

# **ALABAMA EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION COMMISSION**

## **MINUTES**

April 11, 2023

10:00 a.m.

*Alabama Public Television Birmingham Conference Room  
2112 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue S., 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, Chief Legal Counsel

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

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

### **AETC COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Mr. Ferris Stephens, Chairman

Mr. J. Holland, Secretary

Mr. Pete Conroy

Mrs. Bebe Williams, Vice-Chairwoman

Mr. Les Barnett

Mr. William A. Green, Jr.

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

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 10:09 a.m. by Chairman Ferris Stephens.

### **REVIEW OF MINUTES**

Minutes of the January 10, 2023, meeting had been provided in writing prior to the meeting for review by the Commissioners.

**MOTION** by: Commissioner Les Barnett to approve the January 10, 2023, minutes with the on page 2, paragraph c, change "was" to "were" and correcting the attendee list by taking Mr. William Green out of the attendee list as he was absent; he was listed twice

**SECOND** by: Commissioner J. Holland

**DISCUSSION:** No discussion other than those noted above

**MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

### **SETTING OF OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business to be set.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **AHSAA Basketball Championships**

Wayne Reid began by stating that he was glad and excited to be here as Executive Director. He is 45 days in, and everyone has been spectacular, welcoming him, and helping him learn all about APT. In particular, he wanted to thank Phil Hutcheson for getting him up-to-speed and Jack Williams, who had him in a meeting in Montgomery on his second day!

Regarding Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) Basketball Championships, we have had fabulous feedback from the legislators as well as emails and comments from viewers at large about how great it was that we carried both the football and basketball tournaments. He noted that we hope to have the streaming rights as well within a couple of weeks. The ratings were positive. There were 118,000 households that watched, considering we did not have streaming rights which is how about half of the viewers watch nowadays. We did not have any promotions like we did for football coverage where the numbers were three or four times higher than that. This was only TV not streaming and did not include Dothan.

Jack noted that the underwriting for next year is in the works. The response from the legislature is amazing. What we have done with the football and basketball championships has heightened the legislature's awareness. We already have one trade association that has reached out and wants to be part of the championship games next year. We are getting great reviews. Kevin Scarbinsky was the studio host for football and basketball. We are looking at the possibility of adding an additional host for next year. There were no promotions for basketball, but we did have them for football, but people have picked up the fact that APT is where to go for high school championship games!

J. Holland commented that he was very proud, as a Commissioner, that APT picked up the AHSAA championships. He noted that it is a very powerful medium for us when so many broadcast companies have dropped it. He also feels that it will continue to grow. Dr. Ragland commented that it has brought joy and excitement to the communities in Birmingham, and he commended us for being a part of this. He suggested the possibility of the addition of the semi-finals in addition to the finals. He also noted that AHSAA needs to put us on their website. They had OTM on their website, but not APT and wanted to make sure we had that publicity. He watched the games this time and he was very impressed.

J. Holland also noted the "power of sports" is a "win-win". Jack commented that this is a springboard to tell stories of these communities that these high schools are in, and that we are exploring that idea. Jack and Wayne noted that they are reaching out to community colleges to carry their championships also. The opportunity for us to use sports for storytelling through the championships is amazing.

Barry Copeland asked about the opportunity for offsetting costs by local companies. He also noted that there may be an opportunity to produce DVD's for families that might want a copy of that championship game in which their child played in.

Wayne noted that WOTM does have the rights, but we were able to put our logo on the screen in the operations center. AHSAA should have us on their website, and we will ensure they will for next season. WOTM did have the rights this year, but we are hoping when that ends and we can get those rights. Our plan is to cut the deal directly with AHSAA.

Wayne discussed the revenue plans he has for next year due to the exposure we will be getting. Jack commented that the revenue to recover the expenses of production and rights fees are done through the underwriter packages for next season. Underwriting for the games that we have so far are the Homebuilders Association and the Rural Electric Association. Wayne said they have asked the State to cover the cost of production and we are waiting to see what will happen with the budget. If the State funds it, then everything else will be a bonus. Otherwise, he feels we will still be able to cover the costs with the underwriting we are getting.

