



2013 WPFW COMMUNITY ADVISORY December 16, 2013 Meeting Minutes

Attendees: CAB members: Alvernon Garey, Barbara Patterson, Chad Alexander (Vice Chair), Cynthia Hartley (Chair), Keith Braswell (Secretary), Perry Redd, Thomas Raney

On the record at approximately 6:45 pm.

ROLL CALL

Seven CAB members were in attendance. A quorum was met.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was presented to modify the agenda so that interim program manager, Tony Bates, could provide management report. The motion was passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF OCTOBER MEETING NOTES

The members discussed the draft notes of the October 2013 meeting. Mr. Garey moved that the notes be approved. Mr. Redd seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

LISTENER COMMENTS

No listener comments were made initially. However, later in the meeting Mr. Boston said that the indefinite suspension of Dr. Jared Ball is problematic because his program, the Soul Power Hour, is one of the few programs on the station that attracts youth. Ms. Hartley concurred, saying that the punishment seems extreme.

IPD REPORT

Ms. Hartley welcomed Mr. Bates to the meeting. She noted that WPFW Program Directors normally attend CAB meetings, and John Hughes, the former General Manager and acting Program Director, had attended regularly.

Mr. Bates responded that:

- He does not intend to attend CAB meetings regularly,
- He does not have a report to issue,
- He will provide a rationale later by email, and
- He wants to know why his regular presence at CAB meetings is desirable.

Mr. Redd explained that the CAB represents the community to station management. Many of the community's concerns are related to station programming. Therefore, direct communication with the Program Director is highly desirable. For four years the CAB has been unable to get an answer to a simple question: "How does this station vet talent to go

on air? How does a community talent get on air?" Previous station general managers said that they could not answer because the process decision belongs to the program director.

Ms. Hartley stated that the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) requires a CAB for radio stations receiving government funding. The CAB's functions, as reflected in CPB requirements and the CAB's recently revised bylaws, include functions related to the Program Director, such as:

- Reviewing the station's programming goals and the services provided by the station, and
- Advising the LSB and Program Director about the extent to which the station's policies and programming are meeting community needs,

The CAB's ability to perform those functions depends on communicating with station management. Mr. Jack, a junior staff member, is not able to provide the CAB with the station updates that Mr. Hughes provided. The CAB had more of a relationship with Mr. Hughes than it has now with Mr. Bates and Michelle Price-Johnson, interim General Manager. The lack of relationship is demoralizing, and has contributed to CAB member resignations.

Mr. Bates said that CAB / Interim Program Director communication could be done by email.

Mr. Braswell said that he had emailed Mr. Bates and Ms. Price-Johnson, asking them to the CAB meeting. However, Mr. Bates did not respond to the email, and Ms. Price-Johnson replied to say that she would not be able to attend this meeting but would attempt to attend in 2014.

Mr. Bates said that having worked for Pacifica stations for 13 years, he was shocked to hear that WPFW program directors or general managers attend CAB meetings.

Ms. Hartley expressed that the CAB is frustrated by the lack of involvement by station management in the activities of the CAB. The lack of appreciation by the station for the volunteers is also disheartening. She added that volunteers can find other outlets for their civic activity for which they will be appreciated and their time will be valued. Without the volunteers, there is no CAB; and without the CAB, the station will lose CPB funding.

Mr. Bates then offered to provide a report. He stated that:

- The station continues to have problems with its antenna. He plans to visit the broadcasting tower with the station's new (part time) engineer later this week. It appears that rainwater is leaking into the sheath around the antenna; the accumulated water is causing the signal loss. If the leak can be located and fixed, and if that is the only problem, the station may be able to broadcast at full power by the end of January.
- He will provide the CAB with updates on the antenna situation as it proceeds.
- The fund drive achieved its goal of \$125,000. The process was difficult, in part because he was suspended for one day; one of his guests cursed on air and the

station has a zero tolerance policy towards those sorts of violations of Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations.

- The fund drive included, per a suggestion from Willard Jenkins, special programming about musical families. It was good programming, but ineffective for fund raising. The concept may be revisited in the future, possibly during February, for black history month.

Mr. Braswell asked about alternatives to fund drives for raising money for the station in 2014. Mr. Bates responded that:

- Raising money from listeners is and will be the Pacifica business model.
- The alternative fundraising issue is the purview of the general manager, not the program director. Ms. Price-Johnson has already written several grant applications, and is attending a grant writing conference to further her skills. She is partnering with others for grant writing assistance.
- Many of the people involved with Pacifica governance listen to the station all day, and therefore get different ideas about programming than typical listeners, who tend to listen for 15 minutes at a time.
- With proper programming, WPFW can build audience in new places. For example, the new progressive programming strip should help hold the Democracy Now! Listeners. Results, at least for that strip, should be apparent by March.
- There was a huge communication breakdown between him and the public affairs programmers during the recent fund drive, which led to pre-emptions of public affairs programs. The problem will be fixed before the next drive, in February.
- Improved programming will increase listenership, which in turn will improve finances. For example, during the recent fund drive there were three days in a row in which the station raised over \$25,000; the goals for those days were \$9,000, \$9,000, and \$19,000.

