

# **ALABAMA EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION COMMISSION**

## **MINUTES**

October 17, 2023

10:00 a.m.

*Alabama Public Television, Madison Avenue Studio  
1255 Madison Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama 36107*

### **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. Wayne Reid, 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

Mrs. Tijuanna Adetunji

Mr. Pete Conroy

Mr. William A. Green, Jr.

The Alabama Educational Television Commission consists of seven members. 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.

Chairman Stephens opened the meeting. He asked that Phil Hutcheson, CFO present the budget report for both the Alabama Educational Television Commission meeting and the Alabama Educational Foundation Authority meetings at the beginning of the AETC meeting because, even though he was not sick, there was a chance he had recently been exposed to Covid.

### **Budget Report**

CFO Hutcheson presented the financial reports, noting there was a \$2.3 million decrease in total appropriation from the state, because the Agency received a commensurate one-time appropriation the previous year. Despite this decrease, various areas such as a CSG grant, CPB funds, radio development, and investment revenue had seen increases. The overall budget was down only \$457,000 due to these factors.

The expense breakdown showed rises in rental and expenses income primarily due to office space expansion and increased PBS membership. However, the CPB grant is expected to offset some of these costs. Phil expressed confidence that the budget could support future endeavors.

Executive Director Wayne Reid addressed the \$2.3 million drop in funding, specifically pointing out that all of it was allocated to equipment for tower and transmitter upgrades for ASTC 3.0. Phil then invited any further questions before proposing a motion to approve the consolidated budget.

Commissioner Les Barnett moved to approve the consolidated budget and Commissioner Pete Conroy seconded the motion. Chairman Stephens called for a vote, and the motion received unanimous approval.

Alabama Educational Television Foundation Authority Chairman Barry Copeland stated that the financial report during the AETC meeting would suffice for the Alabama Educational Television Foundation Authority meeting, because all the Foundation members were present. Alabama Public Television Foundation Chairman, Johnny Curry indicated that matters raised in the financial report also applied for the APT Foundation.

CFO Hutcheson discussed Development numbers which included that there was a

- 6% increase in TV pledges
- 69% decrease in grant awards
  - A new grant writer had been hired to improve grant requests
- 7.3% increase in underwriting revenues
- 27.3% increase in planned giving, largely contributed by the estate of Peggy Hair, longtime Major Gifts and Planned Giving Officer of APT. Peggy directed that her bequest be dedicated to local productions.

CFO Hutcheson further discussed the radio's financial performance, indicating a 2% increase in pledges; he also noted a decline in underwriting and an increase in car donations. Despite the challenges, he highlighted the positive stance in comparison to the industry's downturn.

Commissioner Les Barnett expressed satisfaction with the positive financial report as compared to nationwide trends and commended the team's fundraising efforts.

Chairman Stephens mentioned that there would be an APT Foundation meeting following the AETC and AETFFA meetings, noting that because it was not a statutorily created entity, that there was no requirement for a statutory prior notice. The agenda then moved to reviewing the prior meeting's minutes.

Chairman Stephens requested flexibility of allowing for a vote of the Commission to approve the July 18, 2023 minutes but allow him after the meeting to make a number of minor language adjustments that he saw necessary, without changing any substantive content of the minutes. He stated that the Commission would then be given a copy of the minutes with the language changes at the next meeting. He then called for any additions or modifications before asking for approval of the minutes with that stipulation. After doing so he called for a vote.

### **REVIEW OF MINUTES**

Minutes of the July 18, 2023, meeting had been provided in writing prior to the meeting for review by the Commissioners.

**Motion** by: Commissioner Les Barnett to approve the July 18, 2023 minutes

**Second** by: Commissioner J. Holland

**Discussion:** No discussion

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

### **SETTING OF OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business set.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Chairman Stephens noted that there were no new business items to add to the agenda.

### **Executive Director's Report – Wayne Reid**

Executive Director Wayne Reid introduced Daniel Black, the new Broadcast Director. He highlighted his past role as Interim Chief Engineer at the University of Alabama Center for Public Television and his background for swift adaptation to changing responsibilities. He discussed ongoing tasks, including tower repairs, antenna installations, and the completion of ASTC 3.0 antenna installations. Additionally, he mentioned there was a grant application to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for a NextGen weather setup, aiming to broadcast on ASTC 3.0.

Wayne delved into Nielsen ratings, sharing that there was a seven-month trend analysis indicating dominant household reach in Alabama compared to major commercial broadcasters. He detailed the audience composition, showcasing a strong

presence in the 55-plus demographic and significant viewership among kids, while acknowledging the challenges in engaging younger demographics.

Additionally, an update was provided about Phil's extended departure, until February, and there are potential plans to fill the CFO position with a person that has combined legal responsibilities; or two people with separate roles, depending on the candidates available. He also discussed potential budget allocations for the vacant position. The plan was to have the position filled by December to facilitate a smooth transition.

Commissioner Stephens inquired about maintaining the attorney role within the CFO position. Wayne expressed interest in finding a candidate capable of handling both aspects but acknowledged the potential difficulty in locating someone with both degrees.

Wayne provided an update on new hires within the organization, including Daniel Black as Broadcast Director/Chief Engineer, Marc Waters and Samantha Guy in the Education Department as Educational Specialists, and Hazel McLaughlin, Web Content Specialist who will significantly impact the web-related tasks.

