**Communication Plan Background**

Consultant was engaged in July 2016; draft plan was delivered November 2016. Plan was devised with the help of the board’s Strategic Planning Committee.

FCC lifted the Quiet Period on Monday, 6 February. We went public Thursday, 9 February.

**Excerpts from the Plan**

**Key principles** behind our communication strategy:

1. *We have one chance at a first impression. Make it tell. Use it to cement the running lanes for all subsequent conversation.*
2. *Show those running lanes to have been determined by committed community listening - and essential context.*
3. *Seed energy and aspiration within those running lanes. Give people something positive to get excited about.*
4. *Prioritize. Certain audiences matter most. They absolutely must hear from us first.*
5. *Prepare. Timing is uncertain. Preparation is not.*

And, the proposed talking points for each of these key principles:

* Impress upon the Committee the dangers around public “windfall” conversations. Make clear the “feeding frenzy” potential, and the imperative of using the first impression to clearly establish the playing field for all subsequent conversations -- so it unfolds on our terms, not outside agendas.
* People respond to ideas more favorably if they see those ideas come from them. The survey we conduct enables a “show not say” commitment to listening. We should articulate an ongoing commitment to listening, too. Historical context is essential, too. We must make clear that while WITF is strong and vibrant - there is significant “deferred maintenance.” (e.g. greater revenue when we began this century than we have today).
* We should seek to give people an early sense of the great things that can be done, to enable natural supporters to get excited. The political truism of “mobilizing your base” is applicable for us. Example: Enabling the future of state-government reporting. *See the press release for how this was decided and articulated.*
* Internal staff, donors and sponsors are particularly critical. Describe the potential dangers with each. Articulate the commitment to establishing rifle-shot communications tailored for each. With a tightly sequenced unfolding of our news, so that everyone who matters hears first from us.
* Timing is uncertain - but we can be ready for anything. Timetable will assume the earliest possible disclosure so we’re ready to go whenever D-Day hits - with clearly tailored segmentation, and tightly timed sequencing, ready to implement.

The following are messages that should be communicated across the board, no matter who we are talking to. They are **informed by listening.** We have conducted surveys to hear from our governing Board, staff members and the larger community about their perceptions of WITF; what they want from the organization; and how we can better the community. That data has been the foundation for our decisions.

* **The Opportunity:**

Used wisely, these auction proceeds give WITF the opportunity to achieve its **next level of public service** for Central Pennsylvania, by helping the region to Live Inspired in new and better ways. While other media organizations increasingly are compelled by financial realities and evolving media habits to contract their services -- WITF, the region’s only public media organization, is committed to using these auction proceeds to expand its public service to the region and beyond.

* **Key Principles:**

**Achieving new levels of public service:** It will be important that our first impression whet public appetites - giving people a tactile sense of what WITF may be able to do with these auction proceeds. Examples are far more powerful than concepts. When we can talk about our ambitious goals in news/information and in education services, we can generate enthusiasm and continued financial support.. And it will help to foreclose conversations in unproductive areas. (e.g. “Why doesn’t WITF just give this money to schools?”)

We can also talk about expanding our reach and recognition from our region to the state as a whole. We have the opportunity to make WITF a leader in public media in serving the needs of our region and state- and that can help to stoke local pride.

* **Long-term planning: “**The greatest value of these auction proceeds lies in their potential to expand WITF’s service to the community in **perpetuity**. As we have in the past when WITF has realized significant gifts, we will take an “endowment” approach, investing the corpus through a sound fiduciary process, and relying on the investment return to expand our community offerings.” This is where we make clear that the relevant number is not, say $100 million (if that is the auction proceeds amount). Rather, it is $5 million a year (e.g. a 5% return on a $100 million endowment).
* **Focusing on what we do best: “**WITF is Central Pennsylvania’s public-media leader, focusing on journalism and education in the issue areas that matter most in our region, and a vibrant arts and culture community. Our focus will remain there. We will seek ways to do what we already do so well - just bigger and better.”
* **Listening:** Our proposals for using these auction proceeds will be grounded in listening. We have been listening already (the survey). And we will continue listening as we develop this plan.

**Focus on the Sweet Spot:**

* **The Idea:** This is the Venn diagram we discussed. It’s where “listening” and “focusing on what we do best” overlap - and get joined at the hip. The survey results provide a concrete rationale for why we’re proposing to use these auction proceeds to address certain community needs that also align with the unique expertise of WITF.
* *“We heard from you and we know that areas we can best serve the community because of our unique resources and services. Specifically, we’re going to focus some of our efforts and the auction proceeds on [INSERT IDEA(S) HERE].”*

**The Nuts & Bolts:**

* **The Idea:** We all know that the auction will have zero impact on our broadcast capability. But people hearing for the first time won’t be so sure. (“How can you get so much money and not give anything up?”) We must make clear that the spectrum auction has zero operating impact.
* We also must make clear here that WITF is not partnering editorially in any way with a Fox affiliate. We must do so respectfully (so as not to appear to be “dissing” them) but with unmistakable clarity. There is no partnering with Tribune, editorially or legally, nor is there any partnering with Tribune’s broadcast affiliate, Fox. Indeed, the FCC requires that co-channel partners remain legally and editorially distinct.

**The Aspirational Delta:**

* **The Idea:** It is mission critical that we make clear that achieving the aspirations articulated above will require ongoing commitment from our stakeholders. This is one of our most important messages. We must use this extraordinary moment to announce a lofty quest - one that will require our donors and sponsors to achieve. We call this approach the “aspirational delta.”

**Listening Tour:**

* **The Idea:** In an effort to continue to rally our base (offense) and to guide the public conversation in productive ways (defense) we should consider announcing that we will convene follow-up meetings with key stakeholders to elicit their views. This “listening tour” might include separate meetings with each of our top priority groups: employees, donor groups, sponsors and key community leaders.