

# **ALABAMA EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION COMMISSION**

## **MINUTES**

January 10, 2023

10:00 a.m.

*Alabama Public Television Birmingham Conference Room  
2112 11<sup>th</sup> Ave. South Suite 400, Birmingham, AL 35205*

### **PRIOR NOTICE**

Sufficient Prior Notice was given as required by the Alabama Open Meetings Act, the FCC, the CPB, and the policies of the AETC, as reported by Mr. Phil Hutcheson, Interim Executive Director.

### **ROLL CALL (VERBAL)**

A verbal roll call was conducted by Mr. J. Holland, Secretary

### **AETC COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Mr. Ferris Stephens, Chairman

Mrs. Bebe Williams, Vice-Chairwoman

Mr. J. Holland, Secretary

Mr. Les Barnett

Mr. Pete Conroy

The Alabama Educational Television Commission consists of seven members. Mrs. Tijuanna Adetunji and Mr. William A. Green, Jr. were absent; however, a quorum was present and official business could be conducted.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 10:06 a.m. by Chairman Ferris Stephens.

### **REVIEW OF MINUTES**

Minutes of the September 20, 2022, meeting had been provided in writing prior to the meeting for review by the Commissioners.

**MOTION** by: Commissioner Les Barnett to approve the September 20, 2022, minutes with the change of notating Mr. William A. Green not Dr.

**SECOND** by: Commissioner Pete Conroy

**DISCUSSION:** No discussion other than the title change of William Green

**MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

### **SETTING OF OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business to be set.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Update on Executive Director/CFO Search—Chairman Ferris Stephens reported that a search held been held and that the search committee recommends that an offer be extended to Wayne Reid to join Alabama Educational Television as its Executive Director at Step 21 of the salary schedule established for that position by the State of Alabama which is \$197,650. Also, as part of that recommendation to extend an offer to Phil Hutcheson to remain with Alabama Educational Television and to serve as Chief Financial Officer/Chief Legal Counsel and in doing so that Phil returns as a Deputy Attorney General Attorney at a salary of \$174,405, which is at the top of the scale. Also, as part of this recommendation is the commission to request that the Attorney General re-appoint Phil Hutcheson to serve in the Alabama Educational Television agency as an Alabama Deputy Attorney General. Mr. Stephens reported that the above is the recommendation of the committee.

**MOTION by:** Commissioner Pete Conroy to accept the recommendations of the committee

**SECOND by:** Commissioner Les Barnett

**DISCUSSION:** No discussion

**MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

After the vote passed, Mr. Stephens commended Phil Hutcheson on his term as Interim Executive Director, in particular his leadership during COVID pandemic/crisis. Mr. Hutcheson thanked Mr. Stephens and noted that none of the above would have been possible without the great group you see here today in this room. He noted that everyone worked hard and wanted to make sure the resources were available for the children. It was a labor of love for this group.

Commissioner Johnny Curry lead a standing ovation for Mr. Hutcheson and his leadership. Mr. Hutcheson thanked everyone.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **AHSAA FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Interim Executive Director Phil Hutcheson reported on the AHSAA Football Championships that were held in December and on how well the process went. Phil asked Jack to tell us more about it from his perspective. Jack told us that we originally were approached in 2021 for the 2021 games and in the summer we quickly realized we didn't know what all it entailed and we pulled the plug for 2021. Phil then allowed Jack to go to Atlanta in December of 2021 to see the Georgia games. He spent three days in Atlanta, one day on the field watching how they handled the sideline things and one day in the studio watching the studio procedures, and the third day in the production truck watching the technical side of it. He came away from that trip convinced: (1) that we made the right decision to not do it in 2021 and (2) that it was something that we could do. After this year's legislative session, Jack started raising the nearly \$400,000 that was needed. Jack reported that we had seven underwriters for the event (Secretary of State, ALDOT, DHR, Protective Life, Rural Electric

