

**WMHT Educational Telecommunications  
WMHT Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
January 23, 2025**

A Meeting of the WMHT Board of Trustees was held on January 23, 2025. Gwen Wright, Chair of the Board of Trustees, presided.

***Present***

Del Salmon	KMarie King
Anthony Hayes	Maire Masterson
Jason Benitez	Steady Moono
Angela Dixon	Livingstone Mukasa
John Eberle	Karen Opalka
Tammis Groft	Paul Powers
Doris Fischer Malesardi	Tobi Saulnier
	Gwen Wright
	Benita Zahn

***Excused***

Don Applyrs	Martin Mbugua
Glinnesa Gailliard	Toyin Tofade
	Teresa Zielinski

***Also Attending***

WMHT Staff: Val Belden, Patrick Carpenter, Cole Mead, Will Pedigo, Julie Raskin, Chris Wienk, Dana Wright, Mara Droган

***Meeting Call to Order***

Ms. Wright called the meeting to order at 4:04 PM

***Consent Agenda Items***

On a motion by Mr. Salmon, duly seconded by Ms. Groft, and hearing no discussion, the consent agenda of minutes and notes listed below was unanimously approved by the Board of Trustees.

**Minutes and Notes**

- November 21, 2024, Board Annual Meeting
- January 7, 2025, Executive Committee Meeting
- January 16, 2025, Finance Committee Meeting

***Finance Committee*** Ms. Dixon and Ms. Raskin noted the highlights.

- WMHT's fiscal year is from July 1 through June 30th.
- After 6 months, WMHT continues to be on track to make its budget net income before depreciation is \$112,058 higher than the budget.
- Operational income is \$155,356 lower than budget.
- CPB Grants are \$16,897 higher than the budget.
- Full year FY25 CPB grants will be higher than budget by \$33,794 due to the adjustments in the CPB formulary
- Membership (including matching gifts) is \$79,163 lower than the budget. Membership is at 97% of the goal.
- Sustainer income (\$965,512) makes up 39% of December's YTD membership revenue.
- Underwriting is \$47,025 lower than budget.
- Operational expenditures before depreciation are \$267,414 favorable to budget. Lapsed salary savings account for \$200,619 or 75% of the favorable variance. Another favorable variance is maintenance and repairs at \$39,427.
- Balance Sheet - cash is \$430,166 higher than the prior year due to the WMHT reserve account - realized gains and interest (\$117,457) along with operational savings (\$313,149).

The investment committee meets with our investment advisor, Graypoint, on January 29<sup>th</sup>.

On a motion by the Finance Committee, the trustees accepted the financial report and December financials.

***Governance Committee***

Ms. Graft spoke about the election of a trustee to the Executive Committee as allowed by the bylaws. The Governance and Executive Committees met to discuss and agreed to ask Mr. Del B. Salmon to join. Mr. Salmon accepted.

On motion by Ms. Malesardi. Duly seconded by Ms. Opalka, a motion to nominate Del B. Salmon for the Executive Committee was unanimously approved by the Board of Trustees. Mr. Salmon abstained.

Ms. Graft reported on the board orientation that took place on January 15<sup>th</sup>. The orientation was well received and is a great benefit to all trustees. Materials are on Board Spot.

Ms. Graft reported there will be demographics surveys sent to the board of trustees. The Governance Committee will use this information to ensure diverse representation on the board. The surveys are expected to go out in February 2025.

The board thanked Bridget Ball Shaw for her years of service and her dedication to public media. Ms. Ball Shaw had to step down due to personal reasons.

***Institutional  
Advancement  
Committee***

Mr. Carpenter reported that fundraising and sales are strong. He noted that the first and early second quarters of FY25 did not follow the historical pattern of major giving at WMHT. Mr. Carpenter was thrilled to report that, despite an aggressive December goal, the fundraising staff hit its goal. He shared that membership numbers are very strong at just over 32,000 active members.

Mr. Carpenter concluded his report by acknowledging the retirement of long-time WMHT Senior Advancement Officer, Sandra Beer. Sandra served in her role for 16 years. In that time, she served hundreds of donors well, working with them to grow their giving in support of the organization. He also noted Sandra's remarkable work in planned giving, which is largely responsible for the size of WMHT's Board Designated Fund.

Ms. Fischer Malesardi noted that the Institutional Advancement Committee is going to be meeting between board meetings. The first meeting will take place on February 13<sup>th</sup> at 2p, over zoom. The committee consists of Jason Benitez, Doris Fischer Malesardi (Chair), Anthony V Hayes, Martin Mbugua, Steady Moono, Livingstone Mukasa, Karen Opalka, Del B. Salmon, Gwen Wright and Teresa Zielinski, along with Patrick Carpenter. The first meeting will be similar to previous years when each IA staff member will meet with the committee and explain what their responsibilities on the staff are. The committee will also meet to discuss board directed funds and the percentage being allocated. The committee will work on the Edison Society. Ms. Fischer Malesardi noted it's a pleasure to serve on this board. Ms. Fischer Malesardi said each trustee is an ambassador for the station.

