

MINUTES OF THE WLRN
COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD (CAB) MEETING

January 22, 2009

CALL TO ORDER: James Swain, CAB Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m.

CAB Members, WLRN Staff and guests in attendance: Susan Angulo, Jo Asmundsson, Jacquelyn Esco, Noreen Frye, Albert Jones, Betsy Kaplan, Denise Izquierdo (for Dr. Karp), Darrell Payne, David Young, Jeanne Westphal, Peter Maerz, Adrienne Kennedy, Ginette Grey, John LaBonia, Bernadette Siy, Ted Eldredge.

Members with excused absences: Maria Ines Castro, Dr. Robert Goddard, Alan Greer, Alex Herrera, Ron Levitt, Patricia Maldonado, Joan Robbins, Gerardo Rodriguez-Menendez, Buck Thornburg, Blair Walker.

Absent members: David Berley, Leonie Hermantin, Jimmy Morales, and Larry Smith.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the previous CAB meeting held on November 13, 2008. Members present accepted and approved the minutes.

The CAB members observed a moment of silence in remembrance of former SPJ representative to the CAB Board Pedro Abigantus.

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS: James Swain asked the members to check the information on the updated CAB rosters including their committee assignments. Members interested in chairing a committee should contact him directly, or he will make the assignments and announce them at the next meeting.

DIGITAL TRANSITION UPDATE: Bernadette Siy gave the Board an update on the station's digital transition plans and outreach activities. She mentioned the community presentations, DTV flyer distribution, on-air promotions (both on TV and radio) including locally produced spots with station staff. She also explained that the station has already participated in several on-air shut-off tests in collaboration with the other local broadcasters. Test messages refer people to a call center for assistance with transition issues.

Bernadette also explained what the programming would be on the digital channels once WLRN shuts of its analog service. The full digital service will be capable of multicasting two channels. 17.1 will be the same schedule as the current analog Ch17. The content for 17.2 will be the current schedule of WLRN Learn, the District's cable access channel. The schedule on Learn consists of PBS children's programming in Spanish, low impact exercises, international news, Charlie Rose, how-to programs, and an international program service called MHz Worldview that will run overnight.

There was discussion regarding the DTV coupon program and members were interested to know how the station plans to handle calls from viewers. Bernadette said that WLRN, as well as all other broadcast stations, have been inundating their airwaves with transition messages. She said it is to be expected that there will be a number of people who will ignore the barrage of on-air messages regarding the digital transition. AC Nielsen, the TV data company reports that nationwide 95% of TV households are aware of the analog shut-off. Unfortunately, a large percentage of those not ready for the transition are loyal PBS viewers.

There has been talk of extending the transition date but regardless of when the change occurs, we know that there will be a 'transition period' where we will receive calls and complaints but we'll have to deal with them as they come.

James Swain mentioned that all future CAB meetings are to be held during regular business hours. This would make it hard for some CAB members to attend and several options were discussed including a change of time and location. Staff would only be able to participate in meeting held during regular work hours.

RADIO PLEDGE DRIVE PARTICIPATION: James Swain said that this year's CAB community service project is to volunteer for the next WLRN Radio fundraiser. Ted Eldredge reported that CAB members have the opportunity to answer phones for the upcoming March Radio Pledge drive. He passed out sign-up sheets saying a minimum of ten volunteers are needed to man the Friday, March 20 shift from 6:45 a.m. to 10:00a.m.

Noreen Frye suggested that the March CAB meeting scheduled for the 19th be switched to the 20th so members would make the trip to the station only once that week. James will discuss this with John LaBonia and he will send out a meeting update.

Al Jones said that phone conferencing for the meetings should be an option for members who could not attend in person.

FUNDING UPDATE: Bernadette said that in the last special Florida legislative session there was discussion regarding cuts to public broadcasting's funding by as much as 14%. WLRN receives close to \$100,000 from the State. Due to the Florida PBS station consortium's strong lobbying efforts, the cuts are down to only 6%, the station can survive with that. CPB funding is holding steady, those monies are allocated every two years. The downturn in the economy has had very negative impacts nationally on public broadcasting. Several TV and radio stations across the country have had large employee lay offs. Ted Eldredge reported that NPR's west coast bureau laid-off over 60 people. The programs *News and Notes* and *Day To Day* have been cancelled.

