**WAMU 88.5 - COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING**

**Final Minutes**

**Wednesday, September 12, 2018**

**WAMU Community Council Members Attending:**

Gene Sofer, Shay Stevens, Nakeisha Neal Jones, Huda Asfour, Maura Brophy, Navroz Gandhi, David Nemazie, Manuel Ochoa, Stan Soloway, Lucinda Crabtree, Susan Weiss, Peter Tannenwald, Matt McCormick,

**WAMU/AU Staff Attending:**

JJ Yore, Carey Needham, Audrey Johnson, Andi McDaniel, Dawnita Altieri, Kimberly Boone, Se’era Spraguely, Caneil McDonald, Elly Yu, Alana Wise, Jenny Abamu, Michelle Morgan, Emily Alfin Johnson, Lia Johnson, Jordan Pascale, Josephine Nyounai, Jordan Pascale, Mike Scher, Chris Tylec, Melissa Glass

**Volunteers:**

Cathleen O’Brien

**Members of the Public Attending:**

Steve Kaffen, Mindy Reiser, Patrick Kamanda

1. **Welcome – Eugene Sofer, Council Chair**

Eugene Sofer, Council Chair called the meeting to order at 7:20 p.m. Mr. Sofer introduced himself, Shay Stevens and JJ Yore, GM of WAMU. Gene reviewed the evening’s agenda with council members. He reminded attendees that meeting materials including: the dashboard, draft February meeting minutes, as well as a report for members, were circulated to members in advance by email. This procedure to mail materials in advance was created so that members may review meeting materials in advance so there is more substantive time for Council members to dig deep into the presented subject matter during the meeting.

1. **Manager’s Presentation on WAMU Diversity – JJ Yore, General Manager**

JJ welcomed new staff and guests to the station. New staff were invited to attend the meeting, so that staff and council members could engage with each other. JJ mentioned that we are experimenting with meeting formats to make the meeting more impactful. This experiment also included a new configuration of the council table (from an open square to closed square).

JJ began his presentation on WAMU diversity. The Washington, DC/Maryland/Virginia region is a great market for public radio. When JJ first arrived, he received a tutorial on the demographics of the region: about 8-9 percent of the audience was traditionally African American, Hispanic listeners fell in the 4% range. Nielsen, the company that handles our ratings doesn’t provide Asian listening rates as a separate category, so those figures are unknown. JJ went on tour around the city and region and spoke with various constituents including Anthony Shallal, a restaurateur who shared that race discussions among African Americans are frequent and suggested that other ethnicities don’t regularly discuss race issues. JJ decided to begin the difficult conversation regarding race with WAMU staff.

From the onset, JJ developed diversity principles for the station staff that would serve and reflect the entire region. Diversity needed to come from inside the organization which would lead to inclusiveness of audience. JJ added that diversity and inclusion are much broader than ethnicity. JJ pointed out that diversity includes political choices, perspectives, age, sexuality, gender, geographic location. JJ also began discussions with the Council, followed by the content team, looking to shape the audience to better represent the region.

There are 21 people on the Community Council. JJ reviewed the geographic make-up of the Council and there weren’t any members from east of river nor from PG County. He decided to work with the Chair of the Council to expand representation in the group. The Council at the time only had one member representing Virginia.

More on Virginia representation to come when we will discuss upcoming nominations for the Council.

WAMU’s staff was always diverse behind the scenes, much more than the outward facing positions in terms of on-air and leadership. The GM’s office sponsored a newly formed staff Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) committee, and JJ asked that a member of this committee sit on interview panels. This practice would ensure that the interview pool is diverse and create positive outcomes. WAMU’s African American staff is about 21%, but our biggest shortfall is among the Hispanic community. We need to broaden diversity efforts as we look at hiring.

As for the overall staff diversity metric at public media? About 20% of full-time employees are non-white. At WAMU, we are 36% non-white. On air voices: Sasha Ann, Jenny Abamu, Elly Yu, Geri Mitchell, Jonathan Wilson, Joshua Johnson along with Tameka Smith and Michael King during the weekend are examples of our on-air diversity.

Diversity in content is harder to quantify. How do we evaluate what we are doing? Former news director Alicia Montgomery brought a new commitment to diversity and Jeffrey Katz continued her work in his role as news director. Jeffrey is currently hosting training sessions with his team and is in the process of starting a content audit. WHYY has been doing a content audit and they will share findings with us, so we can apply them in our newsroom.

The results with our audience? Over the last 4 years, the listening has grown 132%, the African American audience has doubled from 8% to 17% in 4 years. Hispanic listening increased by 50%, grown from 4% to 6%. We are #1 in the market among Hispanics with some college and college grads.

**Questions:**

Gene: Is the increase in Latino listening impacting the membership for the station.

JJ: We don’t have that type of information.

Lucinda: Considering the percentages and numbers are, are we trying to match those?

JJ: we focused on African American audiences that has an increase in listeners and listening and it is based on total population. We are making progress.

Huda: I feel like the presentations don’t represent the smaller ethnic groups in the region. Is there a plan to represent these groups?

JJ: We need to start in the largest population groups and where the biggest shortfalls are. But. you’re right, we are not fully reflective of the region.

Huda: The difference is the vision in how to include this audience- Ethiopian, Arab, Nigerians. It would be beneficial to find the statistics to identify the members.

Navroz: In terms of audience diversity asked about age distribution for audience

Reduced the audience and listening in age over 75 and increased substantially in ages 25-44. Not dropped in listeners above 75, but new listeners are in the 25-44-year-old age bracket.

Shay: Diversity Council as part of the Community Council. Revisit and determine how the council will use the information, move forward and make new plans to highlight new communities. Asked about diversity in Senior staff and would like to know those.

