



**Broadcast Educational Media Commission Meeting Minutes
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
May 14, 2020**

I. **Call to Order:** At 10:01 a.m., Chairman Robert Smith opened the meeting of the Broadcast Educational Media Commission.

A. **Roll Call:** At 10:02 a.m., roll call was conducted by Mrs. Gage.

Members Present:

Chairman Robert Smith
Commissioner Stephen Black
Commissioner Stephen Freeze, Esq.
Commissioner George Sarantou
Commissioner Christine Merritt
Commissioner Dr. Jan Osborn
Commissioner Matt Dole

Members Absent:

Non-Voting State Senator Michael Rulli;
Designee Charles See

Members Arriving Later:

Non-Voting State Representative Dave Greenspan arrived at 10:04 a.m.
Non-Voting State Senator Teresa Fedor arrived at 10:05 a.m.
Designee Shaun Yoder arrived at 10:05 a.m.
Commissioner Curt Steiner arrived at 10:06 a.m.
Non-Voting State Representative Catherine Ingram arrived at 10:14 a.m.
Commissioner Geoffrey Andrews arrived at 10:29 a.m.

A quorum was declared.

Also Present:

Executive Director Geoffrey A. Phillips;
Assistant Attorney General Ashley Barbone;
Chief of Engineering and Broadcast Operations Craig Stevenson;
Chief Information Officer Laura Bryson;
Chief Financial Officer Alina Gage;
interested citizens:
David Carwile, Administrator of Ohio Educational Television Stations, Inc;
Mandy Minick, Press Secretary of the Ohio Department of Education;
David Stein, Chairman of the Ohio Distance Learning Association;
Melissa Snider, OBM Budget Analyst to the BEMC;

Mark Jividen, Chairman of the Ohio Radio Reading Services alliance;
Kevin Martin, Chairman of the Ohio Educational Television Stations;
Mark Brewer, General Manager of WOUB;
Noah Blundo of Hannah News;
Pankaj Shah, Executive Director of OARnet;
Trina Cutter, President/CEO of Western Reserve Public Media;
Tom Rieland, General Manager of WOSU;
Dan Shellenbarger, Executive Director of The Ohio Channel;
Gongwer news representative
and Scott Hunt, Executive Director of Field Relations at the Ohio Department of Education.

B. Commission Action Items

Commissioner Black was sworn in at 10:01 a.m. by Ashley Barbone.

Resolution 20-18: Approval of February 13, 2020 Minutes: 10:04 a.m. –Dr. Osborn moved for approval of minutes. Mr. Dole seconded. Minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

II. Review of COVID-19 Activities

A. Governor’s Daily Briefings – The Ohio Channel:

1. Executive Director Geoffrey Phillips explained some activities the BEMC performs for the Governor’s daily addresses and introduced Mr. Shellenbarger, Executive Director of The Ohio Channel.
2. Mr. Shellenbarger talked about the Governor’s daily briefings beginning on March 7, 2020 and provided a chronological overview of major events regarding the briefings. The Ohio Channel website crashed for the first briefings as there was a large demand for view the conference. The Ohio Channel gets approximately 1.5-2 million views annually. The largest ever viewership was for a State of the State address, which saw 8,000-9,000 viewers. On April 2, 127,000 simultaneous views occurred, which the server was unable to handle. LIS created new servers, which were soon overcome, and DAS OIT worked with Amazon AWS for website traffic. Because of the load, Ohio Channel opened streaming on Facebook and You Tube, which relieved the load. Kevin Martin was asked to help air the briefings instead of only broadcasting on The Ohio Channel and with servers. All PBS stations in Ohio agreed to broadcast the briefings live on the Primary channels. The most recent numbers for just live viewings are 3 million. Total views, including re-airings, are 10 million. This is unprecedented. Mr. Shellenbarger thanked BEMC for their help with broadcasting. He also thanked Andy Chow and Karen Kasler of the State News Bureau for their help with filling airtime when briefings do not start on time, allowing stations to have a definite start and end time. Mr. Shellenbarger provided an overview of the different locations in which the briefings were held, with the current / final location at

Department of Public Safety, with the help of BEMC and OARnet. Mr. Shellenbarger recognized the public broadcasters for their assistance in keeping Ohioans “in-the-know”. It highlights the relationships created in public broadcasting over time make it easy for Ohio to broadcast. Mr. Shellenbarger highlighted that other states do not have our infrastructure. In 1996, cabling was put in the statehouse to connect The Ohio Channel. That foresight has helped keep Ohioans safe and saved lives.

