

SUMMARY

NPR Illinois Community Advisory Board

December 5, 2023, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

AARP Illinois Legislative Office, 300 West Edwards Street, Springfield

1. Call to order/roll call (Randy Eccles acting for Teresa Jones)
 - a. In person: Teresa Jones, Gina Kovach, Jen McMillin, Kent Redfield, Karen Witter
 - b. Remote: Deanie Brown, Cindi Canari, John Carpenter, David Kohn, Adam Porter, Gart Reynolds, Christina Shutt, George Van Dusen, Mia Woods
 - c. Ex-officio: Sean Crawford, Randy Eccles, Janet Gooch, Molly Lamb, Kate McKenzie
 - d. Staff: Bea Bonner, Vanessa Ferguson
 - e. Absent: Steve Anderson, Kelly Glass, Lisbeth Leanos, Michael Morthland, Jody Ogilvy, Nikita Richards, Erma Williams
2. Member reports - During the meeting, Randy Eccles emphasized the crucial role of Advisory Board members as ears in the community and ambassadors for NPR Illinois. Management encourages CAB members to share what they've been hearing and how they've been advocating for NPR Illinois. Jen McMillin highlighted her podcast experience, featuring a colleague's presentation from Lincoln College, which received positive feedback and opened discussions. The discussion also touched upon the success of the "Community Voices" podcast in creating connections beyond traditional news coverage. Randy Eccles provided updates on NPR Illinois programming, including Jeremy Hobson's new program "The Middle" and the addition of "Notes from America," a national call-in program on weekends. The discussion expanded to the evolving media landscape, with insights into listener preferences, smart speakers, and NPR's efforts to integrate local stations into its app.
3. Nominating committee update
 - a. Vice-chair – The CAB nominated Jen McMillin for the vice-chair position, and the CAB passed the motion, making McMillin the new vice-chair. The Executive Committee now consists of Adam Porter as the past-chair, Teresa Jones as the chair, and Jen McMillan as the vice-chair.
 - b. Board openings/nominating committee – at this point, the executive committee will serve as the nominating committee. They welcome any CAB members joining them. The committee needs to meet and review the prospect list, there is still time for CAB members to add nominees to the list. Diverse perspectives are the priority.
4. Virtual happy hour update – Randy Eccles provided an update on the past attempt at a virtual mixer for the Community Advisory Board (CAB) and sought feedback on whether this initiative was worth continuing. Some enjoyed the virtual mixer, others expressed a preference for in-person gatherings, citing the desire for face-to-face interactions over drinks with a planned discussion topic. Signing thank you cards for donors could be another activity.
5. NPR Illinois update
 - a. Audience engagement –
 - i. CSPL Showcase in September, featuring panels from the Illinois Innocence Project and the Alliance for inclusion. Moderated as a "Community Voices" program by Vanessa Ferguson and Bea Bonner, the showcase garnered positive community feedback, resulting in connections for potential show guests on "Community Voices."
 - ii. Next 10 - Ferguson also moderated a conversation for the Next 10 Project, a Springfield-based initiative focusing on significant issues for community improvement. The guest, Cully Davis, shared insights on what Springfield can implement from innovation and collaboration in Silicon Valley.

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- iii. This I Believe – The essay program for high school seniors, held at the ALPLM, received support from various entities, including the Rotary Club, Illinois Times, BLH Computers, and a generous contribution from Mary Beth and Harvey Stevens. Senators Turner and Tracy expressed congratulations and provided gifts for the authors and Sen. McClure attended. Each selected essayist receives a \$500 award. Partners contribute to the This I Believe fund, while sponsors support the program on the station and receive acknowledgment announcements. Plans for the next round include increasing award partners and program sponsors.
 - iv. Citizens Club – NPR Illinois is partnering with the Citizens Club of Springfield to stream their forums on Facebook Live. The collaboration aims to share important discussions with the community, with upcoming events, such as the State of the Arts. Staff then edit these recorded sessions for broadcast and posting at nprillinois.org.
 - v. Randy highlighted the ongoing reflection on the effectiveness of engagement activities, considering what needs to be sunset or reinvented to align with the station's limited staff capacity. The focus remains on amplifying events by recording and editing and featuring underserved audiences contributing to NPR Illinois' content strategy. The CAB encouraged community input and collaboration for future initiatives.
- b. Editorial – Local journalism face challenges due to a changing landscape in media and the decline in interest in journalism as a profession. The discussion revolves around the shift in recruitment practices, the rise of news deserts, and efforts to address these issues by various organizations. Additionally, there's a focus on the importance of educating and engaging communities in civic matters, emphasizing NPR Illinois's unique position in providing local coverage, state news.
 - i. Pipeline – Major markets now hire journalists right out of college, causing a pipeline issue for smaller markets like Springfield. Also, there is a decline in interest in journalism as a career attributed to the perception of the field being under fire and higher paying communications career options (public relations).
 - ii. Plan – NPR Illinois management does not believe funding can increase enough to hire journalists to cover all the emerging news deserts. Media organizations need to find funding to hire professional editors to edit “Citizen journalists.” Engaging and prioritizing the underserved audiences where coverage is most needed, identifying interested community members and students in these audience cohorts that want to report out. Then, providing them training in journalism, civics, media literacy, and audio/podcasting. Then connecting them with the station’s professional editor trained to work with students, volunteers, and stringers to develop credible audio and digital reports. The authoring media outlet shares the reporting with other media to reach the largest audience.
 - iii. Funding – Working with Press Forward Springfield, the Governor’s Local Journalism Task Force, and other foundations to explain this reporting model and fund it.
 - iv. Un-debate - Working on an initiative called “Un-Debates,” aiming to provide in-depth discussions on issues during elections without candidate spin. The focus is on presenting researched perspectives and historical context from researchers and reporters, moving away from sensationalized candidate debates.
- c. Fundraising –
 - i. 100% CAB giving - As of the last fiscal year, NPR Illinois had a 73% giving rate among its CAB members.
 - ii. Currently pacing +\$40,000 over same period last year in overall fundraising.

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- iii. Year-end WAKE UP! Drive continues through New Year's Eve with a Murrow mug featured premium donated by Grab-a-Java. Kicked-off live from the new location on 300 Chatham Road. Will also be a pickup point to reduce mailing costs.
- iv. Celebration of Philanthropy – Save the evening of May 1, 2024, UIS recognizes a major friend of NPR Illinois with the William Winter Award.
- d. Business –
 - i. Public media and university collaboration – University of Vermont study encourages more integration between stations and student structures to increase reporting experience beyond campus.
 - ii. WIPA – transmitter beyond repair, \$300,000+ to replace. Applied for NGWS grant to fund rural service. Rented emergency low power transmitter from NPR until low power, portable backup transmitter arrives after purchase and integration costs (approx. \$10,000).
 - iii. An update on how NPR Illinois is absorbing UIS funding cuts is requested for next meeting.
- 6. Next Meeting – March 5, 2024, 11: 30 a.m.