

WTTW COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

NOTES of the PUBLIC MEETING of the
WTTW Community Advisory Board (CAB)

Tuesday, February 12, 2019

WTTW Studios, 5400 N. St. Louis Ave., Chicago, Illinois

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:20 PM without a quorum present.

The following CAB members were present: Chairman Joseph Morris (Chair); Secretary Rita Tandaric; Joe Bosco; Simuel Hampton; Gene Koprowski; Nancy Koprowski; Peter Kraus; Sinhue Mendoza; Lennette Meredith; Carmela Wimberly.

Note the following CAB members were absent: Vice Chairman Kimberly Frost, Maryilene Blondell; Barbara Cragan; Leatrice Campbell; Susan Ivers; Linda Jackson; Yvonne Johnson; Aaron Lawler; Sharon Meroni; Maggie Steinz; Bruce Sutchar; Nyan Tucker; Dr. Sheila Wicks.

The following persons also were present: Dan Soles, WTTW's Senior Vice President and Chief Television Content Officer and CAB's management liaison; Tim Russell, new Vice President of Community Engagement for WTTW and WFMT, and Yvonne Davis, Administrative Assistant to "Chicago Tonight" and Staff Liaison.

And, the following members of the public were present: Iqbal Shariff, CAB candidate.

The Chair reported on various CAB member absences: Kim Frost, Susan Ivers, Aaron Lawler, Sharon Meroni, Mary Lou Mockus, Herbert Sohn, and Bruce Sutchar.

The Chair welcomed Tim Russell and asked those CAB members present to introduce themselves. The following CAB members introduced themselves: Chairman Morris, Secretary Tandaric, Joe Bosco, Gene Koprowski, Sinhue Mendoza, Nancy Koprowski, Peter Kraus, Simuel Hampton, Carmela Wimberly, and Lennette Meredith.

The Chair asked Mr. Russell to explain his background and his mission at WTTW.

Mr. Russell's parents were from the "Black Belt" of Alabama – an area of swamp and red clay. His great-grandfather was born in slavery. Mr. Russell was born in Oberlin, Ohio, which is known for three interesting facts: Oberlin was the home of the first integrated school in 1832. The city also had the first school that admitted women into a co-educational environment. Further, Oberlin College was the Ohio school to beat Ohio State. Mr. Russell went to Oberlin College and was accepted to its conservatory as a trombone player. He majored in sociology and religion, has a master's degree in theology and planned to be a professor. He worked at the McCormick-Tribune Foundation, the Sara Lee Foundation and the Sara Lee Corporation. At the Sara Lee Foundation he concentrated on social services and was there for 10 years. He then moved to Pepsico in Chicago. There he worked with diversity, inclusion, community engagement and crisis communication. The Chair asked Mr. Russell to explain what constituted crisis communication at Pepsico. Mr. Russell explained that the company had an ad campaign known as the "Mountain Dew Goat." It involved a series of commercials on U-Tube which involved a goat and other restaurant patrons. In the second of the series, trouble ensued, arrests followed, and the waitress could not identify the perpetrator between the goat and the African American men.

The crisis that followed involved Rev. Al Sharpton and Rev. Jesse Jackson. He was with Pepsico for 10 years and then moved to community engagement at CDK Global which created technologies for auto dealers. At some point he realized that he had been on the road for nearly all of his son's 14-year life and decided to move into consulting in diversity and community engagement and then came to WTTW. He has always loved PBS. He has been in Chicago since 1993; he lives in Evanston with his family.

He is working closely with Dan Soles on how to link engagement to the mission strategy and the strategic plan that is in progress by management and the Board. They are in the early stages of this project. He has been on a listening tour with organizations that partner with WTTW and WFMT.

The Chair asked if community engagement would be passive thing – waiting for viewers to come forward with comments or issues and then become reactive or would engagement be proactive.

Mr. Russell commented that engagement must be a two-way communication. It can't just be talking to the community or waiting for the community to come forth with issues. It is important to identify opportunities to engage with the community and must consider the make-up of the community (ethnic and gender, for example).

Ms. Wimberly commented that CAB has been considering how it can better engage the community. Ms. Wimberly explained that she works with the East and West Garfield Park neighborhoods and that no one has ever asked for their opinions. People want to know what's out there.

Mr. Russell said that after three months on the job he's still learning the organization, but that the plan is to get out into the communities. Mr. Russell's position is a new position. Jessica Lawson, who organizes screening events, reports to Mr. Russell. The Chair commented that Ms. Lawson is very skilled at building relationships.

Mr. Russell and Mr. Soles have been successful in securing a grant from WNET in New York to fund community engagement for screening a new film: "Boss: The Black Experience in Business." It will be screened on April 23. It is a deep history of Black business – nationwide – but has a strong connection to Chicago-based African American businesses and iconic African American business leaders.

The Chair asked Ms. Wimberly if she could conceive of venues where such events could be staged in the communities in which she works. Ms. Wimberly suggested several venues, including the Garfield Park Conservatory.