Bernadette also reported that the school district has frozen all hiring, both fulltime and part-time. Plus they have also frozen all overtime and part-time spending.

Peter Maerz reported on a positive note that he received the latest radio data and it shows that listenership for 91.3FM is up.

LISTENER/VIEWER FEEDBACK: Bernadette said she receives the usual calls and emails from viewers who miss their regular programs that are pre-empted during pledge drives. TV fundraises four times during the year. One of the most popular programs with very loyal viewers is *Guy Lombardo and His Royal Canadians*. In the last quarter, she also received several calls from Direct TV subscribers who were experiencing a zoomed in image on their screens. Direct TV was taking their signal directly from the digital transmitter. This signal was an image manipulated by our engineers to fill a 16x9 screen, thus causing the distortion. The problem has since been resolved. The station also received calls after the schedule changes made to the WLRN Learn Channel. Many viewers miss the cooking and travel programs that are featured on the Create service that is no longer available to WLRN. The new Learn schedule is now posted on the station web page.

Peter Maerz said that a vast majority of calls for radio are usually regarding programs that they've heard and would like more information. Most callers can find what they're looking for on the web. Programming changes also prompt listeners to call, write or email. Peter also learned that traffic is an issue important to most listeners. Several stations around the country removed traffic reports entirely from their schedules and he wanted to know how South Florida would react if WLRN discontinued traffic reports. He put out a web survey through Survey Monkey and found out that 48% of the respondents said that removing traffic reports would affect their listening habits. There were 165 respondents to the traffic survey.

Peter said he also received a couple of calls about the reporting on NPR with regards to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in Gaza. Certain people perceive that the reporting is one-sided. He always encourages the public to go to the NPR website to seek out the NPR ombudsman's explanation for any coverage issues.

Ted Eldredge said that the Key West station is up and broadcasting but there have been a few technical issues that has prompted several calls. There is an issue with the downtown area of Key West.

GM REPORT: Adrienne Kennedy announced that WLRN received a major award at the NETA conference in Tampa. *Muhammad Ali: Made in Miami* receive the best Historical Documentary Award. Sports Illustrated Magazine also named the documentary the top sports film for 2008.

Adrienne also mentioned that the City of Miami's Community Relations Board would be screening several of WLRN's local programs in the community. The first will be *Muhammad Ali* at MDC's Wolfson campus.

David Young made a suggestion that the 100th Anniversary of the NAACP be featured on one of WLRN's TV or radio programs. Ted Eldredge said he would forward information to Joe Cooper. for *Topical Currents*.

Adrienne also talked about the success of the All Shook Up event at the Deauville Hotel. James Swain talked about having a great time at the premiere and encouraged other members to try and make future events. Darrell suggested that the CAB be included in all the notices regarding WLRN's community events.

NEW BUSINESS: Bernadette Siy mentioned that WLRN-TV received recognition at the last School Board meeting for live carriage of the presidential inauguration. Board members Dr. Holloway and Dr. Karp both mentioned that all schools would be able to watch the inaugural address on the District's ITV (instructional television) service courtesy of WLRN. A briefing was sent to all school principals regarding the broadcast.

Bernie also announced that WLRN's Instructional Television department would be hosting an open house showcasing its ITV services and professional development opportunities on Friday, February 6th from 8:30am-1:00pm. The event is primarily for educators in the district but members of the public are invited to attend.

Ginette Grey gave an update on the My Source on-air promotional campaign on TV and radio. The station is still looking for "ambassadors" for the new spots and welcome talent suggestions for the new series of promos.

The new radio studio is just about finished and CAB members will be able to tour the newly refurbished area when they volunteer at the March Radio pledge drive.

Ted Eldredge said that NPR has named a new CEO/President, Vivian Schiller. She will be visiting South Florida on February 25-26 and has asked if we would host a visit at WLRN.

James Swain reminded the members that the next CAB meeting is tentatively scheduled for Friday, March 20th at 10:30am.

The meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.