



**Broadcast Educational Media Commission
Commission Meeting via Zoom
September 10, 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 10:01 a.m., roll call was conducted by Mrs. Gage.

Members Present:

Chairman Robert Smith
Commissioner Geoffrey Andrews
Commissioner Stephen Black
Commissioner Matt Dole
Commissioner Rex Elsass
Commissioner Stephen Freeze, Esq.
Commissioner Christine Merritt
Designee Charles See
Designee Shaun Yoder
Non-Voting State Senator Michael Rulli
Non-Voting State Representative Catherine Ingram

Members Absent:

Non-Voting State Representative Dave Greenspan
Non-Voting State Senator Teresa Fedor

Members Arriving Later:

Commissioner Dr. Jan Osborn arrived at 10:05 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;
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;

Kitty Lensman, President and General Manager of WPTD/WCET/WPTO;
Alli Cole, Legislative Aide at Ohio House of Representatives;
Michele Carlisle, Coordinator of Distance Education at East Central Ohio Education Service Center;
Noah Blundo, Reporter with Hannah News;
and David Stein, Video Services Manager, Licking Area Computer Association;

Early Departures:

Mr. Dole departed at 11:01 a.m.

B. Commission Action Items:

Resolution 21-04: Motion to Approve May 14, 2020 Meeting Minutes

10:02 a.m. – Mr. Dole moved for approval of the May 14, 2020 meeting minutes. Mr. Freeze seconded. The motion passed via unanimous voice vote.

Resolution 21-05: Motion to Approve June 10, 2020 Meeting Minutes

10:03 a.m. – Mr. Dole moved for approval of the June 10, 2020 meeting minutes. Mr. Freeze seconded. The motion passed via unanimous voice vote.

C. Introduction of Commissioner Elsass

1. Chairman Smith introduced new commissioner Mr. Rex Elsass. Mr. Elsass joins the commission as an appointee by the Ohio House Speaker taking the seat previously held by Commissioner Sarantou.

D. Remarks from Alliance for Public Telecommunications

1. Mr. Martin, Chairman of the Ohio Alliance for Public Telecommunications, gave comments regarding the FY22-23 operating budget. The public stations are receiving all-time high requests for programming and facing dwindling resources. Stations deliver an indispensable service to over 11 million Ohioans. Mr. Martin believes public media is at an inflection point: public stations may close. In order to deliver the service the alliance has, each station was asked to sacrifice local resources for good of Ohio. No other state was able to do what Ohio did to deliver services to Ohioans; it was a result of unique coordination between BEMC, public stations, OGT (Ohio Government Telecommunications), and SNB (Statehouse News Bureau).

II. Finance

A. September 2020 Financial Statement

1. Mr. Phillips provided an overview of the September 1, 2020 financial statement. This highlighted the spent and remaining funds. Mr. Phillips said the agency is on

track for expected spending, including a repair to the gate surrounding the property and a fix to the VPN service.

2. BEMC staff asked to add a vendor to the Purchases in Excess of \$50,000 list for FY 21

Resolution 21-06: Motion to Allow Purchases in Excess of \$50,000 with National Public Radio

10:19 a.m. – Mr. Dole moved to permit BEMC to execute purchase orders in excess of \$50,000 for National Public Radio. Mr. Freeze seconded. The motion passed via unanimous voice vote.

3. Mr. Phillips gave a high-level overview of the FY22-23 Operating Budget process.
4. Mrs. Gage explained the calculations used to reach the OBM-assigned operating budget scenarios. Operating A is calculated as 90% of the FY21 appropriations left after the set-aside funds are taken out, or \$7,378,124. Operating B is the full FY21 appropriation plus 5%. This was attributed to inflation, but no additional details were given by OBM when asked. Mr. Andrews asked if there are more details about the 105% operating B target. Mrs. Gage stated no additional details were given by OBM.
5. Mr. Phillips presented three different budget scenarios and the fund distribution of each: Operating A, Operating B, and the BEMC Optimal budget. He explained how the totals for each Appropriation Line Item were calculated. This included \$1167,133 in capital funds for BEMC projects, if a capital bill is not approved. Chairman Smith commented that a narrative needs to be included with the budget request. Mr. Phillips stated that 30-35 pages of narrative are included with the budget submission. Chairman Smith confirmed that the presentation provided by Mr. Phillips is the recommendation of the finance committee. Mr. See asked about the ceiling in the budget planning module that was discussed at the Finance Committee meeting. Mr. Phillips responded that OBM did adjust the ceiling to reflect the BEMC optimal budget request.
6. Dr. Osborn offered the recommendation of the finance committee and thanked the BEMC staff, finance committee members, and Mr. Dave Carwile of the OETS. Mr. See stated that the final request was in line with the alliance needs.

Resolution 21-07: Motion to Approve FY22-23 Operating Budget Recommendation

10:44 a.m. – Mr. Osborn made a motion to accept the Finance Committee’s recommendation to submit the “Optimum” Budget with Operating C to the Office of Budget and Management including the yet unfunded BEMC Capital items as the Commission’s FY22-23 Operating budget, and to authorize the Executive Director to make adjustments, if necessary. Mr. See seconded. The motion passed via unanimous voice vote.

