

Marfa Public Radio Corporation Board Meeting
07/31/2017
106 E San Antonio St., Marfa, TX | 5 PM

Board in attendance: Barbara Fountain-Love, Al Davis, Steph Steele, Liz Rogers, Woody Leverett, Ginger Griffice, Chris Douridas (phone), Bill Dingus (phone), Cory Van Dyke (phone)

Staff in attendance: Elise Pepple, Carlos Morales, Diana Nguyen, Bayla Metzger, John Cone, Elizabeth Trovall, Sara Melancon

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 PM.

The meeting began with introductions of new staff and board members. Woody Leverett, Steph Steele, Al Davis, and John Cone introduced themselves.

Last meeting's minutes were reviewed. Ginger moved to approve the minutes, Liz seconded, all were in favor.

Then the board moved to quarterly financials led by Al. First, the board looked at cash flow, identifying underwriting as a risk area. The blow from lack of revenue was lessened by under-spending in other areas, particularly staffing. Verdicos Solutions and a potential lawsuit in Alpine this year were an extra cost. All in all, MPR - at this point in time - was about \$77,000 short of anticipated revenue. CPB money was due to arrive in August, as well as membership drive money in October. There is the potential that MPR will have to pay for back-owed utilities on the Alpine tower. Another potential large expense would be relocating the tower and equipment for Brown Mountain tower. Elise explained that the 2017 budget was created with the idea that another Permian Basin Area Foundation grant would be awarded. The 2017 goal is to double underwriting this year and that looks do-able.

Next, Barbara asked John to talk about the KRTS tower. John explained that the tower was installed incorrectly. It doesn't have adequate grounding or protection against lightning. He had been trying to incrementally defend the transmitter and equip against power line surges and lightning strikes. Barbara asked if that was the #1 reason MPR was off the air? John said yes. In the past, there was a secondary issue with the UPS (backup generator). MPR also needs to put some ferrite rings on and increasing resistance to currents to the tower. Barbara asked for the timeline and John said after a budgetary OK, then he can order things tomorrow and get up to the tower as soon as those items ship. He said those are a start, but MPR would still need surge protectors, which would be relatively inexpensive. But because of the oversized transmitter and AC supply, the surge protectors will be more expensive, so John was trying to find a workaround. John said the real problem, though, is the tower lights. Elise and John showed a breakdown of expenses on the slideshow. Al asked what the

problem is right now? MPR didn't have lights and had been contacting the FAA in two-week intervals. The tower also needed to be repainted, and if MPR didn't repaint, strobe lights would need to be installed to be compliant with FAA. Projected costs were shown with the company Lumen Services. Liz and Al expressed concern with lights being in compliance with the McDonald Observatory. Elise said in the past MPR hasn't made the investment to make permanent fixes so it's worth considering what the long- and short-term fixes are. Barbara asked if there was a backup at the station and John said MPR could have a local auxiliary unit here, but would only cover the KRTS (not KRTP or KDKY) areas. If it was mobile, it could be used as a temp solution if and when the Alpine tower is moved.

Presidio tower location was in a hole and MPR has a permit to build, but anything less than 150K watts wouldn't be heard and wouldn't reach the national park. John recommended changing the construction permit for Presidio to 750 watts. There's already a public radio station serving Presidio (Radio Bilingue) but they aren't ready to build out. The advantage to modifying the construction permit now is saving money. Barbara asked what Neil did, and was informed that he paid for our license.

The Alpine tower was discussed next. Al met with Rusty Moore - CEO of Big Bend Telephone. They were receptive to MPR moving to their tower. Al had trouble moving this deal along. MPR prepared a license agreement for BBT on 6/29, it was sent to their attorney the week prior to this meeting. BBT was doing a tower inventory. John had given them all of MPR's requirements. Al spoke with BBT the day of the meeting and he and John planned to go up for a site visit on Friday to be better able to estimate time and cost. The agreement would be rent and underwriting, \$200 + \$380 in underwriting + a 2% increase for each year. Al said MPR will have to spend \$1200 with Bert for the report. It takes about 6 weeks to get approval from FCC. Another thing MPR needs to do is terminate the lease with Martin Benevich, but that hadn't been possible yet.

Elise added that since there are so many needs across all stations, do regularly experience broadcasting issues, especially on KXWT. She explained the causes as 1) insufficient storage on MPR's main computer, 2) multiple uses of the main computer, and 3) having a hand-built schedule in the program. She outlined 3 action items to correct those issues. Woody asked how it's possible that the classical piece "Planets" always playing? John explained that the automation system has a process for protecting itself when something fails and that is part of the automation system. Every hour has extra program material and the music fill that is the default for KXWT.

Al asked if MPR was looking for approval of funds for something during the meeting. Elise said yes: approval for all items except the lights, a sum adding up to \$5080. John explained all of the expenses on the engineering expenditures spreadsheet. Barbara asked for a list of prioritized expenses that have been researched. Elise said that MPR

does need a new ISDN line replacement. Liz and Steph said it would be nice to go ahead and spend the 5K if the quick fix costs 2K. Barbara was not comfortable voting on all of the line items. Steph suggested that the board needs the ISDN line and Studio B telephone and power supply immediately - a cost of about \$2200. John said the isolating line and ferrite rings were also important because those defend \$50 or \$60K worth of equipment. Bill asked why the board was asked to vote on what seemed to be normal operating expenses. Without a vote, the tower lighting issue was set to be revisited after the board got more information. Steph suggested that money for the lighting is budgeted for next year and MPR contract someone for a "quick fix: in 2017. Barbara asked that in the future, if MPR is asking approval for a high dollar figure, the board has time to research.