Phil commented that our quality of production was outstanding and reminded us that this year we were on the heels of the World Games and sponsors were out of money, but with the success we had this year, we feel we are wide open for this upcoming year.

J. Holland commented that it would be great if we could feature the bands of the individual high schools, but it was noted that we do not have the music rights to be able to do that. There was some discussion about this, and Mike McKenzie noted that we did ask AHSAA about it and they told us we could not do it. Heather noted that our agency is covered under our licenses, but the schools are not covered and could possibly be subject to a lawsuit because they do not have a performance license. There had even been a discussion about doing a separate special and that the AHSAA thought we could not. Commissioner Stephens stated because our agency is Educational Television, that music only is involved, and that if only snippets would be played during game coverage, that we should pursue whether AETV can have incidental coverage of high school bands under the federal Fair Use Doctrine.

Jack also noted that the Governor's Office saved us last year with \$180,000 to cover production expenses. Jack said Wayne has a great plan that we will be able to execute, and he is confident that we will have success for the upcoming seasons.

## **State Budget Request**

Wayne noted that he and Phil have been busy the past 1.5 months and he then asked Phil to step in to lay out the budget requests.

Phil commented that we received \$11.9 million in FY22, and we asked for \$12.4 million this year which is a 4% increase. The Governor recommended funding \$2.3 million less than last year, which is less one-time capital we had last year and added a 2% raise. We have had several good meetings with those in the Governor's office, will receive some help and should be getting part of the money back. But even if we do not get any back, we are still in good shape because of the one-time capital that was for antennas that we had to have to be Advanced Television Systems Committee (ATSC) 3.0 compliant.

Jack handed out a history of our state funding and noted there are 26 state networks and the handout showed Alabama's rank regarding stations that are state-funded. When Jack, Phil, and Wayne met with Senator Arthur Orr, they indicated to him that in order to cover our expenses, we need to at least get \$10.5 million. Senator Orr gave the impression that meeting was that he felt confident that would happen. Jack looked at APT State funding the last several years and the history was between \$9.6 and \$12.4 million. APT gets 56% of their total funding from the State, so we do fairly well. He noted that Kentucky gets two-thirds of their budget from the Kentucky legislature. We have the opportunity to show our value to other state agencies.

Les commented that we always need to "focus on the good" when we are talking about APT.

Wayne commented that he has heard nothing but good feedback from the Legislature about Capitol Journal and how Capitol Journal is getting their stories out. He said that is what we are focused on, getting the good stories out, through our Education mission and through Capitol Journal and through the documentaries.

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

### **I. Engineering**

- a. The Cheaha Project is ongoing, with Windell and Phil having engaged with several individuals involved in the project. They anticipate funding of \$4 million from the State if the tower move is approved. They are still in the process of conducting an environmental assessment. The designated location has been assigned, necessitating the construction of a new building and installation of power lines. Total estimated cost around \$4 million for the entire project. Wayne and Jack had a meeting with the Speaker of the House, and there is significant interest in relocating the tower. If funding is secured, the tower will indeed be moved as per their request, and they have assured us of obtaining the necessary financial support. Currently, we find ourselves in a situation where we must adopt a "wait and see" approach.

- b. Last week Windell received a call from a technician working for the Forestry Commission, requesting that we relocate our Flagg Mountain microwave site to a different location. Windell said if there had to be a move the critical connections of the microwave tower a site with favorable elevation would be required. After conducting an elevation profile analysis, Windell identified a nearby site and shared the details with the technician. This morning, the technician informed Windell that the Forestry Commission is in the process of acquiring a 1,000-acre area, and they specifically require our site to be situated there. Although he hasn't had a chance to investigate the exact location yet, he intends to do so later today, including conducting elevation profiles to ensure adequate height of the microwave. In case there is insufficient elevation, the technician mentioned the possibility that the Forestry Commission would be building a tall tower at that site, on which APT could mount our equipment. Therefore, the current plan is to proceed with the assumption that we will be able to mount on the new tower, as communicated by the technician.
- c. Les Barnett asked about the Channel 4 tower in Vernon, Alabama that would cover Lamar County and where we were on that situation. Windell replied that it was still in the works. Les suggested we speak to a congressman regarding the FCC issue. Windell reported that the FCC must be dealt with, but after the funding for the tower is approved. We currently do not have the funding designated, but we have asked for an appropriation. Once funding is guaranteed, we can move ahead with the FCC approval. Wayne reported that we are waiting to see if we get the funding for the tower.