Association, Children's Hospital, and Google). He also reported that the Friday night game drew the highest rated viewing with 1.2 on Nielsen (Mountain Brook vs. Saraland). Our production was incredible. Jack compared it to the UAB basketball games aired recently on ESPN3 and he felt like our production was better than the smaller ESPN program/networks and better than the regional sports networks. We had ten cameras on-site, six at field level and four above; really great work. Kelsie, our consultant from Georgia, said that our on-air talent was as good as anything they had in Georgia. Mike reported to Jack, just the day before, that the email that he sends out to our membership, that in the email that highlighted the high school football championships, had the largest number of emails opened. There were 50,000+ "opens". We received rave reviews across the state. Every time he has gone to Montgomery, people tell him what a great job we did with the football championships. Jack thanked everyone for allowing us to do this and for the support given. We did not hit the \$400,000 mark that we needed to break-even, but the governor's office agreed to make up the difference of approximately \$175,000. They had offered to support us up to \$300,000 so we exceeded their expectations. We are having discussions internally and I am talking to people in Montgomery about having the state come in and increase our budget enough to become the production sponsors for this. We are waiting to see if they are willing to do that in the spring.

#### **INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT – PHIL HUTCHESON**

Phil Hutcheson referred everyone to the attached Interim Executive Director's Report.

##### **I. General**

- a. Noted that each board member is getting the *Alabama at 200* DVD. This film was produced here and is a commemoration of all the celebrations throughout the state. It was broadcast in December 2021 and won an Abby award from the Alabama Broadcasters Association for Best Documentary, but due to the pandemic and supply chain issues, we have just now gotten the DVD's in for distribution.
- b. Introduced new employees since the last meeting: Dr. Briana Morton who took Dr. Cindy Kirk's place as Vice President of Education Services Department and Lorraine Fancher, Executive Assistant, who took Paula Carlton's place. Cindy Kirk and Paula Carlton both retired.
- c. Pandemic: We have had a few cases but never had a major outbreak at the office. And with the new variant, again a few cases, but the symptoms are a lot milder than in the past and we feel like we are on the downside of this, it's going to be with us for a while, but we feel like we've done a pretty good job handling this for the past three years.
- d. Phil's report included the last three years in review during his time as Interim Executive Director and highlighted some of the accomplishments during this time period.

Phil asked Heather to talk about Season 2 of *DIY Science Time*. Heather reported that we just finished broadcasting Season 2 of *DIY*

*Science Time* on APT in November. As of last week, we have just started to go out nationally with our NETA offer so that the satellite distribution so every Thursday for the next 13 weeks, it will feed and stations will download it and programmers will put it into broadcast throughout the different stations throughout the nation. We had about 35% coverage from *DIY Science Time* Season 1, so we are really hopeful to meet and/or exceed that number with Season 2. Heather noted that we are seeing really good streaming numbers across all digital platforms; it's on PBS LearningMedia and YouTube and we are really seeing good numbers and really good retention numbers. When you are looking at streaming indicators, you can see exactly how many seconds someone has viewed a program and it's great.

Phil noted that we also expanded our goal of having more local production and telling Alabama stories; he highlighted some: *Shuttlesworth, The Forgotten Creeks, Monograph, Journey Proud, Spotlight on Agriculture, Rural Studio, Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, Yellowhammer History Hunts, Spotlight on Education, Discovering Alabama, Alabama Gospel Roots, Alabama Scholars Bowl, Forever Wild: The James D. Martin Story, The Fire in Anniston: A Freedom Riders Story, Tom Bevill: Servant Leader, Lagarde: Making Natural History, Unrivaled: Sewanee 1899, Women of True Grit, Alabama Upstarts, Muscle Shoals to Music Row, and Bookmark*, among others. We are very, very proud of our local production and hopefully that will continue and expand, even into the digital realm.

Again, it has been a challenging and productive three years and Phil is certainly proud of what this team has accomplished.

