

ALABAMA EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION COMMISSION

MINUTES

January 20, 2026

10:00 a.m.

*Alabama Public Television, Birmingham Conference Room
2112 11th Avenue S., Suite 400, Birmingham, Alabama 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 APT Executive Director, Wayne Reid.

ROLL CALL (VERBAL)

Chairman Ferris Stephens designated Logan Glass as the acting secretary for this meeting. A verbal roll call was conducted by Mr. Logan Glass, acting secretary.

AETC Commissioners Present:

Mr. Ferris Stephens, Chairman

Mrs. Tijuanna Adetunji (*virtual*)

Mr. Les Barnett

Mr. Pete Conroy

Mr. Logan Z. Glass

Mr. William A. Green, Jr. (*virtual*)

The Alabama Educational Television Commission consists of seven members. Mrs. Bebe Williams was absent, a quorum was present, and official business could be conducted.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:22 a.m. by Chairman Ferris Stephens.

REVIEW OF MINUTES

Minutes of the October 28, 2025 meeting and the special-called meeting of November 18, 2025 had been provided in writing prior to the meeting for review by the Commissioners. No corrections or modifications were requested.

Motion by: Commissioner Les Barnett to approve the October 28, 2025 and November 18, 2025 minutes

Second by: Commissioner Pete Conroy

Discussion: No discussion.

Motion Passed Unanimously

SETTING OF OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Ferris Stephens requested that additional items be addressed under Other Business.

Chairman Stephens first noted that the term of Dr. Douglas L. Ragland on the Alabama Educational Television Foundation Authority (AETFA) Board was expiring on September 20, 2026 and asked that the subject of his reappointment be added to the agenda.

Chairman Stephens also asked that consideration of former state Senator and businessman Dick Brewbaker for appointment to the Alabama Educational Television Foundation Authority Board be added to the agenda.

Chairman Stephens also requested that the subject of a nominating committee to recommend officers for the Alabama Educational Television Commission and address whether to propose any nominees to the AETFA be added to the agenda.

OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Ferris Stephens noted that there was no old business to be discussed.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Stephens requested of Executive Director Wayne Reid that items on the Other Business portion of the meeting be conducted prior to the Executive Director's Report. Director Reid agreed.

Reappointment of Dr. Douglas Ragland to the Alabama Educational Television Foundation Authority

Chairman Stephens outlined Dr. Ragland's qualifications and service history, including his being Superintendent of Education for Green County and Midfield City Schools, his service on the Birmingham Board of Education, his appointment to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, service on the Governor's Minority Affairs Board, and his role as Alabama Commissioner for the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission, as well as other qualifications.

Motion: By Commissioner Les Barnett to reappoint Dr. Douglas L. Ragland for a new four-year term to begin when his current term ends.

Seconded: By Commissioner Pete Conroy

Discussion: There was no further discussion.

The Motion Passed

Dr. Ragland thanked the board.

Appointment of former Senator Dick Brewbaker to the Alabama Educational Television Foundation Authority

Chairman Stephens offered former Senator Dick Brewbaker for appointment to the AETFA citing his extensive legislative leadership which included his being the longtime Chair of the Senate Education Committee, his advocacy for APT, his business background and expertise, and potential value as an advocate during legislative sessions.

Commissioner Pete Conroy raised concerns about proceeding without first meeting Senator Brewbaker, stating the Foundation had historically struggled with fundraising and expressing a desire to understand his views and approach before appointment. Commissioner Conroy then suggested tabling the motion to allow further discussion and engagement.

Chairman Stephens stated that the timing of the legislative session made appointment at that time advantageous if we needed him, considering Brewbaker's high reputation in the legislature. He also recognized Senator Brewbaker's long-standing support for APT when he served as a leader in the Senate.

Board Member Johnny Curry was recognized and raised whether AETFA members should have input into appointments. Chairman Stephens clarified that the Alabama statute granted the Alabama Educational Television Commission as the body charged with appointing the AETFA members.

Motion: By Commissioner Les Barnett to appoint former Senator Dick Brewbaker to the AETFA Board.

Seconded: By Commissioner Logan Glass

Discussion: No further discussion

The Motion Passed

Barnett – yes

Adetunji – yes

Conroy – no

Glass – yes

Williams – absent

Stephens – yes

Green – yes

Nominating Committee

Chairman Stephens summarized that the purpose of establishing a nominating committee was to recommend officers of the AETC, and if deemed appropriate, recommend members to the AETFA.

