*Lauren Ellerman absent, all other members present*

Renai: Let’s begin with sharing your favorite WVTF radio moment over the past few months

Dana: strike political statement from last meeting; caution this Council to remain non-political

Dana: A young woman commented to me that she learned some things about what seniors should do, many of which she heard on public radio, and that she knows that when it comes from WVTF, she knows it is credible

Renai: I discovered new music on WVTF Music via Luke Currie: Jess Gillam, very “zen” saxophonist

Leigh: In a writing group in RVA employee of VPM talking about the value of storytelling and those stories remind us of our humanity; we share more than we differ; stories bring us together and appreciate public media for sharing human interest stories, reminding us of that human connection

John: My favorite moment was May 1st on WVTF Music, I heard Thomas Morley’s “Madrigal” which I sang in a performance group in high school 70 years ago!

Anna: who here are musicians? Show of hands by many in attendance

Roger: During our 50th anniversary celebration (2023 Open House) I recall performing “Blue Bayou” where Dutchie Morelli sang, and Roger played drums

Dana: Motion to approve January meeting minutes. No further corrections, minutes are approved.

Roger: The Federal Funding situation is changing rapidly. It’s no secret that the administration was going to try to do away with federal funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The founders of public broadcasting foresaw that this could happen, so they wrote in the 1967 Public Broadcasting Act forward-funding two years in advance, and this funding would be processed through a separate non-profit, the CPB. Fast forward to about a month ago, the President was reportedly going to send a letter to Congress proposing rescinding the already-approved 2026-2027 funding. Congress would have had 45 days to approve that recission; then the administration was talking about writing CPB out of the upcoming budget (2028). This letter was to be delivered on April 28, instead the administration sent an email to three Biden-appointed board members saying they no longer had a job as board members. There are four unfilled positions that Republicans were supposed to fill but haven’t yet, leaving CPB with only 2 standing board members; CPB is required to have a minimum of 4 board members to function as a federally-funded corporation, and so this action was seen by many as an attempt to render CPB ineligible for federal funding. An immediate injunction was filed in court the next day to stop the action, and there is considerable evidence that this action to terminate those board members is not legal. The administration then issued an executive order late Thursday night (May 1) forbidding any federal money to go to NPR and PBS. CPB made a statement Friday saying that the actions have no legal merit, and these are exactly the types of actions that the founders of the 1967 PBA foresaw and specifically constructed the CPB to be immune to. Both actions are expected to be challenged in court and likely to be ruled in our favor over time, but still no letter to Congress to rescind CPB funding was delivered yet. We are watching for this recission letter to come back at some point, however.

At WVTF, we have our 2025 money that will fund us into 2026. If we lose this money it is “only” a 6% reduction of our total budget. We know $300,000 is significant for us, but our listeners have stepped up. While we may see “only” a 6% funding cut, our colleagues at Blue Ridge PBS would lose nearly 30% of their budget if CPB funding is cut. Nationwide, over 80% receive more than half of their annual budget from federal funding. And these stations are largely in rural areas, being often one of the only sources of local news and programming in their respective areas (and many of these have Republican congressional representatives). And, CPB not only funds local stations, they also fund the public radio satellite system, emergency alert system, as well as paying music licensing fees for public media stations. Trying to shutter CPB would create chaos in our system, as well as create more costs for us, but the good news is that people are stepping up. There are confirmed Republican supporters of CPB and votes against the rescinding, but this will go on for some time.

Questions?

Anna: Can Virginia Tech play any role in this?

Roger: VT is concerned but their gov’t people will not reach out to other gov’t people, but they want to know what the impact could be.

Roger: When is it appropriate for public radio to start down the road to advocacy for federal funding? How far should/could we go to communicate on our air about the very real threats to federal funding?

Leigh: The way you’ve already posed the situation, stating the facts, and directing listeners where they can learn more information. Given the nature of public broadcasting, I don’t see this being remarkably different from asking individuals for donations.

Susan: What is the structure of your station?

Roger: We are a non-commercial educational station, and a 501 (c)(3) through Virginia Tech

Susan: My organization is also a 501 (c)(3) and we are facing similar federal funding cuts and issues with messaging. We feel comfortable sharing with our membership what is happening and what they can do about it. We have sent emails and one-pagers of info about why their work is valuable for members to share, other similar orgs have come together to have congressional visit days to advocate as a constituent. To me, all of this is completely within our mission and regulations as a 501 (c)(3) – I think WVTF could do the same thing, which is encourage the members to advocate for the station.

