

# Williamsburg Advisory Council (WAC)

## Meeting Minutes

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Date: May 5, 2025

Time: 12:00 PM – 1:05 PM

### In Attendance:

John Shulson, Pat Rublein, Clyde Haulman, Megan Rhyne, Leslie Bowie, Sylvia Payne, Leslie Coe

### Staff Present:

Tom Burton, Kate Pringle, Kelsey Backe, Todd Holcomb, Raymond Jones, Denise Watson

### Meeting Called to Order:

Megan Rhyne called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM in place of Judy Knudson, WAC Chair.

### 1. Welcome

- Bert Schmidt, President and CEO, was absent due to illness.
- Tom Burton, Chief Development Officer, opened the meeting and highlighted Megan's attendance at the recent WHRO board meeting where we did a spotlight on all of our committees. Megan represented WAC.
- Staff introductions: Kelsey Backe, Community Engagement Manager; Denise Watson, Team Editor; and Raymond Jones, Announcer/Producer, were introduced as participants in the meeting.
- **Federal Funding Discussion:**
  - Tom addressed the current uncertainty regarding federal funding. No fundraising campaigns will be tied to the issue at this time.
  - Tom explained the CPB funding model, how much funding WHRO receives from CPB, and recent federal rescission order and most recent executive order.
  - Clarified how CPB distributes grants to stations and how this impacts WHRO's messaging and programming. We cannot fundraise off of the threat of federal funding cuts, but are prepared to if funding is rescinded.
  - Pat Rublein requested additional clarity on CPB's structure, which Tom explained. Megan emphasized the need for clearer communication with WAC members so that they can advocate effectively for WHRO.
  - Kelsey noted an informational page on WHRO's website. Kate added that other stations have developed white papers and videos. Tom emphasized the coordinated

messaging amongst stations suggested by APTS. Tom also mentioned the secondary and tertiary impacts on stations and their programming that could be a fallout from the loss of federal funding.

- Megan reiterated the importance of equipping WAC with tools to advocate effectively. Leslie Coe stated that the community needs reassurance that WHRO is not going to tank. Megan expressed concern over the impact to schools. Kelsey mentioned the letter that came from Bert over the weekend. The group settled on the idea that a *positive* call to action is necessary.
- Leslie Coe asked if there is anything WAC can do locally to help. She wants what WAC to be in line with what WHRO is doing. Tom concluded the discussion with reference to a “State of Current Affairs” slide and call to action via Protect My Public Media.
- Notes that this opening discussion ended at 12:25 pm.

## 2. President’s Report

- In Bert’s absence and given the length of the opening discussion regarding federal funding, this agenda item was omitted

## 3. Community Engagement – Kelsey Backe

- Announced a new part-time Community Relations Coordinator position in Williamsburg. Discussed duties of this position and asked WAC to share the job opening and description with their network.
- Discussed reinvestment in the Peninsula/Williamsburg and potential WHRO office renovations to make the space more accessible for meetings and gatherings with the public. Asked for input on what WAC would like the space to become and invited them to let other organizations know we are always available to meet and potentially collaborate.
- Shared details on upcoming Ken Burns screening in Yorktown on Sept 20.
- Reported on the Virginia Humanities Grant and funding cycle. Advisory committee will meet and recommend projects for funding at the end of this month. The program is forward funding for this granting cycle and the next.
- Updates on the Story Exchange hosted by the Emerging Leaders Board. Would like to host events in Williamsburg, the Peninsula, or Eastern Shore.
- Mentioned upcoming Play Your Heart Out event at the Chrysler Museum.
- Kelsey encouraged members to share events with WHRO that she should know about.
- Pat Rublein stressed the need for stronger journalism on the Peninsula. Tom pointed to Nick McNamara, who is the dedicated reporter for Williamsburg, and to Denise Watson in attendance.

## 4. Development Report – Tom Burton

- Tom shared that Sydney Felker, former development associate and WAC staff contact at the Williamsburg office, moved on from WHRO to another non-profit in the community and reassessment of the Williamsburg office’s role and inherent importance.

- Shared development staffing updates and the end of the Merkle contract that has moved some data/gift entry processes in-house.
- Tom gave a fundraising update for membership and underwriting FY-to-date, with membership tracking only \$28,610 behind budget through 3/31/25 and underwriting \$75,000 away from the FY25 goal. Tom explained how underwriting dollars are booked versus when the spots are actually run, which can be into next fiscal year.

## 5. Content Report – Kate Pringle

- Reflected on the HBAS Producer's Circle Dinner and discussed improving event accessibility for Williamsburg and Peninsula members.
- Shared plans for three events in June at the Norfolk station and the Williamsburg Holiday Reception on December 11.
- Presented a slideshow with content report.

## 6. Classical Programming Highlights – Raymond Jones

- Introduced by Tom at 12:50 PM.
- Provided overview of WHRO 90.3 programming, his history in the region, and his roles at the station over many decades. He highlighted the very talented hosts and producers that make 90.3 programming possible.
- Pat Rublein noted the historical role of WGH and Vianne Webb.

## 7. Community Discussion – Denise Watson

- Introduced at 1:00 PM.
- Described her role and the reporting work focused on Williamsburg. Detailed Nick McNamara's work at WHRO and in the community. She helps him decide which stories to cover and focus on.
- Highlighted the importance of freelance writers for arts and culture reporting, and especially in Williamsburg and on the Peninsula.
- Shared contact info and welcomed further discussion with WAC members.

## 8. Other Business

- No additional items brought forward.
- Highlighted upcoming events.

## 9. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 1:05 PM.

Signature: 

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Date: May 6, 2025