

# RIPBS, The Public's Radio Plan to Merge

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Rhode Island's two public broadcasters plan to merge and form an organization focused on producing high-quality content that sparks public discourse and contributes to lifelong learning.

Rhode Island PBS and The Public's Radio announced Thursday their decision to merge, creating a public media organization that serves Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts.

"It's definitely a merger of equals. I think collectively we all feel that we're much stronger together as a team than trying to work independently with similar missions," said David Piccerelli, president of Rhode Island PBS.

The merger needs to be approved by the Federal Communications Commission and the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office. It's expected to be finalized in the spring of 2024.

Torey Malatia, president, chief executive officer and general manager of The Public's Radio said he's very confident the regulatory approval is going to go well.

"By coming together, what we're doing is we're not only becoming stronger, but I think we're actually ensuring our future independence even more," Malatia said.

Altogether, the two public media organizations have nearly 100 employees and have received Emmy and Telly Awards. They've also been recognized by the Edward R. Murrow Awards and the Public Media Journalists Association. Piccerelli would like to see more employees join the award-winning team once the merger is finalized.

"I think to do this properly we're going to need more talent to make it really work," Piccerelli said.

Malatia said joining forces doesn't just double the impact of the two institutions. "I think it goes up enormously, well beyond doubling," he said. "Public media's increasingly looked at as sort of the last but best hope for trusted, important conversation, information, discussion, debate, the sorts of things that really keep civic life alive. And we're inspired by that."

The new organization will be located in the existing Rhode PBS building at 50 Park Lane in Providence, which is owned by the station. Piccerelli said it will take some time to consolidate the operations of both organizations and will require construction within the existing building.

Conversations about a possible merger started in 2013 when Piccerelli said he spoke with Joe O'Connor, the then-president of what was formerly known as Rhode Island Public Radio. But,

Piccerelli went on to say that serious talks about engaging in a merger began in earnest around August of 2022.

“This was not a financial decision for either one of us,” Piccerelli said. “I mean we’re two both very strong organizations financially. This is purely about being stronger together and better serving the Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts community.”

Both boards will continue to exist until the merger is finalized. Then, several members of the two boards will come together to form one board. Dave Lavery, chair of the Rhode Island PBS Foundation Board, and Elizabeth Delude-Dix, chair of The Public’s Radio Board of Directors, will co-chair the new organization’s board.

In a statement, Lavery said, “By combining resources and talent, we can build on our respective traditions of trust and integrity to meet audiences where they are, across platforms, to deliver rich programming that is meaningful, accessible, and inclusive.”

Delude-Dix said merging will allow the two companies to be seen by more people in different ways. “As a unified public media organization, we anticipate building new relationships and fostering deep partnerships while opening our audience’s eyes and ears to new experiences in the arts, sciences, humanities, and politics. A vibrant public media can create a stronger civic life and, together, we can better deliver on our missions,” she said in a statement.

Malatia and Piccerelli will continue to serve as CEOs. Once the merger is finalized, a national search will be conducted for the head of the combined organization. Board members have invited Malatia and Piccerelli to apply. A name for the new media entity has not yet been selected.