- a. Chairman Smith thanked Mr. Shellenbarger and the public television stations for their actions to make the briefings happen. Mr. Shellenbarger reiterated that it was due to the foresight to wire the statehouse that these briefings could happen. While it is not a good time to ask for funds, it underscores the importance of investment in infrastructure. Because the state has maintained the investment, Ohio was able to respond to the pandemic according to plan.
- b. Ms. Merritt congratulated Mr. Shellenbarger, Mr. Phillips, and Mr. Stevenson for the accomplishments of the Ohio Channel with regards to the daily briefings. Mr. Shellenbarger acknowledged OAB for their quick response when assistance is requested.
- c. Mr. Steiner provided an anecdote about cabling not being in the Riffe tower in 1991, causing a disconnect between the governor’s communications manager and the governor. This led to cabling in the statehouse in 1996 and is an example to show Ohio has been ahead in the broadcasting field. He also expressed gratitude for Mr. Shellenbarger’s leadership.
- d. Mr. Martin thanked Chairman Smith for his assistance with public station’s needs.

B. OARnet Assistance

1. Mr. Shah acknowledged Ohio’s careful planning to serve public television and explained that it was the “glue” in the background to bring all the broadcasts together. Innovation was key to resolve issues – all engineers worked together, regardless of team function. Mr. Shah provided a brief history of OARnet and his time there. Because of the work done over time, he was able to obtain chancellor approval to open the network and upgrade the bandwidth immediately. In 2007, talks occurred with PBS stations to launch a pilot project to use the statewide backbone and fiber. This led to reduced costs for all stations. During the Kasich administration, backbone was upgraded to 100 GB. Because of these strategic investments and partnerships, OARnet was able to rapidly respond. Mr. Shah stated that as OARnet is involved in conversations at a national level, the partnership with BEMC partnership is always highlighted as a key pillar to Ohio’s success.

2. Mr. Stevenson thanked Mr. Shellenbarger and his staff and OARnet staff for their assistance in standing-up the Emergency Operations Center broadcast capabilities. When a bi-directional link was requested, the team worked hard overnight to make it happen. The move to DPS was announced at noon, and by 8:00p.m., it was complete.

C. **Pandemic Phases: Staff Placement**

1. Mr. Stevenson spoke about staff remaining at 2470 North Star facility. On March 24, 2020 access to the building for non-essential staff was closed and some staff was ordered to work from home. On-site employees are isolated to parts of the building based on duties. A partial backup of master control is set up in the Land conference room.

III. **Finance**

A. **FY20 BEMC Operating Appropriation Reduction**

1. Mr. Phillips explained that agencies were asked to decrease remaining funds by 20%, resulting in \$146,727 from BEMC. Mr. Phillips acknowledged Melissa Snider from OBM for her assistance. The initial request included a reduction of subsidy funds for Multimedia projects, which was appealed. With a partnership with Mrs. Snider, those funds were not reduced.

B. **Increase Costs Due to COVID-19**

1. Mr. Phillips explained that additional costs are coming from the remaining funds available in FY20. Governors' daily briefings cost about \$3,000 per briefing; \$1000-\$1500 for satellite charges, \$500 for radio content, and \$1000 for Amazon World Web Services. BEMC is trying to cover those costs with FY20 funds. Briefings are reduced to three days per week, which will reduce that cost. Due to broadcast location moves, additional equipment was needed. BEMC used the reserve en/decoder and a new reserve unit was ordered.

C. **FEMA Grant Opportunity**

1. Mrs. Gage explained the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) COVID-19 grant. On March 31, 2020, the President of the United States declared a federal disaster, making monies available to state, local, and non-profit entities for COVID-19-related costs incurred after January 20, 2020. "Communications of general health and safety information to the public" is specifically listed as an eligible cost, so BEMC submitted a grant application. It is currently under review at Ohio Emergency Management Agency. If approved, BEMC will be eligible for up to 75% reimbursement of COVID-19 costs.

