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IN-DEPTH NPR NEWS & INFORMATION RADIO TO LAUNCH IN PITTSBURGH ON 90.5 FM
24/7 jazz programming to air on HD channel; focus is on sustainable business model

PITTSBURGH, PA — Essential Public Media (EPM) today announced plans to launch a digital journalism hub on July 1, 2011, that features a public radio format emphasizing in-depth local news coverage and National Public Radio (NPR) programs, an expanded jazz schedule on a High Definition (HD) channel—on-line and on-air—and enhanced internship opportunities for student reporters, all built on a long-term, sustainable business model.

EPM, a local, wholly-owned subsidiary of independent public radio station WYEP-FM/Pittsburgh Community Broadcasting Corp., in partnership with Public Media Company (PMC), last January offered to buy WDUQ-90.5 FM from Duquesne University for \$6 million in cash and other considerations. An asset purchase agreement signed on May 2 includes cash, a note, underwriting credits and paid internship commitments to Duquesne University journalism students, according to EPM chair Marco Cardamone.

The Richard King Mellon Foundation and Heinz Endowments previously announced investments of \$1.5 million each toward purchase and operating costs. EPM recently received \$250,000 from WYEP's strategic reserve and another \$250,000 from a donor advised fund managed by The Pittsburgh Foundation (TPF). Additional requests have been made to TPF, and a dialogue is continuing with other leading foundations in Pittsburgh.

The new 90.5 FM radio station initially will be led by Dennis Hamilton, who will serve as interim President and General Manager. Hamilton is a public radio veteran with 25 years in executive positions at Minnesota Public Radio, experienced in station management, radio technology, business innovation and modeling, as well as program production and distribution. Hamilton currently serves as Director of Consulting for Public Radio Capital, a sister nonprofit of PMC.

“Dennis is a seasoned executive who will help us through a start-up transition period as we build-out our organization and recruit senior leadership,” said Cardamone. “We are thrilled Dennis is with us to help shape this new venture.”

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“Working with Dennis for many years, I’ve watched him help build Minnesota Public Radio’s 40-station network group,” said Susan Harmon of PMC. “He’s one of the most well-respected leaders in public radio and shares our excitement about this opportunity.”

Other senior leadership and staffing positions are being determined. “Our goal is to build one of the best teams in public radio, and that includes hiring as many of the current WDUQ staffers as possible, since we believe there is extraordinary talent there,” said Cardamone.

The new radio station will relocate to the WYEP Community Broadcast Center on Pittsburgh’s South Side. At the request of Duquesne University, an application will be made for new call letters.

The 30-day Federal Communications Commission (FCC) public comment period regarding the purchase continues until June 9, 2011. Pending FCC approval of the license transfer application, the format change is planned for July 1.

Why News and Information

Pittsburgh is one of only two U.S. cities in the top 35 radio markets without a full-service NPR news and information station, according to NPR. National research also shows full-service public radio stations consistently outperform split-format stations in terms of community service and audience growth—essential to long-term sustainability. WDUQ currently airs NPR news magazines and local news; about 60 percent of the programming is jazz music.

“Current business models for journalism are eroding as the traditional media landscape continues to be disrupted by the Internet, digital technologies and changing consumer behavior,” said Cardamone. “Yet a significant need remains to provide listeners with in-depth coverage of local, national and global issues impacting their lives. It is our vision and intent to fill that void with cross-platform news and information programming.

“EPM will view local and regional life through a wide-angle lens to spot important stories that are not being told. Our focus is on quality, non-partisan news told by professional journalists that is accurate, comprehensive and compelling. We also intend to include stories offered by citizen and student journalists to engage the community in dialogue and action,” said Cardamone.

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Programming Highlights

Signature shows in development for 90.5 FM include *Essential Pittsburgh*, a daily, hour-long interview/call-in program exploring critical issues impacting our region, and *Sounds of the City*, a weekly round-up featuring stories and sound bites that will form an audio collage of Pittsburgh people and organizations. Other local programs are being planned.

Award winning NPR News magazines Morning Edition and All Things Considered will remain on 90.5 FM, as well as other acclaimed public media programs including Fresh Air, Marketplace, Car Talk, Wait Wait Don't Tell Me, This American Life and The Splendid Table.

Jazz programming, currently airing about 100 hours per week on 90.5 FM, expands to 174 hours per week through three channels; HD radio, on-air and on-line:

- Jazz will be broadcast 24/7 on a companion HD channel and Internet audio stream; EPM plans to offer a voucher program for member listeners to help them purchase HD receivers
- EPM will continue the production of JazzWorks, the U.S.'s only public radio jazz program originating from Pittsburgh.
- EPM will devote six hours of jazz programming every Saturday night on 90.5 FM
- Live jazz events will be recorded for broadcast, celebrating the city's jazz heritage and current scene
- A jazz calendar of events will be posted on-line
- Jazz reports and features will air on 90.5 FM

The core NPR news and information delivery will be through traditional "over-the-air" broadcast radio on 90.5 FM, but also include digital HD radio platforms, the Internet and mobile devices. EPM's primary web site, EssentialPublicMedia.org, will function as a digital journalism hub for up-to-the-minute news, information, insight, listener interaction and community engagement.

"The web site also will serve as a 'listening post' for user-driven journalism that will be encouraged and cultivated," said Cardamone. "EPM also is developing interactive delivery for mobile platforms including smart phones and tablet

devices. News and information will be multimedia in nature, integrating voice, video, photos, information graphics, podcasts and 'widget-based' applications into the storytelling.”

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Partnerships, Leadership, Internships

EPM will be a news partner with PublicSource, a web-based public service journalism initiative conceived by The Pittsburgh Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and administered by Pittsburgh Filmmakers, one of the oldest and largest media arts centers in the U.S.

PublicSource will be regionally focused, using long-form journalism techniques and utilizing text, audio, video and photography. Its web site will operate as a content warehouse and PublicSource will develop media partnerships with news organizations throughout the region.

EPM's Board of Directors currently consists of members of WYEP's board and Public Media Company's board. EPM bylaws call for a 9-12 member governance board, which will be broadly representative of civic, corporate and journalistic leadership in the Pittsburgh region. Experienced and business-focused, the board will build an efficient, sustainable cost structure, ensuring financial resources are properly managed and the station leadership operates EPM in concert with its mission. The board also will create editorial policy to ensure objective, balanced coverage with high ethical journalism standards and non-partisan news reporting.

An advanced internship program with Duquesne University will train aspiring journalists who want to report on in-depth stories, while providing listeners with a younger perspective and helping build public radio's next generation of engaged citizens and leaders.

“We are grateful that, with strong support from the foundation community, underwriters and member listeners, the new radio station and its digital technology platform will preserve a vital public resource in Pittsburgh that will benefit

generations to come,” said Cardamone. “We are public trustees of this resource—not owners—and we will continue to listen to the community’s voice.”

Essential Public Media, a local, wholly-owned subsidiary of independent public radio station WYEP-FM/Pittsburgh Community Broadcasting Corporation, is committed to financially-sustainable, quality public radio journalism. EPM’s digital journalism hub will include local news and information, NPR programming, an all-jazz HD channel, and Internet and mobile platforms. Comments are welcome at www.EssentialPublicMedia.org.

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