Mr. Bosco asked if WTTW can partner with for-profit company, or partner with a not-for-profit, as a way of reaching people. For instance, The Shakespeare Theatre produces theatre in the park around the city. Could WTTW participate in any way? Mr. Russell answered that this is an excellent idea, but they want to ensure that what they do goes beyond the faire-carnival environment and to emphasize engaging with the people.

Mr. Soles commented that it is the station's nature to partner with not-for-profits, but remain open to partnering with for-profit companies and organizations. The Chair pointed out that WFMT, a for-profit entity, practically fell into WTTW's lap. Mr. Russell will also handle community engagement for WFMT.

Mr. Koprowski was pleased to hear that Mr. Russell had attended a seminary. Mr. Koprowski is obtained a Masters of Divinity degree from Catholic Theological Union ("CTU"), and through this experience has learned of a rather famous Black priest, Fr. Augustus Tolton, who, in the 1920's was the first Black ordained as a priest, but who could not obtain

his training in the U.S.; he had to go to Rome for his education. CTU has a Tolton fellowship to underwrite education for promising Black students working toward divinity degrees and the priesthood, and is working to promote canonization for Tolton. It might be possible to work with CTU and the Chicago Archdiocese on educational projects. There is also a huge Catholic radio network.

Mr. Kraus commented that Al Gore, in "The Assault on Reason" stated that television is a one-way medium which does not offer much in the way of engagement. Mr. Kraus cited Current-TV as an attempt to make television a two-way medium. Mr. Kraus suggested that it might be beneficial to offer a medium for controversial or little-covered topics where information is not being offered through network TV, and then ask for comments from companies and organizations which are on opposite sides of the controversy, such as pharmaceutical or agricultural companies.

Mr. Russell responded that Mr. Kraus' idea falls more into the area of content and that WTTW is about more than just putting information out to the public. There has to be the opportunity to discover and explore.

The Chair commented that the technology changes and allows for two-way communication and that the station, under Anne Gleason's direction, maintains a vast library of interactive media and features. The Chair asked if digital engagement is part of Mr. Russell's responsibilities. Mr. Russell answered that digital content is Anne Gleason's area. He will look at whether there is an opportunity to engage the community around the digital content.

Dr. Hampton asked if there is any strategy or plans to engage with younger viewers, and target youth specifically. Mr. Russell responded that part of the strategy will be to build on what WTTW and PBS do well and a large part of that is children's programming. Many ideas are in the formulation stage.

Mr. Soles mentioned "Minding the Gap" which is about young kids in Rockford, and it is an example of where there could be an interesting discussion. It is important to find the right subject matter for engagement.

Mr. Russell reminded CAB about Dan Soles' connection with Free Spirit Media and the desire to find young creative voices.

Ms. Wimberly suggested that there could be a periodic high-school version of "Chicago Tonight." Mr. Soles reminded CAB that the station partners with the Mikva Challenge where kids question candidates and the students take over "Chicago Tonight" for an hour.

The Chair thanked Mr. Russell for joining us.

The Chair noted that with only 9 members present the meeting could not be opened for business, including approval of the October minutes. It is for this reason that there is a mandatory attendance rule.

Under new business we could still have discussion but no action can be taken. The absence of Dr. Wicks is particularly troubling because she has missed many meetings and cannot defend her attendance record. Dr. Wicks commented to the Chair that she considered WTTW Trustee Barbara Proctor to be a mentor and that Chair had intended to ask Dr. Wicks to share her personal reflections about Ms. Proctor with the CAB.

The Chair commented that a number of major publications commented on Ms. Proctor's contributions and her being a pioneer as an African American woman in business and heading business. She also had a tremendous impact on the community.

Ms. Meredith commented that Ms. Proctor had been on "60 Minutes" and WGN TV, and her advertising business where she worked with Kraft, Sears and McDonalds. She was also instrumental in bringing The Beatles to America. She had quite a career and will be greatly missed.

The Chair looked ahead to the April meeting which under the Bylaws is the annual meeting and the meeting at which we hold elections. The Class of 2019 will be up for re-election, that is, nine seats. Nominations may also be made from the floor. Then there will be the election of the officers. The following persons are hereby appointed to the Nominating Committee: Joe Bosco, as Chair, Ms. Koprowski, Ms. Meredith, Mr. Mockus, Chair Morris, Ms. Frost and Ms. Tandarc.

The Nominating Committee must present a slate of nine candidates for a three-year term on the CAB and a slate of officers for a one year term.

The Nominating Committee has several new applications to consider including an application from former CAB member Chet Szerlag who has returned to the Chicago area. Mr. Iqbal Shariff has submitted an application and is in attendance.

Mr. Shariff lives near Irving and Kedzie, and grew up on WTTW. His parents are also big fans and he particularly likes BBC World News. He works with CAB member Leatrice Campbell and he represents a young, fresh face for the CAB. He works in health care (runs a home health care company) and has a more flexible schedule and would like to offer his perspective to the CAB. He lives in Lincolnwood, attended DePaul for his undergrad and has an MBA from Loyola and is Muslim, with his father from India and his mother from Pakistan.

