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Memorandum

Received & Inspected

JAN 28 2014

FCC Mail Room

To: FCC Licensing Renewal Staff
From: M Kathryn Massey
Date: January 18, 2014

Re: **KZYX&Z (Call Sign)**
41157 (Station Facility ID number)
License Renewal Application File Number: BRED20130724AAG

I am offering comments with respect to the License Renewal Application for KZYX&Z (88.1, 90.7, and 91.5 FM), Mendocino County Public Radio, in Philo, CA. I understand the renewal is being held up following serious concerns expressed by current and former board members, former staff, and from volunteers, such as myself.

Briefly, I relocated to Mendocino County nearly three years ago. As a matter of background, I was employed as a Programmer/Announcer and Fund Development Officer in the Nashville TN in the early 1980s. The station was WPLN (90.3 FM), Nashville Public Radio.

I mention this because I know firsthand what a professionally operated radio station looks like.

In my capacity as an employee of WPLN, I worked as an on-air producer, programmer, newscaster, and board operator for over three years. Part of my paid time was in the area of assisting the Development Coordinator. This involved on-air pledge drive pitches, and interviewing prominent volunteers who pitched for the station (former governors, mayors, civic leaders, station underwriters and prominent citizens of Nashville and the listening audience.)

In addition, I worked with the Coordinator to facilitate Annual Direct Mail campaigns and follow up. Each pledge drive was a huge undertaking and involved the community as phone volunteers, catering, and set engineering and logistics.

As ambassadors of WPLN and representing ourselves as the station to volunteers from all tiers of the community, we always put our best foot forward. We had professional standards for dress, behavior and attitude. We saw our volunteers as guests who were individually offering their services to help the station and to raise

resources for WPLN. After all, the many guests we hosted throughout each fund drive were, in fact, the very people who listened to our station and loved it. They put their time, money, voices, and expertise to work for our community public radio. We never took that for granted and always honored and respected them in every way.

Following my taking another position, I was retained by WPLN for many years as an on-air volunteer during each pledge fund drive. Why? Because I love public radio, and I was good at what I did for WPLN.

I mention my years of experience at WPLN, Nashville Public Radio, because it is in sharp contrast to the situation at KZYX&Z.

The management of KZYX&Z does not conduct itself like public radio. Rather, KZYX&Z is more like a private fraternity for the five people who work there. The five staff members are insulated from Mendocino County, including the station's 2,300 members and 88,000 county residents.

The staff, led by General Manager John Coate, do not solicit public input. The station only recently established a Community Advisory Board after a former Board member, Doug McKenty wrote a front page article in a local newspaper.

(see: <http://theava.com/archives/24282>).

A Program Advisory Committee, which is mandated by the station's by-laws, and which would oversee many of the poor decisions made by Program Director Mary Aigner, is still nonexistent.

Adding to the closed atmosphere, Mr. Coate and Ms. Aigner also canceled the only public comment program on the schedule, "Open Lines", after listeners started to vehemently complain about Mr. Coate and his staff.

Mr. Coate also manipulates the elections of the Board of Directors.

Mr. Coate refuses to release important financial information, i.e. staff salaries. He also borrows from banks between pledge drives without releasing information about those borrowings (the station was nearly bankrupted six years ago by its general manager at that time).

Mr. Coate also refuses to post or advertise job openings at KZYX&Z. He hires friends and other insiders. This is probably an EEOC violation.

My comments will now address my direct experience and impressions of the KZYX staff when I became a volunteer.

I was recruited as a phone volunteer for my first fund drive at KZYX&Z in 2011, having been invited by a volunteer programmer to help. I gladly drove down from my home on the Mendocino coast to be in the studio in Philo.

The station itself was filthy and hadn't been cleaned. A dead mouse's head and part of its body was stuck in an open electric socket on the wall of the very cluttered office of the station's Senior Engineer, Rich Culbertson.

Mr. Culbertson's office clutter included rotting food.

The toilet, which was next to Mr. Culbertson's office, was also backed up. It was a disgusting sight, and the smell almost made me vomit. I was further told not to drink the water from the facet in the bathroom because it was "contaminated from the septic tank".

The current Director of Development, Diane Hering, who was supervising my volunteer activities that day, had offensive body odor, and she was wearing dirty clothes. I thought perhaps Ms. Hering hadn't had time to bathe. Not so. Every time I saw Ms. Hering since then, she has appeared disheveled, slovenly, and smelled the same way. I later learned that Ms. Hering prides herself in smelling foul...she calls it a "hillbilly thing". (Ms. Hering hosts a bluegrass radio show.) I find her lack of personal hygiene to be repulsive.

During the fund raising drive at which I volunteered in 2011, I was struck by the fact that no station underwriters were on-air speaking about why they love KZYX&Z and the particular programs they underwrite. Indeed, underwriting revenues at KZYX&Z have fallen in each of the last three years.

Then, there was my bad experience in applying to host a show at KZYX&Z.

In exploring the possibility of hosting a radio program of my own at KZYX&Z, the current Program Director, Mary Aigner, directed me to complete a "talent" and "interest" questionnaire when I first arrived at the station to answer phones.

I put down my past radio experience and expertise from my work with WPLN. Ms. Aigner seemed very excited to learn that my area of expertise was in classical music and the visual arts. We talked further, and she thought we should offer a program on the arts given that few, if any, arts programs at that time were being offered by KZYX&Z. Ms. Aigner advised me to meet with the GM, John Coate, to discuss the idea further.

I met with Mr. Coate and after some discussion he said that I should prepare a written

KZYX&Z is a non-profit radio station. Staffs of non-for-profit entities serve at the pleasure of a volunteer board comprised of a cross-section of the constituents it serves. The KZYX&Z staff is charged with meeting the station's mission and policies that KZYX&Z volunteer board members establish; and, to work with the financial, nominating and other working committees, as determined by the chair of the board and/or executive committee to that end.

This is not how the current management sees its roll as staff. Staff view job security as paramount. Ms. Aigner, for example, has worked at the station since it began 25 years ago. None of the current employees work ethic, professionalism and conduct would hold up in another other market if called upon to do so. If pressed, most if not all current staff would have a difficult time finding employment anywhere due to some of the issues already identified. The station has become about the staff and not about the listeners, volunteers, and connecting community resources.

Mendocino County is a rural and very poor place here in northern California. We have high employment and high levels of poverty. One out of every two county residents is eligible for Food Stamps. One in four county residents is a Medicaid recipient. The incidence of child abuse in the county is twice the national rate. We have a methamphetamine epidemic that is one of the worst in the country.

We are called the "Appalachia of the West" here in Mendocino County. We are just as poor as Appalachia. And instead of making moonshine, we grow marijuana.

We desperately need a good public radio station in Mendocino County, but the KZYX & Z staff does not meet the minimum requirements to fill this need. Almost every principle of good corporate governance has been ignored, if not openly mocked.

I urge you not to renew the licenses at KZYX&Z until current management is replaced.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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