

WTVP Community Broadcasting Advisory Council

Minutes of the WTVP-TV Citizens Advisory Council - January 27th, 2010 at 4pm

In attendance: Adam Sloan; Steve Tarter; Norma Rossi; Sandy Anton; Mary Jo Lewellen, Linda Miller, Chet Tomczyk.

Chairman Adam Sloan welcomed new members to the meeting and reiterated the mission of the council in making sure that the station is responding to the needs of the community. "We need to have members who are active in the community," said Sloan, encouraging advisory council members to draw out community reactions to public TV programming. He also urged members to discover program ideas, adding, "If we want to make one of those ideas a reality, remember that a program idea is only a good idea if we can pay for it." WTVP GM Chet Tomczyk said that ideas from the community can often be used for WTVP's "At Issue" program either on the weekly program or as "At Issue in Brief" shorts that might be only a minute-and-a-half long.

Linda Miller reminded the group that WTVP is forbidden to promote fundraising activities within the community. Tomczyk noted that special dispensation was needed before an appeal for Haitian relief ran on the station. "That was the first time we did anything like that since the aftermath of 9-11," he said. The station cannot take editorial positions when it comes to political races, added the station manager, noting that the race for Peoria County Sheriff was the subject of an upcoming "At Issue" program. "One of the things we can do is provide information," said Tomczyk.

Norma Rossi suggested that the news offerings on PBS – the weekday news hour at 6 p.m. and the BBC news at 10:30 p.m. weekdays – should be promoted to "news junkies" like herself in the community. Miller added that the BBC news also airs at 5 a.m. "If people are really interested in news, they need to know about 47's news," said Rossi, who wondered if the added emphasis on interactive items on the news hour was drawing greater viewer interest. Steve Tarter asked about the possibility of a local insert in that weekday news hour. Tomczyk said that the station was open to ideas for local involvement.

Miller brought attention to an item in packets distributed to council members that included a statement about policies and standards "that outlines how we make our decisions on programming," she said. The station strives for balance in whatever goes over the air, said Miller. "What people sometimes forget is that balance doesn't always come within one program. It's across the spectrum," she said. Sloan suggested that the standards be posted on the station's Web site.

Miller said that the station receives "hundreds of programs over the year" and looks to council members for help in sifting through the many shows. "That's another reason we want to get more diversity on the council. We like to get young parents with kids in order to get their perspective on programs," she said. An excerpt of a pilot episode of "Barnstorming America" was screened by the council at Wednesday's meeting. The show involved hobby farmers in upstate New York with tips on food and livestock production that could be interesting to the viewer interested in the sustainability movement. Sandy Anton said she felt there could be interest in such a program but questioned the title in that it might mislead some viewers unaware of the actual subject matter. Mary Jo Llewellyn added that history buffs might also be interested in such a program.

Tomczyk stated that retired teachers are sought to help with station outreach projects involving school children. "With so much to be done, they could help us serve the community," he said, noting that staff reductions at the station have hindered efforts to serve WTVP's 21-county service area.

The next advisory council meeting is scheduled for April 13, 2010.