7. Mr. Freeze asked about next steps in the budget process. Mr. Phillips stated that much work needs to be done in the next few days. The OBM analyst will review the request and adjustments may be needed. Once the analyst is satisfied, the request will go to the director of OBM, then the governor. The governor will send it to the legislature for review and approval. By the next BEMC commission meeting, we anticipate we will have guidance from OBM.

III. **Distance Learning in Midst of COVID-19**

A. **ECOESC Update**

1. Ms. Bryson gave an update on distance learning and shared an analogy from 1934 of learning via radio programming that was considered very successful.
2. Michelle Carlisle, Coordinator of Distance Learning for the East Central Ohio Educational Service Center (ECOESC), spoke about the impact of distance learning on ECOESC. There was not much change for the teachers but highlighted the inequity for students to access the material. Biggest challenge was student access to classes due to limited internet reach. Chinese language teachers are back at the BEMC facility and changed to Zoom licenses. They are delivering to many new starts (Franklin and Licking counties). 130 daily American Sign Language (ASL) periods for about 566 students, Chinese 10 distance learning periods, 14 periods that will come back, 25 elementary classes receiving instruction, 63 HS students enrolled, 300 students that will go back to face-to-face, Spanish 4 periods of Spanish, 2 English as a Second Language (ESL) periods. Ms. Carlisle stated that additional statistics can be made available.
3. Chairman Smith spoke about internet infrastructure in Appalachia and announcements in that regards will be made soon.

B. **Zoom Update**

1. Mr. Andrews talked about statewide Zoom licenses. 615 licenses were active this time last year. 56,500 Zoom licenses are active today. In August, when schools were not in session, Ohio recorded 440,000 Zoom classes. In May, a map was produced of internet and device access. It was shared with ODE and Broadband Ohio. This resulted in \$50 million to improve access Ohio homes. Awards have already been made and are being drawn down. Pandemic emergency EBT (Electronic Benefit Transaction) cards were distributed to children in Ohio that receive free or reduced lunch. Mr. Freeze asked where there was a lack of resources. Mr. Andrews responded that it has changed dramatically. In October it was the urban and Appalachian areas; it was an affordability issue. Donors and philanthropists stepped in to help resolve the cost. Infrastructure is not in place in Appalachia which is a more difficult fix. If we want people in Ohio to compete in a 21st century, they are not going to do it without a connection to the internet. Mr. Freeze asked about the percentage that can connect.

Mr. Andrews stated that homes which have children are almost 1/3 of those that cannot connect. By October, that should change to 15-20%, but even that is still too high.

C. Ohio Department of Education Distance Learning Insights

1. Mr. Yoder shared updates on RemotEDx. A map was shared of school restart model type and spoke about how districts have decided to restart schools. RemotEDx was established to help schools and districts start the new school year the best they can. It is taking what was learned in the spring and moving forward. Many schools did not want to go back to how teaching occurred pre-pandemic; an in-person class with the ability to switch to remote is ideal. Mr. Andrews added that calamity days should not have to be used again under the new model. Mr. Yoder agreed and offered that conversations have emerged around coherence and design.
 - a. RemotEDx includes a Coordinating Council which is the original design team for the federal grant and now includes input from schools, ESC's, philanthropists and others; an Exchange that showcases remote education models, curricula, and instructional materials that all school districts can access; Connectivity Champions which offers on-the-ground assistance to help schools overcome internet and technology challenges (Mr. Andrews stated champions are being hired now); a Support Squad provides in-need schools with direct support, including ensuring students are engaged with remote learning and will leverage ESC's; a Learning Network and Academy to create feedback loops to drive continuous improvement; and a Collaborative Fund for education remotely that created an RFP for schools which will help them transform remote learning (the state is matching \$3 for every \$1 raised).
 - b. Mr. Yoder shared a story of a PBS airing following three Ohio families dealing with remote learning. He encouraged continuing conversations with our partners to ensure needs are being met.
 - c. Rep. Ingram asked for the slides of RemotEDx. She stated it is important to understand what districts need and Mr. Yoder responded that conversations have occurred regarding the overlay of programs and integrating the district and schools in all levels of conversation.

2. Staff Reports and Miscellaneous Updates

- a. Mr. Stevenson gave an update about broadcasting. He stated that two staff members have left BEMC. Both positions have been re-hired, one started on 09/07/2020 and the other will start before the end of September. Mr. Stevenson said a 99.9% accuracy for on-air has been maintained.
- b. Ms. Bryson gave an update on video conferencing and acknowledged affiliates for offering regular learning programs over the summer. Mr. Yoder added that it makes sense to have a conversation about what the future looking like and what PBS stations are willing to do (and what funding is available).
- c. Rep. Ingram said that the new speaker is trying to move things through, including the broadband issue. It is not a luxury anymore; it is a must.

- d. Mr. Elsass said that he is looking forward to serving with the commission and appreciates the work the commission does.

IV. **Adjournment:**

Resolution 21-08: Motion for Adjournment: 11:47 a.m. –Mr. Andrews 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