Chairman Stephens noted that the nomination of former Senator Dick Brewbaker was proffered as an exception due to his long-standing relationship with APT, his extensive public service, and familiarity among several commissioners. He stated future nominations generally proceed through the committee process. Discussion also addressed the importance of considering legislative relationships and alignment with the priorities detailed in the Governor's letter to the AETC.

Chairman Stephens appointed as nominating committee members Les Barnett, Tijuana Adetunji, William Green, and him as Chairman of the Committee.

EXECUTIVE REVIEW

Chairman Ferris Stephens asked Executive Director Wayne Reid to provide his report.

Update of APT Activities – Wayne Reid, Executive Director

Executive Director Wayne Reid provided an update on the committee the AETC voted to create at the previous meeting to conduct a statewide survey of Alabama citizens in a study initiative to carry out the objectives the Governor proposed in her November 17, 2025 letter to the Commission. He noted there were delays due to holidays and health issues. He stated that a smaller working committee would be formed to develop survey questions and options to present to the Commission for its consideration.

Chairman Stephens emphasized that the committee's work should align with priorities outlined in the Governor's letter regarding the Alabama values she believed are imperative for public television and for future programming alignment.

Engineering Report

Director of Engineering, Daniel Black, provided updates on multiple infrastructure projects. He reported that the unsafe tower at the WJIQ Winfield site had been fully decommissioned and that planning is underway to construct a new 200-foot replacement tower. Daniel confirmed that funding from prior legislative appropriations is sufficient to complete the project.

He also provided updates on plans to replace the Mt. Cheaha transmitter building, noting ongoing coordination with Cheaha State Park and architectural oversight by SS&A Architects. In addition, Daniel discussed preparations for Alabama Public Television facilities in the new State House, including planning for the temporary relocation of *Capitol Journal* operations during the transition to the Madison Avenue studios.

Programming Report

Programming Director, Mike McKenzie, reported continued growth in hours of local programming on APT in part due to the added high school football playoffs and All-Star games. He detailed recent and ongoing productions, including *Capitol Journal*, *Buzz in Birmingham*, *Respite for All*, *Discovering Alabama*, and special event programming. Mike highlighted strong viewership metrics across these programs and outlined upcoming programming initiatives currently in development.

Education Report

Tiffany Armstrong, Director of Educational Services, provided an update on education initiatives, including the continuation of the Teacher of the Month awards, community engagement activities, professional development workshops, and participation in online training programs. She noted steady engagement across these efforts and ongoing outreach to educators and community partners.

Multiplatform Content

Heather Daniels-Whitson reported on the development and distribution of multiplatform content. She highlighted projects such as the *America 250* vignettes, *Jeffrey's Southern Ghosts*, and *Garden Party*. She also reviewed digital engagement metrics, noting significant growth in audience reach and streaming activity across platforms.

Legislative and Budget Update

Jack Williams, External Affairs Director, provided a legislative and budget update, reporting on the Governor's proposed budget, which includes a 1.54% increase in APT FY2027 funding and a proposed \$2 million supplemental appropriation for the completion of the new state house studio. He also discussed ongoing conversations about federal funding, which included possibilities about regional hubs for block grants of which APT could potentially participate if federal funding were to return.

This concluded the Executive Director's report.

Further Discussion on Foundation

Commissioner Conroy returned discussion to the nominations on the AETFFA and noted that he had been caught off guard by earlier nominations. He also said there are other people across the state who would like to be a part of the Foundation, including Anne Bloom who has an interest in serving on the board. Commissioner Conroy then nominated Anne Bloom for appointment to the Foundation Authority, citing her long-standing involvement in Alabama civic life and interest in serving. He indicated that vacancies existed and requested a second to his motion.

Chairman Stephens responded by explaining that a nominating committee had been established and was expected to bring forward any recommended candidates for the AETFFA. He stated that the prior nomination of Dick Brewbaker had been handled as an exception because Mr. Brewbaker was a well-known supporter of Alabama Public Television and his reputation and service was known to the Commission and across the state. Chairman Stephens expressed a preference that future nominees be considered through a nominating committee process to allow commissioners the opportunity to meet and evaluate candidates before appointment.

Commissioner Conroy indicated that a motion had already been placed on the floor. Commissioner Glass stated familiarity with Anne Bloom and seconded the nomination, noting that since the Commission had voted on a prior nomination, it would be fair to vote on this nomination as well.