JJ: The sound of the station is more inclusive and we’ve changed what we are covering. I’ve been focused mostly on-air because it’s visible to the external audience.

JJ completed his presentation and introduced Andi McDaniel, Chief Content Officer for WAMU.

1. **Feature Presentation on Digital Projects at WAMU – Andi McDaniel, Chief Content Officer**

Andi introduced herself and gave a presentation on current digital projects at WAMU. Every department has been reimagined and we need to spend more time on digital. What would it take for this organization to be as impactful in the digital space as we are in the broadcast space? Andi presentation shared information about A-57 digital work, Table Stakes and The Pod Shop.

The digital work has been going on quietly but will have great impact on our work. The **A57 project** began with audience research. A-57 is Atlantic Strategies, a consulting firm. The WAMU team had an opportunity to observe focus groups and learn about the types of news that people consume, as well as what their habits are. Those focus groups illustrated that WAMU is not present in the digital space. While WAMU is a trusted source, we don’t have a foothold in digital. A57 has done stakeholder interviews to help determine where we should make the best digital investment. The work will inform the outcomes on Smartspeakers, staffing levels, and the digital product side. The report will also help establish benchmarks for how large the audience should be. A final report will come out in October or late November.

WAMU is participating in the **Table Stakes** program created by Poynter and originally developed for newspapers. Newspapers were a beloved industry that was disrupted by new technology. The Table Stakes program has been successful in helping newspapers transform into digital platforms.

**There are 7 table stakes:**

* Serve targeted audience with targeted content
* Publish on the right platforms
* Publish at the right times when audiences consume,
* Funnel users into habitual users and loyalists
* Diversify the way we earn funds, unlike newspapers and public media work,
* Partner to expand capacity
* Drive audience growth

There is a 9-month timeline for Table Stakes. The key tasks are:

* Build a strong digital presence.
* Build a robust digital audience.
* Focus on a specific challenge.
* Get internal feedback.
* Believe there’s a way to impact digitally in region news.

We are defining the Table Stakes challenge and working in 2-week sprints. This work will include various WAMU staff throughout the process.

**The Pod Shop** is a pod cast incubator. WAMU should be a leader in the podcasting arena and can help elevate those stories and lead in that space. WAMU launched the experiment and invited people from the region to pitch their ideas – winners would receive a $2500 stipend and training would be provided to the candidates. For 6 weeks, 2 nights a week staff meet to train the winners in audio. We had a goal of 200 applicants and 540 applications were submitted. There were good ideas and people have incredible expertise outside of audio. The winners are a month into the training and development of their projects. 5 external candidates and 2 from WAMU. There are 6 pilots being crafted.

Excited about this opportunity. It has been a great experience to work with these individuals seeking to learn about the trade. Teaching how to use equipment. Been inspiring and would like to expand and repeat. Will share audio tidbits on-air in a future spot, the biggest goal is elevating Washington’s stories.

**Questions**

Navroz: Is concerned about digital taking away some of the serendipity that occurs now.

Gene: The cost must be expensive to create a popular digital platform.

Andi: It is very expensive, and the strategy is to get people to continue to come back. Would like to be in the game with local content. There may be a need to add 20-30 positions to play this out.

JJ: It may require WAMU to re-think how resources are allocated, and which reporters are focused on regional covers. Will need to invest more resources. The monetization model is something we want to test to see if it’s successful.

Stan: How do we create a sustainable business model?

Peter: He’s able to change stations, but on digital he’s able to discover new subjects he may not have noticed on his own.

Huda: It sounds like listeners are decreasing by looking at data. Can you track content interest?

JJ: The acquisition of DCist increased visitors to the existing platform.

JJ: We can track what audiences click online. Think about yourself as having multiple audiences. This is a very iterative process through the digital work. We got a big surge during the presidential election, but we didn’t have a drop and retained many of the listeners we gained. The first year of the Trump administration kept listeners tuned in. And it is now a new norm.

1. **New Business/Nominations process**

Navroz Gandhi, Chair of the nominating committee spoke about seeking new members for the Council. Dr. Berg is rolling off, 2 people have resigned, and we are awaiting notice about a member’s departure. There are possibly 4 spots open on the Council. We have a strong interest in members from VA. Would like diverse and thoughtful perspectives given on what the station is doing. The deadline to send in “bio” and “why you’re interested” is October 31. The committee will meet in November and figure out which members to advance. We want people who want to make a difference and we are seeking professionals. VA is great, but if there are candidates who are interested in the council, we can tee them up for the future openings in the council and prepare candidates to become members over the next few years.

1. **Adjournment/Announcements**

Chairman Sofer mentioned the member match during the campaign, and asked members to participate in the WAMU campaign to show support. Part of being a member of the council is supporting the station to say that the station enjoys 100 percent support.

A motion to approve the minutes from the May 9 meeting with the following edit on page 4, “correct amount to $33 million.” Minutes were approved as amended. Motion was seconded.

David made a comment to get digital user experience on testing the website. Should build that process into the plan and as the digital plan is being built out, it would be good to ask members to look at the site and give members homework to review the site in advance of launching.

1. **Public Comments**

Steve Kaffen made a comment about mass transit in the region, both rail and mostly bus. WAMU has been involved in transportation issues and they might be interested in learning more about the process.

Mindy Reiser made a comment about outreach to new constituencies. Maybe reach out to people from different realms who are professional in skilled trades to gain different insights an perspective.

Patrick Kamanda came from Boston, but originally from Uganda. Digital technology has its benefits, but we should be aware of the negative parts of the digital world. Can we use technology to translate site into other languages? Would WAMU consider bringing in people to train them on digital platforms? People from different communities should be encouraged to participate in the Community Council.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38pm.