



New BOD Application from | PHIL RHEIN

Background:

Please indicate your involvement with WORT, past or current.

Although I moved to West Virginia in 2004, I grew up in Wisconsin and, from 1998 to 2004, lived in Fitchburg and DeForest. Initially working various temp jobs around Madison, I started listening to WORT before being hired as a journalist by the Portage Daily Register in 1999. For the next five years, I commuted to the newspaper's office in Columbia County and often listened to WORT during the commute or while traveling to assignments. Several years after moving to West Virginia, I was delighted to learn of WORT's streaming capabilities and audio archives. While listening to Tropical Riddims in May, 2023, I heard a clip indicating WORT had extended the deadline for applicants to the Board of Directors and I decided to put my name forward, rather than see a spot remain vacant and unfilled. After serving on the Board for the past three years, I know WORT needs people to serve on the Board of Directors who have the dedication and commitment to show up and do the work despite the criticism, which is why I decided to submit myself as a candidate once more.

Please indicate your involvement with communit(ies) in WORT's listening area.

I still have family and friends living in Wisconsin and the Madison region, although I no longer live there myself. Some people feel this should be disqualifying and have gone so far as to suggest the station bylaws be amended to limit participation to local residents. Maybe you feel the same and will not support my candidacy for this reason. From my perspective, the fact WORT has listeners outside Wisconsin who feel strongly enough to volunteer their time to the station is a strength and a credit to the incredible work of everyone who makes the programs people like myself seek out and

make time for. Since election to the Board of Directors in 2023, I've been an active, engaged participant in committees and work groups working on subjects including: the (failed) effort to repaint the station's exterior mural; the successful conclusion of year's long effort to revise and update the station's Volunteer Handbook; conducted personnel evaluations; helped to highlight diversity, equity and inclusion at the station; considered numerous policies and bylaws amendments; strategized around subjects ranging from the future of the station to it's management, music and communications framework and, since last fall; have served as Board Secretary and attended weekly meetings of the station's Executive Committee, in addition to chairing the Elections Committee responsible for one special election and the upcoming Annual Meeting.

Ideas

What are your goals for WORT?

Ensure the radio station's continued operation and success, in a world dominated by monopoly, authoritarianism and fragmentation of the very things which should bring us together as human beings. By providing streaming services, WORT serves people - like myself - who live well beyond the broadcast range of your local Dane County transmissions and I'd like to help ensure the station is able to continue serving listeners as it has the last fifty years, providing a lively and vibrant alternative to homogenized, narrow commercial broadcast playlists and viewpoints. I don't have to agree with every voice the station airs or every volunteer who is drawn to the station but I'd like to think we all share the same belief in the importance of WORT's fundamental mission, purpose and goals: to educate, to inform, to entertain.

What do you see as WORT's major responsibilities to the community?

The genuine uplift and joy provided by music transcends the immediate broadcast range of WORT and the reach of the station's internet streaming and audio archives opens these programs and viewpoints to people far beyond Wisconsin. I think it's important WORT continue to provide opportunities to enrich the lives of not just the people who live near the station but everyone who is able to find these broadcasts.

There are many areas where WORT could improve and many new activities WORT could undertake. Please list specific tasks on which you would be willing to work.

I'd be happy to continue serving as Secretary - there was a fair degree of learning curve to get up to speed on the tasks and, after roughly six months, I'm finally starting to feel comfortable performing in the role. I'd also be happy to continuing to serve on the Executive, Personnel, DEI and Elections committees, since I believe all have important, ongoing work ahead of them. While I was glad to assist with the review and layout work required to complete the update and revision of the WORT Volunteer Handbook in 2025, I don't actually know if my participation in Policy & Bylaws is doing much more than helping to carry the load - so I'd be happy to step back from that group to make way for anyone with an actual interest in the necessary work of continuing to review and update station policies. I would also continue active participation in, but not actual voting membership of, work groups relating to station management, music and, at some point, the Task Force on Programming and Editorial Responsibility & Authority considered during the April 2026 Board meeting. To be honest, one idea which rose in the communications work group was the idea of WORT seeking volunteers to attend committee and work group meetings and prepare reports on the ideas, discussions and even tension which aren't appropriate for inclusion in formal meeting minutes but which provide useful context for anyone unable to attend those meetings who is interested in more information about the station - if I'm not re-elected to the Board, I'm interested enough in the station I'll probably continue to attend committee and work group meetings in this capacity; I was a reporter for several years prior to leaving Wisconsin and while the realities and current state of journalism doesn't leave me with any real longing to return, I did enjoy the work most of the time.

Why do you wish to be on WORT's Board of Directors?

To be honest, I've asked myself the same question many time during the last three years and submitting this application was NOT a foregone conclusion. There is real work and a sense of responsibility in serving on WORT's Board of Directors and recent experience demonstrates this is not an easy burden to bear: since I was elected to the Board in 2023, seven people who were either already serving on the Board or who were elected since then have resigned from their position, sometimes within less than six months of joining. I'm not going to speak to anyone else's decision to resign from the Board - I don't know the individual circumstances which prompted those decisions and there are any number of reasons why people could make a good faith determination they're no longer able or willing to continue doing this. Serving on WORT's Board of Directors shouldn't be an obligation or punishment and I'm not going to question any of those decisions - all I can say is, no matter how difficult the work or the criticism has gotten, I never seriously considered resignation. The decision I made in 2023 to volunteer for an organization more than 600 miles away from my home here in West Virginia was one I made after a fair amount of consideration, just like my current decision to re-apply to continue performing the work. If I didn't believe I could give the station the time and dedication it deserves, I wouldn't have put my name forward, then or now.

The Board currently meets monthly on a Wednesday night. Meetings are scheduled at 7:00 p.m. and may finish as late as 11 p.m.. Are you able to regularly attend Board meetings?

Yes, as I have for the last three years.

WORT's Board is an active participant in station affairs. Board members do committee work and participate in pledge drives and other fundraising events. Board members are expected to commit to five to ten hours a month in addition to meetings. Roughly estimate the time you have available for work in addition to Board meetings.

During the last six months, I'd estimate I spend at least ten hours a week or more on WORT matters. I haven't actually done a good job of tracking the time I spend reading and responding to email, reviewing reports or recordings of earlier meetings, preparing agendas and writing reports, but I am very confident there has not been a single month in the last three years which didn't consume at least ten hours of my time beyond the time spent in various committee meetings or work groups. Good health willing, I don't imagine this changing in the next three years or I wouldn't be putting my name forward.

Feel free to add any additional relevant material.

I don't agree with everyone and don't expect everyone to agree with me. If that's disqualifying for your vote, I'm okay with it.
QAPLA'