***President's Report***

Mr. Hayes took a moment to welcome new trustees and acknowledge the new officers of the board.

- Ms. Gwen Wright – Chair
- Ms. Tammis Groft– Vice Chair
- Ms. Angela Dixon – Treasurer
- Dr. Tobi Saulnier – Secretary

Mr. Hayes reflected on the past year and described it with one word, gratitude.

Mr. Hayes noted we're better together. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The Board, staff and WMHT leadership came together to chart a new course for WMHT's future.

- 2 years of growth & transformation
  - Listening Tours – Internal & External
  - Community & Stakeholder Engagement
  - Content Creation / Enhanced Education Services
  - Board Relations

- Strategic Partnerships & Alliances
- New 3-Year Strategic Plan – North Star
- Refreshed Board Orientation
- Financial Stability
- Selected as a Top Workplace by the Times Union
- 4 Emmy Nominations

Mr. Hayes thanked Ms. Fisher Melesardi for her role in helping us create a Triple A Board – Culture of Philanthropy:

- Advocate
- Ambassador
- Asker

Mr. Hayes reported on the President's Council of Advisors - past trustees. He thanked Ms. Fischer Malesardi for her excellent suggestion. The council will consist of the following past trustees.

Kathy Jimino	Lee McElroy
Karthik Bala	Gina Mintzer
Joe Richardson	Mary-Ellen Piche
Karen Carpenter	

Mr. Hayes reported on:

#### Priorities

- WMHT colleagues are the organization's most valuable resource. Thus, maintaining the "right" culture within WMHT is one of his top priorities. Cultivating a strong, positive, collaborative, and supportive culture fosters high employee engagement, better morale, creativity, and ultimately, the quality of content produced, making it crucial for WMHT's overall success.
- Additional priorities include fostering community engagement, diversifying content and platforms, ensuring financial stability through fundraising, sponsorships, and partnerships, adapting to new technologies, and advocating for public media's value to the Capital Region and beyond; all while upholding the core principles of public media, providing educational services, cherished music selections, and trusted, unbiased information to the audience.

## Threats

- Potential threats to federal public media funding are a growing concern. These threats are not new, but they are intensifying in ways that are alarming to stations and communities across the country, including WMHT.

## Strategy to address threats

- WMHT will continue to rely heavily on the support of our loyal viewers and listeners. The generosity of this community is amazing. One vital strategy for the future of WMHT is to continually tell the story of the important services we provide and then help current and future members find opportunities to contribute to that work best for them.
- Diversifying revenue streams through strategic partnerships, member donations, corporate sponsorships and grants is key to our long-term success and sustainability. We will also continue to research and explore new funding models that align with WMHT's vision, mission, and values.
- Partner with national public media organizations to help secure federal funding for public media.

As Mr. Hayes looks to the future, he remains hopeful and optimistic. He still believes...WMHT's best days are ahead of us.

## ***Leadership Team - Radio***

Mr. Wienk reported the following:

### Classical WMHT

- Very successful Bach at New Year's at the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall on New Year's Day.
- Upcoming events:
  - Feb 4, at the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall - the Troy Chromatic Concert with Stephen Isserlis.
  - On Feb 11, the Albany Symphony will be in our studio for a special season announcement event.
  - Plus, we have a very special concert on March 23, - the Next Generation Festival, musicians and ensembles from local university music programs performing at the Troy Savings bank Music Hall
- And for Mozart lovers, Mozart's birthday is on Monday (Jan 27), we will play wall-to-wall Wolfgang all day long.

## WEXT

- Great Saratoga NYE Fest on December 31st with a few thousand fans of music.
- Co-presentation of the local 518 music awards – The Eddies with the Proctors Collaborative (March 24 HOF and April 27 main Awards show).
- Black History Month – we will be celebrating the music of Black creatives all month with a special playlist to play on President's Day.
- International Women's Day (March 8) – once again, our playlist of the Women Who Rock will air, and the gentlemen of WEXT will be kicked out in favor of the women of WEXT.
- (And happy 114th to Django Reinhardt)

## *Leadership Team – TV*

Mr. Pedigo reported:

### PBS Programming Advisory Council

- After a 3-year term and serving as PAC Chair in 2024, Will Pedigo is rolling off the PAC.

## **Exciting year coming for WMHT!**

### New York NOW

- The 50th anniversary of state capital reporting was January 9th, 2025.
- WMHT's participates in the New York Public News Network, a statewide content sharing initiative between NY's NPR & PBS news producing stations.
- Two new NYPNN reporters that you'll see on New York NOW in the future.

