

# VIRGINIA LOCAL NEWS PROJECT

## Board Meeting Minutes

February 27, 2026

### Attendees

Anne Adams, Betsy Edwards, Steve Weddle, Laura Bennett, Jeff South, Dennis Brack, Matt Paxton, Gwyn Mellinger.

### 1. Call to Order

Anne Adams opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

### 2. Financial Report & Spending Priorities

Betsy Edwards reviewed the organization's financial status, noting that VLNP currently has approximately \$94,000 in the bank, including a recent \$75,000 contribution from the Virginia Press Association (VPA). The board reviewed a proposed spending plan prioritizing continued strategic communications support, conference support, fundraising travel, and marketing initiatives.

### 3. 2026 Conference Support

Steve Weddle presented plans for the 2026 conference keynote speaker, Jerry Mitchell, Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist and MacArthur Fellow. VLNP requested approval for \$3,000 to support the keynote speaker and \$2,000 for student scholarships.

Motion: Jeff South moved to approve conference support funding. Dennis Brack seconded the motion.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

### 4. Fundraising & Strategic Partnerships

Board members discussed the growing relationship with Blue Engine Collaborative, which is helping scale the Digital Initiative into a statewide Digital Accelerator project and connect VLNP with national journalism funders. A proposed \$6,000 travel budget would support attendance at industry conferences and meetings with national and regional funders.

## **5. Marketing & Awareness Initiatives**

VLNP discussed plans to improve public awareness and storytelling efforts through four promotional videos, photography, newsletters, presentations, and social media content. A budget of \$7,500 was proposed for these efforts.

## **6. Grant Development Updates**

Laura Bennett provided updates on multiple funding opportunities, including:

- Dominion Energy grant proposal for a news literacy program in Petersburg and Staunton
- Robins Foundation outreach focused on Richmond/Henrico initiatives
- Henry Luce Foundation concept development
- Worrell Foundation proposal focused on Southwest Virginia community engagement initiatives
- Hampton Roads Community Foundation relationship-building efforts

Laura emphasized the increasing competitiveness of nonprofit funding and the importance of relationship-based fundraising.

## **7. 'The Current' Event**

Laura Bennett shared plans for an upcoming May 5 community event hosted by Blue Octopus Consulting focused on relationships between nonprofits and local news organizations. VLNP will provide sponsorship support through refreshments/snacks.

## **8. Board Development**

Anne Adams nominated Lucille Miller and Kevin Martingale to join the VLNP board. Betsy Edwards provided background information on both nominees.

Motion: Gwyn Mellinger moved to approve both nominations. Jeff South seconded the motion.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

## **9. Officer Transition**

Anne Adams announced her intention to step down as Board President and recommended Gwyn Mellinger as the next President/Chair. Gwyn accepted the nomination and requested Anne Adams continue serving as Vice Chair during the transition.

Motion: Jeff South moved to approve Gwyn Mellinger as Chair and Anne Adams as Vice Chair.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously, with Gwyn abstaining.

## **10. Board Governance & Orientation**

Laura Bennett discussed the importance of nonprofit board governance training, including fiduciary duties, Virginia nonprofit law, conflict of interest, confidentiality, executive compensation oversight, IRS responsibilities, and board liability

considerations.

The board also discussed bylaws review, board expectations, onboarding processes, and directors and officers insurance coverage.

## **11. Program Updates**

Betsy Edwards discussed two emerging initiatives:

- A news literacy initiative tied to News Literacy Week and potential partnerships with local Gannett newspapers
- A Southwest Virginia 'Bridging the Gap' initiative focused on civic engagement, community conversations, and regional legislative reporting support

## **12. Adjournment**

With no further business, Anne Adams adjourned the meeting.