## II. Education

- a. After a hiatus of three years, Be My Neighbor Day returned to an in-person format this year. It was a great to see all the local residents from the neighborhood where the event took place, as well as individuals from various parts of Birmingham. Several people requested that we come to their communities. While Brianna Morton refrained from disclosing specific details about the next year's location, she did mention that they are considering a hybrid approach. Education is exploring the possibility of organizing both an in-person event and a virtual event to accommodate participants from across the state, enabling more people to engage in some of the activities remotely.
- b. Kevin, Mr. C from *DIY Science*, came for the Alabama Science Teachers Association conference as the headliner and presented *DIY Science*. It was wonderful to see so many teachers, school administrators, and other educators excited to see him. He promoted, not only *Mr. C*, but other opportunities that APT provides including *Yellowhammer History Hunt* and other on-line resources.
- c. Kathy LeCroy and Tracey Carter successfully organized their second Yellowhammer History Hunt, which took place at Ivy Green, the Helen Keller Museum. The event was highly enjoyable and well-received.

Approximately 15 teachers participated, and there are hopes for even greater attendance in the future. Efforts are underway to explore methods of attracting more teachers to attend the event in person. The next event is scheduled for April 23 in Moundville, where we will be collaborating with The University of Alabama. Everyone is welcome to attend, so if you happen to be in the area and are interested, please feel free to join.

- d. Recently the Education staff hosted two educational specialists from the state department for a productive discussion on literacy and LETRS training. The Alabama State Department of Education actively promotes LETRS training, which stands for Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling. This training is specifically designed to enhance the expertise of reading and language specialists. For our science and math teachers, we have implemented Teams training as an additional credential to augment their credibility and equip them with enhanced knowledge and skills to support students and parents. Recognizing the value of LETRS training elevates our credibility and enables effective communication with the educators attending our workshops and training sessions. We are currently exploring the possibility of providing LETRS training to all APT Education staff. The belief being that such training will enrich our understanding and proficiency in literacy instruction. Moreover, it is important to note that several members of our staff still hold active teaching certifications, including Dr. Morton. This means our trainers enter a school as certified teachers. We have encouraged our staff to consider renewing their teaching certificates to further strengthen our credibility when delivering workshops and training programs to teachers, caregivers, and educators throughout the state.

### III. Public Information and Programming

- a. The Young Writers Competition, formerly known as the Reading Rainbow Young Writers Contest, has been a longstanding tradition since the mid-1990's. It focuses on nurturing young talents in reading and writing, particularly in the crucial grades of Kindergarten, First, Second, and Third, which lay the foundation for literacy before reaching fourth grade. This upcoming Saturday, April 15, we have an exciting plan for the participants. We will be taking the kids to the Birmingham Children's Theater to watch a captivating performance titled "Miss Fancy: Elephant, Queen of the Zoo." This original play revolves around the remarkable story of Miss Fancy, the elephant from the Avondale Zoo. Following the play, we will return to APT, where a pizza lunch will be provided, and we will proceed with the awards ceremony. During this celebratory event, those who feel comfortable will have the opportunity to share their written works by reading them aloud to the audience. This occasion has always been a source of immense joy throughout its 25+ year history