Dick: Most important thing to do would be to bring the facts to life on a regular basis, to lay out what is happening currently for the listeners to make sense of the chaos. Maybe interview Roger? Radio IQ can take its lead from what NPR is doing. Listeners will figure out on their own what to do.

Roger: We did that, our staff interviewed me and Will Anderson from Blue Ridge PBS on May 2. ([story](https://www.wvtf.org/news/2025-05-02/local-stations-respond-to-news-of-executive-order-cutting-funds-to-npr-and-pbs))

John: Seems like we are living in an age where everything has become political, so I think it’s impossible to avoid bringing politics into the discussion. I think that advocating for public funding is no different than advocating for private funding.

Nick: I have a similar perspective as Susan, working with non-profits in formation and compliance. There is a delicate balance here, you don’t want to wade into lobbying activity as to jeopardize your 501 (c)(3) status. Keep it factual, not try to sway anyone one way or another, but let people know why there is a need and what they can do to help. Right now, optics are important (maybe more than they should be), so maybe be careful with meeting with representatives.

Susan: We are allowed to do some amount of lobbying as a501 (c)(3). We are encouraged to lobby for legislation as long as its within our mission. I was lobbying for science funding, and without our funding we cannot achieve our mission, and we are meeting w/ representatives on both sides of the aisle, advocating for sound policy.

Nick: Just to be clear, there are statutory tests for some of these parameters for advocacy (sent this [link from irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/lobbying) about how far 501 (c)(3)’s can go with lobbying and what is and is not permissible). Looking at it in the current climate, in the context of where we are now.

Roger: Renai posted one of our on-air messages in the chat: “Public Radio is in unchartered waters.

The Trump administration has issued an executive order to stop federal funding for NPR.

That money supports stations on a local level so they can provide fact-based news and information along with vital emergency resources.

To find out more about what you can do - go to Radio-I-Q-Dot-Org and click the Public Media Funding banner. Let your voice be heard in support of the programs you enjoy on Radio IQ.”

Kim: I’ve worked in public broadcasting since 1996, so I recall people getting upset about “salacious content” like the Teletubbies and Madame Bovary, but this is different. We are talking about the foundation, the institution upon which we are built. What is the reason for having public broadcasting, what is the greater good that is being provided by public media? I think it’s important for us to do a contrast/comparison of public media with commercial media. Public broadcasting pioneered HD broadcasting and formats of TV and radio programming; there is a rich culture in creating media as we know it today – especially now, we should focus on our foundational reasons for our existence. Also, correct the perception of how much public media factors into our gov’t budget…is it less than $5 per household per year? Public broadcasting is another public service for the greater good. Share the facts on air, and contact other media organizations (TV, newspapers), as we are preaching to the choir on our own airwaves. Emergency Broadcast System, rural programming, Sesame Street? Absolutely essential!

Roger: The numbers we have for federal funds are $1.60 per person via CPB

Kim: Requested Roger’s earlier talking points about CPB/federal funding

Dana: So much of this is preaching to the choir; find a way to target non listeners, non-believers or people who haven’t been paying attention (social media?) and letting them know that public broadcasting is under attack.

Susan: It’s hard to reach masses who are not paying attention, or to fight the disinformation. Congress writes the budget, and they do count the number of calls they receive from their constituents. Many listeners are in districts who will make a difference with their voices; encourage our members to advocate (calls, visit reps) which will make a difference.

Roger: Last year, (local GOP representative) Morgan Griffith was part of the public hearings about NPR. In his response, you can tell he heard from constituents who said “I like my bluegrass music”. Also, some Republicans are asking, “why do you need federal funding when you are doing so well?” There is a three-legged system to the public media stool, and missing one leg would bring down a lot of this.

Please also email Roger and Renai your thoughts on this topic.

Karen: There’s a lot of feelings about NPR being biased or elitist, and our appeal to others needs to have more personal, relatable faces which speaks to more people. How do we reach more younger people?

Renai: Share stories on social media?

Roger: Many of the talking points from NPR on federal funding sounded very generic, but RMPM made a beautiful statement that was very personal and specific about what they actually do for the public.

Hannah: *From Zoom Chat:* A reels series sharing these stories on IG would likely go viral (locally)

Kim: *From Zoom Chat:* Yes, get member testimonials; listeners, not members

Renai: recorded messages on-air are in the chat. Nick Yee produced spots that are very straight-forward, but listen and pay attention to your gut – if these spots sound “too political” to you, let us know.

Leigh: most of us agree that it would be fine to share concerns with listeners as long as it’s brief and factual and appropriate, it is important to get the news out there, so folks know they can respond.