Chairman Stephens stated that while he held Anne Bloom's family in high regard, that he had never met her. Commissioner Conroy acknowledged the concern but expressed frustration that exceptions appeared inconsistent, stating that Anne Bloom would be a significant asset to the Foundation and reiterating his desire to move forward with her appointment.

Commissioner Adetunji, participating remotely, suggested that all nominations be submitted to the nominating committee for review, noting that multiple commissioners likely had individuals they wished to recommend.

Commissioner Conroy reiterated his concern about inconsistency in the nomination process and emphasized his continued support for Anne Bloom's appointment. He questioned whether other commissioners had advanced knowledge of proposed nominees, expressing frustration with communication practices among board members. Commissioner Conroy asked if any of the other commissioners had been contacted by Chairman Stephens. Chairman Stephens noted that he had previously spoken with Commissioner Tijuanna Adetunji. Chairman Stephens also acknowledged the concern and stated his willingness to improve communication, noting that attempts to reach one another had not always been reciprocated.

AETFA Board Member Johnny Curry was recognized and stated the purpose of the AETFA was not to help raise money from the legislature but to raise money privately and is the purpose of most foundations throughout the state. At that point, Commissioner Glass stated we have a legislature advocate for APT with our Director of External Affairs, Jack Williams. Commissioner Glass requested a roll call vote in order to be consistent and fair.

Chairman Stephens noted that opportunities remained to expand fundraising efforts through the separate private foundation earlier created by the Commission for the purpose of raising money, which was not governed by statute and could be modified to the needs of the Commission.

Motion: By Commissioner Pete Conroy to appoint Anne Bloom to the AETFA Board.

Seconded: By Commissioner Logan Glass.

The Motion Failed

Barnett – no
Adetunji – no
Conroy – yes
Glass – yes
Williams – absent
Stephens – no
Green – no

Streaming and Public Participation Motions

Motion: By Commissioner Pete Conroy to formalize the addition of the live streaming that was conducted at the previous meeting to future Alabama Educational Television Commission meetings to increase transparency and public access.

Seconded: By Commissioner Logan Glass. He noted that he was for such a practice for the purpose of transparency and added that city councils and chambers stream routinely.

Discussion: Discussion addressed technical considerations, including audio and video quality and potential delays, with staff. Also discussed were common practices for streaming by other governmental bodies.

The Motion Passed

Barnett – yes
Adetunji – yes
Conroy – yes
Glass – yes
Williams – absent
Stephens – yes
Green – yes

Motion: By Commissioner Pete Conroy to formalize a public participation segment at future Commission meetings, as conducted at the previous meeting, for a maximum period of 30 minutes per meeting, with individual speaker time limits to be established; two to three minutes per person was suggested.

Seconded: By Commissioner Logan Glass, stating that the board has an obligation to hear from the public.

Discussion: Discussion followed. Commissioner Conroy asserted the goal of transparency, public trust, and that this was standard practice decided upon in other state and local governmental bodies. Chairman Stephens expressed concern that comments from the public would be equally effective when put in writing to the Commissioners, as has been done in the past, that oral comments tended to be repetitive, and not necessarily representative of the broader public. He also stated that commissioners, like legislators who do not have public comment at their sessions, would duly represent the people in their districts. Commissioner Les Barnett also said that the Commission is representative of the state based on Congressional districts. He also stated that he felt that it was not productive because the Commission had no idea if those who showed up would be representative of a minority or the majority of people. Commissioner Conroy stated that he did not want the Commission to be in the headlines that we would not hear from the public.

Several members proposed implementing rules to ensure order, including advance sign-up, time limits per speaker, and structured participation. William Green supported allowing public comment with rules and suggested placing formal guidelines on future comments segments, and stated, "We are Alabama 'Public' Television". A roll call vote was conducted, and the motion carried with the understanding that rules governing public participation would be developed.

The Motion Passed

Barnett – no
Adetunji – yes
Conroy – yes
Glass – yes
Williams – absent
Stephens – no
Green – yes

Public Comment

Liz Laney (Huntsville) stated that she has been a WLRH listener and donor for approximately 30 years and expressed concern that Huntsville listeners and donors felt excluded from decisions regarding changes to WLRH programming, including the removal of NPR content. She commended WLRH staff for adapting to changes but stated that listener trust, donations, and audience levels have likely declined. *Ms.*

Laney expressed concern regarding potential efforts to transfer the station's license and stated that while NPR access is valued, Huntsville listeners also want locally produced content. She recommended forming a study committee composed primarily of WLRH listeners and donors to explore options, including the possible return of the license to Huntsville, and emphasized that community input could lead to a constructive resolution.

