roger Duvall gives General Manager Report. WVTF is ahead of projected fundraising for the year having reached $\frac{3}{4}$ of the annual goal for FY21 and additional COVID Relief grants were received. Challenges ahead include replacing the Poor Mountain transmitter and making improvements to the Roanoke Broadcast Center. NPR programming fees will increase for FY22 but projected FY21 increases were waived by NPR to help member stations through the pandemic. Planning and discussions are underway to restructure the Friends Council and he is excited to have Bruce Marquis on board to lead the group. The first pilot of the new civil discussion series is almost complete and should air in the next 3-4 weeks.

Anna Lawson invites discussion on any old business from the previous meeting and the group moves to discussion of the restructuring and history of the WVTF Friends Council. Anna states that historically the group has been more of a passive organization with no defined rules, bylaws, or stated purpose and asks, "... what is the mechanism we want for the future"?

Bruce Marquis refers the group to the list of models document he provided for the meeting and recommends the North Country Public Radio Advisory Board as a good model for WVTF to consider. He also prepared a summary of the NCPR Advisory Board structure and similarities to WVTF. He suggests smaller working groups to begin defining the new structure of the Friends Council and decide if rules and bylaws are appropriate.

He suggests functions of the Friends Council could include planning the WVTF 50th Anniversary and raising funds to replace the Poor Mountain transmitter. More immediately he asks the group to consider helping to recruit new members and make recommendations of any other similar group models to consider.

Lauren Ellerman recommended not establishing a separate non-profit organization but rather create a core group of volunteers who want to participate in community engagement events. She reflected on the Cokie Roberts event from 2016 and expressed her interest in participating in more events like this.

Community member Michael Bentley commented on the Plow Shares history with the WVTF Friends Council and posted the following note to the Zoom meeting platform:

FYI, I'm representing Plowshare Peace and Justice Center. We've been engaged with WVTF since 2008 and we are why there is a Friends Council to begin with as we engaged NPR's Ombudsman to call out WVTF for pretending to be a university-sponsored station which exempted them from having a community advisory board (CAB). Most CABs, in our research, do have some say in programming, and we have advocated for that for the Friends Council. We have also advocated for news program, which airs on some 1,400 radio and TV stations world-wide.

Anna Lawson stated the group needs to consider Michael Bentley's ideas and look at the relationship among the station, Virginia Tech and a newly-focused community advisory board. Taking the opportunity before us to re-define the structure of the WVTF Friends Council.

Bruce Marquis announces the 50th Anniversary of WVTF will happen in 2023 and asks members to consider what should be celebrated, what should the general public know about the history of WVTF, and what makes WVTF special to each of them.

Anna Lawson declares the end of discussion of old business and invites discussion of new business.

Bruce Marquis discusses the replacement of the Poor Mountain transmitter. WVTF's primary radio tower is 20 years past its lifespan. It is old tube technology and tubes cost over \$5,000 to replace and increase the electricity needed to operate. Goal is to raise \$200,000 in the next 2 years. In addition to the transmitter itself, the accompanying building needs improvements including the cooling system. Almost 50% of the total cost has been raised. Grant application to The Roanoke Women's Foundation was declined.

Anna Lawson stated that they are just beginning to put a group together to form a "Tower Team" to secure lead gifts.

Anna Lawson adjourns the meeting stating that she hopes to schedule two more meetings in 2021.