

Williamsburg Advisory Council  
Monday, November 14, 2022

Members Present: Leslie Bowie, Sean Driscoll, Judy Knudson, Sylvia Payne, Megan Rhyne, John Shulson, and Jim White

Staff Present: Sydney Felker, Mechelle Hankerson, Bruce Jacobson, Dory Morrison, Kate Pringle, Nancy Rogan, and Bert Schmidt

I. WELCOME – Judy Knudson called the meeting to order.

II. PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS – Bert Schmidt shared that the WHRO Holiday Reception will be on Thursday, November 17 and that the invitation was extended to Hunter B. Andrews and Legacy Society members, the Board of Directors, the Community Advisory Board and Williamsburg Advisory Council, the Emerging Leaders Board, new staff members, and WHRO, WHRV, and WFOS radio hosts. He gave an update on the newsroom and shared that there are almost nine journalists on staff, as well as a fellow from ProPublica who will be at WHRO for at least one year. There are two open positions in the newsroom. Bert also shared that the station is partnering with the Hampton Roads Community Foundation on a journalism event that will take place on Wednesday, February 8.

III. DEVELOPMENT REPORT – Kate Pringle shared that WHRO continues to see its rolling donor count increase, despite membership revenue taking a slight dip. She stated that the station’s sustainer count is down since July, but sustainers still account for approximately 42% of all donors and the value of sustainers is 36% of overall membership revenue. The station has maintained 235 Legacy Society members and has seen an increase to 757 Hunter B. Andrews Society members since July. To make up the difference in membership revenue, Development is coming up with additional fundraisers and fundraising incentives including renewed efforts on GivingTuesday, a live jazz concert with Jae Sinnett in December, an album giveaway event in January, and possibly an extra radio drive in June. Underwriting currently sits at 69% of its goal for the year. Grants is behind budget due to grant cycles, but they are currently waiting to hear back from some funders. Kate also shared that the next television drive will take place from Saturday, November 26 through Sunday, December 4, and that the next radio drive will take place from Saturday, December 10 through Friday, December 16.

IV. JOURNALISM – Mechelle Hankerson gave an overview of WHRO’s newsroom and her role as News Director. She stated it is her job to make sure WHRO is putting out quality journalism that people in the community want to support. She provided updates about the newsroom’s Election Day coverage, including that four staff members worked on live on-air and digital coverage. Mechelle shared that she recently hired a new general assignment reporter, Laura Phillion, who came to WHRO from Alaska Public Media. She also shared more about the ProPublica fellow, Brandi Kellam, who will be reporting on eminent domain, and elaborated on the two open positions in the newsroom.

V. CONTENT REPORT – Nancy Rogan reported that WHRO has added a new channel, FNX (First Nations Experience), the first and only Native American and Indigenous TV

channel. FNX will initially be broadcast on Cox 106 and on whro.org. The station is purchasing equipment so that it will eventually be available on 15.5. Nancy shared previews and air dates for several programs, including Murder, They Hope, The Yorkshire Vet, and season three of All Creatures Great and Small. She also shared news about WFOS including new imaging for the Time Machine Radio Network and information about The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame with Paul Shugrue and The Blues Traffic Jam with Jerry Carter. Nancy shared that Leslie Bowie organized a presentation at Williamsburg Landing on The Voice and that it was a positive event for community outreach.

VI. FUTURE MEETINGS – The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 6, 2022. Bruce Jacobson, Chair of WHRO’s Board of Directors, thanked everyone for being part of the Williamsburg Advisory Council and for their years of service to WHRO. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.