### North To New York: The Great Migration in NY's Capital Region

- North to New York event; Feb 8th at 3pm at the New York State Museum Huxley Theater
- Five screenings planned at four libraries in February & March:
  - <https://www.wmht.org/north-to-new-york/>

### Reflections on the Erie Canal

- Erie Canal project will kick off Saturday, April 12th with a 10-part multi-platform series
- One-hour documentary coming in Oct. 2025
- Premiere at the World Canals Conference in Buffalo in Sept. 2025

### Ken Burns The American Revolution

- Coming to PBS on November 16th, 2025
- Ken Burns American Revolution filmmaker event in the Capital Region Sept. 10th, 2025.

- Companion 30-minute episode of Field Trip coming in November.

Thanks to Ms. Drogan and Ms. Rivers for their education work on PBS Learning Media.

***Leadership Team –  
Engineering***

Mr. Mead reported the following:

- New fiber provider named Crown Castle for our connection with Central Cast in Syracuse. This replaced our fiber circuit with Lumen.
- New Employee in the department. Jeff Patridge is our new contracted Broadcast Engineer
- FY 2025s capital projects begin installation March 3rd. When completed we'll have a new video router, production switcher, and master clock system.

***Community  
Advisory Board***

Ms. Drogan reported that she began recruiting new Community Advisory Board members in late October. Announcements were made on broadcast, radio, and social media, and sent through newsletters and through direct emails to various networks and partners. The deadline for applications was December 31, 2024. The goal was to add up to 12 new members and received 15 applications, one of whom subsequently removed her name from consideration. Mr. Pedigo and Ms. Drogan selected 12 new members based on their experience, community connections, and geographic locations.

**Nominees - term ends December 31, 2026**

1. LaQuetta Alexander-Ellis, Albany, NY
2. Kathleen Banks, New Paltz, NY
3. David Brooks, Northville, NY
4. Elizabeth Condrey, Albany, NY
5. Elahe Gol Pari, Troy, NY
6. Erin McIntyre, Beacon, NY
7. Tarasha Darden McKoy, Albany NY
8. Ryan O'Connell, Schenectady, NY
9. Raymond O'Connor, Wilton, NY
10. Siara Lynn Ramos, Watervliet
11. Daniel Siler, Schenectady, NY
12. Cheyenne Simmons, Albany, NY

**Continuing Members - term ends December 31, 2025**

1. Daniel Butterworth, Albany, NY
2. Katelyn Egan, Rensselaer, NY
3. Ayesha Geter, Latham NY
4. Stephen M. Long, Jr., North Adams, MA
5. Charlie Owens, East Greenbush, NY
6. Katy Peace, Schenectady, NY
7. Elizabeth Press, Troy, NY

8. Kathleen Preston, Delmar, NY
9. Gabrielle Raven, Willow NY
10. Gemma Rinefierd, Delmar, New York
11. Alexandra Walters, Loudonville, NY
12. Deborah Warnock, Cambridge, NY

On a motion by Ms. Groft, duly seconded by Mr. Powers, the above-named individuals were elected to serve on the Community Advisory Board

***North to New York:  
The Great Migration  
in NY's Capital  
Region***

Mr. Wright and Mr. Pedigo spoke about North to New York: The Great Migration. Mr. Wright shared information about *North to New York* and presented a trailer to the Board.

***Chair's Report***

Ms. Wright thanked everyone for their faith in her as the leader of the Board of Trustees and hopes she fulfils their expectations. Ms. Wright noted WMHT has an all women, diverse, leadership team on the Board of Trustees. Ms. Wright thanked past Chair, Mr. Del Salmon for leading the board through some tough times and at the same time was able to help us to maintain a steady vision forward. She thanked him for his efforts and being willing to stay on as a trustee to support future efforts. Ms. Wright said WMHT is starting 2025 in a great place financially and she knows with the leadership in place we will stay the course and maintain this level of stability despite some of the future challenges. Now, more than ever, public media is a necessary tool for education and public discourse. This bumps up against some of the rhetoric around the country. WMHT has been down this road, but public media affects the lives of everyone. Getting information that is unbiased and pure is a challenge without public media. WMHT lifts up our viewers and listeners days. Schools could not do the important work they do without public media. WMHT sits in the belly of the future and together, staff and trustees will make this the best public media station. The new strategic plan shows how to accomplish this, it is the road map to use together. Ms. Wright thanked the governance committee for putting together a group of people who are likewise committed to this mission.



***Executive Session***      No executive session needed.

***Adjournment***      Hearing no further business being brought forward, on a motion by Mr. Salmon and seconded by Ms. Saulnier, the trustees unanimously approved closing the meeting at 5:12 pm.