## II. Governmental Affairs

a. Phil noted that Jack has already talked about the high school football championships but asked about other upcoming projects. Jack said he is headed to Montgomery after the meeting for the organizational session. He did have the opportunity last summer to meet about half of the new legislators, going into their offices or communities and meeting with them and between now and the beginning of the regular session, he will meet with the rest of them. He noted that he was in D.C. last week for Senator Britt's and Congressman Strong's swearing in, which took place on the floor of the Senate and the House, but he was at the receptions that were held and he was able to spend a few minutes with Senator Britt. We also had Senator Britt's husband, Wesley, who played football at Alabama and for the Patriots, we utilized him during the Super 7, and we will utilize him even more during the seasons to come. Jack also went by Congressman Strong's office. He also had an opportunity to visit Congressman Rogers and Congresswoman Sewell. Phil noted that he

and Jack also had the opportunity to visit with Paul Housel, who works with Representative Aderholt's district director, at his retirement reception in Jasper, which gave us a chance to chat with Congressman Aderholt.

- b. The next thing he is focused on now is the regular session and we are anticipating an ask of maybe \$15-20 million range to finish up some of the capital needs that we have and to get tower and transmitter for Lamar County. In addition to the ARPA funds, there is a \$500 million surplus in the general fund and a \$2 billion surplus in the ETF. We think this is probably the last big ask like this because the changes in Washington will slow that down; that is his focus for right now. Mrs. Bebe Williams asked if the money that Steve Marshall was bringing in, is it earmarked for anything specifically? Beverly noted that Steve Marshall has earmarked the \$246+ million for prevention, not treatment, which is why we were perfect because he really wanted to reach out to middle schools, parents and kids. She also noted that the campaign had just started that week (January 2) and you will start seeing the two spots (30-second spots), one is about a basketball player that has been injured, he has run out of his pain pills, a teacher overhears him talking to his friends about that he still needs them, so he's been buying them ... it is a very impactful story. She mentioned that a lot of that money is being spent on prevention, programs, education in the schools, etc. Ms. Williams asked if the two videos like the one about basketball player, is that something that can be put in the schools. Beverly reported that she felt like we could stream it and that the agency that is involved could check with Steve Marshall about us streaming it as he is the main person with the power in putting it out and as far as getting it down the school level, it's not our property since we didn't produce it (they are coming from an ad agency). It is in the schools targeting a demographic we don't usually get and we are hopeful that parents will see it and recognize it as well as teachers, that's what was included in these spots, all the people that should be involved in keeping a child out of trouble.

### III. Engineering

- a. Windell reported that in addition to the new antennae already talked about, there are three site visits the following week, Dozier, WCIQ, Demopolis, WIIQ, and Birmingham WBIQ, for transmitter replacement. The transmitter replacement in Dozier as it is 20 years old. Demopolis will be getting a new antenna along with Dozier. There are three bids out that are in process of being awarded now. Plans are for the decision to be made this week and to be awarded and we will end up with three new antennas at a cost of just under \$1 million (\$964,000+).
- b. Windell reported the problem with being off the air for two days in Birmingham is we are on a tower owned American Tower and they control all that we do on that tower. We have to have permission from

them just to be able to get on the tower and do the replacement. Previously we discussed setting up our own tower, but that did not happen. If we had our own tower, we would be able to just have standby antenna and could be connected to it while the antennae was being replaced.

- c. Windell reported that the fiber being in place has proved to be beneficial. We lost microwave last week during the storms but were able to stay on the air with the fiber; it switched over without any issues.
- d. Once all the antennas and transmitters are replaced, we will be ready to purchase some new equipment unless PMM comes forward with the equipment, it will be a capital expense.