Mr. Braswell asked Mr. Bates for his assessment of the station's response to Nelson Mandela's death, considering that it occurred during the fund drive. Mr. Bates said that audience response suggests that the station did well, especially given financial and staff limitations. Mr. Bates reported that:

- Ms. Price-Johnson wants the station to increase its emphasis on justice, even for music programs. Appropriate 60- to 120-second clips will be made available for programmer use.
- Ms. Price-Johnson wants the station to have a regular news program during afternoon drive. He is beginning to look into ways to make that happen.
- He is working with the Morning Brew team to increase its District – Maryland – Virginia (DMV) content. Each day of the week will have a different local emphasis topic, e.g. education, housing gentrification, Maryland, Virginia, health care. Since the station doesn't have the staff to go into the community to get that content, it will be acquired by having a phone line for community members to call in their stories, which will be recorded and may be used on air.

- There will be a new, one hour live music program on daily at 5 PM. It will probably start January 15 with Brother Ah and a quartet or quintet that he will get together, performing at Ben's Next Door.

Ms. Hartley asked Mr. Bates to comment on station relocation and the station's relationship with its landlord. Mr. Bates said that:

- Based on anecdotal reports, the landlord has gotten over the isolated negative events that happened earlier.
- Ms. Price-Johnson promised that the station will move in March. This is a delay from February, when a move would conflict with the fund drive.

Mr. Redd thanked Mr. Bates for his report and for his efforts, and recommended that Mr. Bates consider more extensive use of volunteers.

Mr. Redd noted that the station had trained volunteers to be local reporters several years ago, and asked Mr. Bates if he would consider means, such as the CAB, for community input. Mr. Bates said that he has received several offers for help since he arrived, and was shocked to discover that the offers were true, not just a way to get a show. He specifically mentioned Katea Stitt in that regard. He is always open to suggestions, including from suggestions from the CAB.

Ms. Hartley asked Mr. Bates why Jared Ball had been suspended. Mr. Bates replied that Dr. Ball broke a written WPFW rule to take complaints about the station to the interim general manager or interim program director, not state them on air. Mr. Alexander said that he does not know when the rule was instituted, but that it has been violated frequently over the past year or more. Mr. Bates concurred, and said that the violations hurt the station. Ms. Hartley noted that the penalty for cursing on air, a violation of FCC regulations, was a one-day suspension; the indefinite suspension of Dr. Ball appears to be out of proportion. Mr. Bates agreed that the penalty was harsh. He added that the policy explicitly states that there is zero tolerance, explained that Dr. Ball's suspension is indefinite, not necessarily permanent. He is discussing the issue with Ms. Price-Johnson.

Mr. Bates said that some of the station's financial problems, such as being behind with premiums, are due to programmers who had used the station's airwaves to urge listeners not to give to the station. Mr. Braswell noted that WPFW's problems with premiums are longstanding, predating the recent conditional pledge recommendations. Mr. Alexander mentioned that he was a producer at WFMU, a listener-supported station in New York City, for seven years, and that they did not have problems with premium fulfillment. Moreover, they raised their \$1.5 million budget in two weeks of fund drive.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Redd distributed copies of the results of the listener survey conducted at the U Street Jam. He said that 13 people filled out the survey. However, results were inherently biased because of self-selection by U Street Jam attendees. Some lessons learned include:

- Conduct the survey at the entrance, outside the main room, not inside.

- Have survey forms at the tables as well, so that people can fill them in at their leisure.

He commended Ms. Hartley for her actions as the CAB Chair.

2014 INITIATIVES

Ms. Hartley said that she believes the revised CAB Bylaws will provide a good foundation for the CAB in 2014. She also noted the first survey. However, there is a lot to be done in 2014, including programming, outreach, and CAB membership development.

Ms. Hartley requested suggestions on CAB activities in 2014:

- Mr. Perry recommended that the CAB address programmer training, so that new talent from the community can go on the air. Ms. Hartley noted that programmer training may be a problem for the CAB, since programmers cannot be CAB members. Mr. Perry agreed, and proposed that the CAB make a suitable recommendation to the LSB
- Mr. Garey recalled that the station used to offer board operation training. Mr. Witherspoon said that it has not been offered lately. Mr. Braswell said that he had assisted Lona Alias for two years and wanted to learn board operation, but it didn't happen. Mr. Hughes and Mr. Jack told him that training was on hold due to the impending station move.
- Ms. Patterson recommended that the CAB develop Standard Operating Procedures for obtaining the station's list of programming goals, and for assessing the services that the station is providing.

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RECRUITMENT

Ms. Hartley said that only two people have applied for membership on the 2014 CAB. With people resigning from the CAB and leaving because of term limits, there may not be enough 2014 members to meet the quorum stated in the CAB Bylaws.

Ms. Hartley announced that she is frustrated by the lack of involvement by station management with the CAB. The station management has displayed a lack of appreciation for its volunteers. As such, she will be resigning from the CAB. Mr. Alexander said that, for personal reasons, this will also be his last CAB meeting.

Mr. Redd thanked his fellow CAB members, and Mr. Benjamin, for their service; he enjoyed serving with them.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:38 PM