- b. On April 19, APT will host a memorable dinner and awards ceremony in Montgomery to honor our 2023 Young Heroes. This remarkable event has been a tradition since 2001, marking 22 years of celebrating outstanding students who have demonstrated exceptional qualities. We have an exceptional group of young individuals again for this year's dinner. Members of the board are welcome to join us for this occasion. We invited the legislators representing the districts of the honored students to attend the program. Depending on their schedules, we hope to welcome a substantial number of them. The following day, we have arranged a visit to the Alabama Legislature for our Young Heroes, where they will have a unique opportunity to observe the legislative process firsthand. Additionally, they will enjoy a special tour of the Alabama Archives Museum.
- c. Local programming for the second quarter was 181 programs totaling 131 hours of broadcast which included the basketball championships which were counted as one program each.
- d. Discussed upcoming summer programming. Over the past few years, JSU has successfully produced eight documentaries, some of which have only aired once or twice on APT. In June, Mike announced the JSU Film Festival, which will showcase several of these well produced documentaries once again. Additionally, the Alabama Music Hall of Fame ceremony, was recorded in March and is scheduled for airing in June or July. Another noteworthy documentary produced in part by APT Executive Producer Randy Scott, *Africatown*, is slated for an early July release.

The highlight of our summer lineup is the release of the new documentary, *Sink the Alabama*. The documentary explores the captivating story of the CSS Alabama, which was sunk on June 19, 1864. Due to a range of factors, such as PBS national premieres and the proximity to the pledge drive, we have decided to air the film on the more positive launch date instead of the sinking date. The CSS Alabama was launched on July 29, 1862, making it a more suitable and optimistic focus. Leading up to the premiere, APT plans to organize screening events and a promotional tour in collaboration with the filmmaker. While the exact venue for these premieres has yet to be determined, potential options include The Alabama Department of Archives and The Explorean in Mobile.

To generate excitement and awareness, the promotional campaign will commence next week, featuring advertisements in Alabama Heritage, Alabama Magazine, Mobile Bay Magazine, and other platforms. We will be leveraging social media for a comprehensive online campaign, and there is a possibility of organizing a post-broadcast film tour.

Additionally, we have been exploring potential partnerships with Alabama libraries, not only for this documentary but also for future projects. Mike shared clips and a trailer of the documentary.

Pete Conroy commented that the filming at Barber Motor Speedway starts tomorrow, April 12.

#### IV. Corporate Support

Beverly noted that she had received a donation from Bobbye Weaver for \$50,000 that supports carriage of the Lawrence Welk program. The donation should help us be able to broadcast the program for at least five more years.

#### V. Digital and Education Media

- a. Heather reported on the realignment of resources to create a dedicated digital media department.
- b. The department's most significant achievement since inception was the successful implementation of the social media campaign for the documentary. This campaign garnered widespread recognition and was honored with an Abby award, acknowledging its outstanding creativity and remarkable effectiveness in achieving its goals.
- c. Heather explained they are strategically focusing on promoting APT content and local Alabama content, with an emphasis on video. This shift has already yielded significant benefits, including a 30% increase in followers and a remarkable 500% increase in engagement in terms of video views. The early results of this strategy have been highly satisfying. Collaborating with Todd Stacy, they have been working on producing shorter videos from Capitol Journal for sharing on social media platforms. These videos have also generated excellent engagement, with some reaching a noteworthy 20% engagement rate, well above the average 5% considered good for social media. By prioritizing the digital audience, the goal is to extend APT's reach to more Alabamians, recognizing that many individuals prefer digital platforms over traditional broadcasting. Their objective is to distribute their exceptional content widely. Additionally, the Legacy Moments campaign, which coincided with the state's bicentennial, has been successful in sparking conversations as the replayed videos continue to resonate with audiences.
- d. The Digital team is exploring ideas to enhance ancillary coverage of high school sports on digital platforms. One of the initial concepts under consideration is a companion feature exploring everything but the games. This would highlight other areas of high school athletics like band, cheer and booster support. APT attracted new viewers during the championship games, indicating the popularity and potential reach of such content.