Roger: And getting the word out to people who are not our regular listeners, I made a joint statement with Will Anderson of Blue Ridge PBS to be released to Cardinal News and other news media, raising awareness of the impact of funding cuts to smaller and more rural public stations.

Dana: Renai may proceed

Renai: We had a great Spring Fund Drive this March – on the Wednesday during fund drive (March 19), the press release about the DOGE subcommittee hearing (led by Marjorie Taylor Greene, titled “Anti-American Airwaves”) came out and we reported on it that day. We saw a huge increase in donations (1742 vs. 1290 last year), more than double the number of new donors (486 vs. 241), average donation amounts ($173 vs. $158), and new sustainers. Our 2025 Spring Fund Drive total: $405,000 vs. 2024 Spring Drive total: $308,372). We sent an email this past Friday about the news of the executive order; we’ve gotten over 60 donations, over $12k in donations, as well as a donation of a 2022 Tesla ($21k). At first this felt like a sprint with all the recent DOGE news, but this now feels like a fundraising marathon.

Our messaging was: we want to be sustainable, and we want the people who use this service to support and pay for this service, which resonates with folks on both sides of the aisle.

Roger: A note on our 2024-2025 numbers: we had just redone our fundraising drive in 2024, which resulted in a 107% increase from what we would normally do, so we are being efficient in our asks.

Renai: Our Fall Fund Drive will be Sept. 12-19, 2025. And last year, we launched our first December Fund Drive which was a success, so we will hold another one this year on Dec. 9-12, 2025.

Roger: We also don’t know what the economy will look like in the fall, so we want to make sure we are strike while the iron is hot in fundraising.

Roger: We are in talks with Kathy Baske Young on our Strategic Plan, which will be a process that will go on this summer. I welcome any of you to give your input on our strategic planning coming up. We’re also going to take a hard look at the programming that we currently offer, and we may make changes. Our spending has increased rapidly, and we are approaching $1M in imported programming yearly.

Nick Yee: Thank you for being here, you are our sounding board and reality check. You can’t make a decision in programming without upsetting someone, public radio listeners are very smart and no decision is made lightly. How are you enjoying what is on Radio IQ / WVTF Music? What are you not enjoying? If we have to make cuts, what can we afford to lose? Also, what are we not covering? What would you like to hear more of? The shows linked in the email are ones we have been considering (some local, some national), and some are newer shows. Please send us your feedback on programming.

Karen: I am a WVTF Music listener and local musician in Charlottesville, and I would love to see more coverage on live music performances in Charlottesville – a spotlight type of show would be fantastic.

John: I remember the cooperation between Roanoke Symphony Orchestra and WVTF Music – could that happen with other local orgs such as Charlottesville? Also, I vote for the second hour of Science Friday.

Susan: I would love to see more science content; excited about Climate One. But I almost never listen live; I use the app, NPR+, use Alexa, I almost always listen to these shows after they’ve aired – if things exist already as podcasts, those programs could be cut if they are available in other places.

Dick: I have no clue what Radio Melrose is, was This Old House on PBS decades ago? I highly endorse Science Friday, and I love NPR Tiny Desk Concerts.

Nick: Please listen to the Tiny Desk Concerts show and give us your feedback.

Anna: Asks about Nick’s comment about All Songs Considered, Tiny Desk Concerts

Nick: Tiny Desk Concerts have done a great job bringing a younger audience to NPR.

Mohammed: *From Zoom Chat:* If you're looking for "personal" recommendations/opinions, I got excited about Unexpected Elements and A way with words. I found a connection between the content of these two shows, and being a VT-connected station. Not saying that they're educational programs, but they kinda relate to the mission of a higher education institute (although, of course, VT has nothing to do with your programming choices nor decisions).

Susan: *From Zoom Chat:* I love Wild Card, didn’t like All Songs Considered. I also love the storytelling. I love This American Life and The Moth. But both are also podcast-able....

Kim: *From Zoom Chat:* This American Life, Marketplace, BBC, Fresh Air are essentials for me. And The Daily! also essential Milk Street Radio? Byeeeee!

Leigh: *From Zoom Chat:* Oh Yes! BBC is a MUST KEEP. RadioLab - I LOVE. But they just play repeats since the hosts changed….. Because some of us are later commuters and want to hear news on the drive in!

Hannah: *From Zoom Chat:* I third BBC

Dick: *From Zoom Chat:* I say Bye Bye to Milk Street Radio

Renai: *From Zoom Chat:* I am, surprisingly, a fan of The World. I didn't think I'd like it, but they're doing a great job explaining how American policies impact other countries.

