WVTF / Radio IQ Friends Council Meeting

Tuesday, January 14, 2025

1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

In attendance:

WVTF staff: Roger Duvall, Renai Bodley, Nick Yee, Bill Trifiro, Sarah Hobbs

Friends Council: Dana Martin, Anna Lawson, John Gilliom, Hannah Kinder, Nick Mirra, Matt Peltier, Leigh Archer, Dick Roop, Kim Bratic, Mohammed Seyam

Members of the public: Michael Bentley

Council members sending regrets: Lauren Ellerman and Susan Park

-**Meeting called to order** – Chair Dana Martin

-Yield to Renai, invites everyone to share a short story about their favorite radio moment since we met in September.

-Dana Martin shares that around the first week of November, he was traumatized and wouldn’t listen to any news, but Radio IQ was his one little respite (wife insisted they turn it on) and he was able to stay out of a tearful state.

-Anna Lawson says that’s comforting; her husband is not listening to news and Anna has to sneak away to listen to the news.

-John Gilliom is taking a “news holiday” at his house but mostly streaming WVTF music channel.

-**Approval of September 17, 2024 meeting minutes**

-Dana Martin asks for additions to meeting minutes, no additions are requested. Anna Lawson moves to approve minutes; Chair Martin approves minutes from Sept. 17, 2024 meeting.

-**Revised Charter & Bylaws**

-Dana asks Renai to take the lead to review committee’s work, Renai gives floor to WVTF General Manager, Roger Duvall

- Roger Duvall mentions we are licensed to VT and the VT Foundation and we have this community advisory board. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting likes for each community advisory board to have a charter and/or bylaws. In the Friends Council September meeting, the FC moved to create a group to create that document: Dana Martin, John Gilliom, Hannah Kinder, Renai Bodley and Roger met met twice in the fall (October 2024) to create specific guidelines for these meetings and proposed charter and bylaws that we can use for years to come. Once the charter and bylaws are approved by this group, they will go to VT Foundation’s Office of Counsel who will approve, and they will then be made public and posted to our website.

-Renai: Matt Peltier is joining us, and thank you to Dana, Hannah and John for putting this together.

-Renai went over a few key points of the new charter and bylaws:

-She quoted “the Council’s purpose is to provide a vehicle for effective community input to the station's management on station programming and community service, including the potential impact of major policy decisions by the station.” Renai explained that WVTF / Radio IQ looks to the Friends Council to advise us on our programming, as well as how we serve the community. The FC should give us a perspective on changes to our programming. Renai emphasized the importance of having Nick Yee, station Programming and Operations Director, in the FC meetings, as well as giving members of the public notice of these Council meetings.

-The FC should have 15-20 members who live in the radio station’s listening area, and it’s important to make sure five areas are represented: Roanoke, Blacksburg & New River Valley, Charlottesville, and Richmond. Members must be 18 years old or older. You can be a member of the board again if you term off the board, but you need to wait a year in between those terms. We would form a membership committee made up of the station General Manager, a station staff member, and 2-3 members of the Council to pick new members as needed and appropriate. We would like to see members serve two, three-year terms, but we know people may come and go, so a membership committee can be formed as needed. At the end of an FC member’s first term, they must indicate if they would like to serve a second term and let the Council Chair know at least five days before the next meeting, so the Chair can make sure it is on the agenda.

-The new bylaws provide guidance on how to remove a Council member, if necessary, if we feel that a member is not acting in the best interest of the Council or the station. There would be a five-day written notice presented before a Council meeting and that member would be able to speak on their behalf.

-Officer elections would be held the first meeting of the year in odd-numbered years, when we would select a Chair and a Vice-Chair, each of whom would serve a two-year term. If an officer leaves, we will elect someone to replace them for the remainder of their term. The Council meeting schedule will be determined by the General Manager at least a year in advance. Changes can be made to the charter and bylaws; however, changes will need to be approved by the VT Foundation.

-John Gilliom asks a question about blue text “WVTF / RADIO IQ coverage area” in the Council Membership section of bylaws. It appears there is a missing URL link to our coverage map.

-Dana calls to approve charter and bylaws. John moves to approve, and Anna seconds motion to approve. Chair Dana has taken a voice vote, the Chair rules the ayes have approved the Charter and Bylaws. Leigh Archer just joined us and voted aye on the charter and bylaws.

**-Approval of Officers: Chair and Vice-Chair**

-Renai: our next step is to vote on officers. If somebody is nominated, according to our new bylaws, the chair and vice-chair serve a two-year term. If you are nominated and cannot serve two years, please decline the nomination.

-Dana declares the floor is open for Chair and Vice Chair nominations, which we can do one at a time. Dana notes if he should be nominated and elected, this would be his final term as Chair.

-Leigh Archer nominates Dana Martin for Chair, Dana accepts the nomination.

