

Meeting Minutes, CPM Sounding Board February 28, 2019

ATTENDEES

CPM Staff:

Betsy Berger - Director of Communications
Steve Edwards -- VP, Chief Content Officer
Tracy Brown -- Managing Editor
Natalie Moore -- South Side Bureau
Paula Friedrich -- Digital Producer
Silvia Rivera -- Vocalo
Taylor Figura -- Facilities Manager
Justine Tobiasz -- archivist
Matt Ford -- archivist

Sounding Board:

Lucy Flores – Joint Committee Co-Chair
Dave Stanford – Joint Committee Co – Chair
Jill Dunlap
William Lee
Angela Sims
Samhita Iyer
Danielle Litman
Terreene Bryant
Sanni Bush-Haruna
Sheila Lewis

1. Welcome, Introductions & November Minutes

Minutes from Dave from the previous meeting.

Participants introduced themselves. We had two members of the public join us.

Natalie Moore introduced us to the South Side Bureau. She's been with WBEZ since 2007, and the south side bureau has been at this location since 2014.

2. Meet Tracy Brown, WBEZ's new managing editor -- Steve Edwards and Tracy Brown

Steve reiterated that as WBEZ is expanding the newsroom work including the introduction of new topic desks (race & class being the newest so far). Tracy Brown's job as managing editor is across these desks and the various platforms -- on air, the web, and other digital options. Steve said being steeped in a digital platform was a key requirement in looking to fill the managing editor role. Tracy started on 1/14, and her background is in newspapers. She's excited to be able to work with the sounding board, and take her experience as a front page editor who helped create a bigger digital presence for her last paper into her work at WBEZ. Her job will include directing the editorial strategy of the newsroom, and work to translate the news into multiple different platforms.

Dave asked for more details about what specifically a managing editor does, and where that fits in the hierarchy at the station. Steve said that as VP of CPM content, he has 4 folks under him, Izzy on programming, Tracy on the newsroom, Silvia on Vocalo, and Kevin on digital / podcasts. Kymbria Young, a member of the public, asked where does the content come from for the news, and how are those decisions made? Tracy said that a lot of it comes from the reporter level on a day to day, or local sources contacting the station, or following obvious news of the day (like the polar vortex, or the election). Dave asked about how often cooperation between CPM and other organizations like the Sun Times, the Tribune, Pro Publica, or the BGA happens, and how that comes about. Steve said that some of that comes out based on a partner reaching out looking for an audio partner, or the coincidence of reporters realizing they're working on the same story and sharing data. Sanni asked about more digital partnerships, and Steve said they've looking to work with many of the new startup organizations like the City Bureau, Southside Weekly, and The Triibe.

3. Vocalo -- Silvia Rivera

Silvia introduced Vocalo to the unaware as Chicago's urban alternative. Vocalo has existed for 10 years, 4 years in the current urban alternative format. Vocalo is the sensibility of public radio doing music (R&B, hip-hop, dance, and house). Morning Amp is the main non-music show on the station from 8-10 weekdays. Vocalo aims to play Chicago music, and discuss Chicago issues. Stations across the country are looking at Vocalo as an example. "AAA" music at other stations brings in new audience, but not a diverse audience. Vocalo has recently gotten a grant enabling them to have additional positions there. They have a goal of having 8am-8pm hosted, not just playlists for most of the day. They're also looking for a digital engagement producer to start very soon. Vocalo just had their 10th block party, and it was a good time. William Lee gave feedback that he really likes the Morning Amp, but wondered when the Vocalo app might have more features. Silvia said that the app hasn't been a priority yet with the light staffing they have. The website is new as of January, and they're working on more robust digital presences which will help address the app. Dave said he actually likes the simple app, because while it doesn't do a lot, it does what it does well. Will piped up to mention that he actually really likes the WBEZ app, and believes it to be better than the NPR ONE app. Sam said she thought the mobile website for Vocalo is very good, and wondered about potentially working with Spotify for podcasts, which Sanni agreed with. Sam continued that she found so many new artists through vocalo. Demetrius Young, a member of the public, said that he really likes Vocalo, but didn't realize it was connected to WBEZ. Silvia mentioned that the the music selection on Vocalo aims to be a mix of local, classic, and music of the moment. Vocalo solicits music from local bands, and will play it. Local artists (musical and otherwise) are in Vocalo's most recent "Chicago Sounds Like" video. Kymbria Young asked Silvia what the target audience for Vocalo was. Silvia said aiming for a core of 25-30 years old matching the ethnic demographics of Chicago. Most marketing is via festivals and events, like the Union Park roller skating party, or the Reclaimed Soul evening at Promontory Point Park.

4. Mayoral election coverage + editorial product development -- Paula Friedrich

During our discussion, an inebriated person from the community crashed the meeting. Folks at the meeting valiantly tried to bring the discussion back on topic, or at least get the new person to share the floor to no avail. Natalie's quick thinking got the gentleman escorted out by bouncers from a nearby establishment.

Paula Friedrich talked about the web page she'd helped produced trying to take all the various information from so many different mayoral candidates and simplify it down to a single web page, with ways to expand on the candidates answers beyond the yes or no format that they were aiming for. After the page had been live for a few days, feedback online was that it'd be great to have the public answer the same questions and see which candidates lined up most closely with the users answers. Paula and her team quickly turned around a page that did just that. Sheila said that she liked the page so much, and it was clearly so popular that when it was announced, the link crashed from so many visitors. Sam said she appreciated being able to get to the profiles of the candidates, while Terreene said she was happy that they were able to get so much detail into something "short and sweet". Lucy thought the page online and mobile was well polished, and did a good job getting folks talking about the candidates. Then discussion turned to how the site could have been possibly better, perhaps with candidates or users answering the questions prioritizing the questions.

Betsy asked Paula how the Sounding Board might be able to help the digital team. Paula mentioned perhaps meeting at the station for as little as 30 minutes at a time. The Sounding Board said they were happy to be asked to give feedback, in person, over email, or over the phone.

5. Public Comments

No extra comments were made.

Reminder about upcoming meetings:

5/23/19 -- TBD location (perhaps west side bureau ?)

8/21/19 -- navy pier probably

11/21/19 -- navy pier

9/11/19 -- annual meeting.