Nick: Please listen to the suggested shows, as NPR programming is not cheap. All Songs Considered, Tiny Desk *from Zoom Chat:* REACH OUT! Email: [nickyee@vt.edu](mailto:nickyee@vt.edu) Cell: (540) 541-9910

Hannah: I’ve really been enjoying the newer show “It’s Been a Minute” and the conversations. I’ve recommended this show to my friends, as I feel my friends would engage with this program’s content more than say, Marketplace.

Nick: Commented on it’s been a minute/code switch/wild card

Leigh: I would like to see technology-focused programming, and anything involving human interest storytelling. I love Marketplace and how they talk about money and complex economic principles in an approachable way. Planet Money – some redundancy between that program and Marketplace? I love 1A and its storytelling but it tends to be highly political, that’s one to be mindful of. Climate One?

Nick: Comments on 1A, Here and Now, Fresh Air and possible bias on topics or interviewees

Susan: This American Life and The Moth are both available on the NPR+ podcast

Nick: The bias of NPR shows has been under attack, there has been critique about some hosts’ bias

Roger: In order to add shows, we need to subtract some shows. Which shows are sacred? Let us know, let Nick know which shows you believe are essential and critical.

Nick: Write me and be brutally honest about your opinions, also let me know your opinions on the placement of the shows. Folks who listen some like or don’t like the placement of say, the BBC.

Karen: Question for Nick: Who is “they” when you refer to “they don’t like this” or “they like that”?

Nick: Friends Council, other radio programmers groups and representatives, ratings, gut instinct, etc.

Roger: Program economics can be complicated; some shows are free, some are very expensive.

Nick: Radio Melrose is a new low-power FM station in Roanoke that is paying rent on our HD4 signal, it is slated to play jazz and social/community content and aimed toward our African-American community in Roanoke. They just got a lease for a terrestrial broadcast tower, but it is a work in progress.

Anna: I have a concern. We’ve said for years that the Friends Council does not make decisions about programming, but we are talking a lot about programming here! What is the distinction between what Council can and can’t do here?

Roger: Thank you. The guidelines from CPB for community advisory boards say they are not about the programming. However, you are the eyes and ears of the listening area of this station. There is a fine line between having Friends Council as a community advisory board for the station in general and advising programming specifically. Ultimately, the employees of WVTF are the ones who will make those programming decisions, but we want to know from you about what areas are we missing?

Renai: *From Zoom Chat:* Here is what the CPB requires of a Community Advisory Board: <https://cpb.org/stations/certification/cert3>

Nick: If there are any testimonials you would like to record for on-air, you can record your own on your phone and email it to me. “My name is \_\_\_\_ and I support Radio IQ and my favorite show is \_\_\_\_\_...” We are also working on a way to collect audio testimonials via the WVTF app

Dana: We are now going to elect our members whose terms expired in 2024. I invite those of you who are here to speak.

Renai: We have five people whose terms expired in 2024:

Anna Lawson, Lauren Ellerman, Hannah Kinder, John Gilliom, Dick Roop

Before we take a vote, I would like to open the floor to each of you to speak about serving another term.

Anna: What else would I do?

Dick: I am a public radio fanatic, Radio IQ is doing such a great job, and I’m honored to have some input.

Hannah: I have really enjoyed my time with you all; this feels like a tangible way to make impact in the world, and I would also like to make space for new faces, and I appreciate the work you all do.

John: I’m interested in strategic planning, and I’m happy we’re finally getting around to strategic planning, looking forward to it.

Dana: Move to vote on reelection of all five members. All five members have been reelected to a second term via unanimous vote.

Renai: Our Friends Council is at 12 now, and our bylaws state a recommended Council member number between 12-15 members. We can form a membership committee to elect new members at any time

Leigh: Do we have all geographic areas represented?

Roger: in losing Tom, we have no representation from Lexington.

Renai: And no one in Lynchburg

Susan: How is our Council’s diversity representation? Are we representing our listenership as a whole? What about younger listeners and community members and how do they listen?

Renai: I misspoke - we are actually at 13 members.

Dana: Do we want to form membership committee now or in September?

Roger: I would say the best time to open up membership may be around August-September-October. We could put a call for new members on the air.

Dana: Perhaps we can find two volunteers by noon next Monday and we will officially form the committee.

Renai: **CORRECTION** - our new bylaws require us to have a membership of 15-20

John: I learned about this opportunity from an email to the donor list; maybe we can reach out that way?

Dana: We will be forming a committee

Renai: We get donations from NPR.org as well, and Wendy informed me that since May 1st, we have raised over $6K, which is more than we have ever seen at the beginning of the month

Roger: Thank you for your time, do we have public comment?

No public comment

Dana: Motion to adjourn

Meeting adjourned