Wayne reported on the ongoing research projects with Troy University, Samford University, and the University of Alabama anticipating the completion of reports by November or early December. He expressed excitement about sharing the findings in January.

Wayne highlighted various divisions, starting with Heather Daniels Witson and the Digital and Education Media Department's current activities and updates.

#### I. Digital and Education Media

Heather Daniels-Whitson shared updates from the digital and education media department highlighting the award-winning series: *Yellowhammer History Hunt*, finishing its final season to make way for a new science-focused series, tentatively titled "*Alabama Nature Academy*", covering Alabama's natural aspects. Additionally, she discussed the launch of APT Education Teaching Tips on Instagram, collaborating with educators statewide to connect teachers with APT's resources and showcased a video of a teaching tip from a connected teacher.

Heather mentioned the forthcoming *DIY Science Time Season 3*, emphasizing plans to integrate more student involvement, career profiles, and on-location filming.

#### II. Education

Dr. Briana Morton highlighted the collaborations and recordings of educators like Alabama State Department of Education's reading specialists and Amber Broadhead, the Alabama History Teacher of the Year, to create valuable teaching resources. She discussed recognizing outstanding teachers and plans for a year-end celebration for awardees. Wayne Reid mentioned APT's presence during the check presentations at schools, with plans to invite board members.

III. Madison Avenue Studio

Mary Davis updated about the recent completion of the new antenna installation at WAIQ and the delivery of new studio equipment. Wayne Reid invited the attendees to view the Scholar Bowl's setup after the meeting. Participants in the Scholar Bowl come from across the state.

IV. News and Public Affairs

Capital Journal host Todd Stacy highlighted the achievements of Capitol Journal during the summer and the coverage of the special session. Todd shared that the on-location videoing in late summer received positive feedback and plans to do more of such recordings at events like the Innovate Alabama Conference and the History of the Alabama Judiciary Conference. Todd emphasized the return to issue debates or discussions, planning to explore topics like school choice and issue-specific shows to delve deeper into particular subjects such as agriculture, economic development, and workforce participation. Commissioner Les Barnett emphasized Capitols Journal's need to maintain fairness and respect in discussions without aiming to embarrass or criticize government officials; Todd did assure him that he has a commitment to maintaining fair and unbiased reporting without sensationalizing or targeting individuals. The emphasis remained on contributing positively to Alabama through informative storytelling and education.

V. Governmental Affairs

Governmental Affairs Manager Jack Williams discussed upcoming association conferences and meetings with Senator Greg Reed and the Governor's Finance Director Bill Poole. He discussed opportunities for sports coverage and storytelling for Alabama. Williams outlined plans to seek funding for equipment and programming through legislative connections, exploring avenues like the NDAA (National Defense Authorization Act) and Homeland Security budget.

VI. Public Information and Programming

Public Information Director Mike McKenzie discussed completed spots for Children's Safety campaign involving Congresswoman Terri Sewell, Caroline Aderholt, wife of Congressman Robert Aderholt, and U.S. Senator Katie Britt.

McKenzie shared upcoming holiday programming for Halloween, Veterans Day, and Christmas. He highlighted specific programs such as "To Kill a Mockingbird" paired with a documentary on Kathryn Tucker Windham for Halloween, a four-part American Veterans Series, a special on Bob Dole and Italy in World War II, and a story of an American soldier's grandson retracing his POW grandfather's steps in Germany for Veterans Day. Mike also mentioned a range of Christmas-themed shows including Christmas concerts and the "Bells of St. Mary's".

Commissioner J. Holland encouraged news-oriented content covering positive events, state agencies, education efforts, conferences, and significant events across Alabama. Commissioner Holland's vision is to utilize APT's resources, equipment, and talent to cover news in a different format, highlighting positive state developments. The goal to make a substantial impact, utilizing APT's reach across 47 counties outside of Alabama to create a regional influence and potentially attract funding from neighboring states.

VII. (See attached reports for additional information.)

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Executive Director Reid stated his desire to establish a junior board aimed at engaging young professionals aged around 22 to 35 to support and volunteer for various events and activities related to the organization's mission. The junior board he envisioned would serve as volunteers for specific tasks, such as fundraising, event planning, and community engagement. His idea is to start a junior board in Birmingham, initially as a trial, then expanding it to other locations later. The board's role, structure, and funding were discussed by the Commissioners, including whether it may fall under the Foundation and its potential interaction with the Commission. A recommendation from Wayne on the structure and policies governing the junior board will be later brought before the Commission for consideration.

## **SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING**

The next AETC meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 23, 2024, in the Birmingham office.

**Motion** by: Commissioner Les Barnett to approve January 23, 2024, as the date of the next meeting

**Seconded** by: Commissioner Bebe Williams

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

Chairman Stephens said, as there was no further business for the meeting, that he would entertain a motion to adjourn; such was moved and seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion** by: Commissioner Les Barnett

**Second** by: Commissioner J. Holland

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

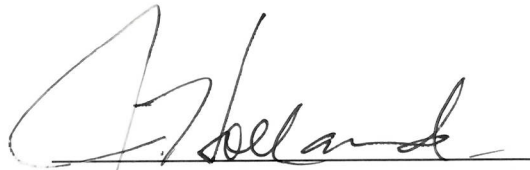


Lorraine Fancher  
Recording Secretary

**APPROVED – DATE:**



Mr. Ferris Stephens  
Chairman



Mr. J. Holland  
Secretary