

NPR Illinois
Community Advisory Board Meeting
March 23, 2021

In attendance:

Deanie Brown, Cynthia Canary, John Carpenter, Jamie Dunn-Thomason, Randy Eccles, Bob Gallo, Monique Garcia, Nice Garcia, Mario Jimenez, Regina Kovach, Molly Lamb, Raychel McBride, Lawrence Msall, Barbara Pesch, Megan Pressnall, Kent Redfield, Richard Schuldt, George Van Dusen, Corinne Wood, Karen Whitney and Karen Witter

Chair Karen Witter welcomed everyone to the Zoom meeting. Minutes of the last meeting were accepted.

Karen Witter welcomed UIS Chancellor Karen Whitney and asked her to talk about her vision for UIS and how NPR Illinois fit into that vision. Chancellor Whitney introduced herself and talked about the financial fragility of the University of Illinois Springfield. She reported that NPR Illinois is an enterprise of the University and not a core academic unit. Therefore, the financial support to the station will be reduced, but she also expressed her belief that NPR Illinois should be able to become financially independent from the University.

Randy Eccles provided an overview of the three-year transition plan which will require the station to be totally independent in 3-4 years, receiving \$100,000 less each year from the university. Advisory Board members expressed their strong support for the value of NPR Illinois to UIS and raised several concerns and questions related to moving away from University funding in a very short period. They stated that it will be very difficult considering that Springfield is a small city and has limited resources with few major companies outside of state government and hospitals. Randy said that during this period and after, major gifts and planned giving will be critically important and the UIS Office of Advancement led by Vice Chancellor Jeff Lorber will assist with meeting the increasing fundraising requirements of the station during the station's transition toward financial independence. Advisory Board members suggested that Jeff Lorber should be invited to the next CAB meeting to speak to the members about the plans being developed.

The Advisory Board asked if there was a plan to communicate to the public the information about the funding reductions from UIS. Molly Lamb said although it will be fully transparent, more thought should be given to how to present the issue to donors and the public.

The role of statehouse coverage was identified as an important function of NPR Illinois by the CAB members and staff. Randy stated that our Statehouse Service is important to other stations in the state, but they are looking for other options to provide this service due to their budget situations.

The CAB suggested that along with the plan should be a set of benchmarks to be reviewed at each meeting in the future.

Karen stated that Jamey Dunn-Thomason will be chairing and Nabih Elhaj will be Vice-chairing the Nominating Committee. Laurence Msall, Mario Jimenez, Raychel McBride and George Van Dusen volunteered to serve on the committee. The importance of geographic, age, racial, and occupational diversity was emphasized. Karen reported that Cindi Canary, Corinne Wood and she were eligible for another term. While Cindi and Karen decided to continue, Corinne decided to step down due to her location.

Randy discussed staff positions. The Chief Engineer has been hired. Hannah Meisel who had been serving as an Extra Help reporter since last fall was hired as the full time Statehouse Editor in March. Another reporter who will be reporting to Hannah will be hired. He also noted there is an opportunity for increased business underwriting but, to maximize this revenue, NPR Illinois will need to hire a staff member or two. Randy stated that long time Production Coordinator Bob Meyer has left the station, and NPR Illinois is currently seeking a Community Voices Production Coordinator to fill that position.

Randy updated the Advisory Board about the DEI initiative. Mary Hansen, Bea Bonner, and Maureen McKinney will be part of a committee looking at NPR Illinois practices and how to improve our diversity. Randy asked for board volunteers to join the staff on the committee. Raychel McBride, Mario Jimenez, and Monique Garcia volunteered. Deanie Brown would like to serve but doesn't have the time to commit at this point. The committee is asked to review *An Anti-Racism Future* document created for public media and other resources to recommend best practices for NPR Illinois along with potential tactics and a timeline for action. The DEI committee report will be a standing agenda item at each quarter's NPR Illinois Community Advisory Board meeting.

Nice gave information on the upcoming Spring Fundraising Drive which will take place on May 3 – 31, 2021. For each \$300 gift, the donor can designate a local non-profit organization which will receive 10 complementary on-air spots. She stated that the extended goal for this campaign is \$150,000 and the plan is to get \$300 each from 500 donors.

Chair Karen Witter informed the Board that the This I Believe program has been conducted by NPR Illinois for 15 years. Sunrise Rotary has been a major sponsor and has been instrumental in funding a cash award for the 10 winners each year. The culminating event was held virtually last week where each of the ten high school students read their winning essay. Beatrice Bonner was recognized by Karen for putting together an outstanding event.

Board Giving – Karen emphasized that 100% board participation is a “powerful statement” that helps in fundraising efforts. Current CAB giving for FY 2021 is at 75%.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m. The next meeting will take place virtually via Zoom on June 8, 2021, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.