

WVTF Friends Council Meeting Wednesday, December 9, 4:00pm
Tele-meeting via Zoom hosted by Director of Development Bruce Marquis

WVTF staff in attendance: Roger Duvall, Bruce Marquis, Brian Black
Community Members in attendance: Anna Lawson, Nick Mira, Wes Spruill (by phone)
Special Guest: William Fralin

4:00 pm Anna Lawson calls the meeting to order. Introduces Bruce Marquis as WVTF's new Development Director to the members.

Bruce Marquis calls for a motion to approve the minutes of the June meeting. Friends Council Chair Anna Lawson presents the motion. The motion is approved and the members vote to informally approve the June minutes without a quorum in attendance. Minutes of today's meeting will be posted as usual.

Roger Duvall gives General Manager Report. He reviews and summarizes items discussed at the June meeting and gives updates to fundraising and announces plans for a new civil discussion series to be moderated by William Fralin and produced in partnership with Virginia Tech. He announces new hires Bruce Marquis as Development Director and Anne Adams as Corporate Support Representative. Roger explains that fundraising is on track to show an increase over the first half of fiscal year 2020 and is cautiously optimistic about the financial health as support is strong for public radio stations across the country through the COVID pandemic. Plans are being made for the Spring Fund Drive and other fundraising through the second half of fiscal year 2021.

Roger continues with updates to the staffing in Roanoke with greater precautions due to the COVID pandemic in recent weeks. WVTF staff are alternating work from home shifts to cut down on the number of people in the building at one time and staff are required to social distance and wear masks while in the office. Roger thanks and acknowledges Director of Operations Teresa Sanders for keeping local newspaper readings on the Radio Reading Service finding volunteers who are able to record from home. The Fall Fund Drive was a success with a great response to the new Milk for Good program that replaces the long running Food for Forty program. WVTF Book Club is meeting virtually for now.

Roger Duvall gives description of new civil discussion series project. He explains that the idea was discussed with Anna Lawson two years ago. Anna referred Roger to Katherine Walker who referred Roger to William Fralin. Mr. Fralin was also formulating ideas for a similar project. More recently, discussions and plans have involved Virginia Tech's Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT). Next week Kathy Baske Young will lead a discussion group to focus on the intended audience and the production of a pilot program. Roger Duvall introduces special guest William Fralin as the moderator of the new discussion series and invites him to share his vision of the new project.

William Fralin introduces himself as a former attorney at Woods Rogers law firm where he worked with Anna Lawson's husband. Later, he served in the Virginia General Assembly until about 10 years ago. He is now the President and CEO of Medical Facilities of America. He describes a desire to produce a program that is a departure from the extreme right and left programming of Fox News or MSNBC. The goal is to have panel discussions with representatives of both points of view that allows each participant equal time to address an issue, answer questions and summarize their views without interruption. Each topic will be introduced with undisputable facts such as, "more African Americans are arrested by the police than Whites" and the discussions will start from there. The ultimate goal is

not to convince the audience that one position is correct over the other but to give the audience a greater understanding of the opposing views and the people who hold those views and why.

Mr. Fralin explains that the pilot program will be focused on policing and excessive force and will include Executive Director of Virginia's State Police and the VA ACLU. The program will be edited for multiple platforms including shorter social media "bites" to attract viewers to the WVTF website, video, blogs, and audio for radio broadcast on WVTF/Radio IQ. He added that the final production may be recorded at Virginia Tech's Moss Arts Center in the Cube venue that allows for 360-degree video recording. The final program will also include elements of animation intended to help decrease biases from the audience. Mr. Fralin gave special thanks and credit to Roger Duvall, Virginia Tech's ICAT, Tracy Vosburgh (VT AVP for Advancement) and WVTF for getting the project advanced to the point of creating a pilot program in the near future. Perhaps as early as February 2021.

Roger Duvall added that former WVTF Program Director Rick Mattioni has also been engaged to produce the pilot program and thanks Mr. Fralin for his presentation. Mr. Fralin logs out of meeting.

Bruce Marquis invites Anna Lawson to present any old business from the previous meeting or new business to be discussed. Anna suggests returning to the conversation of recruiting new members and Bruce returns the discussion to agenda items regarding the same issues of growth and structure of the WVTF Friends Council.

Bruce, Anna, and Roger discussed several ideas on the purpose and structure of the Friends Council going forward. Bruce proposes a set schedule of meetings pre-determined every 6 months to a year. It is agreed by all that this would help increase attendance. Bruce and Roger state plans to look at Friends Councils for public radio stations across the country that are also licensed by universities and how they operate under this umbrella. They will also look at membership numbers and the types of activities and projects these other groups participate in. Bruce proposed recruiting members from each geographical area that WVTF serves and gives examples of his previous experiences working with similar groups spread out over a large area.

Bruce Marquis invites Wes Spruill and Nick Mira to comment. Nick Mira says he feels new members will accept a community advisory role with no decision-making power on programming and that he hopes to contribute more as the Friends Council grows under Bruce's leadership. He repeats that early scheduling the meetings would be most helpful.

Wes Spruill states that he is hopeful to see WVTF and Radio IQ become the public radio service for Virginia and he is excited to see what the Friends Council can do. He states that most people in Richmond don't know us yet. He formerly lived in Roanoke and that is how he is familiar with WVTF/Radio IQ. He also added that the early scheduling of meetings would be helpful and he is excited to see and hear the pilot program of the civil discussion series.

With no other business Bruce Marquis adjourns the meeting and states the next meeting will be at the end of March, 2021.