-Dana motions to vote for Chair; the ayes approve Dana Martin as Chair. Dana says it is an honor to serve and notes the progress this Council and the station has made over the years.

-Anna Lawson nominates Leigh Archer for Vice Chair. John Gilliom seconds the motion, Chair Dana calls for a vote, and the ayes approve Leigh Archer as Vice-Chair.

-Leigh says she is excited to get more involved and learn from Dana.

-**Fund Drive Report** – Renai Bodley

Congrats to Dana, Leigh, and everyone for creating a new charter and bylaws.

 - December Fund Drive & Year-End Giving

-Upon the recommendation of Greater Public (advisors for public radio stations) and seeing many stations have success with a Winter Fund Drive, Roger made the call to have our very first December Fund Drive. Between December 10-12, 2024, we raised just under $70,000 in three days. We blended this fund drive with our Year-End Giving Campaign. From Black Friday through Giving Tuesday (Dec. 2), and Dec. 31, this is the busiest time of the year for philanthropic giving. From Black Friday (Nov. 29) through Dec. 31 of this year, we raised $443,767 and exceed our past three years of giving during this same time frame. Our total from July 1 – Dec. 31 this year was $1,524,168, and our yearly budget is $3,100,000, so we received nearly half of our yearly budget.

-The messaging that seemed to resonate with our listeners was about the incoming presidential administration making noise about slashing funding for public broadcasting, and we felt it was important to put this messaging out in a non-partisan way. In order for us to continue and increase the level of service we are providing our community, it’s essential that the people who use the service help support it. If our budget is cut, we will need to make up the difference, and this messaging seemed to work as our listeners were engaged and inspired to give.

Roger says we mentioned this messaging about once per hour, but we did not make this potential federal budget cut the overarching theme for this fund drive. We receive around $300K from federal funding, but it’s a manageable amount of money for us to make up. If something comes about to take away this money, we will be talking about this in March.

Renai adds that normally we see about 10% of our total donations coming from first-time donors, but during the December drive we saw around 15-20% of those donations from new donors. We are setting up a new tradition for those new donors to give annually to public radio.

 - 2025 Fund Drives

-The WVTF 2025 Pledge Drives: Spring Fund Drive will be **March 14-21, 2025**. Fall Fund Drive will be **September 12-19, 2025.** December Fund Drive will be **December 9-12, 2025** (four days).

-Renai would like to reset how we handle volunteers for fund drive. We are working with VT on training our volunteers to be PCI compliant (safely handle payment information). And, it would be great to have members of the Friends Council serve as volunteers and answer phones!

-Renai had previously mentioned Sept. 16, 2025 as a potential date for our Council meeting. **We would like to move that meeting to Tuesday, Sept. 9, 2025 due to the upcoming Fall Fund Drive.**

-Dana moves to Roger Duvall for report.

-**General Manager report** – Roger Duvall

- Programming changes

-Roger reports that as of January 6th, Radio IQ is covering Virginia news with hourly newscasts after Morning Edition and before All Things Considered every hour on the hour, from 4 minutes past each hour to 6 minutes past the hour. This will be a six-month trial period that we fully intend to keep going, and we’re hoping to attract corporate sponsorships for this. Bill Trifiro is our host of these newscasts, and Roger invites Bill to introduce himself.

-Bill Trifiro: Bill is a broadcaster of nearly 30 years and has been a Radio IQ fan for a while. He has had the fortune to do some fill-ins and weekend here. Bill fell in love with Roanoke, his family is here, and Radio IQ is a great new home. He started in news WGST in Atlanta, WBT in Charlotte, WHJJ in Providence, Boston, WBZ, then moved to NBC news radio group, anchoring national broadcasting for 7-8 years, which was 500 stations across the US. After offices closed, he opened an office in Roanoke and serviced many stations, wanting to bring great local news in this area, so he began a local news service servicing stations in Covington down to Galax during Covid.

-Roger plays a sample of Bill’s newscast for Council members.

-Roger mentions that the addition of these newscasts was not announced before we put this on the air and that this is a trial run that we intend to keep going. Luckily, we had a lot of local and regional news to cover, including the Richmond water crisis and Jimmy Carter’s funeral which gave us plenty of material so far to use. Thanks to Bill for making these newscasts happen.

 - HD4 channel

-Last September Roger mentioned a community Engagement initiative, primarily to benefit arts and cultural institutions, is still a work in progress but we will have more to report on that in May and in the coming months.