- e. DIY Science Time is being distributed through NETA and being aired on 22 stations nationwide. Season 3 will be premiering in the spring/summer 2024.
- f. Heather noted the online presence of *Yellowhammer History Hunt* educational videos which are five- to ten-minutes in length, geared to fourth grade students, with five to eight educational resources and/or activities that are all aligned to meet state standards.
- g. Mike noted that the Digital department is incorporating dashboards of information with the number of people watching programming on social media, which is helpful in planning the future programming.
- h. Since February, the digital department has seen a notable surge in online viewership, particularly during the high school basketball championships. This event introduced a fresh audience to APT, prompting the department to explore strategies to engage these viewers consistently throughout the year, rather than solely during the championship games.

#### VI. Production

- a. Chris reported that *Shuttlesworth* won an Abby award.
- b. He is excited about adding new staff. This will provide greater ability to tell Alabama's stories in all forms, short or longer productions. There are three positions to be filled. J. Holland asked about applicant response to fill the positions. Chris reported that these are state positions, funded by the legislature, and there is a lot of state personnel processes with these types of positions. Currently, they are not posted yet.
- c. Fund requests are being sent out to support of the *Big Momma Thornton* documentary. Chris is optimistic and is waiting to hear about a sizeable grant they submitted last month.
- d. The award-winning documentary, *Shuttlesworth*, was distributed to AETC Board Members. Chris noted it is available on the APT website. Phil noted that for the second year in a row, APT received "Best Documentary" in the state. Last year it was *Alabama at 200* and this year it was *Shuttlesworth*.
- e. Chris noted that the team was excited about the next show in Journey Proud series. Called Heritage Seeds and they are partnering with WLRH in Huntsville. WLRH will be doing radio stories about on the seed bank on Sand Mountain.

#### VII. (See attached reports for additional information.)

Wayne mentioned his frequent visits to both the State House Studio and the Madison Avenue Studio. He then asked Mary Davis for an update from Montgomery. Mary shared that efforts are underway to acquire new equipment for both studios. While they couldn't obtain everything desired with no additional funds from ARPA, they will utilize other state funds to purchase some necessary equipment. Mary expressed her strong determination to make the Madison Avenue studio operational again, as it has

remained inactive since 2011. J. Holland encouraged increased usage of the studio moving forward. Wayne affirmed his support for utilizing the Madison Avenue studio more extensively, emphasizing that the extent of its usage would depend on the funding received from the state to upgrade the equipment.

Wayne noted that several APT staff would be trained on the Nielsen ratings system the following Friday and would be able to view data from February ratings period. Ratings data lags about a month behind a ratings period. Data will include Mobile, Montgomery, Huntsville, and Birmingham markets; Dothan is not included.

Wayne also let the group know that he is working on a research project with state universities. He has reached out to ten universities that will work with local and regional companies. The students do the research projects for the companies and getting school credit for it. Three universities have agreed to do research this fall (Troy, Alabama, and Samford). This is a junior/senior type of project. APT will meet with the classes, describe the data APT is looking to find. The students in the class will design the survey, launch the survey, and compile the results.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business.

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

The next AETC meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 18, 2023, in the Birmingham office.

**MOTION** by: Commissioner J. Holland to approve July 18, 2023, as the date of the next meeting

**SECOND** by: Commissioner Les Barnett

**MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION** by: Commissioner J. Holland

**SECOND** by: Commissioner Les Barnett

**MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

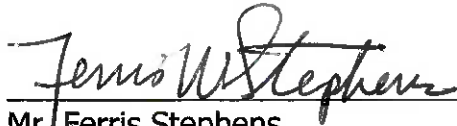
The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

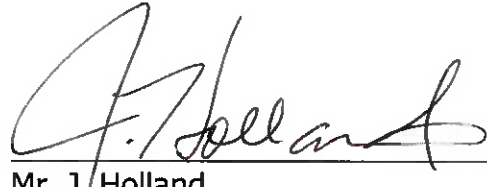


Lorraine Fancher  
Recording Secretary

**APPROVED – DATE:**



Mr. Ferris Stephens  
Chairman



Mr. J. Holland  
Secretary