Resolution 20-19: Approval of FEMA Grant Authority: 10:47 a.m. –Dr. Osborn moved for approval of Mr. Phillips as authorizing agent for FEMA grant DR-4507-OH. Mr. Andrews seconded. Motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

D. **FY21 Operating Appropriations**

1. Mr. Phillips explained that BEMC has been seeking guidance from OBM for FY21. Initial direction has been discussed and BEMC is waiting on specific figures, which

is anticipated later this week or early next. It is understood that these reductions will come from non-compensation lines.

2. Mr. Phillips provided an overview of the financial statement. It was stated which funds will be the focus of cost reductions. BEMC will work with suppliers to reduce costs and execute contracts. OBM has asked agencies to not sign yearly contracts, so BEMC will be reaching out to suppliers for quarterly agreements.

E. **FY21 Suppliers Over \$50,000**

1. Mr. Phillips provided a list of suppliers that will need approval for encumbrances over \$50,000: American Electric Power, AT&T, Cincinnati Bell, DAS, HA Design, OARnet, and Ohio State University.
 - a. Disclosures with conflicts – Mr. Freeze stated that he is on the board of Public Media Connect, of which WCET Public TV is a member. He abstained his vote.

Resolution 20-20: Approval of Suppliers Over \$50,000: 10: 54a.m. –Dr. Osborn moved for approval of suppliers over \$50,000. Mr. Andrews seconded. Motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote, with Mr. Freeze abstaining.

F. **FY21 Subsidy Allocation Recommendation**

1. Dr. Osborn explained the Finance Committee activities with the subsidy allocation formula review. He thanked the alliance members for their participation. With current uncertainties, it is recommended that the subsidy formula remains the same for FY21, with the review to continue.
 - a. Mr. Dole spoke about the process the committee used, including input from the association, and the plan to use Zoom to further the review meetings.

Resolution 20-21: Approval of FY21 Subsidy Allocation Formula: 11:00 a.m. –Dr. Osborn moved for approval for FY21 to continue to use the current subsidy allocation formula. Mr. Dole seconded. Motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

IV. **BEMC/Ohio Public TV/ODE Multi-Media Projects**

A. **FY21 Meeting Schedule Proposal**

1. Mr. Phillips presented the proposed meeting schedule for FY21
 - a. September 10, 2020 at 2470 North Star Road
 - b. November 5, 2020 at 2470 North Star Road
 - c. February 11, 2021 at 2470 North Star Road
 - d. May 13, 2021 at 2470 North Star Road

Resolution 20-22: Approval of FY21 Meeting Schedule: 10: a.m. – Ms. Merritt moved for approval of the FY21 meeting schedule. Mr. Steiner seconded. Motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote

B. **Ohio Department of Education's Marketing and Communications Strategy**

2. Mr. Yoder provided some updates from the Ohio Department of Education. On 03/17/2020, Governor DeWine ordered schools closed. One of the first steps was to work with stakeholders to develop a remote learning guide, including PBS resources.

Second step was to learn what remote learning would look like across the state. A survey was sent to schools: 70% of schools reported students facing internet access issues. Access is a critical function of remote learning (internet availability and technology). It was easier for some districts to turn on remote learning than others. InnovateOhio has been working with Internet Service Provider's (ISP's) to help schools and families with access. Schools are doing two things: working with internet service providers directly to provide hotspots or serving as a third-party provider to connect families with ISP's. Remote learning will be a significant part of the equation for fall sessions. ODE is working with partners to create a plan, including questions schools and districts should be addressing to make sure every student is able to access learning. Mr. Yoder stated that the pandemic is shining a light on equity issues and ODE is trying to remedy those.