Elaine Witt identified herself as a retired nonprofit development professional and addressed fundraising concerns. She emphasized the importance of engaging major donors and recommended establishing a volunteer fundraising committee composed of individuals with access to philanthropic and corporate resources. *Ms. Witt* stated that donor engagement is critical to successful fundraising and suggested surveying donors and viewers to better understand their priorities. She further urged the commission to affirmatively commit to continuing PBS programming and to extend the PBS contract, stating that current programming is a primary reason donors support APT.

Michael Krall (Birmingham) stated that repeated public comments on similar issues indicate broader concerns that warrant attention. He expressed support for APT's affiliation with PBS and urged equal support for WLRH. *Mr. Krall* acknowledged the efforts of APT and WLRH staff and emphasized the importance of stability and clarity for public media institutions. He stated that removing NPR from WLRH weakened the station's identity, audience trust, and fundraising capacity, noting that NPR programming anchors listener habits and supports local content. He cautioned that continued absence of NPR programming would likely result in audience loss, reduced membership, and underwriting challenges.

Morgan Andriulli (Huntsville) stated that he traveled with a group of WLRH listeners to attend the meeting. He discussed financial impacts associated with the removal of NPR programming, citing analysis of publicly available financial information and projecting a significant loss in donations relative to the station's budget. While commending staff for producing strong local content, he stated that local programming alone cannot replace nationally syndicated programming in terms of depth and audience reach. *Mr. Andriulli* requested transparency regarding the long-term plan for WLRH, questioned how success would be measured, and urged the commission to engage informed listeners through the formation of a WLRH advisory or working group. He emphasized that listeners want meaningful dialogue and stated that public trust and financial support depend on being heard.

Pam Caruso (Huntsville) questioned the commission regarding adhering to the Governor's letter and whether public input was being actively solicited in relation to her correspondence. The speaker asked how the Commission intended to implement the Governor's guidance and expressed concern that prior decisions were made without sufficient public engagement. She also recommended improving audio

quality for streamed meetings and preserving video recordings for public access and archival use.

Greg Flanders (rural Cleburne County, Alabama) stated that he had attended a prior meeting and expressed his desire for Alabama Public Television to thrive. He encouraged commissioners to work collaboratively, communicate more clearly with the public, and improve meeting logistics and technical quality. Mr. Flanders emphasized the importance of openness and mutual respect and stated that public engagement is intended to strengthen, not undermine, the Commission's work.

Lee Ann Bryant stated that she was not accustomed to speaking publicly but felt compelled to comment due to being blindsided by the loss of NPR programming in Huntsville. She stated that she no longer listens to WLRH because the news programming she relied on is no longer available. She referenced the Governor's letter, stating that it called for allowing the public to respond to plans before votes are taken, and expressed frustration that listeners were not given that opportunity.

Krista B. (Birmingham) stated that eliminating PBS programming would result in a complete loss of donor support from those present. She defended PBS children's programming as educational, factual, and consistent with community and family values, citing specific examples of current children's shows. She also addressed concerns raised about PBS news coverage, describing it as factual and impartial. She stated that discontinuing PBS would result in donors withdrawing their financial support.

Unknown Speaker (not identified) stated that defining programming solely based on "Alabama values" as articulated by the Governor excludes many viewers and donors who hold different perspectives. The speaker emphasized that many supporters value DEI and factual programming and urged the commission to listen to a broad range of constituents rather than relying on what was in the Governor's letter.

David Brown (Huntsville) stated that he has lived in Huntsville for 35 years and previously worked at both WLRH and WUAL. He emphasized his long-standing connection to public broadcasting and stated that it is important to him personally. *Mr. Brown* asked whether it would be possible to transfer the WLRH license to another responsible entity committed to the public service mission if such an entity could be identified by Huntsville citizens and requested information regarding what that process would entail.

The Commission leadership thanked the speakers for their comments. No further public comment was offered. After discussion among the Commissioners as to the most convenient time for all, the next quarterly meeting was set for April 21, 2026.

Chairman Stephens noted that there was no further business to be discussed and called for a motion to adjourn.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by: Commissioner Les Barnett

Second by: Commissioner William Green

Motion Passed Unanimously

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lorraine Fancher
Recording Secretary

APPROVED – DATE:

Mr. Ferris Stephens
Chairman

Mrs. Bebe Williams
Vice Chairwoman

APPROVED; NOT SIGNED