-But before we meet in May, our HD4 channel (currently not being used) will be a new community radio station called Radio Melrose, which has been registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) charitable radio station. It will be run and programmed by Dr. David Points, who owns the Fox affiliate radio station in Roanoke and has a long history in broadcasting as well as involvement in African-American community and the Roanoke community. This will broadcast as a low-power (LP-FM) on 96.9 FM in Roanoke and on our HD4 channel. Dr. Points will be rolling out the programming and his mission during a public discussion at the Melrose Branch Public Library Community Room 2502 Melrose Ave. NW in Roanoke, on Monday, February 3rd at 1:00pm. That will be our first glimpse at the programming schedule. Nick Yee will be monitoring this station, along with our HD3 music stream from Liberty University to make sure it lives up to our standards in public broadcasting. Roger says we are excited about doing this venture with Dr. Points and see where it takes us because need to do better service for not just our current NPR listener audience, but our minority communities as well. This relationship will be transactional, as Radio Melrose listeners will be hearing about Radio IQ if they haven’t before. We are excited to see this new venture.

 - CPB in 2025

-We are getting into more local programming initiatives; local programming is very important. A mentor of Roger from WUNC said “You know you don’t serve a community by just piping in NPR, you do it with an investment in local programming.” Roger said the local newscasts are part of this service, which will spill over into other things we do, such as social media, new music programs, new commitments to arts and culture, etc. Local programming is also the key to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting’s Community Service Grant (CSG), which is the annual money we receive through CPB. Our incoming presidential administration is saying they are doing away with public broadcasting. Now, there are many Republicans who like and are standing up for public broadcasting, especially PBS, but we are all tied together. PBS stands a lot more to lose than we do; out of the $500MM total federal CPB’s funding, 75% goes to PBS stations. The 1968 Public Broadcasting Act ensures CPB will be forward-funding two years in advance to protect from political influence, so the money we are applying for this year (which we should receive by March 2025) would fund our NPR bill through September 2026, which will then be six weeks away from the 2026 mid-term elections.

-Listeners have responded, and we may be able to make up that difference if funding goes away. While things will continue and there may be attempts to zero out that funding, CPB has been so successful because its head for the last 15 years, Patricia de Stacy Harrison, was formerly the head of the Republican Party who has very good contacts and networking, as well as people at NPR contacting Republican representatives.

 - Personnel – new administrative assistant & open positions

-Roger introduces Sarah Hobbs as the voice of our underwriting, and our new Administrative Assistant, who is taking minutes for this Council meeting.

-Our Roanoke Reporter position is now open and we are hoping to interview people for the position in February. Also working on budget and looking to hire a new underwriting position.

-Leigh says thank you for the updates about the Richmond water crisis. This is a state-wide issue about infrastructure and also a local issue for our listeners here in RVA.

-**Follow up on community calendar / events** – Renai Bodley

-Renai says we are still working on some sort of Community Calendar / events product for our audience.

-Leigh asks, concerning VA-based programming, is there thought to use the Friends Council to work within the communities for brainstorming or community input about programming?

-Roger answers that this is a community advisory board, so yes, this board could be involved in community engagement, and we want to have feedback from our community.

-Leigh is brainstorming thoughts on community outreach and how to increase awareness in the Richmond area.

-Renai emphasizes that this is a group for you to come to us if you think there is something we are over-reporting or under-reporting, or anything you hear that you’re concerned about, have questions, or just really love, please let us know!

-Nick Yee adds that we always welcome feedback. As programming director, we make decisions on behalf of our entire station and our entire coverage area, and so we can’t always promise things. We want to best serve our community with our programming and I take all suggestions and comments to heart. We haven’t made too many programming changes yet, but there will be some changes coming.

-Roger also adds we will be more proactive with you, presenting ideas and possible changes to you Council members for your feedback.

-Leigh asks if WVTF collaborates with WNRN or collaborative opportunities with them?

-Roger answers that they have just turned their signal on in Roanoke (99.5FM) and we already have an engineering agreement with them. They have solid music and programming, and we would love to have our programming departments talk.

-Dana comments that our plan for the HD4 station is and well-designed and well-positioned case of equitable inclusion, reaching out to an underserved community. This is an effort in the right place and in the right way. He is optimistic and hopeful about Radio Melrose.

-Roger mentions that Dr. David Points is very committed to promoting literacy and outreach in the African-American community.

-Dana reminds everyone that the next Council meeting will be Tuesday, May 13 at 1:30pm, and Renai will send a Zoom link closer to that date.

-Roger adds that he aims to have these meetings occur in January, May, and September, on a Tuesday closest to the 15th of the month at 1:30pm.

-Opening the floor to public comments.

-**Public Comment**

-Michael Bentley represents Plowshare Peace Center in Roanoke and have been engaged with WVTF since 2008. He is once again asking WVTF to broadcast Democracy Now. It is carried by more than 50 PBS channels and 40 NPR stations, as well as many college stations and local low-power stations, and it is free. Democracy Now covers Gaza, the fires in LA, the war in Ukraine, and has good international coverage and excellent interviews.

-Roger mentions we have another public meeting, our budget meeting occurs each year at Hotel Roanoke during a Friday in June, but that meeting date has not been confirmed yet.

-Dana motions to adjourn the meeting; Anna seconds move to adjourn. Meeting adjourned.