



## **Media Minutes**

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**Producers: Stevie Converse and Candace Clement**

### **TRANSCRIPT**

#### **The Future of News**

This week, a crowd of 150 leaders in journalism, philanthropy, and business gathered in St. Paul, Minn., to address the crisis of declining local and regional journalism. The Future of News conference. The event, hosted by American Public Media and Minnesota Public Radio, tackled complex questions facing the worlds of commercial and public media alike.

Andrew Haeg is public insight editor at American Public Media. Haeg says that the summit came together quickly out of the necessity to address major questions about how to sustain a future journalism on the local level.

**Andrew Haeg:** *Content has been atomized and the unit of content isn't the publication, it's the story or the piece of journalism. How do you adjust in an environment where the ability to aggregate a mass audience and to "monetize" that through advertising is no longer really possible. And as we talk about how to move forward, are we attempting to preserve the structures and institutions that have traditionally produced this kind of journalism? Or are we trying to preserve the values of journalism that have informed how we produce socially valuable journalism and public service journalism. And I think the consensus in the room is that yes, we are trying to preserve the values of journalism.*

Those values were laid out by Tom Rosentiel, director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, as being that journalists provide facts, make sense of what's happening, stand as watchdog, show up and bear witness, serve as a forum leader to engage community, aggregate and distill information, empower their audiences, and provide a role model for citizen journalists.

There was also a lot of discussion over whether there should be an increased role for federally subsidized, public service journalism. But attendees disagreed over whether journalism should be considered a public or private good.

**Andrew Haeg:** *That's an interesting tension that's going to play out over the next several months or years and that's trying to figure out where are the gaps in journalism*

*where has the market failed and therefore where does the federal government need to step in. And I don't think that's at all clear right now.*

The day's discussions were distilled into an "instant white paper," co-authored by Haeg, which laid out the major findings and lingering questions to come out of the summit.

To read the white paper, visit [www.thefutureofnews.ning.com](http://www.thefutureofnews.ning.com).

### **Local TV Airwaves for Wireless Broadband?**

The Federal Communications Commission is working on a national broadband plan, and the need for more broadband for our phones, netbooks and laptops is driving the agency to find new sources of spectrum. And they've floated an interesting prospect: Should we use local TV airwaves for wireless broadband?

The airwaves belong to the public; they're only licensed to broadcasters. But, as Harold Feld of Public Knowledge explains, many broadcasters don't regard the airwaves as public property. And they're rattled by any discussion about what to do with *their* spectrum.

**Harold Feld:** *The broadcasters have had this allocation in this system, really since the 1930s and 1940s. This creates an unfortunately very anachronistic way about thinking about broadcast spectrum, both in terms of what you do with it – you're doing a single thing with it, just sending a certain type of information in one direction – and also, in terms of the mentality. Despite the fact that the law says very clearly that spectrum is the public airwaves, that it is a public asset, that there is no ownership of broadcast licenses, after 70 years, broadcasters think of this as their spectrum.*

It's the FCC's job to ensure efficient, fair and equitable use of the airwaves. And with only a small percentage of the population now receiving over-the-air broadcast TV since the transition to digital signals, the FCC is questioning whether to continue to broadcast local TV in the same way it has always done and considering other ways to ensure free TV reception to those who need it.

One idea is to auction unused portions of the airwaves off to the highest bidder. But Feld says that is not a solution for the 21<sup>st</sup> century because it wouldn't bring more competition to the wireless industry, since only the big companies can afford to bid at spectrum auctions. And there's another reason.

**Harold Feld:** *What is does is reinforce the old ways of thinking about wireless access – and both that it's a scarce resource that we ought to be paying for instead of treating it as something we can conserve and move to reuse and not treat as a limited resource; and it reinforces the ownership idea.*

Feld wants to move away from the old model of broadcasters and wireless service monopolizing our airwaves. He's advocating for changing broadcasting policy to make

better use of the airwaves, using new technology in the so-called white spaces between the TV channels. He also wants to open up the spectrum to more services.

**Harold Feld:** *If we think of wireless as potentially our public square, would we want to lease out our public square because we could make more money that way? Or is it something that we want to figure out how to let everybody get a fair shake at having a chance to use?*

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