#### IV. Education

- a. Phil introduced the new VP of Education, Dr. Briana Morton. Phil noted that she has really hit the ground running. In his report he had a picture of the Montevallo Christmas Parade and they won an award for the Most Christmas Spirit!
- b. Dr. Morton said that as of last week, she has been on staff for three months, but feels like a lot longer than that, but in a positive way. She is thoroughly enjoying being at APT and the team is incredible. She said when she thinks of education, she thinks beyond K-12 and thinks of every citizen in Alabama and of ways that we can do that through PBS Media and through APT Production and beyond.
- c. She reported that we are working on some incredible things and that we will have our current DHR grant for another 1.5 years and she believes that we will continue beyond that time frame.
- d. Briana reported that APT has joined the STEM Council of Alabama as a partner to be a part of their agenda.
- e. One thing Education is working on is the Clever portal. Clever is available in every public school to every child which is how they access their resources whether it is to check their grades, their power school, to access additional resources, all through the Clever portal. She wants to make sure that APT and PBS LearningMedia is part of the Clever portal. They are currently working on that, but it is proving to be more difficult than originally expected. She commented that she is even having her own children plugging APT whenever possible!

#### V. Digital and Education Media

- a. Phil reported that we have created a standalone APT Digital and Education Media department headed by Heather Daniels-Whitson.
- b. Heather reported in October, at the beginning of the new fiscal year, the Digital and Education Media department was created, and that Education Media aspect of the program came out from under VP of Education and now reports directly to the Executive Director. The reason behind this was to have additional focus and dedicated digital team would allow APT to expand our digital audience with original APT

content as well as allow us to better focus on additional distribution platforms for all of the content that we already create that primarily broadcast only currently. It will put a focus on all that digital media has to offer which makes sense for digital media to stay with the team to work hand-in-hand and closely with the Education department to continue to create educational media, but essentially all the media that is created is digital. The content we currently have is digital, but the broadcast program still has a digital presence.

- c. Heather also reported that she has joined the PBS Learning Media Station Content Creator Advisory Council. PBS Learning Media has new leadership in the last six months and they have created a council of station advisors which are the top stations that put content on that platform. She will be working with that advisory group to make sure that we continue to build that platform to be the best possible product for reaching educators in the state of Alabama. This will also give her the opportunity to promote *DIY Science* nationally.
- d. She also noted that she is excited about the possibilities and that they are still in the process of transitioning and still have a few positions to fill that will take on more of the digital work as we are adding it to our very full requirements for education media.

## VI. Production

- a. Phil reported about *Shuttlesworth* that aired on December 20 and mentioned in his report he has a photo that was taken at the premier at The Carver Theater, and you can see the APT logo and *Shuttlesworth* on the marquee. He asked Chris to give his report on *Shuttlesworth*. It is a slow process making a documentary of this magnitude, and they are very proud of how it turned out. It was a team effort and of course, near the end it becomes kind of frenzied with deadlines, but everyone worked hard and everyone on his time had some type of role in this project. They are working on DVD's now and he feels that at the next meeting they should have the DVD's available to give out. Chris also reported that they are starting to get some interest and invitations for screenings that others want to host. There has been a lot of press. J. Whitson, who is the producer on the project, has been on numerous news channels and programs during the premier screening through another one scheduled for later this week. He said it was a nice feeling to kind of be "back" in the full sense compared to the past couple of years. Phil noted that it is a great documentary and the screening event at The Carver was fantastic, it was full house. The mayor was there, the former mayor, city councilmen, representatives on the county commission, commissioners, among others.
- b. Phil also reported that we had another documentary about the Poarch Creek Indians, *The Forgotten Creeks*. There was a screening at the Wind Creek Casino movie complex, and it was very well received. We partnered with the JSU team on this. The Poarch Creek Indians are very protective of their image, and they have not let a lot of people get

inside and Mr. Conroy had some connections to get that project started. Phil called on Mr. Pete Conroy to comment on the screening. Mr. Conroy said that it was exciting, and it had a similar response to the *Shuttlesworth* project. Several of the old timers were very happy with the project and he has known them for 35 years and it took 35 years of trust to get this broadcast and it was a great thing. Phil said it was an emotional thing to hear their story.

- c. The Distinguished Young Women broadcast will take place again this year. Chris said in his written report that it is a little bit vague as we were not receiving the necessary media from them until he finally reached someone and discovered that they were on their second interim executive director and she didn't even know what was going on, but we've been able to act quickly and were still able to broadcast as scheduled on December 19.