- a. Chairman Smith stated he is in conversations with the governor and distance learning will continue to be crucial in how students learn. Broadband connectivity and access is a priority of JobsOhio.
- b. Mr. Yoder stated the CARES Act included \$489 million for education. \$440 million will flow to schools and districts through Title 1 allocation. ODE had \$50 million in discretionary funds and the governor's office had \$105 million discretionary funds. Conversations continue to determine how to maximize those funds. There will be resources to schools and districts to address access issues. US Department of Education announces a grant opportunity: Rethink K-12 Education Models. Conversations continue to determine how can Ohio use these grant opportunities to create a long-term impact.
- c. Mr. Greenspan commended the group in communicating the challenges. The state has done a great job and communicating the message is key. Challenges are broadband issue (HB 13 is expected to provide more coverage), additional content for remote learning, and recommendations for new school year in fall. The commission had a great opportunity to enhance distance learning and the commissioners need to continue advocating for it.
- d. Senator Fedor added her thanks to the team and she will commit to distribute distance learning resources. Transportation will be a problem for in-person classes in the fall. The commission should think ahead for childcare and access for care providers to assist children with schoolwork. Ms. Fedor recommended that Mr. Yoder and the team present to the educational committees at the statehouse and asked Mr. Yoder to send the amounts mentioned from educational grants to the commission members.
- e. Mr. Yoder stated that an opportunity exists with Philanthropy Ohio to create a private-public fund for school districts to meet remote learning needs on a regional basis.
- f. Representative Ingram stated she was pleased with The Ohio Channel broadcasts and access to learning content. She thanked Mr. Yoder for shining a light in inequities in education. Ms. Ingram said there is a silver lining and it is opportunity. The broadband bill has

been on the table for a long time, and now is the time to see it through: it needs to be looked at it as an investment.

C. Ohio Public TV

1. Mr. Martin, Chairman of the Ohio Educational Television Stations, told the Commission public media providers have provided thousands of reports and resources. Information has been distributed on websites, emails, and on-air.
 - a. Cincinnati Public Radio unique website users increased 117% from February to March 2020
 - b. WOSU logged 271,000+ online streaming hours in March 2020
 - c. WOUB 234% increase in users from March to April 2020
 - d. WVIZ had 1 million views in April
2. Governor's address has been the central draw for The Ohio Channel. Mr. Martin read a letter from a constituent praising the station. Stations provide children's programming but felt they could do more. Stations committed to air additional learning programs between 6a-6p, including programming that have materials to use in conjunction with the shows. Mr. Martin shared praise received from Paolo DeMaria, Superintendent of ODE. Stations are forecasting 30-40% drop in underwriting, 15-20% drop in membership, 10% reduction in foundation support, and special event fundraising cancellations. Ohio is not unique with these reductions but should be proud to answer the calls when Ohioans needed it the most.
 - a. Mr. Rieland, General Manager of WOSU thanked the commission and BEMC and shared WOSU's experience in translating the governor's daily briefings into Spanish. With the help of United Way and Columbus Foundation, a Spanish live stream is available as a voice-over.

D. FY20 Multi-Media Projects

1. Ms. Bryson shared that all funds for multi-media have been released. Stations are finishing FY20 projects and WOSU released a sixth episode of Drawing with Mr. J (first episode shown at February 13, 2020 commission meeting).

E. Distance Learning and In-Home Learning

1. Mr. Andrews spoke about broadband access. InnovateOhio was interested in existing coverage and ISP's were brought in. There is no comprehensive coverage map for Ohio and a heat map for connectivity is in progress. Several school districts are pursuing USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Distance Learning & Telemedicine (DLT) grants with the USDA; many small rural districts can get \$1m for equipment, connectivity, and tele-medicine.
2. Dr. Osborn provided some examples of learning innovation: teachers posting YouTube tutorials and lessons, Zoom meetings (22,000 teachers on Zoom now when only 1,000 February 2020), dance parties, interviews, special education virtual meetings with families, recognition of senior's, summer bus driver training. A virtual reading mentoring program is planned and shared a success story of virtual learning.

V. Staff Reports

A. Master Control and Engineering

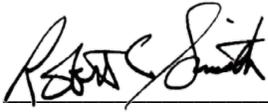
1. Mr. Stevenson reviewed the discrepancies for the last four weeks. 16 satellite feeds coming in and recorded 7 discrepancies. Master Control is maintaining 99% accuracy based on minutes of error.

B. Video Network Operations Center

1. Ms. Bryson reminded Commissioners that financial disclosure statements are due on 07/15/2020 and ethics training needs to be done by 12/31/2020, which needs to be completed each calendar year. Public service recognition for Tony Miller (5 years), Shawn Workman (10 years), Tyler Heichel (15 years), and Scott Nash (20 years).

VI. Adjournment:

Resolution 20-23: Motion for Adjournment: 11:58a.m. –Mr. Dole moved to adjourn. Ms. Merritt seconded. The adjournment motion passed via unanimous voice vote.



Robert C. Smith, Chairman
Broadcast Educational Media Commission

November 5, 2020

Date

DRAFT