Regarding Tower and Engineering discussion - Elise would circle back with the board within the next two weeks with a prioritized list of engineering needs and cost information.

Elise's GM report. Cash on hand had increased because Q1 didn't include the Spring Membership Drive. Other stats were consistent and increasing. MPR also contacted Neilsen and they were going to send us that information soon. Then Elise did a slideshow of "what's going on" at the station.

She showcased the recent reporting and how it's expanded and more standardized. MPR is hosting Texas Standard live from MPR with Emily Donahue. Our west Texas talks are now more thematically and geographically diverse. In underwriting, we budgeted for one employee and no one applied because we have a part-time for underwriting and a contract employee for grants. Barbara asked about Laurel's commitment. Elise said Laurel would be here for 6 months. Barbara asked what we're doing to get a new permanent person? Elise said we are making a multi-tiered effort. Historically, the position has been in Midland, but that hasn't worked. Barbara asked everyone on the board to network and think about new ways to find someone. Barbara said that she wants this to be a priority. Then Elise moved to grants and said if we get what we've applied for, we should definitely meet budget. In addition to meeting budget, she is aiming to exceed it. In the future, Barbara wants to know the likelihood of what grants we are getting. Elise said all grants would be payable this year. Then the board looked at underwriting and spoke about what else needs to be done to meet the year's goal. Regarding Development - Barbara Love suggested we develop templates for underwriting and grant reports that communicate likelihood of closing e.g., 50% or 85%, where we are in the process, and timeline for the deal to close. The objective is to forecast more accurately underwriting and grant request revenue. Plus these reports will enable us to track more closely our progress towards goals.

Barbara discussed UVP (unique value proposition) - the things you say about the organization to sell it to someone. Barbara wanted to create a one-sheet for everyone on the board so they can "talk the talk."

Elise wanted to discuss her notes from her conferences. A few takeaways she brought back were:

- Know your audience;
- More content → more relevant → more audio → more revenue
- Make a 5-year plan for developing our regional reporting
- Develop relationships with other news sources
- Create a live storytelling plan for next year with partnerships
- No effort or thought in an area = nothing happening
- Have everyone at the station able to share consistent messaging
- Identify philanthropic opportunities
- Creating development teams on board
- Securing donors beyond West Texas

These things would be implemented with a timeline and benchmarks. Goal setting is key. Elise outlined goals in her her presentation. Steph said she might be able to help with event hosting in Austin and in LA.

Elise reiterated that the station is doing a great job, and definitely has room for growth. She said her priorities were understanding and evaluating and revisiting her initial goals for the station.

Barbara wanted to make sure the station is capitalizing on these events as much as possible. She wants to know what it will take to make this a regular series. Elise explained some of the station's different reporting, storytelling, and engagement initiatives.

Lastly, Elise wanted to ask about equipment upgrades. She explained the current tech situation but wanted to allocate some money to upgrade our office equipment. Barbara asked if Elise was looking for approval. The board approved.

In new business, Barbara wanted to discuss the survey results and there needed to be multiple conversations before a strategic plan is made.

At Whole Foods, Steph would do something called Future Search every 5 years. It was a multi-stakeholder planning session. Went from 30, 75, to over 200 attendees. Jessica Agneessens led these meetings. Steph said it's important to have voices of people who are invested at the table. There would be group work - start from the top and go into small groups. It would usually be a two-day process and would cost \$3000 and

include airfare with possible lodging donated. Jessica sent Steph with some questions and a Statement of Work.

Barbara said the only thing that gave her pause was that Jessica has no experience with nonprofits and public media. Steph spoke to Jessica's leading skills. Barbara thought MPR needed to find out if they could get other public media experts to attend. Steph also mentioned that she believed Jessica has worked with nonprofits. Elise told Barbara, yes, she has people in mind to attend who would be an asset to the meeting. Barbara suggested January. It was agreed that early 2-3 days in early January 2018 would be ideal. Steph suggested that Jessica join by phone for an initial meeting. Barbara didn't want to wait until the next board meeting. John said he believes identifying stakeholders in the first place is valuable in itself. Steph agreed to set up a call, and would check with Jessica Agneessens to see whether she has any experience working with public media or nonprofits

Barbara mentioned upcoming events and explained what the objectives and expectations of each were.

Barbara and Elise requested that there be at least 3 conversations among the board leading up to strategic planning to discuss general opinions around:

KXWT vs. KRTS

- 1) Branding - should we be branding the stations differently - or should they be one in the same? And, Programming- should we be tailoring the programming more for each market?
- 2) Development opportunities - where are the major opportunities in each market and how do we tackle them?
- 3) Public Radio 101- have a Public Radio expert spend an hour+ with the Board, speaking with us about the fundamentals of public radio/public media

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 PM.