## VII. Programming

- a. Phil asked Mike McKenzie to comment on Programming and to show the clip on the Sloss story. Mike reported, first, in addition to *The Forgotten Creeks*, there was a lot of other great programming in November, *Women of Nasa*, part of the *Women of True Grit* series, was interviews with three women in charge of the Artemis mission and really gave a great background on their careers which was a great motivator and great role models for young women in science and technology.
- b. Mike reported that Spotlight on Agriculture did a great show on genetic research that Auburn is involved in for genetic cures for different diseases, which was a mid-year program.
- c. Mike also reported that coming up in January, in a couple of weeks, we will be airing a new program from JSU on the Sloss family and the building of Birmingham (*Building Birmingham: The Sloss Story*).
- d. Mike reported that there are a lot of great programs coming up in February including a new *Spotlight on Education* that Todd is producing and repeating *Alabama Blackbelt Blues* and showing *Shuttlesworth* again. We are doing our best to get Alabama stories out there every week, every day, about all the great things we are doing in the state. Phil mentioned that Bob Clem, who is from Alabama, who went to Birmingham Southern, but lives in New York state now, produced *Alabama Blackbelt Blues* and is working on a documentary on Big Momma Thornton that we are helping with.
- e. Mr. Pete Conroy mentioned the new two projects that are in the works at Jacksonville State University for 2023, in part, following up to *Shuttlesworth* which when the premier concluded it had a Q&A section afterwards, which was lively and one of the questions was "What's next in relation to telling civil rights history?" Arthur Shores' daughter, Barbara, was at the premier and he was one of the first practicing black lawyers in Alabama and that was the night where she agreed to let that be the next story. So, it will be a story about Arthur Shores and while Fred Gray would not do a story about himself, he was willing

to support Arthur Shores. From Washington to Montgomery and around the world, there will be a lot of people who will want to be a part of that story. In her living room, on Dynamite Hill, Barbara Shores had given Pete an eggnog before the premier and it was served in a special glass, and she told him "That was Martin's glass" which made him take a step back. She also told him "That's where Martin would sit and that is the corner of the house that was blown apart", which was just amazing. His hope is that the outcome of that documentary will be to rise up to Dynamite Hill as part of the heritage tourism scene in Alabama.

- f. The other project is totally on the opposite end of the spectrum and is going to be a show about Barber Speedway, not George Barber, but Barber Speedway. If you haven't visited the museum, you should definitely visit it as it is one of the best museums around.

#### VIII. Human Resources

- a. Phil asked Jackie Goosby, Human Resources Manager, to give her report. He commended Jackie again for stepping in while Tracy Neeley was out sick and on her subsequent passing and Jackie has stepped up and has done a great job for APT. Jackie reported that there is a lot of activity in recruitment as you can see in her report and you've already been introduced to Briana and Lorraine who were hired in this quarter and they are in the midst of hiring a few other positions as noted in her report. Phil noted that Peggy Hair is retiring at the end of this month and Jacked said they are actively recruiting for her position. There are interviews scheduled for later this week for two positions in Education. There are interviews scheduled for a Television technician.

- IX. (See attached reports for additional information.)

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business.

#### **SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING**

The next AETC meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 11, 2023, in the Birmingham office.

**MOTION** by: Commissioner Les Barnett to approve April 11, 2023, as the date of the next meeting

**SECOND** by: Commissioner Pete Conroy

**MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**ADJOURNMENT**

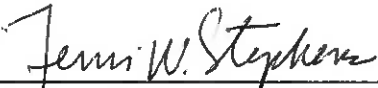
**MOTION** by: Commissioner Pete Conroy  
**SECOND** by: Commissioner Les Barnett  
**MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**  
Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lorraine Fancher  
Recording Secretary

**APPROVED – DATE:**



Mr. Ferris Stephens, Chairman



Mr. J. Holland, Secretary