Ms. Meredith continued her report by stating that CAB members Aaron Lawler and Nyan Tucker also have attendance issues.

The Chair then called on Mr. Soles for his Management Report. Mr. Soles commented that Chicago is in the election season and that WTTW is doing a deeper dive with its Candidate free time and forums. All 50 aldermanic races will be covered and each candidate will be offered time. There will also be mayoral forums. There will likely be a run-off with so many candidates. The station intends to do ½ hour documentaries on the runoff candidates as it did in the recent gubernatorial races.

Upcoming screenings: "Minding the Gap".

Kartemquin Films is producing a film on the "63 Boycott" about the boycott of the Chicago Public Schools which will be screened on March 16th. As previously mentioned, "The Boss" will be screened in April. Additionally, in May "Leaps of Faith" which will cover Catholic and Jewish marriages. The film has been screened at Old St. Pat's and has several rabbis involved.

Reginald Lewis was an African-American entrepreneur who passed away in the 1990s. There is the possibility of a screening of a documentary about his life, but it will not be a usual Cultural Center screening. Information will be sent out if this comes together.

On April 16 the Prime Minister of Poland will be in Chicago for the airing of a “Poland-The Royal Tour” program. The station hopes to be able to extend an invitation to the CAB members. If this comes together it is possible that the CAB meeting might be rescheduled.

The strategic planning project is progressing. Doing a deep dive into what is now called “WTTW News”. The station plans to send another survey to CAB and Mary Field may want to meet again with CAB.

Politics will be a major focus in the coming months. There is a new segment called “Spotlight Politics” on Wednesdays which includes discussions among Carol Marin, Paris Schutz and Amanda Vinicky which seems to be successful.

The Chair asked if there is additional coverage considered on the Federal court beat. Mr. Soles answered that when there are significant trials there is additional coverage relying on correspondent Matt Masterson.

Mr. Kraus asked how many people are involved in the production of “Chicago Tonight”. Mr. Soles answered that with camera crews, editors, producers, etc., there are about 20 in all about 12 of which are producers, some doubling as on-air personnel. The producers research, identify guests, prepare the hosts, and write copy. There are 5 to 7 segments in each hour.

Mr. Kraus then asked if guest on “Chicago Tonight” can be brought onto the program via satellite or other electronic means. Mr. Soles commented that satellite time is very expensive and other electronic means such as Skype often have unreliable quality. The program tends to concentrate on Chicago-related issues and cedes nationwide issues and coverage of same to the “PBS Newshour”.

Ms. Koprowski asked where she could locate information about screenings. Mr. Soles responded that the information is mentioned on-air but can always be found in the events calendar on the WTTW website.

Mr. Mendoza asked about the locations for station screenings and specifically asked if the station has a partnership with the Cultural Center. Mr. Soles responded that the Cultural Center provides space once a month for screenings. It’s centrally located which is desirable. But, the station likes to get into the neighborhoods, too, and does not want the Cultural Center to be the only screening location.

The Chair then moved to a discussion of the proposed committee structure. The standing committees are required by the By-laws. No action will be taken tonight, but CAB members are encouraged to review the information for the next meeting. The Chair specifically mentioned the Journalistic Standards committee and the various avenues for the dissemination of news – and the varying quality of the content produced by various parties. The Chair believes that WTTW offers a Chicago-focus and news content is produced by very experienced personnel and is probably the best news organization in Chicago.

The Chair asked CAB members to consider whether the proposed committee structure suits the CAB’s needs with minimum overlap, although some overlap is inevitable – for instance in education and cultural issues. The CAB’s mandate is to determine the cultural and educational needs of the community are met by the programming and policies of the station. It is a broad mandate.

Volunteers will be needed to populate and chair the committees. Ms. Wimberly asked about the December meeting discussions where there was a mention of combining some of the committees. The Chair responded that there was

discussion of combining the Membership and Nominating committees. The purposes of these committees are quite different so they should probably remain separate.

Several members called out committees on which they would like to participate. This will be discussed again at the next meeting.

There was a brief discussion of community engagement. The Chair explained that what the CAB does in engagement is quite different than what the station does. What the CAB does is trickier as the CAB's duty is to represent the community and try to identify the needs of the community and communicate that information to the station's board and management. CAB should be proactive in the community. For a time, surveying was used by the Outreach Committee (now community engagement committee). It was not very successful after the first few years. There are other tools that could be used. The Chair opened the floor for discussion. A variety of tools should be used. Each community might need a different approach. Different age groups may need different methods. Instagram might be viable. Focus groups, going into schools might be possible.

Other items from the current agenda will be carried forward to the next meeting, to be held on a date to be determined.

Good and Welfare: The Koprowski's film on Frank Capra has been selected as an American Documentary Film Festival film at the end of March in Palm Springs.

A new General Manager has been named at WFMT starting March 1st.

The Nominating Committee will have some work to do before the next meeting. Due to the screening event surrounding "Poland – The Royal Tour" the next meeting may be rescheduled.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 PM.

Next Public CAB Meeting: To be determined.

Respectfully submitted,
Rita E. Tandaric, Secretary

Attachments: